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H. G. WELLS

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THE WORKS OF
H. G. WELLS

ATLANTIC EDITION

VOLUME VI

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THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON
AND SOME MORE HUMAN STORIES

BY

H. G. WELLS

LONDON
T. FISHER UNWIN, LTD.
MCMXXV

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PREFACE TO VOLUME VI

"The First Men in the Moon" was first published as a serial in 1900, in America in Mr. John Brisben Walker's *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, and in England in the *Strand Magazine*. It is an imaginative spree. Except for Cavorite, that substance opaque to gravitation, the writer has allowed himself no liberties with known facts; there is no impossibility in the tale. There are no doubt details of a high degree of improbability but nothing that a properly informed science student can contradict flatly. The book had the honour of a review in *Nature* by Professor Turner, who discussed its ingenuities very sympathetically. It is probably the writer's best "scientific romance."

Bound up with this are some early stories that come conveniently here as a sort of transition to the two early novels in the next volume. The Euphemia Papers are very early writings indeed. For the most part they were written as contributions to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1893–4. They are the stuff of which novels are made. "A Slip under the Microscope" was done for the *Yellow Book* about the year 1895, and is obviously related genetically to "Love and Mr. Lewisham." "Miss Winchelsea's Heart" came into my head to tell my friend George Gissing on the Pincio one spring morning in 1898.

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THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON

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"Three thousand stadia from the earth to the moon. . . . Marvel not, my comrade, if I appear talking to you on super-terrestrial and aerial topics. The long and the short of the matter is that I am running over the order of a Journey I have lately made."

—*Lucian's "Icaromenippus."*

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I

MR. BEDFORD MEETS MR. CAVOR AT LYMPNE

s I sit down to write here amidst the shadows of vine-leaves under the blue sky of southern Italy it comes to me with a certain quality of astonishment that my participation in these amazing adventures of Mr. Cavor was, after all, the outcome of the purest accident. It might have been any one. I fell into these things at a time when I thought myself removed from the slightest possibility of disturbing experiences. I had gone to Lympne because I had imagined it the most uneventful place in the world. "Here at any rate," said I, "I shall find peace and a chance to work!"

And this book is the sequel. So utterly at variance is Destiny with all the little plans of men.

I may perhaps mention here that very recently I had come an ugly cropper in certain business enterprises. At the present moment, surrounded by all the circumstances of wealth, there is a luxury in admitting my extremity. I can even admit that to a certain extent my disasters were conceivably of my own making. It may be there are directions in which I have some capacity; the conduct of business operations is not among these. But in those days I was young, and my youth, among other objectionable forms, took that of a pride in my capacity for

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affairs. I am young still in years, but the things that have happened to me have rubbed something of the youth from my mind. Whether they have brought any wisdom to light below it, is a more doubtful matter.

It is scarcely necessary to go into the details of the speculations that landed me at Lympne in Kent. Nowadays even about business transactions there is a strong spice of adventure. I took risks. In these things there is invariably a certain amount to give and take, and it fell to me finally to do the giving, reluctantly enough. Even when I had got out of everything one cantankerous creditor saw fit to be malignant. Perhaps you have met that flaming sense of outraged virtue or perhaps you have only felt it. He ran me hard. It seemed to me at last that there was nothing for it but to write a play, unless I wanted to drudge for my living as a clerk. I have a certain imagination, and luxurious tastes, and I meant to make a vigorous fight for it before that fate overtook me. In addition to my belief in my powers as a business man I had always in those days had an idea that I was equal to writing a very good play. It is not, I believe, an uncommon persuasion. I knew there was nothing a man can do outside legitimate business transactions that has such opulent possibilities, and very probably that biassed my opinion. I had indeed got into the habit of regarding this unwritten drama as a convenient little reserve put by for a rainy day. That rainy day had come and I set to work.

I soon discovered that writing a play was a longer

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business than I had supposed—at first I had reckoned ten days for it—and it was to have a *pied-à-terre* while it was in hand that I came to Lympne. I reckoned myself lucky in getting that little bungalow. I got it on a three-years' agreement. I put in a few sticks of furniture, and while the play was in hand I did my own cooking. My cooking would have shocked Mrs. Beeton. And yet, you know, it had a flavour. I had a coffee-pot, a saucepan for eggs and one for potatoes, and a frying-pan for sausages and bacon. Such was the simple apparatus of my comfort. One can't always be magnificent, but simplicity is always a possible alternative. For the rest I laid in an eighteen-gallon cask of beer on credit, and a trustful baker came each day. It was not perhaps in the style of Sybaris, but I have had worse times. I was a little sorry for the baker, who was a very decent man; but even for him I hoped.

Certainly if any one wants solitude the place is Lympne. It is in the clay part of Kent, and my bungalow stood on the edge of an old sea cliff and stared across the flats of Romney marsh at the sea. In very wet weather the place is almost inaccessible, and I have heard that at times the postman used to traverse the more succulent portions of his route with boards upon his feet. I never saw him doing so, but I can quite imagine it. Outside the doors of the few cottages and houses that make up the present village, big birch besoms are stuck to wipe off the worst of the clay, which will give some idea of the texture of the district. I doubt if the place would be there at all if it were not a fading memory of things

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gone forever. It was the big port of England in Roman times, Portus Lemanis, and now the sea is four miles away. All down the steep hill are boulders and masses of Roman brickwork, and from it old Watling Street, still paved in places, starts like an arrow to the north. I used to stand on the hill and think of it all, the galleys and legions, the captives and officials, the women and traders, the speculators like myself, all the swarm and tumult that came clanking in and out of the harbour. And now just a few lumps of rubble on a grassy slope and a sheep or two—and I! And where the port had been were the levels of the marsh, sweeping round in a broad curve to distant Dungeness and dotted here and there with tree clumps and the church towers of old mediæval towns that are following Lemanis now towards extinction.

That outlook on the marsh was indeed one of the finest views I have ever seen. I suppose Dungeness was fifteen miles away; it lay like a raft on the sea, and farther westward were the hills by Hastings under the setting sun. Sometimes they hung close and clear, sometimes they were faded and low, and often the drift of the weather took them clean out of sight. And all the nearer parts of the marsh were laced and lit by ditches and canals.

The window at which I worked looked over the skyline of this crest, and it was from this window that I first set eyes on Cavor. It was just as I was struggling with my scenario, holding down my mind to the sheer hard work of it, and naturally enough he arrested my attention.

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The sun had set, the sky was a vivid tranquillity of green and yellow, and against that he came out black, the oddest little figure.

He was a short, round-bodied, thin-legged little man, with a jerky quality in his motions; he had seen fit to clothe his extraordinary mind in a cricket cap, an overcoat, and cycling knickerbockers and stockings. Why he did so I do not know, for he never cycled and he never played cricket. It was a fortuitous concurrence of garments arising I know not how. He gesticulated with his hands and arms and jerked his head about and buzzed. He buzzed like something electric. You never heard such buzzing. And ever and again he cleared his throat with a most extraordinary noise.

There had been rain, and that spasmodic walk of his was enhanced by the extreme slipperiness of the footpath. Exactly as he came against the sun he stopped, pulled out a watch, hesitated. Then with a sort of convulsive gesture he turned and retreated with every manifestation of haste, no longer gesticulating, but going with ample strides that showed the relatively large size of his feet—they were I remember grotesquely exaggerated in size by adhesive clay—to the best possible advantage.

This occurred on the first day of my sojourn when my play-writing energy was at its height, and I regarded the incident simply as an annoying distraction—the waste of five minutes. I returned to my scenario. But when next evening the apparition was repeated with remarkable precision, and again the next evening, and indeed every evening when rain

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was not falling, concentration upon the scenario became a considerable effort. "Confound the man," said I, "one would think he was learning to be a marionette!" and for several evenings I cursed him pretty heartily.

Then my annoyance gave way to amazement and curiosity. Why on earth should a man do this thing? On the fourteenth evening I could stand it no longer, and as soon as he appeared I opened the French window, crossed the veranda, and directed myself to the point where he invariably stopped.

He had his watch out as I came up to him. He had a chubby rubicund face, with reddish-brown eyes—previously I had seen him only against the light. "One moment, sir," said I as he turned.

He stared. "One moment," he said, "certainly. Or if you wish to speak to me for longer, and it is not asking too much—your moment is up—would it trouble you to accompany me——?"

"Not in the least," said I, placing myself beside him.

"My habits are regular. My time for intercourse —limited."

"This, I presume, is your time for exercise?"

"It is. I come here to enjoy the sunset."

"You don't."

"Sir?"

"You never look at it."

"Never look at it?"

"No. I've watched you thirteen nights and not once have you looked at the sunset. Not once."

He knitted his brows like one who encounters a problem.

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"Well, I enjoy the sunlight—the atmosphere. I go along this path, through that gate"—he jerked his head over his shoulder—"and round——"

"You don't. You never have been. It's all nonsense. There isn't a way. To-night for instance——"

"Oh! to-night! Let me see. Ah! I just glanced at my watch, saw that I had already been out just three minutes over the precise half hour, decided there was not time to go round, turned——"

"You always do."

He looked at me, reflected. "Perhaps I do—now I come to think of it. . . . But what was it you wanted to speak to me about?"

"Why—*this!*"

"This?"

"Yes. Why do you do it? Every night you come making a noise——"

"Making a noise?"

"Like this." I imitated his buzzing noise. He looked at me and it was evident the buzzing awakened distaste. "Do I do *that?*" he asked.

"Every blessed evening."

"I had no idea."

He stopped. He regarded me gravely. "Can it be," he said, "that I have formed a habit?"

"Well, it looks like it. Doesn't it?"

He pulled down his lower lip between finger and thumb. He regarded a puddle at his feet.

"My mind is much occupied," he said. "And you want to know why! Well, sir, I can assure you that not only do I not know why I do these things, but I did not even know I did them. Come to think, it is

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just as you say; I never *have* been beyond that field. . . . And these things annoy you?"

For some reason I was beginning to relent towards him. "Not annoy," I said. "But—imagine yourself writing a play!"

"I couldn't."

"Well, anything that needs concentration."

"Ah," he said, "of course," and meditated. His expression became so eloquent of distress that I relented still more. After all there is a touch of aggression in demanding of a man you don't know why he hums on a public footpath.

"You see," he said weakly, "it's a habit."

"Oh, I recognise that."

"I must stop it."

"But not if it puts you out. After all, I had no business—it's something of a liberty."

"Not at all, sir," he said, "not at all. I am greatly indebted to you. I should guard myself against these things. In future I will. Could I trouble you—once again? that noise?"

"Something like this," I said. "Zuzzoo, zuzzoo—But really you know——"

"I am greatly obliged to you. In fact—I know—I am getting absurdly absent-minded. You are quite justified, sir—perfectly justified. Indeed, I am indebted to you. The thing shall end. And now, sir, I have already brought you farther than I should have done."

"I do hope my impertinence——"

"Not at all, sir, not at all."

We regarded each other for a moment. I raised

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my hat and wished him a good evening. He responded convulsively, and so we went our ways.

At the stile I looked back at his receding figure. His bearing had changed remarkably; he seemed limp, shrunken. The contrast with his former gesticulating, zuzzooing self took me in some absurd way as pathetic. I watched him out of sight. Then, wishing very heartily I had kept to my own business, I returned to my bungalow and my play.

The next evening I saw nothing of him, nor the next. But he was very much in my mind, and it had occurred to me that as a sentimental comic character he might serve a useful purpose in the development of my plot. The third day he called upon me.

For a time I was puzzled to think what had brought him—he made indifferent conversation in the most formal way—then abruptly he came to business. He wanted to buy me out of my bungalow.

"You see," he said, "I don't blame you in the least, but you've destroyed a habit and it disorganises my day. I've walked past here for years—years. No doubt I've hummed. . . . You've made all that impossible!"

I suggested he might try some other direction.

"No. There is no other direction. This is the only one. I've inquired. And now every afternoon at four—I come to a dead wall."

"But, my dear sir, if the thing is so important to you——"

"It's vital! You see I'm—I'm an investigator—I am engaged in a scientific research. I live—" he

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paused and seemed to think. "Just over there," he said, and pointed suddenly dangerously near my eye. "The house with white chimneys you see just over the trees. And my circumstances are abnormal —abnormal. I am on the point of completing one of the most important demonstrations, I can assure you, one of the most important of all the demonstrations that have ever been made. It requires constant thought, constant mental ease and activity. And the afternoon was my brightest time!—effervescing with new ideas—new points of view."

"But why not come by still?"

"It would be all different. I should be self-conscious. I should think of you at your play—watching me, irritated! Instead of thinking of my work. No! I must have the bungalow."

I meditated. Naturally I wanted to think the matter over thoroughly before anything decisive was said. I was generally ready enough for business in those days and selling always attracted me, but in the first place it was not my bungalow, and even if I sold it to him at a good price I might get inconvenienced in the delivery if the current owner got wind of the transaction, and in the second I was, well—undischarged. It was clearly a business that required delicate handling. Moreover the possibility of his being in pursuit of some valuable invention also interested me. It occurred to me that I would like to know more of this research, not with any dishonest intention, but simply with an idea that to know what it was would be a relief from play-writing. I threw out feelers.

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He was quite willing to supply information. Indeed, once he was fairly under way the conversation became a monologue. He talked like a man long pent up, who has had it over with himself again and again. He talked for nearly an hour, and I must confess I found it a pretty stiff bit of listening. But through it all there was the undertone of satisfaction one feels when one is neglecting work one has set oneself. During that first interview I gathered very little of the drift of his work. Half his words were technicalities entirely strange to me, and he illustrated one or two points with what he was pleased to call elementary mathematics, computing on an envelope with a copying ink pencil, in a manner that made it hard even to seem to understand. "Yes," I said. "Yes. Go on!" Nevertheless I made out enough to convince me that he was no mere crank playing at discoveries. In spite of his crank-like appearance there was a force about him that made that impossible. Whatever it was it was a thing with mechanical possibilities. He told me of a workshed he had and of three assistants, originally jobbing carpenters whom he had trained. Now from the workshed to the patent office is clearly only one step. He invited me to see these things. I accepted readily and took care by a remark or so to underline that. The proposed transfer of the bungalow remained very conveniently in suspense.

At last he rose to depart with an apology for the length of his call. Talking over his work was, he said, a pleasure enjoyed only too rarely. It was not often he found such an intelligent listener as

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myself. He mingled very little with professional scientific men.

"So much pettiness," he explained, "so much intrigue! And really when one has an idea—a novel, fertilising idea—I don't wish to be uncharitable, but——"

I am a man who believes in impulses. I made what was perhaps a rash proposition. But you must remember that I had been alone, playwriting in Lympne for fourteen days, and my compunction for his ruined walk still hung about me. "Why not," said I, "make this your new habit? In the place of the one I spoilt. At least—until we can settle about the bungalow. What you want is to turn over your work in your mind. That you have always done during your afternoon walk. Unfortunately that's over—you can't get things back as they were. But why not come and talk about your work to me—use me as a sort of wall against which you may throw your thoughts and catch them again. It's certain I don't know enough to steal your ideas myself, and I know no scientific men. . . ."

I stopped. He was considering. Evidently the thing attracted him. "But I'm afraid I should bore you," he said.

"You think I'm too dull?"

"Oh no, but technicalities——"

"Anyhow you've interested me immensely this afternoon."

"Of course, it *would* be a great help to me. Nothing clears up one's ideas so much as explaining them. Hitherto——"

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"My dear sir, say no more."

"But really can you spare the time?"

"There is no rest like change of occupation," I said with profound conviction.

The affair was over. On my veranda steps he turned. "I am already greatly indebted to you," he said.

I made an interrogative noise.

"You have completely cured me of that ridiculous habit of humming," he explained.

I think I said I was glad to be of any service to him, and he turned away.

Immediately the train of thought that our conversation had suggested must have resumed its sway. His arms began to wave in their former fashion. The faint echo of "*zuzzoo*" came back to me on the breeze. . . .

Well—after all that was not my affair. . . .

He came the next day and again the next day after that, and delivered two lectures on physics to our mutual satisfaction. He talked with an air of being extremely lucid about the "ether" and "tubes of force" and "gravitational potential" and such things, and I sat in my other folding-chair and said "Yes," "Go on," "I follow you," to keep him going. It was tremendously difficult stuff, but I do not think he ever suspected how much I did not understand him. There were moments when I doubted whether I was well employed, but at any rate I was resting from that confounded play. Now and then things gleamed on me clearly for a space, only to vanish just when I thought I had hold of them. Sometimes

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my attention failed altogether, and I would give it up and sit and stare at him, wondering whether after all it would not be better to use him as a central figure in a good farce and let all this other stuff slide. And then perhaps I would comprehend again for a bit.

At the earliest opportunity I went to see his house. It was large and carelessly furnished; there were no servants other than his three assistants, and his dietary and private life were characterised by a philosophical simplicity. He was a water-drinker, a vegetarian, and all those logical, disciplinary things. But the sight of his equipment settled many doubts. It looked like business from cellar to attic—an amazing little place to find in an out-of-the-way village. The ground-floor rooms contained benches and apparatus, the bakehouse and scullery boiler had developed into respectable furnaces, dynamos occupied the cellar, and there was a gasometer in the garden. He showed it to me with all the confiding zest of a man who has been living too much alone. His seclusion was overflowing now in an excess of confidence, and I had the good luck to be the recipient.

The three assistants were creditable specimens of the class of "handy men" from which they came. Conscientious if unintelligent, strong, civil, and willing. One, Spargus, who did the cooking and all the metal work, had been a sailor; a second, Gibbs, was a joiner, and the third was an ex-jobbing gardener and now general assistant. They were the merest labourers; all the intelligent work was done by Cavor.

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Theirs was the darkest ignorance compared even with my muddled impression.

And now, as to the nature of these inquiries. Here unhappily comes a grave difficulty. I am no scientific expert, and if I were to attempt to set forth in the highly scientific language of Mr. Cavor the aim to which his experiments tended, I am afraid I should confuse not only the reader but myself, and almost certainly I should make some blunder that would bring upon me the mockery of every up-to-date student of mathematical physics in the country. The best thing I can do therefore is, I think, to give my impressions in my own inexact language without any attempt to wear a garment of knowledge to which I have no claim.

The object of Mr. Cavor's search was a substance that should be "opaque"—he used some other word I have forgotten, but "opaque" conveys the idea—to "all forms of radiant energy." "Radiant energy," he made me understand, was anything like light or heat or those Röntgen rays there was so much talk about a year or so ago, or the electric waves of Marconi, or gravitation. All these things, he said, *radiate* from centres and act on bodies at a distance, whence comes the term "radiant energy." Now almost all substances are opaque to some form or other of radiant energy. Glass, for example, is transparent to light, but much less so to heat, so that it is useful as a fire-screen; and alum is transparent to light, but blocks heat completely. A solution of iodine in carbon bisulphide, on the other hand, completely blocks light but is quite transparent to heat. It will

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hide a fire from you but permit all its warmth to reach you. Metals are not only opaque to light and heat but also to electrical energy, which passes through both iodine solution and glass almost as though they were not interposed. And so on.

Now all known substances are "transparent" to gravitation. You can use screens of various sorts to cut off the light or heat or electrical influence of the sun, or the warmth of the earth from anything; you can screen things by sheets of metal from Marconi's rays, but nothing will cut off the gravitational attraction of the sun or the gravitational attraction of the earth. Yet why there should be nothing is hard to say. Cavor did not see why such a substance should not exist, and certainly I could not tell him. I had never thought of such a possibility before. He showed me by calculations on paper which Lord Kelvin, no doubt, or Professor Lodge or Professor Karl Pearson, or any of those great scientific people might have understood, but which simply reduced me to a hopeless muddle, that not only was such a substance possible, but that it must satisfy certain conditions. It was an amazing piece of reasoning. Much as it amazed and exercised me at the time, it would be impossible to reproduce it here. "Yes," I said to it all, "yes. Go on!" Suffice it for this story that he believed he might be able to manufacture this possible substance opaque to gravitation out of a complicated alloy of metals and something new—a new element I fancy—called, I believe, *helium*, which was sent to him from London in sealed stone jars. Doubt has been thrown upon this detail,

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but I am almost certain it was *helium* he had sent him in sealed stone jars. It was certainly something very gaseous and thin.

If only I had taken notes. . . .

But then how was I to foresee the necessity of taking notes?

Any one with the merest germ of imagination will understand the extraordinary possibilities of such a substance, and will sympathise a little with the emotion I felt as this understanding emerged from the haze of abstruse phrases in which Cavor expressed himself. Comic relief in a play indeed! It was some time before I would believe that I had interpreted him aright, and I was very careful not to ask questions that would have enabled him to gauge the profundity of misunderstanding into which he dropped his daily exposition. But no one reading the story of it here will sympathise fully, because from my barren narrative it will be impossible to gather the strength of my conviction that this astonishing substance was positively going to be made.

I do not recall that I gave my play an hour's work at any one time after my visit to his house. My imagination had other things to do. There seemed no limit to the possibilities of the scheme; whichever way I tried, I came on miracles and revolutions. For example, if one wanted to lift a weight, however enormous, one had only to get a sheet of this substance beneath it and one might lift it with a straw. My first natural impulse was to apply this principle to guns and ironclads and all the material and methods of war and from that to shipping, loco-

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motion, building, every conceivable form of human industry. The chance that had brought me into the very birth chamber of this new time—it was an epoch, no less—was one of those chances that come once in a thousand years. The thing unrolled, it expanded and expanded. Among other things I saw in it my redemption as a business man. I saw a parent company and daughter companies, applications to right of us, applications to left, rings and trusts, privileges and concessions spreading and spreading, until one vast stupendous Cavorite Company ran and ruled the world.

And I was in it.

I took my line straight away. I knew I was staking everything, but I jumped there and then.

"We're on absolutely the biggest thing that has ever been invented," I said, and put the accent on "we." "If you want to keep me out of this, you'll have to do it with a gun. I'm coming down to be your fourth labourer to-morrow."

He seemed surprised at my enthusiasm, but not a bit suspicious or hostile. Rather he was self-depreciatory.

He looked at me doubtfully. "But do you really think—?" he said. "And your play! How about that play?"

"It's vanished!" I cried. "My dear sir, don't you see what you've got? Don't you see what you're going to do?"

That was merely a rhetorical turn, but positively he didn't. At first I could not believe it. He had not had the beginning of the inkling of an idea! This

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astonishing little man had been working on purely theoretical grounds the whole time! When he said it was "the most important" research the world had ever seen he simply meant it squared up so many theories, settled so much that was in doubt; he had troubled no more about the application of the stuff he was going to turn out than if he had been a machine that makes guns. This was a possible substance, and he was going to make it! *V'là tout*, as the Frenchman says.

Beyond that—he was childish! If he made it, it would go down to posterity as Cavorite or Cavorine and he would be made an F. R. S. and his portrait as a scientific worthy given away with *Nature*, and things like that. And that was all he saw! He would have dropped this bombshell into the world as though he had discovered a new species of gnat, if it had not happened that I had come along. And there it would have lain and fizzled, like one or two other little things these scientific people have lit and dropped about.

When I realised this, it was I did the talking and Cavor who said "Go on!" I jumped up. I paced the room, gesticulating like a boy of twenty. I tried to make him understand his duties and responsibilities in the matter—*our* duties and responsibilities in the matter. I assured him we might make wealth enough to work any sort of social revolution we fancied; we might own and order the whole world. I told him of companies and patents and the case for secret processes. All these things seemed to impress him much as his mathematics had impressed

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me. A look of perplexity came into his ruddy little face. He stammered something about indifference to wealth, but I brushed all that aside. He had got to be rich and it was no use stammering. I gave him to understand the sort of man I was, and that I had had very considerable business experience. I did not tell him I was an undischarged bankrupt at the time, because that was temporary, but I think I reconciled my evident poverty with my financial claims. And quite insensibly in the way such projects grow, the understanding of a Cavorite monopoly grew up between us. He was to make the stuff and I was to make the boom.

I stuck like a leech to the "we"—"you" and "I" didn't exist for me.

His idea was that the profits I spoke of might go to endow research, but that of course was a matter we had to settle later. "That's all right," I shouted. "That's all right." The great point, as I insisted, was to get the thing done.

"Here is a substance," I cried, "no home, no factory, no fortress, no ship can dare to be without —more universally applicable even than a patent medicine! There isn't a solitary aspect of it, not one of its ten thousand possible uses, that will not make us rich, Cavor, beyond the dreams of avarice!"

"No!" he said. "I begin to see. It's extraordinary how one gets new points of view by talking over things!"

"And as it happens you have talked to just the right man!"

"I suppose no one," he said, "is absolutely

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averse to enormous wealth. Of course there is one thing——"

He paused. I stood still.

"It is just possible, you know, that we may not be able to make it after all. It may be one of those things that are a theoretical possibility but a practical absurdity. Or when we make it, there may be some little hitch——!"

"We'll tackle the hitch when it comes," said I.

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II

THE FIRST MAKING OF CAVORITE

BUT Cavor's fears were groundless so far as the actual making was concerned. On the fourteenth of October, 1899, this incredible substance was made.

Oddly enough it was made at last by accident when Mr. Cavor least expected it. He had fused together a number of metals and certain other things —I wish I knew the particulars now—and he intended to leave the mixture a week and then allow it to cool slowly. Unless he had miscalculated, the last stage in the combination would occur when the stuff sank to a temperature of sixty degrees Fahrenheit. But it chanced that, unknown to Cavor, dissension had arisen among the men about the furnace-tending. Gibbs, who had previously seen to this, had suddenly attempted to shift it to the man who had been a gardener, on the score that coal was soil, being dug, and therefore could not possibly fall within the province of a joiner; the man who had been a jobbing gardener alleged, however, that coal was a metallic or ore-like substance, let alone that he was cook. But Spargus insisted on Gibbs doing the coaling, seeing that he was a joiner and that coal is notoriously fossil wood. Consequently Gibbs ceased to replenish the furnace and no one else did so, and Cavor was too much immersed in certain interesting problems concerning a Cavorite flying-

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machine (neglecting the resistance of the air and one or two other points) to perceive that anything was wrong. And the premature birth of his invention took place just as he was coming across the field to my bungalow for our afternoon talk and tea.

I remember the occasion with extreme vividness. The water was boiling and everything was prepared and the sound of his "zuzzoo" had brought me out upon the veranda. His active little figure was black against the autumnal sunset, and to the right the chimneys of his house just rose above a gloriously tinted group of trees. Remoter rose the Wealden Hills, faint and blue, while to the left the hazy marsh spread out spacious and serene. And then——!

The chimneys jerked heavenward, smashing into a string of bricks as they rose, and the roof and a miscellany of furniture followed. Then overtaking them came a huge white flame. The trees about the building swayed and whirled and tore themselves to pieces that sprang toward the flare. My ears were smitten with a clap of thunder that left me deaf on one side for life, and all about me windows smashed unheeded.

I took three steps from the veranda towards Cavor's house, and even as I did so came the wind.

Instantly my coat tails were over my head and I was progressing in great leaps and bounds and quite against my will, towards him. In the same moment the discoverer was seized, whirled about, and blown through the screaming air. I saw one of my chimney pots hit the ground within six yards of me, leap a score of feet, and so hurry in great strides towards

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the focus of the disturbance. Cavor, kicking and flapping, came down again, rolled over and over on the ground for a space, struggled up and was lifted and borne forward at an enormous velocity, vanishing at last among the labouring, lashing trees that writhed about his house.

A mass of smoke and ashes and a square bluish shining substance rushed up towards the zenith. A large fragment of fencing came sailing past me, dropped edgewise, hit the ground and fell flat, and then the worst was over. The aerial commotion fell swiftly until it was merely a strong gale, and I became once more aware that I had breath and feet. By leaning back against the wind I managed to stop, and could collect such wits as still remained to me.

In that instant the whole face of the world had changed. The tranquil sunset had vanished, the sky was dark with scurrying clouds, everything was flattened and swaying with the gale. I glanced back to see if my bungalow was still in a general way standing, then staggered forward towards the trees among which Cavor had vanished and through whose tall and leaf-denuded branches shone the flames of his burning house.

I entered the copse, dashing from one tree to another and clinging to them, and for a space I sought him in vain. Then amidst a heap of smashed branches and fencing that had banked itself against a portion of his garden wall, I perceived something stir. I made a run for this, but before I reached it a brown object separated itself, rose on two muddy legs and

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protruded two drooping, bleeding hands. Some tattered ends of garment fluttered out from its middle portion and streamed before the wind.

For a moment I did not recognise this earthy lump, and then I saw that it was Cavor, caked in the mud in which he had rolled. He leaned forward against the wind, rubbing the dirt from his eyes and mouth.

He extended a muddy lump of hand, and staggered a pace towards me. His face worked with emotion; little lumps of mud kept falling from it. He looked as damaged and pitiful as any living creature I have ever seen, and his remark therefore amazed me exceedingly. "Gratulate me," he gasped; "gratulate me!"

"Congratulate you!" said I. "Good heavens! What for?"

"I've done it."

"You *have*. What on earth caused that explosion?"

A gust of wind blew his words away. I understood him to say that it wasn't an explosion at all. The wind hurled me into collision with him, and we stood clinging to each other.

"Try to get back to my bungalow," I bawled in his ear. He did not hear me, and shouted something about "three martyrs—science," and also something about "not much good." At the time he laboured under the impression that his three attendants had perished in this whirlwind. Happily this was incorrect. As soon as he had left for my bungalow they had gone off to the public house in Lympne,

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to discuss the question of the furnaces over some trivial refreshment.

I repeated my suggestion of getting back to my bungalow, and this time he understood. We clung arm in arm and started, managing at last to reach the shelter of as much roof as was left to me. For a space we sat in arm-chairs and panted. All the windows were broken and the lighter articles of furniture were in great disorder, but no irrevocable damage was done. Happily the kitchen door had stood the pressure upon it, so that all my crockery and cooking materials had escaped damage. The oil-stove was still burning and I put on the water to boil again for tea. That prepared, I could turn to Cavor for his explanation.

"Quite correct," he insisted; "quite correct. I've done it, and it's all right."

"But—" I protested. "All right! Why, there can't be a rick standing, or a fence or a thatched roof undamaged for twenty miles round. . . ."

"It's all right—*really*. I didn't, of course, foresee this little upset. My mind was preoccupied with another problem, and I'm apt to disregard these practical side issues. But it's all right——"

"My dear sir," I cried, "don't you see you've done thousands of pounds' worth of damage?"

"There, I throw myself on your discretion. I'm not a practical man, of course, but don't you think they will regard it as a cyclone——?"

"But the explosion——"

"It was not an explosion. It's perfectly simple. Only, as I say, I'm apt to overlook these little things.

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It's that zuzzoo business on a larger scale. Inadvertently I made this substance of mine, this Cavorite, in a thin wide sheet. . . ."

He paused. "You are quite clear that the stuff is opaque to gravitation, that it cuts off objects from gravitating towards each other?"

"Yes," said I. "Yes?"

"Well, so soon as it reached a temperature of sixty degrees Fahrenheit and the process of its manufacture was complete, the air above it, the portions of roof and ceiling and floor above it ceased to have weight. I suppose you know—everybody knows nowadays—that, as a usual thing, the air *has* weight, that it presses on everything at the surface of the earth, presses in all directions, with a pressure of fourteen and a half pounds to the square inch?"

"I know that," said I. "Go on."

"I know that too," he remarked. "Only this shows you how useless knowledge is unless you apply it. You see, over our Cavorite this ceased to be the case, the air there ceased to exert any pressure, and the air round it, and not over the Cavorite, was exerting a pressure of fourteen pounds and a half to the square inch upon this suddenly weightless air. Ah! you begin to see! The air all about the Cavorite crushed in upon the air above it with irresistible force. The air above the Cavorite was forced upwards violently, the air that rushed in to replace it immediately lost weight, ceased to exert any pressure, followed suit, blew the ceiling through and the roof off. . . .

"You perceive," he said, "it formed a sort of at-

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mospheric fountain, a kind of chimney in the atmosphere. And if the Cavorite itself hadn't been loose and so got sucked up the chimney, does it occur to you what would have happened?"

I thought. "I suppose," I said, "the air would be rushing up and up over that infernal piece of stuff now."

"Precisely," he said. "A huge fountain!"

"Spouting into space! Good heavens! Why, it would have squirted all the atmosphere of the earth away! It would have robbed the world of air! It would have been the death of all mankind! That little lump of stuff!"

"Not exactly into space," said Cavor, "but as bad—practically. It would have whipped the air off the world as one peels a banana, and flung it thousands of miles. It would have dropped back again of course—but on an asphyxiated world! From our point of view very little better than if it never came back!"

I stared. As yet I was too amazed to realise how all my expectations had been upset. "What do you mean to do now?" I asked.

"In the first place, if I may borrow a garden trowel I will remove some of this earth with which I am encased, and then if I may avail myself of your domestic conveniences, I will have a bath. This done, we will converse more at leisure. It will be wise, I think,"—he laid a muddy hand on my arm—"if nothing were said of this affair beyond ourselves. I know I have caused great damage—probably even dwelling-houses may be ruined here and there upon

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the country-side. But on the other hand, I cannot possibly pay for the damage I have done, and if the real cause of this is published it will lead only to heart-burning and the obstruction of my work. One cannot foresee everything, you know, and I cannot consent for one moment to add the burden of practical considerations to my theorising. Later on, when you have come in with your practical mind and Cavorite is floated—floated is the word, isn't it? and it has realised all you anticipate for it, we may set matters right with these people. But not now—not now. If no other explanation is offered, people, in the present unsatisfactory state of meteorological science, will ascribe all this to a cyclone; there might be a public subscription, and as my house has collapsed and been burnt I should in that case receive a considerable share in the compensation which would be extremely helpful to the prosecution of our researches. But if it is known that *I* caused this, there will be no public subscription, and everybody will be put out. Practically, I shall never get a chance of working in peace again. My three assistants may or may not have perished. That is a detail. If they have it is no great loss; they were more zealous than able, and this premature event must be largely due to their joint neglect of the furnace. If they have not perished, I doubt if they have the intelligence to explain the affair. They will accept the cyclone story. And if during the temporary unfitness of my house for occupation, I may lodge in one of the untenanted rooms of this bungalow of yours——"

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He paused and regarded me.

A man of such possibilities, I reflected, is no ordinary guest to entertain.

"Perhaps," said I, rising to my feet, "we had better begin by looking for a trowel," and I led the way to the scattered vestiges of the greenhouse.

While he was having his bath I considered the entire question alone. It was clear there were drawbacks to Mr. Cavor's society I had not foreseen. The absent-mindedness that had just escaped depopulating the terrestrial globe might at any moment result in some other grave inconvenience. On the other hand I was young, my affairs were in a mess, and I was in just the mood for reckless adventure, with a chance of something good at the end of it. I had quite settled in my mind that I was to have half at least in that aspect of the affair. Fortunately I held my bungalow, as I have already explained, on a three years' agreement, without being responsible for repairs, and my furniture, such as there was of it, had been hastily purchased, was unpaid for, insured, and altogether devoid of associations. In the end I decided to keep on with him and see the business through.

Certainly the aspect of things had changed very greatly. I no longer doubted at all the enormous possibilities of the substance, but I began to have doubts about the gun-carriage and the patent boots.

We set to work at once to reconstruct his laboratory and to proceed with our experiments. Cavor talked more on my level than he had ever done before when it came to question of how we should make the stuff next.

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"Of course we must make it again," he said, with a sort of glee I had not expected in him, "of course we must make it again. We have caught a tartar, perhaps, but we have left the theoretical behind us for good and all. If we can possibly avoid wrecking this little planet of ours we will. But—there must be risks! There must be. In experimental work there always are! And here, as a practical man, *you* must come in. For my own part, it seems to me we might make it edgewise, perhaps, and very thin. Yet I don't know—I have a certain dim perception of another method. I can hardly explain it yet. But curiously enough it came into my mind while I was rolling over and over in the mud before the wind and very doubtful how the whole adventure was to end, as being absolutely the thing I ought to have done."

Even with my aid we found some little difficulty and meanwhile we kept at work restoring the laboratory. There was plenty to do before it was absolutely necessary to decide upon the precise form and method of our second attempt. Our only hitch was the strike of the three labourers, who objected to my activity as a foreman. But that matter we compromised after two days' delay.

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III

THE BUILDING OF THE SPHERE

I REMEMBER very distinctly the occasion when Cavor told me of his idea of the sphere. He had had intimations of it before, but at the time it seemed to come to him in a rush. We were returning to the bungalow for tea, and on the way he fell humming. Suddenly he shouted: "That's it! That finishes it! A sort of roller blind."

"Finishes what?" I asked.

"Space—anywhere! The moon!"

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? Why—it must be a sphere! That's what I mean!"

I saw I was out of it, and for a time I let him talk in his own fashion. I hadn't the ghost of an idea then of his drift. But after he had taken tea he made it clear to me.

"It's like this," he said. "Last time I ran this stuff into a flat tank with an overlap that held it down. When it had cooled and the manufacture was completed, all that uproar happened; nothing above it weighed anything, the air went squirting up, the house squirted up, and if the stuff itself hadn't squirted up too, I don't know what would have happened! But suppose the substance is loose and quite free to go up?"

"It will go up at once!"

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"Exactly. With no more disturbance than firing a big gun."

"But what good will that do?"

"I'm going up with it!"

I put down my teacup and stared at him.

"Imagine a sphere," he explained, "large enough to hold two people and their luggage. It will be made of steel, lined with thick glass, it will contain a proper store of solidified air, concentrated food, water, distilling apparatus and so forth, and enamelled as it were on the outer steel——"

"Cavorite?"

"Yes."

"But how will you get inside?"

"There was a similar problem about a dumpling."

"Yes, I know. But how?"

"That's perfectly easy. An air-tight manhole is all that is needed. That of course will have to be a little complicated; there will have to be a valve, so that things may be thrown out if necessary without much loss of air."

"Like Jules Verne's apparatus in 'A Trip to the Moon?' "

But Cavor was not a reader of fiction.

"I begin to see," I said, slowly. "And you could get in and screw yourself up while the Cavorite was warm, and as soon as it cooled it would become impervious to gravitation, and off you would fly——"

"At a tangent."

"You would go off in a straight line—" I stopped abruptly. "What is to prevent the thing travelling in a straight line into space for ever?"

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I asked. "You're not sure to get anywhere, and if you do—how will you get back?"

"I've just thought of that," said Cavor. "That's what I meant when I said the thing was finished. The inner glass sphere can be air-tight and except for the manhole, continuous, and the steel sphere can be made in sections, each section capable of rolling up after the fashion of a roller blind. These can easily be worked by springs, and released and checked by electricity conveyed by platinum wires fused through the glass. All that is merely a question of detail. So you see that except for the thickness of the blind rollers, the Cavorite exterior of the sphere will consist of windows or blinds, whichever you like to call them. Well, when all these windows or blinds are shut, no light, no heat, no gravitation, no radiant energy of any sort will get at the inside of the sphere; it will fly on through space in a straight line as you say. But open a window—imagine one of the windows open! Then at once any heavy body that chances to be in that direction will attract us——"

I sat taking it in.

"You see?" he said.

"Oh, I *see*."

"Practically we shall be able to tack about in space just as we wish. Get attracted by this and that."

"Oh, yes. That's clear enough. Only——"

"Well?"

"I don't quite see what we shall do it for! It's really only jumping off the world and back again."

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"Surely! For example! One might go to the moon."

"And when one got there! What would you find?"

"We should see—! Oh! Consider the new knowledge!"

"Is there air there?"

"There may be."

I shook my head. "It's a fine idea," I said, "but it strikes me as a large order all the same. The moon! I'd much rather try some smaller things first."

"They're out of the question—because of the air difficulty."

"Why not apply that idea of spring blinds—Cavorite blinds in strong steel cases—to lifting weights?"

"It wouldn't work," he insisted. "After all to go into outer space is not so much worse, if at all, than a polar expedition. Men go on polar expeditions."

"Not business men. Besides they get paid for polar expeditions. And if anything goes wrong there are relief parties. But this—it's just firing ourselves off the world for nothing."

"Call it prospecting."

"You'll have to call it that. . . . One might make a book of it perhaps."

"I have no doubt there will be minerals," said Cavor.

"For example?"

"Oh! sulphur, ores, gold perhaps; possibly new elements."

"Cost of carriage," I said; "you know you're

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not a practical man. The moon's a quarter of a million miles away."

"It seems to me it wouldn't cost much to cart any weight anywhere if you packed it in a Cavorite case."

"I had not thought of that. Delivered free on head of purchaser, eh?"

"It isn't as though you were confined to the moon."

"You mean——?"

"There's Mars—clear atmosphere, novel surroundings, exhilarating sense of lightness. It might be pleasant to go there."

"Is there air on Mars?"

"Oh yes!"

"Seems as though you might run it as a sanitorium. By the way, how far is Mars?"

"Two hundred million miles at present," said Cavor airily; "and you go close by the sun."

My imagination was picking itself up again. "After all," I said, "there's something in these things. There's travel——"

An extraordinary possibility came rushing into my mind. Suddenly I saw as in a vision the whole solar system threaded with Cavorite liners and spheres *de luxe*. "Rights of pre-emption," came floating into my head—planetary rights of pre-emption. I recalled the old Spanish monopoly in American gold. It wasn't as if it was just this planet or that—it was all of them. I stared at Cavor's rubicund face and suddenly my imagination was leaping and dancing. I stood up, I walked up and down; my tongue was loosened.

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"I'm beginning to take it in," I said. "I'm beginning to take it in." The transition from doubt to enthusiasm seemed to take scarcely any time at all. "But this is tremendous!" I cried; "this is imperial! I haven't been dreaming of this sort of thing."

Once the chill of my opposition was removed, his own pent-up excitement had play. He too got up and paced. He too gesticulated and shouted. We behaved like men inspired. We *were* men inspired.

"We'll settle all that!" he said, in answer to some incidental difficulty that had pulled me up. "We'll soon settle all that. We'll start the drawings for mouldings this very night."

"We'll start them now," I responded, and we hurried off to the laboratory to begin upon this work forthwith.

I was like a child in wonderland all that night. The dawn found us both still at work; we kept our electric light going heedless of the day. I remember now exactly how those drawings looked—I shaded and tinted while Cavor drew—smudged and haste-marked they were in every line, but wonderfully correct. We got out the orders for the steel blinds and frames we needed from that night's work, and the glass sphere was designed within a week. We gave up our afternoon conversations and our old routine altogether. We worked, and we slept and ate when we could work no longer for hunger and fatigue. Our enthusiasm infected even our three men, though they had no idea what the sphere was for. Through those days the man Gibbs gave up walking and went

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everywhere, even across the room, at a sort of fussy run.

And it grew, the sphere. December passed, January—I spent a day with a broom sweeping a path through the snow from bungalow to laboratory—February, March. By the end of March the completion was in sight. In January had come a team of horses, a huge packing case; we had our thick glass sphere now ready and in position, under the crane we had rigged to sling it into the steel shell. All the bars and blinds of the steel shell—it was not really a spherical shell, but polyhedral, with a roller blind to each facet—had arrived by February, and the lower half was bolted together. The Cavorite was half made by March, the metallic paste had gone through two of the stages in its manufacture, and we had plastered quite half of it on to the steel bars and blinds. It was astonishing how closely we kept to the lines of Cavor's first inspiration in working out the scheme. When the bolting together of the sphere was finished he proposed to remove the rough roof of the temporary laboratory in which the work was done and build a furnace about it. So the last stage of Cavorite making, in which the paste is heated to a dull red glow in a stream of helium, would be accomplished when it was already on the sphere.

And then we had to discuss and decide what provisions we were to take, compressed foods, concentrated essences, steel cylinders containing reserve oxygen, an arrangement for removing carbonic acid and waste from the air and restoring oxygen by means of sodium peroxide, water condensers, and so

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forth. I remember the little heap they made in the corner, tins and rolls and boxes—convincingly matter-of-fact.

It was a strenuous time, with little chance of thinking. But one day, when we were drawing near the end, an odd mood came over me. I had been bricking up the furnace all the morning, and I sat down by these possessions, tired out. Everything seemed dull and incredible.

"But look here, Cavor," I said. "After all! What's it all for?"

He smiled. "The thing now is to go."

"The moon," I reflected. "But what do you expect? I thought the moon was a dead world."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"What do you expect?"

"We're going to see."

"Are we?" I said and stared before me.

"You are tired," he remarked. "You'd better take a walk this afternoon."

"No," I said obstinately; "I'm going to finish this brickwork."

And I did, and insured myself a night of insomnia.

I don't think I have ever had such a night. I had some bad times before my business collapse but the very worst of those was sweet slumber compared to this infinity of aching wakefulness. I was suddenly in the most enormous funk at the thing we were going to do.

I do not remember before that night thinking at all of the risks we were running. Now they came

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like that array of spectres that once beleaguered Prague, and camped around me. The strangeness of what we were about to do, the unearthliness of it, overwhelmed me. I was like a man awakened out of pleasant dreams to the most horrible surroundings. I lay, eyes wide open; and the sphere seemed to get more flimsy and feeble, and Cavor more unreal and fantastic and the whole enterprise madder and madder, every moment.

I got out of bed and wandered about. I sat at the window and stared at the immensity of space. Between the stars was the void, the unfathomable darkness— ! I tried to recall the fragmentary knowledge of astronomy I had gained in my irregular reading, but it was all too vague to furnish any idea of the things we might expect. At last I got back to bed and snatched some moments of sleep, moments of nightmare rather, in which I fell and fell and fell for evermore into the abyss of the sky.

I astonished Cavor at breakfast. I told him shortly: "I'm not coming with you in the sphere."

I met all his protests with a sullen persistence. "The thing's too mad," I said, "and I won't come. The thing's too mad."

I would not go with him to the laboratory. I fretted about my bungalow for a time, and then took hat and stick and set off alone, I knew not whither. It chanced to be a glorious morning; a warm wind and deep-blue sky, the first green of spring abroad and multitudes of birds singing. I lunched on beef and beer in a little public-house near Elham, and startled the landlord by remarking,

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à propos of the weather: "A man who leaves the world when days of this sort are about is a fool!"

"That's what I says when I heerd on it!" said the landlord, and I found that for one poor soul at least this world had proved excessive and there had been a throat-cutting. I went on with a new twist to my thoughts.

In the afternoon I had a pleasant sleep in a sunny place, and went my way refreshed.

I came to a comfortable-looking inn near Canterbury. It was bright with creepers, and the landlady was a clean old woman who took my eye. I found I had just enough money to pay for my lodging with her. I decided to spend the night there. She was a talkative body, and among many other particulars I learnt she had never been to London. "Canterbury's as far as ever I been," she said. "I'm not one of your gad-about sort."

"How would you like a trip to the moon?" I cried.

"I never did hold with them ballooneys," she said, evidently under the impression that this was a common excursion enough. "I wouldn't go up in one—not for ever so."

This struck me as being funny. After I had supped I sat on a bench by the door of the inn and gossiped with two labourers about brickmaking and motor cars and the cricket of last year. And in the sky a faint new crescent, blue and vague as a distant Alp, sank westward over the sun.

The next day I returned to Cavor. "I am coming," I said. "I've been a little out of order—that's all."

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That was the only time I felt any serious doubt of our enterprise. Nerves purely! After that I worked a little more carefully and took a trudge for an hour every day. And at last, save for the heating in the furnace, our labours were at an end.

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IV

INSIDE THE SPHERE

"Go on," said Cavor as I sat across the edge of the manhole and looked down into the black interior of the sphere. We two were alone. It was evening, the sun had set and the stillness of twilight was upon everything.

I drew my other leg inside and slid down the smooth glass to the bottom of the sphere; then turned to take the cans of food and other impedimenta from Cavor. The interior was warm, the thermometer stood at eighty, and as we should lose little or none of this by radiation, we were dressed in slippers and thin flannels. We had however a bundle of thick woollen clothing and several thick blankets to guard against mischance. By Cavor's direction I placed the packages, the cylinders of oxygen and so forth, loosely about my feet; and soon we had everything in. He walked about the roofless shed for a time, seeking anything we had overlooked, and then crawled in after me. I noted something in his hand.

"What have you there?" I asked.

"Haven't you brought anything to read?"

"Good Lord! No!"

"I forgot to tell you. There are uncertainties—The voyage may last— We may be weeks!"

"But——"

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"We shall be floating in this sphere with absolutely no occupation."

"I wish I'd known——"

He peered out of the manhole. "Look!" he said. "There's something there!"

"Is there time?"

"We shall be an hour."

I looked out. It was an old number of *Tit-Bits*, that one of the men must have brought. Farther away in the corner I saw a torn *Lloyds' News*. I scrambled back into the sphere with these things. "What have you got?" I said.

I took the book from his hand and read, "The Works of William Shakespeare."

He coloured slightly. "My education has been so purely scientific—" he said apologetically.

"Never read him?"

"Never."

"He knew a little, you know—in an irregular sort of way."

"Precisely what I am told," said Cavor.

I assisted him to screw in the glass cover of the manhole, and then he pressed a stud to close the corresponding blind in the outer case. The little oblong of twilight vanished. We were in darkness.

For a time neither of us spoke. Although our case would not be impervious to sound, everything was very still. I perceived there was nothing to grip when the shock of our start should come, and I realised that I should be uncomfortable for want of a chair.

"Why have we no chairs?" I asked.

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"I've settled all that," said Cavor. "We shan't need them."

"Why not?"

"You will see," he said, in the tone of a man who refuses to talk.

I became silent. Suddenly it had come to me, clear and vivid, that I was a fool to be inside that sphere. Even now, I asked myself, is it too late to withdraw? The world outside the sphere, I knew, would be cold and inhospitable enough to me—for weeks I had been living on subsidies from Cavor—but after all, would it be as cold as the infinite zero, as inhospitable as empty space? If it had not been for the appearance of cowardice, I believe that even then I should have made him let me out. But I hesitated on that score and hesitated, and grew fretful and angry, and the time passed.

There came a little jerk, a noise like champagne being uncorked in another room, and a faint whistling sound. For just one instant I had a sense of enormous tension, a transient conviction that my feet were pressing downward with a force of countless tons. It lasted for an infinitesimal time.

But it stirred me to action. "Cavor!" I said in the darkness, "my nerve's in rags . . . I don't think——"

I stopped. He made no answer.

"Confound it!" I cried; "I'm a fool! What business have I here? I'm not coming, Cavor. The thing's too risky. I'm getting out."

"You can't," he said.

"Can't! We'll soon see about that!"

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He made no answer for ten seconds. "It's too late for us to quarrel now, Bedford," he said. "That little jerk was the start. Already we are flying as swiftly as a bullet up into the gulf of space."

"I—," I said, and then it did not seem to matter what happened. For a time I was, as it were, stunned. I had nothing to say. It was just as if I had never heard of this idea of leaving the earth before. Then I perceived an unaccountable change in my bodily sensations. It was a feeling of lightness, of unreality. Coupled with that was a queer sensation in the head, an apoplectic effect almost, and a thumping of blood-vessels in the ears. Neither of these feelings diminished as time went on, but at last I got so used to them that I experienced no inconvenience.

I heard a click, and a little glow lamp came into being.

I saw Cavor's face, as white as I felt my own to be. We regarded each other in silence. The transparent blackness of the glass behind him made him seem to be floating in a void.

"Well, we're committed," I said at last.

"Yes," he said, "we're committed."

"Don't move," he exclaimed, at some suggestion of a gesture. "Let your muscles keep quite lax—as if you were in bed. We are in a little universe of our own. Look at those things!"

He pointed to the loose cases and bundles that had been lying on the blankets in the bottom of the sphere. I was astonished to see that they were floating now nearly a foot from the spherical wall.

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Then I saw from his shadow that Cavor was no longer leaning against the glass. I thrust out my hand behind me and found that I too was suspended in space, clear of the glass.

I did not cry out nor gesticulate, but fear came upon me. It was like being lifted and held by something—you know not what. The mere touch of my hand against the glass moved me rapidly. I understood what had happened but that did not prevent my being afraid. We were cut off from all exterior gravitation—only the attraction of objects within our sphere had effect. Consequently everything that was not fixed to the glass was falling—slowly because of the slightness of our masses—towards the centre of gravity of our little world, which seemed to be somewhere about the middle of the sphere, but rather nearer to myself than to Cavor on account of my greater weight.

"We must turn round," said Cavor, "and float back to back, with the things between us."

It was the strangest sensation conceivable, floating thus loosely in space, at first indeed horribly strange, and when the horror passed, not disagreeable at all, exceedingly restful! indeed the nearest thing in earthly experience to it that I know is lying on a very thick soft feather bed. But the quality of utter detachment and independence! I had not reckoned on anything like this. I had expected a violent jerk at starting, a giddy sense of speed. Instead I felt—as if I were disembodied. It was not like the beginning of a journey; it was like the beginning of a dream.

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V

THE JOURNEY TO THE MOON

PRESENTLY Cavor extinguished the light. He said we had not overmuch energy stored and what we had we must economise for reading. For a time, whether it was long or short I do not know, there was nothing but blank darkness.

A question floated up out of the void. "How are we pointing?" I said. "What is our direction?"

"We are flying away from the earth at a tangent, and as the moon is near her third quarter, we are going somewhere towards her. I will open a blind——"

There came a click and then a window in the outer case yawned open. The sky outside was as black as the darkness within the sphere, but the shape of the open window was marked by an infinite number of stars.

Those who have seen the starry sky only from the earth cannot imagine its appearance when the vague half-luminous veil of our air has been withdrawn. The stars we see on earth are the mere scattered survivors that penetrate our misty atmosphere. But now at last I could realise the meaning of the hosts of heaven! Stranger things we were presently to see, but that airless, star-dusted sky! Of all things I think that will be one of the last I shall forget.

The little window vanished with a click, another beside it snapped open and instantly closed, and then

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a third, and for a moment I had to close my eyes because of the blinding splendour of the waning moon.

For a space I had to stare at Cavor and the white-lit things about me to season my eyes to light again, before I could turn them towards that pallid glare.

Four windows were open in order that the gravitation of the moon might act upon all the substances in our sphere. I found I was no longer floating freely in space, but that my feet were resting on the glass in the direction of the moon. The blankets and cases of provisions were also creeping slowly down the glass, and presently came to rest so as to block out a portion of the view. It seemed to me, of course, that I looked "down" when I looked at the moon. On earth "down" means earthward, the way things fall, and "up" the reverse direction. Now the pull of gravitation was towards the moon, and for all I knew to the contrary our earth was overhead. And of course, when all the Cavorite blinds were closed, "down" was towards the centre of our sphere, and "up" towards its outer wall.

It was curiously unlike earthly experience, too, to have the light coming up. On earth light falls from above or comes slanting down sidewise, but here it came from beneath our feet, and to see our shadows we had to look up.

At first it gave me a sort of vertigo to stand only on thick glass and look down upon the moon through hundreds of thousands of miles of vacant space. But this sickness passed very speedily. And then —the splendour of the sight!

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The reader may imagine it best if he will lie on the ground some warm summer's night and look between his upraised feet at the moon, but for some reason, probably because the absence of air made it so much more luminous, the moon seemed already considerably larger than it does from earth. The minutest details of its surface were acutely clear. And since we did not see it through air, its outline was bright and sharp; there was no glow or halo about it and the star-dust that covered the sky came right to its very margin and marked the outline of its illuminated part. And as I stood and stared at the moon between my feet, that perception of the impossible that had been with me off and on ever since our start returned again with tenfold conviction.

"Cavor," I said, "this takes me queerly. Those companies we were going to run and all that about minerals——"

"Well?"

"I don't see 'em here."

"No," said Cavor, "but you'll get over all that."

"I suppose I'm made to turn right side up again. Still *this*— For a moment I could half believe there never was a world."

"That copy of *Lloyds' News* might help you."

I stared at the paper for a moment, then held it above the level of my face and found I could read it quite easily. I struck a column of mean little advertisements. "A gentleman of private means is willing to lend money," I read. I knew that gentleman. Then somebody eccentric wanted to sell a Cutaway bicycle, "quite new and cost £15," for

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£5, and a lady in distress wished to dispose of some fish knives and forks, "a wedding present," at a great sacrifice. No doubt some simple soul was sagely examining those knives and forks, and another triumphantly riding off on that bicycle, and a third trustfully consulting that benevolent gentleman of means, even as I read. I laughed and let the paper drift from my hand.

"Are we visible from the earth?" I asked.

"Why?"

"I knew some one—who was interested in astronomy. It occurred to me that it would be odd if—my friend—chanced to be looking through a telescope and should chance to see us."

"It would need the most powerful telescope on earth even now to see us as the minutest speck."

For a time I stared in silence at the moon.

"It's a world," I said; "one feels that infinitely more than one ever did on earth. People perhaps——"

"People!" he exclaimed. "No! Banish all that! Think yourself a sort of ultra Arctic voyager exploring the desolate places of space. Look at it!"

He waved his hand at the shining whiteness below. "It's dead—dead! Vast extinct volcanoes, lava wildernesses, tumbled wastes of snow or frozen carbonic acid or frozen air, and everywhere landslips, seams and cracks and gulfs. Nothing happens. Men have watched this planet systematically with telescopes for over two hundred years. How much change do you think they have seen?"

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"They have traced two indisputable landslips, a doubtful crack and one slight periodic change of colour. And that's all."

"I didn't know they'd traced even that."

"Oh, yes. But as for people——!"

"By the way," I asked, "how small a thing will the biggest telescopes show upon the moon?"

"One could see a fair-sized church. One could certainly see any towns or buildings or anything like the handiwork of men. There might perhaps be insects, something in the way of ants for example, something able to hide in deep burrows from the lunar night. Or some new sort of creatures having no earthly parallel. That is the most probable thing if we are to find life there at all. Think of the difference in conditions! Life must fit itself to a day as long as fourteen earthly days, a cloudless sun-blaze of fourteen days, and then a night of equal length, growing ever colder and colder under these cold, sharp stars. In that night there must be cold, the ultimate cold, absolute zero, 273° Centigrade, below the earthly freezing point. Whatever life there is must hibernate through that,—and rise again each day."

He mused. "One can imagine something worm-like," he said, "taking its air solid as an earthworm swallows earth, or thick-skinned monsters——"

"By the bye," I said, "why didn't we bring a gun?"

He did not answer that question. "No," he concluded, "we just have to go. We shall see when we get there."

I remembered something. "Of course, there's my

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minerals anyhow," I said, "whatever the conditions may be."

Presently he told me he wished to alter our course a little by letting the earth tug at us for a moment. He was going to open one earthward blind for thirty seconds. He warned me that it would make my head swim, and advised me to extend my hands against the glass to break my fall. I did as he directed, and thrust my feet against the bales of food cases and air cylinders to prevent their falling upon me. Then with a click the window flew open. I fell clumsily upon hands and face and saw for a moment between my black extended fingers, our mother earth—a planet in a downward sky.

We were still very near—Cavor told me the distance was, perhaps, eight hundred miles—and the huge terrestrial disc filled all heaven. But already it was plain to see that the world was a globe. The land below us was in twilight and vague, but westward the vast grey stretches of the Atlantic shone like molten silver under the receding day. I think I recognised the cloud-dimmed coast-lines of France and Spain and the south of England, and then with a click the shutter closed again and I found myself in a state of extraordinary confusion, sliding slowly over the smooth glass.

When at last matters settled themselves in my mind again, it seemed quite beyond question that the moon was "down" under my feet, and that the earth was somewhere away on the level of the horizon, the earth that had been "down" to me and my kindred since the beginning of things.

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So slight were the exertions required of us, so easy did the practical annihilation of our weight make all we had to do, that the necessity for taking refreshment did not occur to us for nearly six hours (by Cavor's chronometer) after our start. I was amazed at that lapse of time. Even then I was satisfied with very little. Cavor examined the apparatus for absorbing carbonic acid and water, and pronounced it to be in satisfactory order, our consumption of oxygen having been extraordinarily slight; our talk being exhausted for the time, and there being nothing further for us to do, we gave way to a curious drowsiness that had come upon us, and spreading our blankets on the bottom of the sphere in such a manner as to shut out most of the moonlight, wished each other good night, and almost immediately fell asleep.

And so sleeping, and sometimes talking and reading a little, at times eating, though without any keenness of appetite,* but for the most part in a sort of quiescence that was neither waking nor slumber, we fell through a space of time that had neither night nor day in it, silently, softly, and swiftly down towards the moon.

* It is a curious thing that while we were in the sphere we felt not the slightest desire for food nor did we feel the want of it when we abstained. At first we forced our appetite but afterwards we fasted completely. Altogether we did not consume one-twentieth part of the compressed provision we had brought with us. The amount of carbonic acid we exhaled was also unnaturally low, but why this was so I am quite unable to explain.

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VI

THE LANDING ON THE MOON

I REMEMBER how one day Cavor suddenly opened six of our shutters and blinded me so that I cried aloud at him. The whole area was moon, a stupendous scimitar of white dawn with its edge hacked out by notches of darkness, the crescent shore of an ebbing tide of darkness, out of which peaks and pinnacles came climbing into the blaze of the sun. I take it the reader has seen pictures or photographs of the moon, so that I need not describe the broader features of that landscape, those spacious, ring-like ranges vaster than any terrestrial mountains, their summits shining in the day, their shadows harsh and deep; the grey disordered plains, the ridges, hills, and craterlets all passing at last from a blazing illumination into a common mystery of black. Athwart this world we were flying scarcely a hundred miles above its crests and pinnacles. And now we could see, what no human eye had ever seen before, that under the blaze of the day the harsh outlines of the rocks and ravines of the plains and crater floor grew grey and indistinct under a thickening haze, that the white of their lit surfaces broke into lumps and patches and broke again and shrank and vanished, and that here and there strange tints of brown and olive grew and spread.

But little time we had for watching then. For

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now we had come to the real danger of our journey. We had to drop ever closer to the moon as we spun about it, to slacken our pace and watch our chance until at last we could dare to drop upon its surface.

For Cavor that was a time of intense exertion; for me it was an anxious inactivity. I seemed perpetually to be getting out of his way. He leaped about the sphere from point to point with an agility that would have been impossible on earth. He was perpetually opening and closing the Cavorite windows, making calculations, consulting his chronometer by means of the glow-lamp during those last eventful hours. For a long time we had all our windows closed, and hung silently in darkness, hurtling through space.

Then he was feeling for the shutter studs, and suddenly four windows were open. I staggered and covered my eyes, drenched and scorched and blinded by the unaccustomed splendour of the sun beneath my feet. Then again the shutters snapped, leaving my brain spinning in a darkness that pressed against the eyes. And after that I floated in another vast black silence.

Then Cavor switched on the electric light, and told me he proposed to bind all our luggage together with blankets about it, against the concussion of our descent. We did this with our windows closed, because in that way our goods arranged themselves naturally at the centre of the sphere. That too was a strange business; we two men floating loose in that spherical space and packing and pulling ropes. Imagine it if you can! No up nor down, and every

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effort resulting in unexpected movements. Now I would be pressed against the glass with the full force of Cavor's thrust; again I would be kicking helplessly in a void. Now the star of the electric light would be overhead, now under foot. Now Cavor's feet would float up before my eyes, and now we would be crosswise to each other. But at last our goods were safely bound together in a big soft bale, all except two blankets with head holes that we were to wrap about ourselves.

Then for a flash Cavor opened a window moonward, and we saw that we were dropping towards a huge central crater, with a number of minor craters grouped in a cross about it. And then again Cavor flung our little sphere open to the scorching, blinding sun. I think he was using the sun's attraction as a brake. "Cover yourself with a blanket," he cried, thrusting himself from me, and for a moment I did not understand.

Then I hauled the blanket from beneath my feet and got it about me and over my head and eyes. Abruptly he closed the shutters, snapped one open again and closed it; then suddenly began snapping them all open, each safely into its steel roller. There came a jar and then we were rolling over and over, bumping against the glass and against the big bale of our luggage, and clutching at each other, and outside some white substance splashed as if we were rolling down a slope of snow. . . .

Over, clutch, bump, clutch, bump, over. . . .

Came a thud, and I was half buried under the bale of our possessions, and for a space everything

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was still. Then I could hear Cavor puffing and grunting and the snapping of a shutter in its sash. I made an effort, thrust back our blanket-wrapped luggage, and emerged from beneath it. Our open windows were just visible as a deeper black set with stars.

We were still alive, and we were lying in the darkness of the shadow of the wall of the great crater into which we had fallen.

We sat getting our breath again and feeling the bruises on our limbs. I think neither of us had had a very clear expectation of such rough handling as we had received. I struggled painfully to my feet. "And now," said I, "to look at the landscape of the moon! But—! It's tremendously dark, Cavor!"

The glass was dewy, and as I spoke I wiped at it with my blanket. "We're half an hour or so beyond the day," he said. "We must wait."

It was impossible to distinguish anything. We might have been in a sphere of steel for all that we could see. My rubbing with the blanket simply smeared the glass, and as fast as I wiped it, it became opaque again with freshly condensed moisture mixed with an increasing quantity of blanket hairs. Of course I ought not to have used the blanket. In my efforts to clear the glass I slipped upon the damp surface and hurt my shin against one of the oxygen cylinders that protruded from our bale.

The thing was exasperating—it was absurd. Here we were just arrived upon the moon, amidst we knew not what wonders, and all we could see was the grey and streaming wall of the bubble in which we had come.

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"Confound it," I said, "but at this rate we might have stopped at home!" and I squatted on the bale and shivered and drew my blanket closer about me.

Abruptly the moisture turned to spangles and fronds of frost. "Can you reach the electric heater?" said Cavor. "Yes—that black knob. Or we shall freeze."

I did not wait to be told twice. "And now," said I, "what are we to do?"

"Wait," he said.

"Wait?"

"Of course. We shall have to wait until our air gets warm again, and then this glass will clear. We can't do anything till then. It's night here yet—we must wait for the day to overtake us. Meanwhile, don't you feel hungry?"

For a space I did not answer him, but sat fretting. I turned reluctantly from the crater wall. These hummocks looked like snow. At the time I thought they were snow. But they were not—they were mounds and masses of frozen air!

So it was at first; and then, sudden, swift, and amazing, came the lunar day.

The sunlight had crept down the cliff, it touched the drifted masses at its base, and incontinently came striding with seven-leagued boots towards us. The distant cliff seemed to shift and quiver, and at the touch of the sun a reek of grey vapour poured upwards from the crater floor, whirls and puffs and drifting wraiths of grey, thicker and broader and denser, until at last the whole westward plain was steaming like a wet handkerchief held before the fire,

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and the westward cliffs were no more than a refracted glare beyond.

"It is air," said Cavor. "It must be air—or it would not rise like this—at the mere touch of a sunbeam. And at this pace. . . ."

He peered upwards. "Look!" he said.

"What?" I asked.

"In the sky. Already. On the blackness—a little touch of blue. See! The stars seem larger; the little ones and all those dim nebulosities we saw in empty space—they are hidden!"

Swiftly, steadily the day approached us. Grey summit after grey summit was overtaken by the blaze, and turned to a smoking white intensity. At last there was nothing to the west of us but a bank of surging fog, the tumultuous advance and ascent of cloudy haze. The distant cliff had receded farther and farther, had loomed and changed through the whirl, had foundered and vanished at last in its confusion.

Nearer came that steaming advance, nearer and nearer, coming as fast as the shadow of a cloud before the south-west wind. About us rose a thin, anticipatory haze.

Cavor gripped my arm. "What?" I said.

"Look! The sunrise! The sun!"

He turned me about and pointed to the brow of the eastward cliff, looming above the haze about us, scarcely lighter than the darkness of the sky. But now its line was marked by strange reddish shapes—tongues of vermilion flame that writhed and danced. I fancied it must be spirals of vapour that

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had caught the light and made this crest of fiery tongues against the sky, but indeed it was the solar prominences I saw, a crown of fire about the sun that is for ever hidden from earthly eyes by our atmospheric veil.

And then—the sun!

Steadily, inevitably, came a brilliant line—came a thin edge of intolerable effulgence that took a circular shape, became a bow, became a blazing sceptre, and hurled a shaft of heat at us as though it were a spear.

It seemed verily to stab my eyes! I cried aloud and turned about blinded, groping for my blanket beneath the bale.

And with that incandescence came a sound, the first sound that had reached us from without since we left the earth, a hissing and rustling, the stormy trailing of the aerial garment of the advancing day. And with the coming of the sound and the light the sphere lurched, and, blinded and dazzled, we staggered helplessly against each other. It lurched again, and the hissing grew louder. I had shut my eyes perforce; I was making clumsy efforts to cover my head with my blanket, and this second lurch sent me helplessly off my feet. I fell against the bale, and, opening my eyes, had a momentary glimpse of the air just outside our glass. It was running—it was boiling—like snow into which a white-hot rod is thrust. What had been solid air had suddenly, at the touch of the sun, become a paste, a mud, a slushy liquefaction that hissed and bubbled into gas.

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There came a still more violent whirl of the sphere, and we had clutched each other. In another moment we were spun about again. Round we went and over, and then I was on all fours. The lunar dawn had hold of us. It meant to show us little men what the moon could do with us.

I caught a second glimpse of things without, puffs of vapour, half-liquid slush, excavated, sliding, falling, sliding. We dropped into darkness. I went down with Cavor's knees in my chest. Then he seemed to fly away from me, and for a moment I lay, with all the breath out of my body, staring upwards. A huge landslip, as it were, of melting stuff had splashed over us, buried us, and now it thinned and boiled away from us. I saw the bubbles dancing on the glass above. I heard Cavor exclaiming feebly.

Then some huge landslip in the thawing air had caught us and, spluttering expostulation, we began to roll down a slope, rolling faster and faster, leaping crevasses and rebounding from banks, faster and faster, westward into the white-hot boiling tumult of the lunar day.

Clutching at each other we spun about, pitched this way and that, our bale of packages leaping at us, pounding at us. We collided, we gripped, we were torn asunder—our heads met, and the whole universe burst into fiery darts and stars! On the earth we should have smashed each other a dozen times, but on the moon luckily for us our weight was only one-sixth of what it is terrestrially, and we fell very mercifully. I recall a sensation of utter sickness, a

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feeling as if my brain were upside down within my skull, and then——

Something was at work upon my face; some thin feelers worried my ears. Then I discovered the brilliance of the landscape around was mitigated by blue spectacles. Cavor bent over me, and I saw his face upside down, his eyes also protected by tinted goggles. His breath came irregularly, and his lip was bleeding from a bruise. "Better?" he said, wiping the blood with the back of his hand.

Everything seemed swaying for a space, but that was simply my giddiness. I perceived that he had closed some of the shutters in the outer sphere to save me from the direct blaze of the sun. I was aware that everything about us was very brilliant.

"Lord!" I gasped. "But this——"

I craned my neck to see. I perceived there was a blinding glare outside, an utter change from the gloomy darkness of our first impressions. "Have I been insensible long?" I asked.

"I don't know—the chronometer is broken. Some little time. . . . My dear chap! I have been afraid. . . ."

I lay for a space taking this in. I saw his face still bore evidences of emotion. For a while I said nothing. I passed an inquisitive hand over my contusions, and surveyed his face for similar damages. The back of my right hand had suffered most, and was skinless and raw. My forehead was bruised and had bled. He handed me a measure with some of the restorative—I forget the name of it—he had brought with us. After a time I felt a little better.

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I began to stretch my limbs carefully. Soon I could talk.

"It wouldn't have done," I said, as though there had been no interval.

"No, it *wouldn't!*"

He thought, his hands hanging over his knees. He peered through the glass and then stared at me. "Good Lord!" he said. "No!"

"What has happened?" I asked after a pause; "have we jumped to the tropics?"

"It was as I expected. This air has evaporated. If it is air. At any rate it has evaporated, and the surface of the moon is showing. We are lying on a bank of earthy rock. Here and there bare soil is exposed; a queer sort of soil."

It occurred to him that it was unnecessary to explain. He assisted me into a sitting position, and I could see with my own eyes.

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VII

A LUNAR MORNING

THE harsh emphasis, the pitiless black and white of the scenery had altogether disappeared. The glare of the sun had taken upon itself a faint tinge of amber; the shadows upon the cliff of the crater wall were deeply purple. To the eastward a dark bank of fog still crouched and sheltered from the sunrise, but to the westward the sky was blue and clear. I began to realise the length of my insensibility.

We were no longer in a void. An atmosphere had risen about us. The outline of things had gained in character, had grown acute and varied; save for a shadowed space of white substance here and there, white substance that was no longer air but snow, the Arctic appearance had gone altogether. Everywhere broad, rusty-brown spaces of bare and tumbled earth spread to the blaze of the sun. Here and there at the edge of the snowdrifts were transient little pools and eddies of water, the only things stirring in that expanse of barrenness. The sunlight inundated the upper two-thirds of our sphere and turned our climate to high summer, but our feet were still in shadow and the sphere was lying upon a drift of snow.

And scattered here and there upon the slope, and emphasised by little white threads of unthawed snow upon their shady sides, were shapes like sticks

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—dry, twisted sticks of the same rusty hue as the rock upon which they lay. That caught one's thoughts sharply. Sticks! On a lifeless world? Then as my eye grew more accustomed to the texture of their substance I perceived that almost all this surface had a fibrous texture, like the carpet of brown needles one finds beneath the shade of pine-trees.

"Cavor!" I said.

"Yes?"

"It may be a dead world now—but once——"

Something arrested my attention. I had discovered among these needles a number of little round objects. It seemed to me that one of these had moved.

"Cavor," I whispered.

"What?"

But I did not answer at once. I stared incredulous. For an instant I could not believe my eyes. I gave an inarticulate cry. I gripped his arm. I pointed. "Look!" I cried, finding my tongue. "There! Yes! And there!"

His eyes followed my pointing finger. "Eh?" he said.

How can I describe the thing I saw? It is so petty a thing to state, and yet it seemed so wonderful, so pregnant with emotion. I have said that amidst the stick-like litter were these round bodies, these little oval bodies that might have passed as very small pebbles. And now first one and then another had stirred, had rolled over and cracked, and down the crack of each of them showed a minute line of

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yellowish green, thrusting outward to meet the hot encouragement of the newly risen sun. For a moment that was all, and then there stirred and burst a third!

"It is a seed," said Cavor. And then I heard him whisper, very softly: "*Life!*"

"Life!" and immediately it poured upon us that our vast journey had not been made in vain, that we had come to no arid waste of minerals, but to a world that lived and moved! We watched intensely. I remember I kept rubbing the glass before me with my sleeve, jealous of the faintest suspicion of mist.

The picture was clear and vivid only in the middle of the field. All about that centre the dead fibres and seeds were magnified and distorted by the curvature of the glass. But we could see enough! One after another all down the sunlit slope these miraculous little brown bodies burst and gaped apart, like seed-pods, like the husks of fruits; opened eager mouths that drank in the heat and light pouring in a cascade from the newly risen sun.

Every moment more of these seed-coats ruptured, and even as they did so the swelling pioneers overflowed their rent distended seed-cases and passed into the second stage of growth. With a steady assurance, a swift deliberation, these amazing seeds thrust a rootlet downward to the earth and a queer bundle-like bud into the air. In a little while the whole slope was dotted with minute plantlets standing at attention in the blaze of the sun.

They did not stand for long. The bundle-like buds swelled and strained and opened with a jerk, thrusting out a coronet of red sharp tips, spreading

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a whorl of tiny, spiky, brownish leaves, that lengthened rapidly, lengthened visibly even as we watched. The movement was slower than any animal's, swifter than any plant's I have ever seen before. How can I suggest it to you—the way that growth went on? The leaf tips grew so that they moved onward even while we looked at them. The brown seed-case shrivelled and was absorbed with an equal rapidity. Have you ever on a cold day taken a thermometer into your warm hand and watched the little thread of mercury creep up the tube? These moon-plants grew like that.

In a few minutes, as it seemed, the buds of the more forward of these plants had lengthened into a stem, and were even putting forth a second whorl of leaves, and all the slope that had seemed so recently a lifeless stretch of litter was now dark with the stunted, olive-green herbage of bristling spikes that swayed with the vigour of their growing.

I turned about, and behold! along the upper edge of a rock to the eastward a similar fringe, in a scarcely less forward condition, swayed and bent, dark against the blinding glare of the sun. And beyond this fringe was the silhouette of a plant mass, branching clumsily like a cactus and swelling visibly, swelling like a bladder that fills with air.

Then to the westward also I discovered another such distended form was rising over the scrub. But here the light fell upon its sleek sides, and I could see that its colour was a vivid orange. It rose as one watched it; if one looked away from it for a minute and then back, its outline had changed: it thrust out

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blunt, congested branches, until in a little time it rose a coralline shape of many feet in height. Compared with such a growth the terrestrial puff-ball which will sometimes swell a foot in diameter in a single night, would be a hopeless laggard. But then the puff-ball grows against a gravitational pull of six times that of the moon. Beyond, out of gullies and flats that had been hidden from us but not from the quickening sun, over reefs and banks of shining rock, a bristling beard of spiky and fleshy vegetation was straining into view, hurrying tumultuously to take advantage of the brief day in which it must flower and fruit and seed again and die. It was like a miracle, that growth. So, one must imagine, the trees and plants arose at the Creation, and covered the desolation of the new-made earth.

Imagine it! Imagine that dawn! The resurrection of the frozen air, the stirring and quickening of the soil, and then this silent uprising of vegetation, this unearthly ascent of fleshliness and spikes. Conceive it all lit by a blaze that would make the intensest sunlight of earth seem watery and weak. And still amidst this stirring jungle wherever there was shadow lingered banks of bluish snow. And to have the picture of our impression complete you must bear in mind that we saw it all through a thick bent glass, distorting it as things are distorted by a lens, acute only in the centre of the picture and very bright there, and towards the edges magnified and unreal.

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VIII

PROSPECTING BEGINS

We ceased to gaze. We turned to each other, the same thought, the same question in our eyes. For these plants to grow there must be some air, however attenuated—air that we also should be able to breathe.

"The manhole?" I said.

"Yes," said Cavor; "if it is air we see!"

"In a little while," I said, "these plants will be as high as we are. Suppose—suppose, after all— Is it certain? How do you know that stuff *is* air? It may be nitrogen; it may be carbonic acid even!"

"That is easy," he said, and set about proving it. He produced a big piece of crumpled paper from the bale, lit it, and thrust it hastily through the manhole valve. I bent forward and peered down through the thick glass for its appearance outside, that little flame on whose evidence depended so much!

I saw the paper drop out and lie lightly upon the snow. The pink flame of its burning vanished. For an instant it seemed to be extinguished. . . . And then I saw a little blue tongue upon the edge of it that trembled and crept and spread!

Quietly the whole sheet, save where it lay in immediate contact with the snow, charred and shrivelled and sent up a quivering thread of smoke. There was no doubt left to me: the atmosphere of the moon was either pure oxygen or air, and capable

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therefore, unless its tenuity were excessive, of supporting our alien life. We might emerge—and live!

I sat down with my legs on either side of the manhole and prepared to unscrew it, but Cavor stopped me. "There is first a little precaution," he said. He pointed out that, although it was certainly an oxygenated atmosphere outside, it might still be so rarefied as to cause us grave injury. He reminded me of mountain sickness and of the bleeding that often afflicts aeronauts who have ascended too swiftly, and he spent some time in the preparation of a sickly tasting drink which he insisted on my sharing. It made me feel a little numb, but otherwise had no effect on me. Then he permitted me to begin unscrewing.

Presently the glass stopper of the manhole was so far undone that the denser air within our sphere began to escape along the thread of the screw, singing as a kettle sings before it boils. Thereupon he made me desist. It speedily became evident that the pressure outside was very much less than it was within. How much less it was we had no means of telling.

I sat grasping the stopper with both hands, ready to close it again if, in spite of our intense hope, the lunar atmosphere should after all prove too rarefied for us, and Cavor sat with a cylinder of compressed oxygen at hand to restore our pressure. We looked at each other in silence, and then at the fantastic vegetation that swayed and grew visibly and noiselessly without. And ever that shrill piping continued.

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The blood-vessels began to throb in my ears, and the sound of Cavor's movements diminished. I noted how still everything had become because of the thinning of the air.

As our air sizzled out from the screw the moisture of it condensed in little puffs.

Presently I experienced a peculiar shortness of breath—that lasted, indeed, during the whole of the time of our exposure to the moon's exterior atmosphere, and a rather unpleasant sensation about the ears and finger-nails and the back of the throat grew on my attention, and presently passed off again.

But then came vertigo and nausea that abruptly changed the quality of my courage. I gave the lid of the manhole half a turn and made a hasty explanation to Cavor, but now he was the more sanguine. He answered me in a voice that seemed extraordinarily small and remote because of the thinness of the air that carried the sound. He recommended a nip of brandy, and set me the example, and presently I felt better. I turned the manhole stopper back again. The throbbing in my ears grew louder, and then I remarked that the piping note of the outrush had ceased. For a time I could not be sure that it had ceased.

"Well?" said Cavor, in the ghost of a voice.

"Well?" said I.

"Shall we go on?"

I thought. "Is this all?"

"If you can stand it."

By way of answer I went on unscrewing. I lifted

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the circular operculum from its place and laid it carefully on the bale. A flake or so of snow whirled and vanished as that thin and unfamiliar air took possession of our sphere. I knelt and then seated myself at the edge of the manhole, peering over it. Beneath, within a yard of my face, lay the untrodden snow of the moon.

There came a little pause. Our eyes met.

"It doesn't distress your lungs too much?" said Cavor.

"No," I said. "I can stand this."

He stretched out his hand for his blanket, thrust his head through its central hole, and wrapped it about him. He sat down on the edge of the manhole; he let his feet drop until they were within six inches of the lunar snow. He hesitated for a moment, then thrust himself forwards, dropped these intervening inches, and stood upon the untrodden soil of the moon.

As he stepped forwards he was refracted grotesquely by the edge of the glass. He stood for a moment looking this way and that. Then he drew himself together and leaped.

The glass distorted everything, but it seemed to me even then to be an extremely big leap. He had at one bound become remote. He seemed twenty or thirty feet off. He was standing high upon a rocky mass and gesticulating back to me. Perhaps he was shouting—but the sound did not reach me. But how the deuce had he done this? I felt like a man who has just seen a new conjuring trick.

Still in a puzzled state of mind, I too dropped

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through the manhole. I stood up. Just in front of me the snowdrift had fallen away and made a sort of ditch. I made a step and jumped.

I found myself flying through the air, saw the rock on which he stood coming to meet me, clutched it, and clung in a state of infinite amazement. I gasped a painful laugh. I was tremendously confused. Cavor bent down and shouted in piping tones for me to be careful. I had forgotten that on the moon, with only an eighth part of the earth's mass and a quarter of its diameter, my weight was barely a sixth what it was on earth. But now that fact insisted on being remembered.

"We are out of Mother Earth's leading-strings now," he said.

With a guarded effort I raised myself to the top and, moving as cautiously as a rheumatic patient, stood up beside him under the blaze of the sun. The sphere lay behind us on its dwindling snowdrift thirty feet away.

As far as the eye could see over the enormous disorder of rocks that formed the crater floor the same bristling scrub that surrounded us was starting into life, diversified here and there by bulging masses of a cactus form, and scarlet and purple lichens that grew so fast they seemed to crawl over the rocks. The whole area of the crater seemed to me then to be one similar wilderness up to the very foot of the surrounding cliff.

This cliff was apparently bare of vegetation save at its base, and with buttresses and terraces and platforms that did not very greatly attract our at-

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tention at the time. It was many miles away from us in every direction; we seemed to be almost at the centre of the crater, and we saw it through a certain haziness that drove before the wind. For there was even a wind now in the thin air—a swift yet weak wind that chilled exceedingly, but exerted little pressure. It was blowing round the crater, as it seemed, to the hot, illuminated side from the foggy darkness under the sunward wall. It was difficult to look into this eastward fog; we had to peer with half-closed eyes beneath the shade of our hands, because of the fierce intensity of the motionless sun.

"It seems to be deserted," said Cavor, "absolutely desolate."

I looked about me again. I retained even then a clinging hope of some quasi-human evidence, some pinnacle of building, some house or engine; but everywhere spread the tumbled rocks in peaks and crests, and the darting scrub and those bulging cacti that swelled and swelled, a flat negation as it seemed of all such hope.

"It looks as though these plants had it to themselves," I said. "I see no trace of any other creature."

"No insects—no birds—no! Not a trace, not a scrap or particle of animal life. If there was—what would they do in the night? . . . No; there's just these plants alone."

I shaded my eyes with my hand. "It's like the landscape of a dream. These things are less like earthly land plants than the things one imagines among the rocks at the bottom of the sea. Look at

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that, yonder! One might imagine it a lizard changed into a plant. And the glare!"

"This is only the fresh morning," said Cavor.

He sighed and looked about him. "This is no world for men," he said. "And yet in a way . . . it appeals."

He became silent for a time, then commenced his meditative humming. I started at a gentle touch, and found a thin sheet of livid lichen lapping over my shoe. I kicked at it; it fell to powder, and each speck began to grow. I heard Cavor exclaim sharply, and perceived that one of the fixed bayonets of the scrub had pricked him.

He hesitated, his eyes sought among the rocks about us. A sudden blaze of pink had crept up a ragged pillar of crag. It was a most extraordinary pink, a livid magenta.

"Look!" said I, turning, and behold Cavor had vanished.

For an instant I stood transfixed. Then I made a hasty step to look over the verge of the rock. But, in my surprise at his disappearance, I forgot once more that we were on the moon. The thrust of my foot that I made in striding would have carried me a yard on earth; on the moon it carried me six—a good five yards over the edge. For the moment the thing had something of the effect of one of those nightmares when one falls and falls. For while one falls sixteen feet in the first second of a fall on earth, on the moon one falls two, and with only a sixth of one's weight. I fell, or rather I jumped down, about ten yards I supposed. It seemed to take a long

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time—five or six seconds, I should think. I floated through the air and fell like a feather, knee-deep in a snowdrift in the bottom of a gully of blue-grey, white-veined rock.

I looked about me. "Cavor!" I cried, but no Cavor was visible.

"Cavor!" I cried louder, and the rocks echoed me.

I turned fiercely to the rocks and clambered to the summit of them. "Cavor," I cried. My voice sounded like the voice of a lost lamb.

The sphere too was not in sight, and for a moment a horrible feeling of desolation pinched my heart.

Then I saw him. He was laughing and gesticulating to attract my attention. He was on a bare patch of rock twenty or thirty yards away. I could not hear his voice, but "Jump!" said his gestures. I hesitated, the distance seemed enormous. Yet I reflected that surely I must be able to clear a greater distance than Cavor.

I made a step back, gathered myself together, and leaped with all my might. I seemed to shoot up in the air as if I should never come down.

It was horrible and delightful, and as wild as a nightmare to go flying off in this fashion. I realised my leap had been altogether too violent. I flew clean over Cavor's head, and beheld a spiky confusion in a gully spreading to meet my fall. I gave a yelp of alarm. I put out my hands and straightened my legs.

I hit a huge fungoid bulk that burst all about me, scattering a mass of orange spores in every direction, and covering me with orange powder. I rolled over

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spluttering, and came to rest convulsed with breathless laughter.

I became aware of Cavor's little round face peering over a bristling hedge. He shouted some faded inquiry. "Eh?" I tried to shout, but could not do so for want of breath. He made his way towards me, coming gingerly among the bushes. "We've got to be careful!" he said. "This moon has no discipline. She'll let us smash ourselves."

He helped me to my feet. "You exerted yourself too much," he said, dabbing at the yellow stuff with his hand to remove it from my garments.

I stood passive and panting, allowing him to beat off the jelly from my knees and elbows and lecture me upon my misfortunes. "We don't quite allow for the gravitation. Our muscles are scarcely educated yet. We must practice a little. When you have got your breath."

I pulled two or three little thorns out of my hand, and sat for a time on a boulder of rock. My muscles were quivering, and I had that feeling of personal disillusionment that comes to the learner of cycling on earth at his first fall.

It suddenly occurred to Cavor that the cold air in the gully after the brightness of the sun might give me a fever. So we clambered back into the sunlight. We found that beyond a few abrasions I had received no serious injuries from my tumble, and at Cavor's suggestion we were presently looking round for some safe and easy landing-place for my next leap. We chose a rocky slab some ten yards off, separated from us by a little thicket of olive-green spikes.

"Imagine it there!" said Cavor, who was assum-

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ing airs of a trainer, and he pointed to a spot about four feet from my toes. This leap I managed without difficulty, and I must confess I found a certain satisfaction in Cavor's falling short by a foot or so and tasting the spikes of the scrub. "One has to be careful, you see," he said, pulling out his thorns, and with that he ceased to be my mentor and became my fellow-learner in the art of lunar locomotion.

We chose a still easier jump and did it without difficulty, and then leaped back again and to and fro several times, accustoming our muscles to the new standard. I could never have believed, had I not experienced it, how rapid that adaptation would be. In a very little time indeed, certainly after fewer than thirty leaps, we could judge the effort necessary for a distance with almost terrestrial assurance.

And all this time the lunar plants were growing around us, higher and denser and more entangled, every moment thicker and taller, spiked plants, green cactus masses, fungi, fleshy and lichenous things, strange radiate and sinuous shapes. But we were so intent upon our leaping that for a time we gave no heed to their unfaltering expansion.

An extraordinary elation had taken possession of us. Partly I think it was our sense of release from the confinement of the sphere. Mainly, however, the thin sweetness of the air, which I am certain contained a much larger proportion of oxygen than our terrestrial atmosphere. In spite of the strange quality of all about us, I felt as adventurous and experimental as a Cockney placed for the first time among mountains; and I do not think it occurred to

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either of us, face to face though we were with the Unknown, to be very greatly afraid.

We were bitten by a spirit of enterprise. We selected a lichenous kopje, perhaps fifteen yards away, and landed neatly on its summit one after the other. "Good!" we cried to each other, "good"; and Cavor made three steps and went off to a tempting slope of snow a good twenty yards and more beyond. I stood for a moment struck by the grotesque effect of his soaring figure, his dirty cricket cap and spiky hair, his little round body, his arms and his knickerbockered legs tucked up tightly against the weird spaciousness of the lunar scene. A gust of laughter seized me, and then I stepped off to follow. Plump! I dropped beside him.

We made a few Gargantuan strides, leaped three or four times more, and sat down at last in a lichenous hollow. Our lungs were painful. We sat holding our sides and recovering our breath, looking appreciation at each other. Cavor panted something about "amazing sensations." And then came a thought into my head. For the moment it did not seem a particularly appalling thought, simply a natural question arising out of the situation.

"By the way," I said, "where exactly is the sphere?"

Cavor looked at me. "Eh?"

The full meaning of what we were saying struck me sharply.

"Cavor!" I cried, laying a hand on his arm. "Where is the sphere?"

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IX

LOST MEN IN THE MOON

His face caught something of my dismay. He stood up and stared about him at the scrub that fenced us in and rose about us, straining upwards in a passion of growth. He put a dubious hand to his lips. He spoke with a sudden lack of assurance. "I think," he said, slowly, "we left it . . . somewhere . . . about *there*."

He pointed a hesitating finger that wavered in an arc.

"I'm not sure." His look of consternation deepened. "Anyhow," he said, with his eyes on me, "it can't be far."

We had both stood up. We made unmeaning ejaculations.

All about us on the sunlit slopes frothed and swayed the darting shrubs, the swelling cactus, the creeping lichens, and wherever the shade remained the snowdrifts lingered. North, south, east and west spread an identical monotony of unfamiliar forms. And somewhere, buried already among this tangled confusion, was our sphere, our home, our only provision, our only hope of escape from this fantastic wilderness of ephemeral growths into which we had come.

"I think, after all," he said, pointing suddenly, "it might be over there."

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"No," I said. "We have turned in a curve. See! here is the mark of my heels. It's clear the thing must be more to the eastward, much more. No! the sphere must be over there."

"I *think*," said Cavor, "I kept the sun upon my right all the time."

"Every leap, it seems to me," I said, "my shadow flew before me."

We stared into each other's eyes. The area of the crater had become enormously vast to our imaginations, the growing thickets already impenetrably dense.

"Good heavens! What fools we have been!"

"It's evident that we must find it again," said Cavor, "and that soon. The sun grows stronger. We should be fainting with the heat already if it wasn't so dry. And . . . I'm hungry."

I stared at him. I had not suspected this aspect of the matter before. But it came to me at once—a positive craving. "Yes," I said with emphasis, "I am hungry, too."

He stood up with a look of active resolution. "Certainly we must find the sphere."

As calmly as possible we surveyed the interminable reefs and thickets that formed the floor of the crater, each of us weighing in silence the chances of our finding the sphere before we were overtaken by heat and hunger.

"It can't be fifty yards from here," said Cavor, with indecisive gestures. "The only thing is to beat round about until we come upon it."

"That is all we can do," I said, without any

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alacrity to begin our hunt. "I wish this confounded spike bush did not grow so fast!"

"That's just it," said Cavor. "But it was lying on a bank of snow."

I stared about me in the vain hope of recognising some knoll or shrub that had been near the sphere. But everywhere was a confusing sameness, everywhere the aspiring bushes, the distending fungi, the dwindling snow-banks, steadily and inevitably changed. The sun scorched and stung; the faintness of an unaccountable hunger mingled with our infinite perplexity. And even as we stood there, confused and lost amidst unprecedented things, we became aware for the first time of a sound upon the moon other than the stir of the growing plants, the faint sighing of the wind, or those that we ourselves had made.

Boom . . . Boom . . . Boom . . .

It came from beneath our feet, a sound in the ground. We seemed to hear it with our feet as much as with our ears. Its dull resonance was muffled by distance, thick with the quality of intervening substance. No sound that I can imagine could have astonished us more, nor have changed more completely the quality of things about us. For this sound, rich, slow, and deliberate, seemed to us like the striking of some gigantic buried clock.

Boom . . . Boom . . . Boom . . .

Sound suggestive of still cloisters, of sleepless nights in crowded cities, of vigils and the awaited hour, of all that is orderly and methodical in life, booming out pregnant and mysterious in this fan-

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tastic desert! To the eye everything was unchanged; the desolation of bushes and cacti waving silently in the wind, stretched unbroken to the distant cliffs; the still, dark sky was empty overhead, and the hot sun hung and burned. And through it all, a warning, a threat, throbbed this enigma of sound.

Boom . . . Boom . . . Boom . . .

We questioned each other in faint and faded voices. "A clock?"

"Like a clock!"

"What is it?"

"What can it be?"

"Count," was Cavor's belated suggestion, and at that word the striking ceased.

The silence, the rhythmic disappointment of the silence, came as a fresh shock. For a moment one could doubt whether one had ever heard a sound. Or whether it might not still be going on! Had I indeed heard a sound?

I felt the pressure of Cavor's hand upon my arm. He spoke in an undertone as if he feared to wake some sleeping thing. "Let us keep together," he whispered, "and look for the sphere. We must get back to the sphere. This is beyond our understanding."

"Which way shall we go?"

He hesitated. An intense persuasion of presences, of unseen things about us and near us, dominated our minds. What could they be? Where could they be? Was this arid desolation, alternately frozen and scorched, only the outer rind and mask of some subterranean world? And if so, what sort of world?

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What sort of inhabitants might it not presently disgorge upon us?

And then stabbing the aching stillness, as vivid and sudden as an unexpected thunder-clap, came a clang and rattle as though great gates of metal had suddenly been flung apart.

It arrested our steps. We stood gaping helplessly. Then Cavor stole towards me.

"I do not understand!" he whispered, close to my face. He waved his hand vaguely skywards, the vague suggestions of still vaguer thoughts.

"A hiding-place! If anything came——"

I looked about us. I nodded my head in assent to him.

We started off, moving stealthily, with the most exaggerated precautions against noise. We went towards a thicket of scrub. A clangour as of hammers flung about a boiler hastened our steps. "We must crawl," whispered Cavor.

The lower leaves of the bayonet plants, already overshadowed by the newer ones above, were beginning to wilt and shrivel so that we could thrust our way among the thickening stems without any serious injury. A stab in the face or arm we did not heed. At the heart of the thicket I stopped and stared panting into Cavor's face.

"Subterranean," he whispered. "Below."

"They may come out."

"We must find the sphere!"

"Yes," I said, "but how?"

"Crawl till we come to it."

"But if we don't?"

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"Keep hidden. See what they are like."

"We will keep together," said I.

He thought. "Which way shall we go?"

"We must take our chance."

We peered this way and that. Then very circumspectly we began to crawl through the lower jungle, making so far as we could judge a circuit, halting now at every waving fungus, at every sound, intent only on the sphere from which we had so foolishly emerged. Ever and again from out of the ground beneath us came concussions, beatings, strange, inexplicable, mechanical sounds, and once and then again we thought we heard something, a faint rattle and tumult, borne to us through the air. But fearful as we were we dared attempt no vantage-point to survey the crater. For long we saw nothing of the beings whose sounds were so abundant and insistent. But for the faintness of our hunger and the drying of our throats that crawling would have had the quality of a very vivid dream. It was so absolutely unreal. The only element with any touch of reality was these sounds.

Picture it to yourself. About us the dreamlike jungle, with the silent bayonet leaves darting overhead, and the silent, vivid, sun-splashed lichens under our hands and knees, waving with the vigour of their growth as a carpet waves when the wind gets beneath it. Ever and again one of the bladder fungi, bulging and distending under the sun, loomed upon us. Ever and again in vivid colour some novel shape obtruded. The very cells that built up these plants were as large as my thumb, like beads of

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coloured glass. And all these things were saturated in the unmitigated glare of the sun, were seen against a sky that was bluish-black and spangled still, in spite of the sunlight, with a few surviving stars. Strange! the very forms and texture of the stones were strange. It was all strange: the feeling of one's body was unprecedented, every other movement ended in a surprise. The breath sucked thin in one's throat, the blood flowed through one's ears in a throbbing tide, thud, thud, thud, thud . . .

And ever and again came gusts of turmoil, hammering, the clanging and throb of machinery, and presently—the bellowing of great beasts!

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X

THE MOONCALF PASTURES

So we two poor terrestrial castaways, lost in that wild-growing moon jungle, crawled in terror before the sounds that had come upon us. We crawled as it seemed a long time before we saw either Selenite or mooncalf, though we heard the bellowing and gruntulous noises of these latter continually drawing nearer to us. We crawled through stony ravines, over snow slopes, amidst fungi that ripped like thin bladders at our thrust, emitting a watery humour; over a perfect pavement of things like puff-balls and beneath interminable thickets of scrub. And ever more hopelessly our eyes sought for our abandoned sphere. The noise of the mooncalves would at times be a vast, flat, calf-like sound, at times it rose to an amazed and wrathy bellowing, and again it would become a clogged, bestial sound as though these unseen creatures had sought to eat and bellow at the same time.

Our first view was but an inadequate, transitory glimpse, yet none the less disturbing because it was incomplete. Cavor was crawling in front at the time, and he first was aware of their proximity. He stopped, arresting me with a single gesture.

A crackling and smashing of the scrub appeared to be advancing directly upon us, and then, as we squatted close and endeavoured to judge of the nearness and direction of this noise, there came a terrific

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bellow behind us, so close and vehement that the tops of the bayonet scrub bent before it, and one felt the breath of it hot and moist. Turning about we saw indistinctly through a crowd of swaying stems the mooncalf's shining sides and the long line of its back looming against the sky.

Of course it is hard for me now to say how much I saw at that time, because my impressions were corrected by subsequent observation. First of all was its enormous size: the girth of its body was some fourscore feet, its length perhaps two hundred. Its sides rose and fell with its laboured breathing. I perceived that its gigantic flabby body lay along the ground and that its skin was of corrugated white, dappling into blackness along the back-bone. But of its feet we saw nothing. I think also that we saw then the profile at least of the almost brainless head, with its fat-encumbered neck, its slobbering, omnivorous mouth, its little nostrils, and tight-shut eyes. (For the mooncalf invariably shuts its eyes in the presence of the sun.) We had a glimpse of a vast red pit as it opened its mouth to bleat and bellow again, we had a breath from the pit, and then the monster heeled over like a ship, dragged forward along the ground, creasing all his leathery skin, rolled again, and so wallowed past us, smashing a path amidst the scrub, and was speedily hidden from our eyes by the dense interlacings beyond. Another appeared more distantly, and then another, and then, as though he was driving these animated lumps of provender to their pasture, a Selenite came momentarily into view. My grip upon Cavor's foot became con-

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vulsive at the sight of him, and we remained motionless and peering long after he had passed out of our range.

By contrast with the mooncalves he seemed a trivial being, a mere ant, scarcely five feet high. He was wearing garments of some leathery substance so that no portion of his actual body appeared—but of this of course we were entirely ignorant. He presented himself, therefore, as a compact bristling creature, having much of the quality of a complicated insect, with whip-like tentacles, and a clanging arm projecting from his shining cylindrical body-case. The form of his head was hidden by his enormous, many-spiked helmet—we discovered afterwards that he used the spikes for prodding refractory mooncalves—and a pair of goggles of darkened glass set very much at the side gave a bud-like quality to the metallic apparatus that covered his face. His arms did not project beyond his body-case, and he carried himself upon short legs that, wrapped though they were in warm coverings, seemed to our terrestrial eyes inordinately flimsy. They had very short thighs, very long shanks, and little feet.

In spite of his heavy-looking clothing he was progressing with what would be from the terrestrial point of view very considerable strides, and his clanging arm was busy. The quality of his motion during the instant of his passing suggested haste and a certain anger, and soon after we had lost sight of him we heard the bellow of a mooncalf change abruptly into a short, sharp squeal, followed by the scuffle of its acceleration. And gradually that bel-

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lowing receded, and then came to an end, as if the pastures sought had been reached.

We listened. For a space the moon world was still. But it was some time before we resumed our crawling search for the vanished sphere.

When next we saw mooncalves they were some little distance away from us, in a place of tumbled rocks. The sloping surfaces of the rocks were thick with a speckled green plant, growing in dense, mossy clumps, upon which these creatures were browsing. At the sight of them we stopped on the margin of the reeds amidst which we were crawling, peering through at them and looking round for a second glimpse of a Selenite. They lay against their food like stupendous slugs, huge, greasy hulls, eating greedily and noisily, with a sort of sobbing avidity. They seemed monsters of mere fatness, clumsy and overwhelmed to a degree that would make a Smithfield ox seem a model of agility. Their busy, writhing, chewing mouths, their closed eyes, together with the appetising sound of their munching, made up an effect of animal enjoyment that was singularly stimulating to our empty frames.

"Hogs!" said Cavor, with unusual passion. "Disgusting hogs!" and after one glare of angry envy crawled off through the bushes to our right. I stayed long enough to see that the speckled plant was quite hopeless for human nourishment, then crawled after him, nibbling a quill of it between my teeth.

Presently we were arrested again by the proximity of a Selenite, and this time we were able to observe him more exactly. Now we could see that

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the Selenite covering was indeed clothing, and not a sort of crustacean integument. He was similar in costume to the former one we had glimpsed, except that ends of something like wadding were protruding from his neck, and he stood on a promontory of rock and moved his head this way and that as though he was surveying the crater. We lay quite still, fearing to attract his attention if we moved, and after a time he turned about and disappeared.

We came upon another drove of mooncalves bellowing up a ravine, and then we passed over a place of sounds, sounds of beating machinery, as if some huge hall of industry came near the surface there. And while these sounds were still about us we came to the edge of a great open space, perhaps two hundred yards in diameter, and perfectly level. Save for a few lichens that advanced from its margin, this space was bare, and presented a powdery surface of a dusty yellow color. We were afraid to strike out across this space, but as it presented less obstruction to our crawling than the scrub, we went down upon it and began very circumspectly to skirt its edge.

For a little while the noises below ceased, and everything, save for the faint stir of the growing vegetation, was very still. Then abruptly there began an uproar, louder, more vehement, and nearer than any we had so far heard. Of a certainty it came from below. Instinctively we crouched as flat as we could, ready for a prompt plunge into the thicket beside us. Each knock and throb seemed to vibrate through our bodies. Louder grew this throbbing and beating, and that irregular vibration increased until

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the whole moon world seemed to be jerking and pulsing.

"Cover," whispered Cavor, and I turned towards the bushes.

At that instant came a thud like the thud of a gun, and then a thing happened—it still haunts me in my dreams. I had turned my head to look at Cavor's face, and thrust out my hand in front of me as I did so. My hand met nothing! I plunged suddenly into a bottomless hole!

My chest hit something hard, and I found myself with my chin on the edge of an unfathomable abyss that had suddenly opened beneath me, my hand extended stiffly into the void. The whole of that flat circular area was no more than a gigantic lid, that was now sliding sideways from off the pit it had covered into a slot prepared for it.

Had it not been for Cavor I think I should have remained rigid, hanging over this margin and staring into the enormous gulf below until at last the edges of the slot scraped me off and hurled me into its depths. But Cavor had not received the shock that had paralysed me. He had been a little distance from the edge when the lid had first opened, and, perceiving the peril that held me helpless, gripped my legs and pulled me backward. I came into a sitting position, crawled away from the edge for a space on all fours, then staggered up and ran after him across the thundering, quivering sheet of metal. It seemed to be swinging open with a steadily accelerated velocity, and the bushes in front of me shifted sideways as I ran.

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I was none too soon. Cavor's back vanished amidst the bristling thicket, and as I scrambled up after him the monstrous valve came into its position with a clang. For a long time we lay panting, not daring to approach the pit.

But at last, very cautiously, and bit by bit, we crept into a position from which we could peer down. The bushes about us creaked and waved with the force of a breeze that was blowing down the shaft. We could see nothing at first except smooth, vertical walls descending at last into an impenetrable black. And then gradually we became aware of a number of very faint and little lights going to and fro.

For a time that stupendous gulf of mystery held us so that we forgot even our sphere. In time as we grew more accustomed to the darkness we could make out very small dim illusive shapes moving about among those needle-point illuminations. We peered, amazed and incredulous, understanding so little that we could find no words to speak. We could distinguish nothing that would give us a clue to the meaning of the faint shapes we saw.

"What can it be?" I asked; "what can it be?"

"The engineering! . . . They must live in these caverns during the night and come out during the day."

"Cavor!" I said. "Can they be—*that*—it was something like—men?"

"*That* was not a man."

"We dare risk nothing!"

"We dare do nothing until we find the sphere," he assented with a groan, and stirred himself to

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move. He stared about him for a space, sighed, and indicated a direction. We struck out through the jungle. For a time we crawled resolutely, then with diminishing vigour. Presently among great shapes of flabby purple there came a noise of trampling and of cries about us. We lay close, and for a long time the sounds went to and fro and very near. But this time we saw nothing. I tried to whisper to Cavor that I could hardly go without food much longer, but my mouth had become too dry for whispering.

"Cavor," I said, "I must have food."

He turned a face full of dismay towards me. "It's a case for holding out," he said.

"But I *must*," I said; "and look at my lips!"

"I've been thirsty some time."

"If only some of that snow had remained!"

"It's clean gone! We're driving from Arctic to tropical at the rate of a degree a minute. . . ."

I gnawed my hand.

"The sphere!" he said. "There is nothing for it but the sphere." We roused ourselves to another spurt of crawling. My mind ran entirely on edible things, on the hissing profundity of summer drinks; more particularly I craved for beer. I was haunted by the memory of the eighteen-gallon cask that had swaggered in my Lympne cellar. I thought of the adjacent larder, and especially of steak and kidney pie—tender steak and plenty of kidney, and rich, thick gravy between. Ever and again I was seized with fits of hungry yawning. We came to flat places overgrown with fleshy red things, monstrous coral-

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line growths; as we pushed against them they snapped and broke. I noted the quality of the broken surfaces. The confounded stuff certainly looked of a biteable texture.

I picked up a fragment and sniffed at it.

"Cavor," I said, in a hoarse undertone.

He glanced at me with his face screwed up. "Don't," he said. I put down the fragment, and we crawled on through this tempting fleshiness for a space.

"Cavor," I asked, "why not?"

"Poison," I heard him say, but he did not look round.

We crawled some way before I decided.

"I'll chance it," said I.

He made a belated gesture to prevent me. I stuffed my mouth full. He crouched, watching my face, his own twisted into the oddest expression. "It's good," I said.

"Oh, Lord!" he cried.

He watched me munch, his face wrinkled between desire and disapproval, then suddenly succumbed to appetite, and began to tear off huge mouthfuls. For a time we did nothing but eat.

The stuff was not unlike a terrestrial mushroom, only it was much laxer in texture, and as one swallowed it, it warmed the throat. At first we experienced a mere mechanical satisfaction in eating. Then our blood began to run warmer, and we tingled at the lips and fingers, and then new and slightly irrelevant ideas came bubbling up in our minds.

"It's good," said I. "Infernally good! What a

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home for our surplus population! Our poor surplus population," and I broke off another large portion.

It filled me with a curiously benevolent satisfaction that there was such good food in the moon. The depression of my hunger gave way to an irrational exhilaration. The dread and discomfort in which I had been living vanished entirely. I perceived the moon no longer as a planet from which I most earnestly desired the means of escape, but as a possible refuge for human destitution. I think I forgot the Selenites, the mooncalves, the lid, and the noises completely as soon as I had eaten that fungus.

Cavor replied to my third repetition of my "surplus population" remark with similar words of approval. I felt that my head swam, but I put this down to the stimulating effect of food after a long fast. "Ess'lent discov'ry, yours, Cavor," said I. "Se'nd on'y to the 'tato."

"Whajer mean?" asked Cavor. "'Scovery of the moon—se'nd on'y to the 'tato?"

I looked at him, shocked at his suddenly hoarse voice and by the badness of his articulation. It occurred to me in a flash that he was intoxicated, possibly by the fungus. It also occurred to me that he erred in imagining that he had discovered the moon—he had not discovered it, he had only reached it. I tried to lay my hand on his arm and explain this to him, but the issue was too subtle for his brain. It was also unexpectedly difficult to express. After a momentary attempt to understand me—I remember wondering if the fungus had made my

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eyes as fishy as his—he set off upon some observations on his own account.

"We are," he announced, with a solemn hiccup, "the creashurs o' what we eat and drink."

He repeated this, and as I was now in one of my subtle moods I determined to dispute it. Possibly I wandered a little from the point. But Cavor certainly did not attend at all properly. He stood up as well as he could, putting a hand on my head to steady himself, which was disrespectful, and stood staring about him, quite devoid now of any fear of the moon beings.

I tried to point out that this was dangerous, for some reason that was not perfectly clear to me; but the word "dangerous" had somehow got mixed with "indiscreet," and came out rather more like "injurious" than either, and after an attempt to disentangle them I resumed my argument, addressing myself principally to the unfamiliar but attentive coralline growths on either side. I felt that it was necessary to clear up this confusion between the moon and a potato at once—I wandered into a long parenthesis on the importance of precision of definition in argument. I did my best to ignore the fact that my bodily sensations were no longer agreeable.

In some way that I have now forgotten my mind was led back to projects of colonisation. "We must annex this moon," I said. "There must be no shillyshally. This is part of the White Man's Burden. Cavor—we are—*hic*—Satap—mean Satraps! Nempire Cæsar never dreamt. B'in all the newspapers.

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Cavorecia. Bedfordecia. Bedfordecia. Hic—Limited. Mean—unlimited! Practically."

Certainly I was intoxicated. I embarked upon an argument to show the infinite benefits our arrival would confer upon the moon. I involved myself in a rather difficult proof that the arrival of Columbus was, after all, beneficial to America. I found I had forgotten the line of argument I had intended to pursue, and continued to repeat "sim'lar to C'lumbus" to fill up time.

From that point my memory of the action of that abominable fungus becomes confused. I remember vaguely that we declared our intention of standing no nonsense from any confounded insects, that we decided it ill became men to hide shamefully upon a mere satellite, that we equipped ourselves with huge armfuls of the fungi—whether for missile purposes or not I do not know—and, heedless of the stabs of the bayonet shrub, we started forth into the sunshine.

Almost immediately we must have come upon the Selenites. There were six of them, and they were marching in single file over a rocky place, making the most remarkable piping and whining sounds. They all seemed to become aware of us at once, all instantly became silent and motionless like animals, with their faces turned towards us.

For a moment I was sobered.

"Insects," murmured Cavor, "insects!—and they think I'm going to crawl about on my stomach—on my vertebrated stomach!

"Stomach," he repeated, slowly, as though he chewed the indignity.

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Then suddenly, with a sort of fury, he made three vast strides and leaped towards them. He leaped badly; he made a series of somersaults in the air, whirled right over them, and vanished with an enormous splash amidst the cactus bladders. What the Selenites made of this amazing, and to my mind undignified, irruption from another planet, I have no means of guessing. I seem to remember the sight of their backs as they ran in all directions—but I am not sure. All these last incidents before oblivion came are vague and faint in my mind. I know I made a step to follow Cavor, and tripped and fell headlong among the rocks. I was, I am certain, suddenly and vehemently ill. I seem to remember a violent struggle, and being gripped by metallic clasps. . . .

My next clear recollection is that we were prisoners at we knew not what depth beneath the moon's surface; we were in darkness amidst strange, distracting noises; our bodies covered with scratches and bruises, and our heads racked with pain.

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XI

THE SELENITE'S FACE

I FOUND myself sitting crouched together in a tumultuous darkness. For a long time I could not understand where I was nor how I had come to this perplexity. I thought of the cupboard into which I had been thrust at times when I was a child, and then of a very dark and noisy bedroom in which I had slept during an illness. But these sounds about me were not noises I had known, and there was a thin flavour in the air like the wind of a stable. Then I supposed we must still be at work upon the sphere, and that somehow I had got into the cellar of Cavor's house. I remembered we had finished the sphere, and fancied I must still be in it and travelling through space.

"Cavor," I said, "cannot we have some light?"

There came no answer.

"Cavor!" I insisted.

I was answered by a groan. "My head!" I heard him say, "my head!"

I attempted to press my hands to my brow, which ached, and discovered they were tied together. This startled me very much. I brought them up to my mouth and felt the cold smoothness of metal. They were chained together. I tried to separate my legs and made out they were similarly fastened, and also

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I was fastened to the ground by a much thicker chain about the middle of my body.

I was more frightened than I had yet been by anything in all our strange experiences. For a time I tugged silently at my bonds. "Cavor!" I cried out, sharply, "why am I tied? Why have you tied me hand and foot?"

"I haven't tied you," he answered. "It's the Selenites."

The Selenites! My mind hung on that for a space. Then my memories came back to me; the snowy desolation, the thawing of the air, the growth of the plants, our strange hopping and crawling among the rocks and vegetation of the crater. All the distress of our frantic search for the sphere returned to me. . . . Finally the opening of the great lid that covered the pit!

Then as I strained to trace our later movements down to our present plight the pain in my head became intolerable. I came to an insurmountable barrier, an obstinate blank.

"Cavor!"

"Yes."

"Where are we?"

"How should I know?"

"Are we dead?"

"What nonsense!"

"They've got us, then!"

He made no answer but a grunt. The lingering traces of the poison seemed to make him oddly irritable.

"What do you mean to do?"

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"How should I know what to do?"

"Oh, very well," said I, and became silent. Presently I was roused from a stupor. "Oh, Lord!" I cried, "I wish you'd stop that buzzing."

We lapsed into silence again, listening to the dull confusion of noises, like the muffled sounds of a street or factory, that filled our ears. I could make nothing of it; my mind pursued first one rhythm and then another, and questioned it in vain. But after a long time I became aware of a new and sharper element, not mingling with the rest, but standing out, as it were, against that cloudy background of sound. It was a series of little definite sounds, tappings and rubbings like a loose spray of ivy against a window or a bird moving about upon a box. We listened and peered about us, but the darkness was a velvet pall. There followed a noise like the subtle movement of the wards of a well-oiled lock. And then there appeared before me, hanging as it seemed in an immensity of black, a thin bright line.

"Look!" whispered Cavor, very softly.

"What is it?"

"I don't know."

We stared.

The thin bright line became a band, broader and paler. It took upon itself the quality of a bluish light falling upon a whitewashed wall. It ceased to be parallel sided; it developed a deep indentation on one side. I turned to remark this to Cavor, and was amazed to see his ear in a brilliant illumination —all the rest of him in shadow. I twisted my head

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round as well as my bonds would permit. "Cavor!" I said, "it's behind!"

His ear vanished—gave place to an eye!

Suddenly the crack that had been admitting the light broadened out and revealed itself as the space of an opening door. Beyond was a sapphire vista, and in the doorway stood a grotesque outline silhouetted against the glare.

We both made convulsive efforts to turn, and, failing, sat staring over our shoulders at this. My first impression was of some clumsy quadruped with lowered head. Then I perceived it was the slender, pinched body and short and extremely attenuated bandy legs of a Selenite, with his head depressed between his shoulders. He was without the helmet and body-covering they wear upon the exterior.

He was a blank black figure to us, but instinctively our imaginations supplied features to his very human outline. I at least took it instantly that he was somewhat hunchbacked, with a high forehead and long features.

He came forward three steps and paused for a time. His movements seemed absolutely noiseless. Then he came forward again. He walked like a bird—his feet fell one in front of the other. He stepped out of the ray of light that came through the doorway, and it seemed that he vanished altogether in the shadow.

For a moment my eyes sought him in the wrong place, and then I perceived him standing facing us both in the full light. Only the human features I had attributed to him were not there at all!

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Of course I ought to have expected that, only I did not. It came to me as an absolute, for a moment an overwhelming, shock. It seemed as though it wasn't a face; as though it must needs be a mask, a horror, a deformity that would presently be disavowed or explained. There was no nose, and the thing had bulging eyes at the side—in the silhouette I had supposed they were ears . . . I have tried to draw one of these heads, but I cannot.

There was a mouth, downwardly curved, like a human mouth in a face that stared ferociously.

The neck on which the head was poised was jointed in three places, almost like the short joints in the leg of a crab. The joints of the limbs I could not see because of the puttee-like straps in which they were swathed, and which formed the only clothing this being wore.

At the time my mind was taken up by the mad impossibility of the creature. I suppose he also was amazed—and with more reason, perhaps, for amazement than we. Only, confound him, he did not show it. We did at least know what had brought about this meeting of incompatible creatures. But conceive how it would seem to decent Londoners, for example, to come upon a couple of living things, as big as men and absolutely unlike any other earthly animals, careering about among the sheep in Hyde Park!

It must have taken him like that.

Imagine us! We were bound hand and foot, fagged and filthy, our beards two inches long, our faces scratched and bloody. Cavor you must imagine

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in his knickerbockers (torn in several places by the bayonet scrub), his Jaeger shirt and old cricket cap, his wiry hair wildly disordered, a tail to every quarter of the heavens. In that blue light his face did not look red, but very dark; his lips and the drying blood upon his hands seemed black. If possible I was in a worse plight than he, on account of the yellow fungus into which I had jumped. Our jackets were unbuttoned, and our shoes had been taken off and lay at our feet. We were sitting with our backs to the queer, bluish light peering at such a monster as Dürer might have invented.

Cavor broke the silence, started to speak, went hoarse, and cleared his throat. Outside began a terrific bellowing, as of a mooncalf in trouble. It ended in a shriek, and everything was still again.

Presently the Selenite turned about, flickered into the shadow, stood for a moment retrospective at the door, and then closed it on us, and once more we were in that murmurous mystery of darkness into which we had awakened.

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XII

MR. CAVOR MAKES SOME SUGGESTIONS

For a time neither of us spoke. To focus all the things we had brought upon ourselves seemed beyond my mental powers.

"They've got us," I said at last.

"It was that fungus."

"Well, if I hadn't taken it we should have fainted and starved."

"We might have found the sphere."

I lost my temper at his persistence and swore to myself. For a time we hated each other in silence. I drummed with my fingers on the floor between my knees and ground the links of my fetters together. Presently I was forced to talk again.

"What do you make of it, anyhow?" I asked humbly.

"They are reasonable creatures—they can make things and do things. Those lights we saw . . ."

He stopped. It was clear he could make nothing of it.

When he spoke again it was to confess. "After all, they are more human than we had a right to expect. I suppose——"

He stopped irritatingly.

"Yes?"

"I suppose anyhow—on any planet, where there is an intelligent animal, it will carry its brain case upward, and have hands and walk erect. . . ."

Presently he broke away in another direction.

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"We are some way in," he said. "I mean—perhaps a couple of thousand feet or more."

"Why?"

"It's cooler. And our voices are so much louder. That faded quality—it has altogether gone. And the feeling in one's ears and throat."

I had not noted that, but I did now.

"The air is denser. We must be some depth—a mile even we may be—inside the moon."

"We never thought of a world inside the moon."

"No."

"How could we?"

"We might have done. Only—one gets into habits of mind."

He thought for a time.

"Now," he said, "it seems such an obvious thing. Of course! The moon must be enormously cavernous with an atmosphere within, and at the centre of its caverns a sea. One knew that the moon had a lower specific gravity than the earth; one knew that it had little air or water outside; one knew, too, that it was sister planet to the earth and that it was unaccountable that it should be different in composition. The inference that it was hollowed out was as clear as day. And yet one never saw it as a fact. Kepler, of course—" His voice had the interest now of a man who has discovered a pretty sequence of reasoning.

"Yes," he said, "Kepler, with his *subvolvani*, was right after all."

"I wish you had taken the trouble to find that out before we came," I said.

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He answered nothing, buzzing to himself softly as he pursued his thoughts. My temper was going. "What do you think has become of the sphere, anyhow?" I asked.

"Lost," he said, like a man who answers an uninteresting question.

"Among those plants?"

"Unless they find it."

"And then?"

"How can I tell?"

"Cavor," I said, with a sort of hysterical bitterness, "things look bright for my Company."

He made no answer.

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed. "Just think of all the trouble we took to get into this pickle! What did we come for? What are we after? What was the moon to us, or we to the moon? We wanted too much, we tried too much. We ought to have started the little things first. It was you proposed the moon! Those Cavorite spring blinds! I am certain we could have worked them for terrestrial purposes. Certain! Did you really understand what I proposed? A steel cylinder——"

"Rubbish!" said Cavor.

We ceased to converse.

For a time Cavor kept up a broken monologue without much help from me.

"If they find it," he began; "if they find it . . . what will they do with it? Well, that's a question! It may be that's *the* question. They won't understand it, anyhow. If they understood that sort of thing they would have come long since to the earth.

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Would they? Why shouldn't they? But they would have sent something— They couldn't keep their hands off such a possibility. No! But they will examine it. Clearly they are intelligent and inquisitive. They will examine it—get inside it—trifle with the studs. Off! . . . That would mean the moon for us for all the rest of our lives. Strange creatures, strange knowledge . . ."

"As for strange knowledge—!" said I, and language failed me.

"Look here, Bedford," said Cavor. "You came on this expedition of your own free will."

"You said to me—'call it prospecting.'"

"There are always risks in prospecting."

"Especially when you do it unarmed and without thinking out every possibility."

"I was so taken up with the sphere. The thing rushed on us and carried us away."

"Rushed on *me*, you mean."

"Rushed on me just as much. How was I to know when I set to work on molecular physics that the business would bring me here—of all places?"

"It's this accursed Science," I cried. "It's the very Devil. The mediæval priests and persecutors were right, and the moderns are all wrong. You tamper with it and it offers you gifts. And directly you take them it knocks you to pieces in some unexpected way. Old passions and new weapons—now it upsets your religion, now it upsets your social ideas, now it whirls you off to desolation and misery!"

"Anyhow, it's no use your quarrelling with me

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now. These creatures—these Selenites—or whatever we choose to call them, have got us tied hand and foot. Whatever temper you choose to go through with it in, you will have to go through with it. . . . We have experiences before us that will need all our coolness."

He paused as if he required my assent. But I sat sulking. "Confound your science!" I said.

"The problem is communication. Gestures, I fear, will be different. Pointing, for example. No creatures but men and monkeys point."

That was too obviously wrong for me. "Pretty nearly every animal," I cried, "points with its eyes or nose."

Cavor meditated over that. "Yes," he said at last, "and we don't. There are such differences! Such differences!

"One might . . . But how can I tell? There is speech. The sounds they make, a sort of fluting and piping. I don't see how we are to imitate that. Is it their speech, that sort of thing? They may have different senses, different means of communication. Of course they are minds and we are minds—there must be something in common. Who knows how far we may not get to an understanding?"

"The things are outside us," I said. "They're more different from us than the strangest animals on earth. They are a different clay. What is the good of talking like this?"

Cavor thought. "I don't see that. Where there are minds, they will have something similar—even though they have been evolved on different planets.

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Of course, if it was a question of instinct—if we or they were no more than animals——"

"Well, are they? They're much more like ants on their hind legs than human beings, and who ever got to any sort of understanding with ants?"

"But these machines and clothing! No, I don't hold with you, Bedford. The difference is wide——"

"It's insurmountable."

"The resemblance must bridge it. I remember reading once a paper by the late Professor Galton on the possibility of communication between the planets. Unhappily at that time it did not seem probable that it would be of any material benefit to me, and I fear I did not give it the attention I should have done—in view of this state of affairs. Yet . . . Now, let me see!

"His idea was to begin with those broad truths that must underlie all conceivable mental existences and establish a basis on those. The great principles of geometry, to begin with. He proposed to take some leading proposition of Euclid's, and show by construction that its truth was known to us; to demonstrate, for example, that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, and that if the equal sides be produced the angles on the other side of the base are equal also; or that the square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle is equal to the sum of the squares on the two other sides. By demonstrating our knowledge of these things we should demonstrate our possession of a reasonable intelligence. . . . Now, suppose I . . . I might draw the geometrical figure with a wet finger or even trace it in the air . . ."

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He fell silent. I sat meditating his words. For a time his wild hope of communication, of interpretation with these weird beings, held me. Then that angry despair that was a part of my exhaustion and physical misery resumed its sway. I perceived with a sudden novel vividness the extraordinary folly of everything I had ever done. "Ass!" I said, "oh, ass, unutterable ass . . . I seem to exist only to go about doing preposterous things. . . . Why did we ever leave the sphere? . . . Hopping about looking for patents and concessions in the craters of the moon! . . . If only we had had the sense to fasten a handkerchief to a stick to show where we had left the sphere!"

I subsided fuming.

"It is clear," meditated Cavor, "they are intelligent. One can hypothecate certain things. As they have not killed us at once they must have ideas of mercy. Mercy! At any rate of restraint. Possibly of intercourse. They may meet us. And this apartment and the glimpses we had of its guardian! These fetters! A high degree of intelligence. . . ."

"I wish to Heaven," cried I, "I'd thought even twice! Plunge after plunge. First one fluky start and then another. It was my confidence in you. Why didn't I stick to my play? That was what I was equal to. That was my world and the life I was made for. I could have finished that play. I'm certain . . . it was a good play. I had the scenario as good as done. Then . . . Conceive it! Leaping to the moon! Practically—I've thrown my life away! That old woman in the inn near Canterbury had better sense."

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I looked up, and stopped in mid-sentence. The darkness had given place to that bluish light again. The door was opening, and several noiseless Selenites were coming into the chamber. I became quite still, staring at their grotesque faces.

Then suddenly my sense of disagreeable strangeness changed to interest. I perceived that the foremost and second carried bowls. One elemental need at least our minds could understand in common. They were bowls of some metal that, like our fetters, looked dark in that bluish light; and each contained a number of whitish fragments. All the cloudy pain and misery that oppressed me rushed together and took the shape of hunger. I eyed these bowls wolfishly. It seemed that at the end of the arms that lowered one towards me were not hands, but a sort of flap and thumb, like the end of an elephant's trunk.

The stuff in the bowl was loose in texture and whitish-brown in color—rather like lumps of some cold soufflé, and it smelt faintly like mushrooms. From a partly divided carcass of a mooncalf that we presently saw I am inclined to believe it must have been mooncalf flesh.

My hands were so tightly chained that I could barely contrive to reach the bowl, but when they saw the effort I made two of them dexterously released one of the turns about my wrist. Their tentacle hands were soft and cold to my skin. I immediately seized a mouthful of the food. It had the same laxness in texture that all organic structures seem to have upon the moon; it tasted rather

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like a *gauffre*, or a damp meringue, but in no way was it disagreeable. I took two other mouthfuls. "I wanted—foo'!" said I, tearing off a still larger piece. . . .

For a time we ate with an utter absence of self-consciousness. We ate and presently drank like tramps in a soup kitchen. Never before, nor since, have I been hungry to the ravenous pitch, and save that I have had this very experience I could never have believed that a quarter of a million of miles out of our proper world, in utter perplexity of soul, surrounded, watched, touched by beings more grotesque and inhuman than the worst creatures of a nightmare, it would be possible for me to eat in utter forgetfulness of all these things. They stood about us, watching us, and ever and again making a slight elusive twittering that stood them, I suppose, in the stead of speech. I did not even shiver at their touch. And when the first zeal of my feeding was over I could note that Cavor too had been eating with the same shameless abandon.

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XIII

EXPERIMENTS IN INTERCOURSE

When at last we had made an end of eating, the Selenites linked our hands closely together again, and then untwisted the chains about our feet and rebound them, so as to give us a limited freedom of movement. Then they unfastened the chains about our waists. To do all this they had to handle us freely, and ever and again one of their queer heads came down close to my face, or a soft tentacle-hand touched my head or neck. I do not remember that I was afraid then or repelled by their proximity. I think that our incurable anthropomorphism made us imagine there were human heads inside their masks. The skin, like everything else, looked bluish, but that was on account of the light, and it was hard and shiny quite in the beetle-wing fashion, not soft or moist or hairy as a vertebrated animal's would be. Along the crest of the head was a low ridge of whitish spines running from back to front, and a much larger ridge curved on each side over the eyes. The Selenite who untied me used his mouth to help his hands.

"They seem to be releasing us," said Cavor. "Remember, we are on the moon! Make no sudden movements!"

"Are you going to try that geometry?"

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"If I get a chance. But, of course, they may make an advance first."

We remained passive, and the Selenites having finished their arrangements stood back from us, and seemed to be looking at us. I say seemed to be, because as their eyes were at the sides and not in front one had the same difficulty in determining the direction in which they were looking as one has in the case of a hen or a fish. They conversed with one another in their reedy tones that seemed to me impossible to imitate or define. The door behind us opened wider, and glancing over my shoulder I saw a vague large space beyond in which a little crowd of Selenites were standing. They seemed a curiously miscellaneous rabble.

"Do they want us to imitate those sounds?" I asked Cavor.

"I don't think so," he said.

"It seems to me that they are trying to make us understand something."

"I can't make anything of their gestures. Do you notice this one, who is worrying with his head like a man with an uncomfortable collar?"

"Let us shake our heads at him."

We did that, and finding it ineffectual, attempted an imitation of the Selenite's movements. That seemed to interest them. At any rate, they all set up the same movement. But as that seemed to lead to nothing we desisted at last, and so did they, and fell into a piping argument among themselves. Then one of them, shorter and very much thicker than the others, and with a particularly wide mouth, squatted

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down suddenly beside Cavor, and put his hands and feet in the same posture as Cavor's were bound, and then by a dexterous movement stood up.

"Cavor," I shouted, "they want us to get up!"

He stared open-mouthed. "That's it!" he said.

And with much heaving and grunting, because our hands were tied together, we contrived to struggle to our feet. The Selenites made way for our elephantine heavings, and seemed to twitter more volubly. As soon as we were on our feet the thick-set Selenite came and patted each of our faces with his tentacles, and walked towards the open doorway. That also was plain enough and we followed him. We saw that four of the Selenites standing in the doorway were much taller than the others, and clothed in the same manner as those we had seen in the crater, namely, with spiked, round helmets and cylindrical body-cases, and that each of the four carried a goad, with spike and guard made of that same dull-looking metal as the bowls. These four closed about us, one on either side of each of us, as we emerged from our chamber into the cavern from which the light had come.

We did not get our impression of that cavern all at once. Our attention was taken up by the movements and attitudes of the Selenites immediately about us, and by the necessity of controlling our motion, lest we should startle and alarm them and ourselves by some excessive stride. In front of us was the short, thick-set being who had solved the problem of asking us to get up, moving with gestures that seemed, almost all of them, intelligible to us,

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inviting us to follow him. His spout-like face turned from one of us to the other with a quickness that was clearly interrogative. For a time, I say, we were taken up with these things.

But at last the great place that formed a background to our movements asserted itself. It became apparent that the source of much at least of the tumult of sounds which had filled our ears ever since we had recovered from the stupefaction of the fungus was a vast mass of machinery in active movement, whose flying and whirling parts were visible indistinctly over the heads and between the bodies of the Selenites who walked about us. And not only did the web of sounds that filled the air proceed from this mechanism, but also the peculiar blue light that irradiated the whole place. We had taken it as a natural thing that a subterranean cavern should be artificially lit, and even now, though the fact was patent to my eyes, I did not really grasp its import until presently the darkness came. The meaning and structure of this huge apparatus I cannot explain, because we neither of us learned what it was for or how it worked. One after another, big shafts of metal flung out and up from its centre, their heads travelling in what seemed to me to be a parabolic path; each dropped a sort of dangling arm as it rose towards the apex of its flight and plunged down into a vertical cylinder, forcing this down before it. About it moved the shapes of tenders, little figures that seemed vaguely different from the beings about us. As each of the three dangling arms of the machine plunged down there was a clank and then a roar-

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ing, and out of the top of the vertical cylinder came pouring this incandescent substance, that lit the place and ran over as milk runs over a boiling pot and dripped luminously into a tank of light below. It was a cold blue light, a sort of phosphorescent glow, but infinitely brighter, and from the tanks into which it fell it ran in conduits athwart the cavern.

Thud, thud, thud, thud, came the sweeping arms of this unintelligible apparatus, and the light substance hissed and poured. At first the thing seemed only reasonably large and near to us; and then I saw how exceedingly little the Selenites upon it seemed, and I realised the full immensity of cavern and machine. I looked from this tremendous affair to the faces of the Selenites with a new respect. I stopped, and Cavor stopped, and stared at this thunderous engine.

"But this is stupendous!" I said. "What can it be for?"

Cavor's blue-lit face was full of an intelligent respect. "I can't dream! Surely these beings—Men could not make a thing like that! Look at those arms: are they on connecting rods?"

The thick-set Selenite had gone some paces unheeded. He came back and stood between us and the great machine. I avoided seeing him, because I guessed somehow that his idea was to beckon us onward. He walked away in the direction he wished us to go, and turned and came back, and flicked our faces to attract our attention.

Cavor and I looked at each other.

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"Cannot we show him we are interested in the machine?" I said.

"Yes," said Cavor. "We'll try that." He turned to our guide, and smiled, and pointed to the machine, and pointed again, and then to his head, and then to the machine. By some defect of reasoning he seemed to imagine that broken English might help these gestures. "Me look 'im," he said; "me think 'im very much. Yes."

His behaviour seemed to check the Selenites in their desire for our progress for a moment. They faced one another, their queer heads moved, the twittering voices came quick and liquid. Then one of them, a lean, tall creature, with a sort of mantle added to the puttee in which the others were dressed, twisted his elephant trunk of a hand about Cavor's waist, and pulled him gently to follow our guide, who again went on ahead.

Cavor resisted. "We may just as well begin explaining ourselves now! They may think we are new animals, a new sort of mooncalf, perhaps! It is most important that we should show an intelligent interest from the outset."

He began to shake his head violently. "No, no," he said; "me not come on one minute. Me look at 'im."

"Isn't there some geometrical point you might bring in *à propos* of that affair?" I suggested, as the Selenites conferred again.

"Possibly a parabolic—" he began.

He yelled loudly and leaped six feet or more!

One of the four armed moon-men had pricked him with a goad!

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I turned on the goad-bearer behind me with a swift, threatening gesture and he started back. This and Cavor's sudden shout and leap clearly astonished all the Selenites. They receded hastily, facing us. For one of those moments that seem to last for ever we stood in angry protest, with a scattered semicircle of these inhuman beings about us.

"He pricked me!" said Cavor, with a catching of the voice.

"I saw him," I answered.

"Confound it!" I said to the Selenites; "we're not going to stand that! What on earth do you take us for?"

I glanced quickly right and left. Far away across the blue wilderness of cavern I saw a number of other Selenites running towards us; broad and slender they were and one with a larger head than the others. The cavern spread wide and low, and receded in every direction into darkness. Its roof, I remember, seemed to bulge down as if with the weight of the vast thickness of rocks that prisoned us. There was no way out of it—no way out of it. Above, below, in every direction, was the unknown, and these inhuman creatures with goads and gestures confronting us, and we two unsupported men!

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XIV

THE GIDDY BRIDGE

JUST for a moment that hostile pause endured. I suppose that both we and the Selenites did some very rapid thinking. My clearest impression was that there was nothing to put my back against and that we were bound to be surrounded and killed. The overwhelming folly of our presence there loomed over me in black, enormous reproach. Why had I ever launched myself on this mad, inhuman expedition?

Cavor came to my side and laid his hand on my arm. His pale and terrified face was ghastly in the blue light.

"We can't do anything," he said. "It's a mistake. They don't understand. We must go—as they want us to go."

I looked down at him, and then at the fresh Selenites who were coming to help their fellows. "If I had my hands free——"

"It's no use," he panted.

"No."

"We'll go."

And he turned about and led the way in the direction that had been indicated for us.

I followed, trying to look as subdued as possible, and feeling at the chains about my wrists. My blood was boiling. I noted nothing more of that cavern, though it seemed to take a long time before we had marched across it, or if I noted anything I

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forgot it as I saw it. My thoughts were concentrated I think, upon my chains and the Selenites, and particularly upon the helmeted ones with the goads. At first they marched parallel with us, and at a respectful distance, but presently they were overtaken by three others, and then they drew nearer until they were within arms' length again. I winced like a spurred horse as they came near to us. The shorter, thicker Selenite marched at first on our right flank, but presently came in front of us again.

How well the picture of that grouping has bitten into my brain: the back of Cavor's downcast head just in front of me, and the dejected droop of his shoulders, and our guide's gaping visage, perpetually jerking about him, and the goad-bearers on each side, watchful yet open-mouthed—a blue monochrome. And after all, I do remember one other thing besides the purely personal affair, which is that a sort of gutter came presently across the floor of the cavern and then ran along by the side of the path of rock we followed. It was full of that same bright blue luminous stuff that flowed out of the great machine. I walked close beside it, and I can testify it radiated not a particle of heat. It was brightly shining, and yet it was neither warmer nor colder than anything else in the cavern.

Clang, clang, clang, we passed under the thumping levers of another vast machine, and so came at last to a wide tunnel, in which we could even hear the pad, pad of our shoeless feet, and which, save for the trickling thread of blue to the right of us, was quite unlit. The shadows made gigantic traves-

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ties of our shapes and those of the Selenites on the irregular wall and roof of the tunnel. Ever and again crystals in the walls scintillated like gems, ever and again the passage expanded into a stalactitic cavern, or gave off branches that vanished into darkness.

We seemed to be marching down that tunnel for a long time. "Trickle, trickle," went the flowing light very softly, and our footfalls and their echoes made an irregular paddle, paddle. My mind settled down to the question of my chains. If I were to slip off one turn *so*, and then to twist it *so*. . . .

If I tried to do it very gradually, would they see I was slipping my wrist out of the looser turn? If they did, what would they do?

"Bedford," said Cavor, "it goes down. It keeps on going down."

His remark roused me from my sullen preoccupation. "If they wanted to kill us," he said, dropping back to come level with me, "there is no reason why they should not have done it."

"No," I admitted; "that's true."

"They don't understand us," he said; "they think we are merely strange animals, some wild sort of mooncalf birth, perhaps. It will be only when they observe us better that they will begin to think we have minds——"

"When you trace those geometrical problems?" said I.

"It may be that."

We tramped on for a space.

"You see," said Cavor, "these may be Selenites of a lower class."

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"The infernal fools," said I viciously, glancing at their exasperating faces.

"If we endure what they do to us——"

"We've got to endure it," said I.

"There may be others less stupid. This is the mere outer fringe of their world. It must go down and down, cavern, passage, tunnel, down at last to the sea, hundreds of miles below."

His words made me think of the mile or so of rock and tunnel that might be over our heads already. It was like a weight dropping on my shoulders. "Away from the sun and air," I said. "Even a mine half a mile deep is stuffy."

"This is not—anyhow. It's probable— Ventilation! The air would blow from the dark side of the moon to the sunlit, and all the carbonic acid would well out there and feed those plants. Up this tunnel, for example—there is quite a breeze. And what a world it must be! The earnest we have in that shaft, and those machines——"

"And the goad," I said. "Don't forget the goad!"

He walked a little in front of me for a time.

"Even that goad—" he said.

"Well?"

"I was angry at the time. But—it was perhaps necessary we should get on. They have different skins and probably different nerves. They may not understand our objection—just as a being from Mars might not like our earthly habit of nudging."

"They'd better be careful how they nudge me."

"And about that geometry. After all, their way

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is a way of understanding too. They begin with the elements of life and not of thought. Food. Compulsion. Pain. They strike at fundamentals."

"There's no doubt about that," I said.

He went on to talk of the enormous and wonderful world into which we were being taken. I realised slowly from his tone that even now he was not absolutely in despair at the prospect of going ever deeper into this inhuman planet burrow. His mind ran on machines and invention to the exclusion of a thousand dark things that beset me. It wasn't that he intended to make any use of these things: he simply wanted to know them.

"After all," he said, "this is a tremendous occasion. It is the meeting of two worlds. What are we going to see? Think of what is below us here."

"We shan't see much if the light isn't better," I remarked.

"This is only the outer crust. Down below— On this scale— There will be everything. Do you notice how different they seem one from another? The story we shall take back!"

"Some rare sort of animal," I said, "might comfort himself in that way while they were bringing him to the Zoo. . . . It doesn't follow that we are going to be shown all these things."

"When they find we have reasonable minds," said Cavor, "they will want to learn about the earth. Even if they have no generous emotions they will teach in order to learn. . . . And the things they must know! The unanticipated things!"

He went on to speculate on the possibility of their

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knowing things he had never hoped to learn on earth, speculating in that way, with a raw wound from that goad already in his skin! Much that he said I forgot, for my attention was drawn to the fact that the tunnel along which we had been marching was opening out wider and wider. We seemed from the feeling of the air to be going out into a huge space. But how big the space might really be we could not tell, because it was unlit. Our little stream of light ran in a dwindling thread and vanished far ahead. Presently the rocky walls had disappeared altogether on either hand. There was nothing to be seen but the path in front of us and the trickling, hurrying rivulet of blue phosphorescence. The figures of Cavor and the guiding Selenite marched before me; the sides of their legs and heads that were towards the rivulet were clear and bright blue; their darkened sides, now that the reflection of the tunnel wall no longer lit them, merged indistinguishably in the darkness beyond.

And soon I perceived that we were approaching a declivity of some sort, because the little blue stream dipped suddenly out of sight.

In another moment, as it seemed, we had reached the edge. The shining stream gave one meander of hesitation and then rushed over. It fell to a depth at which the sound of its descent was absolutely lost to us. Far below was a bluish glow, a sort of blue mist. And the darkness the stream dropped out of became utterly void and black, save that a thing like a plank projected from the edge of the cliff and stretched out and faded and vanished alto-

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gether. There was a warm air blowing up out of the gulf.

For a moment Cavor and I stood as near the edge as we dared peering into a blue-tinged profundity. And then our guide was pulling at my arm.

He left me and walked to the end of that plank and stepped upon it, looking back. When he perceived we watched him, he turned about and went on over it, walking as surely as though he was on firm earth. For a moment his form was distinct, then he became a blue blur, and vanished into the obscurity. I was aware of some vague shape looming darkly out of the black.

There was a pause. "Surely— !" said Cavor.

One of the other Selenites walked a few paces out upon the plank and turned and looked back at us unconcernedly. The others stood ready to follow us. Our guide's expectant figure reappeared. He was returning to see why we had not advanced.

"What is that beyond there?" I asked.

"I can't see."

"We can't cross this at any price," said I.

"I could not go three steps on it," said Cavor, "even with my hands free."

We looked at each other's drawn faces in blank consternation.

"They can't know what it is to be giddy," said Cavor.

"It's quite impossible for us to walk that plank."

"I don't believe they see as we do. I've been watching them. I wonder if they know this is simply blackness for us. How can we make them understand?"

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"Anyhow, we must make them understand."

I think we said these things with a vague half hope the Selenites might somehow understand. I knew quite clearly that all that was needed was an explanation. Then, as I saw their faces, I realised that an explanation was impossible. Just here it was that our resemblances were not going to bridge our differences. Well, I wasn't going to walk the plank anyhow. I slipped one wrist very quickly out of the coil of chain that was loose, and then began to twist both in opposite directions. I was standing nearest to the bridge, and as I did this two of the Selenites laid hold of me and pulled me gently towards it.

I shook my head violently. "No go," I said, "no use. You don't understand."

Another Selenite added his compulsion. I was forced to step forward.

"I've got an idea," said Cavor, but I knew his ideas.

"Look here!" I exclaimed to the Selenites. "Steady on! It's all very well for you——"

I swung round upon my heel; I burst out into curses. For one of the armed Selenites had stabbed me behind with his goad.

I wrenched my wrist free from the little tentacles that held them. I turned on the goad-bearer. "Confound you!" I cried. "I've warned you of that. What on earth do you think I'm made of, to stick that into me? If you touch me again——!"

By way of answer he pricked me forthwith.

I heard Cavor's voice in alarm and entreaty. Even

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then I think he wanted to compromise with these creatures. "I say, Bedford," he cried, "I know a way!" But the sting of that second stab seemed to set free some pent-up reserve of energy in my being. Instantly a link of the wrist chain snapped, and with it snapped all considerations that had held us unresisting in the hands of these moon-creatures. For that second, at least, I was mad with fear and anger. I took no thought of consequences. I hit straight out at the face of the thing with the goad. The chain was twisted round my fist. . . .

There came another of those beastly surprises of which the moon world is full.

My mailed hand seemed to go clean through him. He smashed like some sort of sweetmeat with liquid in it. He broke right in. He squelched and splashed. It was like hitting a damp toadstool. The flimsy body went spinning a dozen yards and fell with a flabby impact. I was astonished. I was incredulous that any living thing could be so flimsy. For an instant I could have believed the whole thing a dream.

Then it had become real and imminent again. Neither Cavor nor the other Selenites seemed to have done anything from the time when I had turned about to the time when the dead Selenite hit the ground. Every one stood back from us two, every one alert. That arrest seemed to last at least a second after the Selenite was down. Every one must have been taking the thing in. I seem to remember myself standing with my arm half retracted, trying also to take it in. "What next?" clamoured

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my brain; "what next?" Then in a moment every one was moving!

I perceived we must get our chains loose, and that before we could do this these Selenites had to be beaten off. I faced towards the group of the three goad-bearers. Instantly one threw his goad at me. It swished over my head, and I suppose went flying into the abyss behind.

I leaped right at him with all my might as the goad flew over me. He turned to run as I jumped, and I bore him to the ground, came down right upon him, and slipped upon his smashed body and fell. He seemed to wriggle under my feet.

I came into a sitting position, and on every hand the blue backs of the Selenites were receding into the darkness. I bent a link by main force and untwisted the chain that had hampered me about the ankles, and sprang to my feet, with the chain in my hand. Another goad, flung javelin-wise, whistled by me, and I made a rush towards the darkness out of which it had come. Then I turned back towards Cavor, who was still standing in the light of the rivulet near the gulf, convulsively busy with his wrists, and at the same time jabbering nonsense about his idea.

"Come on!" I cried.

"My hands!" he answered.

Then, realising that I dared not run back to him because my ill-calculated steps might carry me over the edge, he came shuffling towards me, with his hands held out before him.

I gripped his chains at once to unfasten them.

"Where are they?" he panted.

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"Run away. They'll come back. They're throwing things! Which way shall we go?"

"By the light. To that tunnel. Eh?"

"Yes," said I, and his hands were free.

I dropped on my knees and fell to work on his ankle bonds. Whack came something—I know not what—and splashed the livid streamlet into drops about us. Far away on our right a piping and whistling began.

I whipped the chain off his feet, and put it in his hand. "Hit with that!" I said, and without waiting for an answer set off in big bounds along the path by which we had come. I had a nasty feeling that these things could jump out of the darkness on to my back. I heard the impact of Cavor's leaps come following after me.

We ran in vast strides. But that running, you must understand, was an altogether different thing from any running on earth. On earth one leaps and almost instantly hits the ground again; but on the moon, because of its weaker pull, one shot through the air for several seconds before one came to earth. In spite of our violent hurry this gave an effect of long pauses, pauses in which one might have counted seven or eight. Step, and one soared off. All sorts of questions ran through my mind: "Where are the Selenites? What will they do? Shall we ever get to that tunnel? Is Cavor far behind? Are they likely to cut him off?" Then whack, stride, and off again for another step.

I saw a Selenite running in front of me, his legs going exactly as a man's would go on earth, saw him

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glance over his shoulder, and heard him shriek as he ran aside out of my way into the darkness. He was, I think, our guide, but I am not sure. Then in another vast stride the walls of rock had come into view on either hand, and in two more strides I was in the tunnel, and tempering my pace to its low roof. I went on to a bend, then stopped and turned back, and plug, plug, plug, Cavor came into view, splashing into the stream of blue light at every stride, and grew larger and blundered into me. We stood clutching each other. For a moment, at least, we had shaken off our captors and were alone.

We were both very much out of breath. We spoke in panting, broken sentences.

"You spoiled it all!" panted Cavor.

"Nonsense," I cried. "It was that or death."

"What are we to do?"

"Hide."

"How can we?"

"It's dark enough."

"But where?"

"Up one of these side caverns."

"And then?"

"Think."

"Right—come on."

We strode on, and presently came to a radiating, dark cavern. Cavor was in front. He hesitated, and chose a black mouth that seemed to promise good hiding. He went towards it and turned.

"It's dark," he said.

"Your legs and feet will light us. You're wet with that luminous stuff."

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"But——"

A tumult of sounds, and in particular a sound like a clanging gong became audible advancing up the main tunnel. It was horribly suggestive of a tumultuous pursuit. We made a bolt for the unlit cavern forthwith. As we ran our way was lit by the irradiation of Cavor's legs. "It's lucky," I panted, "they took off our boots, or we should fill this place with clatter." On we rushed, taking the smallest steps we could to avoid striking the roof of the cavern. After a time we seemed to be gaining on the uproar. It became muffled, it dwindled, it died away.

I stopped and looked back, and I heard the pad, pad of Cavor's feet receding. Then he stopped also. "Bedford," he whispered, "there's a sort of light in front of us."

I looked, and at first could see nothing. Then I perceived his head and shoulders dimly outlined against a fainter darkness. I saw also that this mitigation of the darkness was not blue as all the other light within the moon had been, but a pallid grey, a very vague faint white, the daylight colour. Cavor noted this difference as soon or sooner than I did, and I think, too, that it filled him with much the same wild hope.

"Bedford," he whispered, and his voice trembled, "that light—it is possible——"

He did not dare to say the thing he hoped. There came a pause. Suddenly I knew by the sound of his feet that he was striding towards that pallor. I followed him with a beating heart.

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XV

POINTS OF VIEW

THE light grew stronger as we advanced. In a little time it was nearly as strong as the phosphorescence on Cavor's legs. Our tunnel was expanding into a cavern and this new light was at the farther end of it. I perceived something that set my hopes leaping and bounding.

"Cavor," I said, "it comes from above! I am certain it comes from above!"

He made no answer, but hurried on.

Indisputably it was a grey light, a silvery light.

In another moment we were beneath it. It filtered down through a chink in the walls of the cavern, and as I stared up, drip, came a huge drop of water upon my face. I started, and stood aside; drip, fell another drop quite audibly on the rocky floor.

"Cavor," I said, "if one of us lifts the other, he can reach that crack!"

"I'll lift you," he said, and incontinently hoisted me as though I were a baby.

I thrust an arm into the crack, and just at my finger-tips found a little ledge by which I could hold. The white light was very much brighter now. I pulled myself up by two fingers with scarcely an effort, though on earth I weigh twelve stone, reached to a still higher corner of rock, and so got my feet on the narrow ledge. I stood up and searched up the

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rocks with my fingers; the cleft broadened out upwardly. "It's climbable," I said to Cavor. "Can you jump up to my hand if I hold it down to you?"

I wedged myself between the sides of the cleft, rested knee and foot on the ledge, and extended a hand. I could not see Cavor, but I could hear the rustle of his movements as he crouched to spring. Then whack, and he was hanging to my arm—and no heavier than a kitten! I lugged him up until he had a hand on my ledge and could release me.

"Confound it!" I said, "any one could be a mountaineer on the moon," and so set myself in earnest to climbing. For a few minutes I clambered steadily, and then I looked up again. The cleft opened out gradually, and the light was brighter. Only——

It was not daylight after all!

In another moment I could see what it was, and at the sight I could have beaten my head against the rocks with disappointment. For I beheld simply an irregularly sloping open space, and all over its slanting floor stood a forest of little club-shaped fungi, each shining gloriously with that pinkish, silvery light. For a moment I stared at their soft radiance, then sprang forward and upward among them. I plucked up half-a-dozen and flung them against the rocks, and then sat down, laughing bitterly, as Cavor's ruddy face came into view.

"It's phosphorescence again," I said. "No need to hurry. Sit down and make yourself at home." And as he spluttered over our disappointment I began to fling more of these growths into the cleft.

"I thought it was daylight," he said.

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"Daylight!" cried I. "Daybreak, sunset, clouds, and windy skies! Shall we ever see such things again?"

As I spoke a little picture of our world seemed to rise before me, bright and dainty and clear, like the background of some old Italian picture. "The sky that changes, and the sea that changes, and the hills and the green trees, and the towns and cities shining in the sun. Think of a wet roof at sunset, Cavor! Think of the windows of a westward house!"

He made no answer.

"Here we are burrowing in this beastly world that isn't a world, with its inky ocean hidden in some abominable blackness below, and outside that torrid day and that death stillness of night. And all those things that are chasing us now, beastly men of leather—insect men, that come out of a nightmare! After all, they're right! What business have we here, smashing them and disturbing their world? For all we know the whole planet is up and after us already. In a minute we may hear them whimpering and their gongs going. What are we to do? Where are we to go? Here we are as comfortable as snakes from Jamrach's loose in a Surbiton villa!"

"It was your fault," said Cavor.

"My fault!" I shouted. "Good Lord!"

"I had an idea."

"Curse your ideas!"

"If we had refused to budge——"

"Under those goads?"

"Yes. They would have carried us."

"Over that bridge?"

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"Yes. They must have carried us from outside."

"I'd rather be carried by a fly across a ceiling. Good Heavens!"

I resumed my destruction of the fungi. Then suddenly I saw something that struck me even then.

"Cavor," I said, "these chains are of gold!"

He was thinking intently, with his hands gripping his cheeks. He turned his head slowly and stared at me and, when I had repeated my words, at the twisted chain about his right hand. "So they are," he said, "so they are." His face lost its transitory interest even as he looked. He hesitated for a moment, then went on with his interrupted meditation. I sat for a space puzzling over the fact that I had only just observed this, until I considered the blue light in which we had been and which had taken all the colour out of the metal. And from that discovery I started upon a train of thought that carried me wide and far. I forgot that I had just been asking what business we had in the moon. Gold . . .

It was Cavor who spoke first. "It seems to me that there are two courses open to us."

"Well?"

"Either we can attempt to make our way—fight our way if necessary—out to the exterior and then hunt for our sphere until either we find it or the cold of the night comes to kill us, or else——"

He paused. "Yes," I said, though I knew what was coming.

"We might attempt once more to establish some sort of understanding with the minds of the people in the moon."

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"So far as I'm concerned—it's the first."

"I doubt."

"I don't."

"You see," said Cavor, "I do not think we can judge the Selenites by what we have seen of them. Their central world, their civilised world, will be far below in the profounder caverns about their sea. This region of the crust in which we are is an outlying district, a pastoral region. At least, that is my interpretation. These Selenites we have seen may be only the equivalent of cowboys and engine-tenders. Their use of goads—in all probability mooncalf goads—the lack of imagination they show in expecting us to be able to do just what they can do, their indisputable brutality, all seem to point to something of that sort. But if we endured——"

"Neither of us could endure a six-inch plank across the bottomless pit for very long."

"No," said Cavor, "but then——"

"I *won't*," I said.

He discovered a new line of possibilities. "Well, suppose we got ourselves into some corner, where we could defend ourselves against these hinds and labourers. If, for example, we could hold out for a week or so, it is probable that the news of our appearance would filter down to the more intelligent and populous parts——"

"If they exist."

"They must exist, or whence come those tremendous machines?"

"That's possible, but it's the worst of the two chances."

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"We might write up inscriptions on walls——"

"How do we know their eyes could see the marks we made?"

"If we cut them——"

"That's possible of course."

I took up a new thread of thought. "After all," I said, "I suppose you don't think these Selenites so infinitely wiser than men?"

"They must know a lot more—or at least a lot of different things."

"Yes, but—" I hesitated. "I think you'll admit, Cavor, that you're rather an exceptional man."

"How?"

"Well, you—you're a rather lonely man; have been, that is. You haven't married."

"Never wanted to. But why?"

"And you never grew richer than you happened to be?"

"Never wanted that either."

"You've just rooted after knowledge."

"Well, a certain curiosity is natural——"

"You think so. That's just it. You think every other mind wants to know. I remember once, when I asked you why you conducted all these researches, you said you wanted your F.R.S., and to have the stuff called Cavorite, and things like that. You know perfectly well you didn't do it for that; but at the time my question took you by surprise, and you felt you ought to have something to look like a motive. Really, you conducted researches because you had to. It's your twist."

"Perhaps it is——"

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"It isn't one man in a million has that twist. Most men want—well, various things, but very few want knowledge for its own sake. I don't, I know perfectly well. Now these Selenites seem to be a driving, busy sort of people, but how do you know that even the most intelligent will take an interest in us or our world? I don't believe they'll even know we have a world. They never come out at night—they'd freeze if they did. They've probably never seen any heavenly body at all except blazing sun. How are they to know there is another world? What does it matter to them if they do? Well, even if they have had a glimpse of a few stars or even of the earth crescent, what of that? Why should people living inside a planet trouble to observe that sort of thing? Men wouldn't have done it except for the seasons and sailing; why should the moon people? . . .

"Well, suppose there are a few philosophers like yourself. They are just the very Selenites who'll never hear of our existence. Suppose a Selenite had dropped on the earth when you were at Lympne; you'd have been the last man in the world to hear he had come. You never read a newspaper. You see the chances against you. Well, it's for these chances we're sitting here doing nothing while precious time is flying. I tell you we've got into a fix. We've come unarmed, we've lost our sphere, we've got no food, we've shown ourselves to the Selenites and made them think we're strange, strong, dangerous animals, and unless these Selenites are perfect fools they'll set about now and hunt us till they find us, and when

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they find us they'll take us if they can and kill us if they can't, and that's the end of the matter. After they take us they'll probably kill us through some misunderstanding. After we're done for they may discuss us, perhaps, but we sha'n't get much fun out of that."

"Go on."

"On the other hand, here's gold knocking about like cast-iron at home. If only we can get some of it back, if only we can find our sphere again before they do and get back, then——"

"Yes?"

"We might put the thing on a sounder footing. Come back in a bigger sphere with guns."

"Good Lord!" cried Cavor, as though the idea was horrible.

I shied another luminous fungus down the cleft.

"Look here, Cavor," I said, "I've half the voting power anyhow in this affair, and this is a case for a practical man. I'm a practical man, and you are not. I'm not going to trust to Selenites and geometrical diagrams again if I can help it. . . . That's all. Get back. Drop all this secrecy—or most of it. And come again."

He reflected. "When I came to the moon," he said, "I ought to have come alone."

"The question before the meeting," I said, "is how to get back to the sphere."

For a time we nursed our knees in silence. Then he seemed to decide to accept my reasons.

"I think," he said, "one can get data. It is clear that, while the sun is on this side of the moon, the

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air will be blowing through this planet sponge from the dark side hither. On this side, at any rate, the air will be expanding and flowing out of the moon caverns into the crater. . . . Very well, there's a draught here."

"So there is."

"And that means that this is not a dead end; somewhere behind us this cleft goes on and up. The draught is blowing up, and that is the way we have to go. If we try to get up any sort of chimney or gully there is, we shall not only get out of these passages where they are hunting for us——"

"But suppose the gully is too narrow."

"We'll come down again."

"Ssh!" I said, suddenly; "what's that?"

We listened. At first it was an indistinct murmur, and then one picked out the clang of a gong. "They must think we are mooncalves," said I, "to be frightened at that."

"They're coming along that passage," said Cavor. "They must be."

"They'll not think of the cleft. They'll go past."

I listened again for a space. "This time," I whispered, "they're likely to have some sort of weapon."

Then suddenly I sprang to my feet. "Good heavens, Cavor!" I cried. "But they *will*. They'll see the fungi I have been pitching down. They'll——"

I didn't finish my sentence. I turned about and made a leap over the fungus-tops towards the upper end of the cavity. I saw that the space turned upwards and became a draughty cleft again, ascending

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to impenetrable darkness. I was about to clamber up into this, and then with a happy inspiration turned back.

"What are you doing?" asked Cavor.

"Go on!" said I, and went back and got two of the shining fungi, and putting one into the breast pocket of my flannel jacket so that it stuck out to light our climbing, went back with the other for Cavor. The noise of the Selenites was now so loud that it seemed they must be already beneath the cleft. But it might be they would have difficulty in clambering into it, or might hesitate to ascend it against our possible resistance. At any rate we had now the comforting knowledge of the enormous muscular superiority that was the gift of our birth on another planet. The next moment I was clambering with gigantic vigour after Cavor's blue-lit heels.

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XVI

THE FIGHT IN THE CAVE OF THE MOON BUTCHERS

I DO not know how far we clambered before we came to the grating. It may be we ascended only a few hundred feet, but at the time it seemed to me we might have hauled and jammed and hopped and wedged ourselves through a mile or more of vertical ascent. Whenever I recall that time there comes into my head the heavy clank of our golden chains that followed every movement. Very soon my knuckles and knees were raw, and I had a bruise on one cheek. After a time the first violence of our efforts diminished, and our movements became more deliberate and less painful.

The noise of the pursuing Selenites had died away altogether. It seemed almost as if they had not traced us up the crack after all, in spite of the telltale heap of broken fungi that must have lain beneath it. At times the cleft narrowed so much that we could scarce squeeze into it, at others it expanded into great drusy cavities studded with prickly crystals, or thickly beset with dull, shining fungoid pimples. Sometimes it twisted spirally and at other times slanted down nearly to the horizontal direction. Ever and again there was the intermittent drip and trickle of water by us. Once or twice it seemed to us that small living things had rustled out of our

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reach, but what they were we never saw. They may have been venomous beasts for all I know, but they did us no harm, and we were now tuned to a pitch when a weird creeping thing more or less mattered little. And at last, far above came the familiar bluish light again, and then we saw that it filtered through a grating that barred our way.

We whispered as we pointed this out to each other and became more and more cautious in our ascent. Presently we were close under the grating, and by pressing my face against its bars I could see a limited portion of the cavern beyond. It was clearly a large space, and lit no doubt by some rivulet of the same blue light that we had seen flow from the beating machinery. An intermittent trickle of water dropped ever and again between the bars near my face.

My first endeavour was naturally to see what might be upon the floor of the cavern, but our grating lay in a depression whose rim hid all this from our eyes. Our foiled attention then fell back upon the suggestion of the various sounds we heard, and presently my eye caught a number of faint shadows that played across the dim roof, far overhead.

Indisputably there were several Selenites, perhaps a considerable number in this space, for we could hear the noises of their intercourse and faint sounds that I identified as their footfalls. There was also a succession of regularly repeated sounds, chid, chid, chid, which began and ceased, suggestive of a knife or spade hacking at some soft substance. Then came a clank as of chains, a whistle and a rumble as of a truck running over a hollowed place, and then

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again that chid, chid, chid, resumed. The shadows told of shapes that moved quickly and rhythmically in agreement with that regular sound, and rested when it ceased.

We put our heads close together and began to discuss these things in noiseless whispers.

"They are occupied," I said; "they are occupied in some way."

"Yes."

"They're not seeking us or thinking of us."

"Perhaps they have not heard of us."

"Those others are hunting about below. If suddenly we appeared here——"

We looked at each other.

"There might be a chance to parley," said Cavor.

"No," I said, "not as we are."

For a space we remained, each occupied with his own thoughts.

Chid, chid, chid went the chipping, and the shadows moved to and fro.

I looked at the grating. "It's flimsy," I said. "We might bend two of the bars and crawl through."

We wasted a little time in vague discussion. Then I took one of the bars in both hands, and got my feet up against the rock until they were almost on a level with my head, and so thrust against the bar. It bent so suddenly that I almost slipped. I clambered about and bent the adjacent bar in the opposite direction, and then took the luminous fungus from my pocket and dropped it down the fissure.

"Don't do anything hastily," whispered Cavor,

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as I twisted myself up through the opening I had enlarged. I had a glimpse of busy figures as I came through the grating, and immediately bent down, so that the rim of the depression in which the grating lay hid me from their eyes, and so lay flat, signalling advice to Cavor as he also prepared to come through. Presently we were side by side in the depression, peering over the edge at the cavern and its occupants.

It was a much larger cavern than we had supposed from our first glimpse of it, and we looked up from the lowest portion of its sloping floor. It widened out as it receded from us, and its roof came down and hid the remoter portion altogether. Lying in a line along its length, vanishing at last far away in that tremendous perspective, were a number of huge shapes, huge pallid hulls, upon which the Selenites were busy. At first they seemed big white cylinders of vague import. Then I noted the heads upon them lying towards us, eyeless and skinless like the heads of sheep at a butcher's, and perceived they were the carcasses of mooncalves being cut up, much as the crew of a whaler might cut up a moored whale. They were cutting off the flesh in strips, and on some of the farther trunks the white ribs were showing. It was the sound of their hatchets that made that chid, chid, chid. Some distance away a thing like a trolley, cable-drawn and loaded with chunks of lax meat, was running up the slope of the cavern floor. That enormous busy avenue of hulls that were destined to be food gave us a sense of the vast populousness of the moon world second only to the effect of our first glimpse down the shaft.

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It seemed to me at first that the Selenites must be standing on trestle-supported planks,* and then I saw that the planks and supports and the hatchets were really of the same leaden hue as my fetters had seemed before white light came to bear on them. A number of very thick-looking crowbars lay about the floor and had apparently assisted to turn the dead mooncalf over on its side. They were perhaps six feet long, with shaped handles; very tempting looking weapons. The whole place was lit by three transverse streams of the blue fluid.

We lay for a long time noting all these things in silence. "Well?" said Cavor at last.

I crouched lower and turned to him. I had come upon a brilliant idea. "Unless they lowered those bodies by a crane," I said, "we must be nearer the surface than I thought."

"Why?"

"The mooncalf doesn't hop and it hasn't got wings."

He peered over the edge of the hollow again. "I wonder, now—" he began. "After all we have never gone far from the surface."

I stopped him by a grip on his arm. I had heard a noise from the cleft below us!

We twisted ourselves about and lay as still as death, with every sense alert. In a little while I did not doubt that something was quietly ascending the

* I do not remember seeing any wooden things on the moon; doors, tables, everything corresponding to our terrestrial joinery was made of metal, and I believe for the most part of gold, which as a metal would, of course, naturally recommend itself—other things being equal—on account of the ease in working it and its toughness and durability.

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cleft. Very slowly and quite noiselessly I assured myself of a good grip on my chain, and waited for that something to appear.

"Just look at those chaps with the hatchets again," I said.

"They're all right," said Cavor.

I took a quick provisional aim at the gap in the grating. I could hear now quite distinctly the soft twittering of the ascending Selenites, the dab of their hands against the rock, and the falling of dust from their grips as they clambered.

Then I could see that there was something moving dimly in the blackness below the grating, but what it might be I could not distinguish. The whole thing seemed to hang fire just for a moment; then, smash! I had sprung to my feet, struck savagely at something that had flashed out at me. It was the keen point of a spear. I have thought since that its length in the narrowness of the cleft must have prevented its being sloped to reach me. Anyhow, it shot out from the grating like the tongue of a snake and missed, and flew back and flashed again. But the second time I snatched and caught it, and wrenched it away, but not before another had darted ineffectually at me.

I shouted with triumph as I felt the hold of the Selenite resist my pull for a moment and give, and then I was jabbing down through the bars, amidst squeals from the darkness, and Cavor had snapped off the other spear, and was leaping and flourishing it beside me and making inefficient jabs. "Clang, clang," came up through the grating, and then an axe hurtled through the air and whacked against the

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rocks beyond to remind me of the fleshers at the carcasses up the cavern.

I turned, and they were all coming towards us in open order, waving their axes. They were short thick little beggars with long arms, strikingly different from the ones we had seen before. If they had not heard of us before they must have realised the situation with incredible swiftness. I stared at them for a moment, spear in hand. "Guard the grating, Cavor," I cried, and howling to intimidate them, I rushed to meet them. Two of them missed with their hatchets, and the rest fled incontinently. Then the two also were sprinting away up the cavern, with hands clenched and heads down. I never saw men run like them.

I knew the spear I had was useless for me. It was thin and flimsy, only effectual for a thrust, and too long for a quick recover. So I only chased the Selenites as far as the first carcass, and stopped there and picked up one of the crowbars that were lying about. It felt comfortably heavy and equal to smashing any number of Selenites. I threw away my spear, and picked up a second crowbar for the other hand. I felt five times better than I had with the spear. I shook the two threateningly at the Selenites, who had come to a halt in a little crowd far away up the cavern, and then turned about to look at Cavor.

He was leaping from side to side of the grating making threatening jabs with his broken spear. That was all right. It would keep the Selenites down—for a time at least. I looked up the cavern again. What on earth were we going to do now?

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We were cornered already. But these butchers up the cavern had been surprised; they were probably scared, and they had no special weapons, only those little hatchets of theirs. And that way lay escape. Their sturdy little forms—ever so much shorter and thicker than the mooncalf herders—were scattered up the slope in a way that was eloquent of indecision. I had the moral advantage of a mad bull in a street. But for all that there seemed a tremendous crowd of them. Very probably there was. Those Selenites down the cleft had certainly some infernally long spears. It might be they had other surprises for us. . . . But, confound it! if we charged up the cave we should let them up behind us; and if we didn't, those little brutes up the cave would probably be reinforced. Heaven alone knew what tremendous engines of warfare—guns, bombs, terrestrial torpedoes—this unknown world below our feet, this vaster world of which we had only picked the outer cuticle, might not presently send up to our destruction. It became clear the only thing to do was to charge! It became clearer as the legs of a number of fresh Selenites appeared running down the cavern towards us.

"Bedford!" cried Cavor, and behold! he was halfway between me and the grating.

"Go back!" I cried. "What are you doing——?"

"They've got—it's like a gun!"

And struggling in the grating between those defensive spears appeared the head and shoulders of a singularly lean and angular Selenite bearing some complicated apparatus.

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I realised Cavor's utter incapacity for the fight we had in hand. For a moment I hesitated. Then I rushed past him whirling my crowbars, and shouting to confound the aim of the Selenite. He was aiming in the queerest way with the thing against his stomach. "*Chuzz!*" The thing wasn't a gun; it went off more like a cross-bow, and dropped me in the middle of a leap.

I didn't fall down—I simply came down a little shorter than I should have done if I hadn't been hit, and from the feel of my shoulder the thing might have tapped me and glanced off. Then my left hand hit against the shaft, and I perceived there was a sort of spear sticking half through my shoulder. The moment after, I got home with the crowbar in my right hand, and hit the Selenite fair and square. He collapsed—crushed and crumpled—his head smashed like an egg.

I dropped a crowbar, pulled the spear out of my shoulder, and began to jab it down the grating into the darkness. At each jab came a shriek and twitter. Finally I hurled the spear down upon them with all my strength, leaped up, picked up the crowbar again, and started for the multitude up the cavern.

"Bedford!" cried Cavor, "Bedford!" as I flew past him.

I seem to remember his footsteps coming on behind me.

Step, leap, . . . whack, step, leap. . . . Each leap seemed to last ages. With each, the cave opened out and the number of visible Selenites increased. At first they seemed all running about like ants in a

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disturbed ant-hill, one or two waving hatchets and coming to meet me, more running away, some bolting sidewise into the avenue of carcasses; then presently others came in sight carrying spears, and then others. I saw a most extraordinary thing, all hands and feet, bolting for cover. The cavern grew darker farther up. Flick! something flew over my head. Flick! As I soared in mid-stride I saw a spear hit and quiver in one of the carcasses to my left. Then as I came down one hit the ground before me and I heard the remote chuzz! with which their things were fired. Flick! Flick! for a moment it was a shower. They were volleying!

I stopped dead.

I don't think I thought clearly then. I seem to remember a stereotyped phrase running through my mind: "Zone of fire, seek cover!" I know I made a dash for the space between two of the carcasses, and stood there, panting and feeling very wicked.

I looked round for Cavor, and for a moment it seemed as if he had vanished from the world. Then he came out of the darkness between the row of the carcasses and the rocky wall of the cavern. I saw his little face, dark and blue, and shining with perspiration and emotion.

He was saying something, but what it was I did not heed. I had realised that we might work from mooncalf to mooncalf up the cave until we were near enough to charge home. It was charge or nothing. "Come on!" I said, and led the way.

"Bedford!" he cried, unavailingly.

My mind was busy as we went up that narrow

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alley between the dead bodies and the wall of the cavern. The rocks curved about—they could not enfilade us. Though in that narrow space we could not leap, yet with our earth-born strength we were still able to go very much faster than the Selenites. I reckoned we should presently come among them. Once we were on them they would be hardly as formidable as black-beetles. Only there would first of all be a volley. I thought of a stratagem. I whipped off my flannel jacket as I ran.

"Bedford!" panted Cavor, behind me.

I glanced back. "What?" said I.

He was pointing upward over the carcasses. "White light!" he said. "White light again!"

I looked, and it was even so: a faint white ghost of twilight in the remoter cavern roof. That seemed to give me double strength.

"Keep close," I said. A flat long Selenite dashed out of the darkness and squealed and fled. I halted and stopped Cavor with my hand. I hung my jacket over my crowbar, ducked round the next carcass, dropped jacket and crowbar, showed myself, and darted back.

"Chuzz—flick," just one arrow came. We were close on the Selenites, and they were standing in a crowd, broad, short and tall together, with a little battery of their shooting implements pointing down the cave. Three or four other arrows followed the first, and then their fire ceased.

I stuck out my head, and escaped by a hair's breadth. This time I drew a dozen shots or more, and heard the Selenites shouting and twittering as if

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with excitement as they shot. I picked up jacket and crowbar again.

"Now!" said I, and thrust out the jacket.

"Chuzz-zz-zz-zz! Chuzz!" In an instant my jacket had grown a thick beard of arrows, and they were quivering all over the carcass behind us. Instantly I slipped the crowbar out of the jacket, dropped the jacket—for all I know to the contrary it is lying up there in the moon now—and rushed out upon them.

For a minute perhaps it was massacre. I was too fierce to discriminate, and the Selenites were probably too scared to fight. At any rate they made no sort of fight against me. I saw scarlet, as the saying is. I remember I seemed to be wading among these leathery thin things as a man wades through tall grass, mowing and hitting, first right then left—smash, smash! Little drops of moisture flew about. I trod on things that crushed and piped and went slippery. The crowd seemed to open and close and flow like water. They seemed to have no combined plan whatever. There were spears flying about me; I was grazed over the ear by one. I was stabbed once in the arm and once in the cheek, but I only found that out afterwards when the blood had had time to run and cool and feel wet.

What Cavor did I do not know. For a space it seemed that this fighting had lasted for an age and must needs go on for ever. Then suddenly it was all over, and there was nothing to be seen but the backs of heads bobbing up and down as their owners ran in all directions. . . . I seemed altogether unhurt.

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I ran forward some paces, shouting, then turned about. I was amazed.

I had come through them in vast flying strides. They were all behind me, and running hither and thither to hide.

I felt an enormous astonishment at the evaporation of the great fight into which I had hurled myself, and not a little exultation. It did not seem to me that the Selenites were unexpectedly flimsy, but that I was unexpectedly strong. I laughed stupidly. This fantastic moon!

I glanced for a moment at the smashed and writhing bodies that were scattered over the cavern floor with a vague idea of further violence, then hurried on after Cavor.

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XVII

IN THE SUNLIGHT

PRESENTLY we saw that the cavern before us opened on a hazy void. In another moment we had emerged upon a slanting gallery that projected into a vast circular space, a huge cylindrical pit running vertically up and down. Round this pit the slanting gallery ran without any parapet or protection for a turn and a half, and then plunged high above into the rock again. Somehow it reminded me then of one of those spiral turns of the railway through the Saint Gothard. It was all tremendously huge. I can scarcely hope to convey to you the Titanic proportion of all that place—the Titanic effect of it. Our eyes followed up the vast declivity of the pit wall, and overhead and far above we beheld a round opening set with faint stars, and half of the lip about it well-nigh blinding with the white light of the sun. At that we cried aloud simultaneously.

"Come on!" I said, leading the way.

"But there?" said Cavor, and very carefully stepped nearer the edge of the gallery. I followed his example, craned forward and looked down, but I was dazzled by that gleam of light above, and I could see only a bottomless darkness with spectral patches of crimson and purple floating therein. Yet if I could not see I could hear. Out of this darkness came a sound—a sound like the angry hum one can

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hear outside a hive of bees, a sound out of that enormous hollow, it may be, for miles beneath our feet. . . .

For a moment I listened, then tightened my grip on my crowbar and led the way up the gallery.

"This must be the shaft we looked down upon," said Cavor. "Under that lid."

"And below there is where we saw the lights."

"The lights!" said he. "Yes—the lights of the world that now we shall never see."

"We'll come back," I said, for now we had escaped so much I was rashly sanguine that we should recover the sphere.

His answer I did not catch.

"Eh?" I asked.

"It doesn't matter," he answered, and we hurried on in silence.

I suppose that slanting lateral way was four or five miles long, allowing for its curvature, and it ascended at a slope that would have made it almost impossibly steep on earth, but which we strode up easily. We saw only two Selenites during all that portion of our flight, and as soon as they became aware of us they ran headlong. It was clear that the knowledge of our strength and violence had reached them. Our way to the exterior was unexpectedly plain. The spiral gallery straightened into a steeply ascendent tunnel, its floor bearing abundant traces of the mooncalves, and so straight and short in proportion to its vast arch that no part of it was absolutely dark. Almost immediately it began to lighten, and then far off and high up, and quite blindly bril-

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liant, appeared its opening on the exterior, a slope of Alpine steepness surmounted by a crest of bayonet shrub, tall but broken down now and dry and dead, in spiky silhouette against the sun.

And it is strange that we men, to whom this very vegetation had seemed so weird and horrible a little time ago, should now behold it with the emotion a home-coming exile might feel at sight of his native land. We welcomed even the rareness of the air that made us pant as we ran and which rendered speaking no longer the easy thing it had been. Larger grew the sunlit circle above us and larger, and all the nearer tunnel sank into a rim of indistinguishable black. We saw the dead bayonet shrub no longer with any touch of green in it, but brown and dry and thick, and the shadow of its upper branches high out of sight made a densely interlaced pattern upon the tumbled rocks. And at the immediate mouth of the tunnel was a wide trampled space where the mooncalves had come and gone.

We came out upon this space at last into a light and heat that hit and pressed upon us. We traversed the exposed area painfully, and clambered up a slope among the scrub-stems, and sat down at last panting in a high place beneath the shadow of a mass of twisted lava. Even in the shade the rock felt hot.

The air was intensely hot, and we were in great physical discomfort, but for all that we were no longer in a nightmare. We seemed to have come to our own province again, beneath the stars. All the fear and stress of our flight through the dim passages and fissures below had fallen from us. That last

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fight had filled us with an enormous confidence in ourselves so far as the Selenites were concerned. We looked back almost incredulously at the black opening from which we had just emerged. Down there, in a blue glow that now in our memories seemed the next thing to absolute darkness, we had met with things like mad mockeries of men, helmet-headed creatures, and had walked in fear before them, and had submitted to them until we could submit no longer. And behold, they had smashed like wax and scattered like chaff, and fled and vanished like the creatures of a dream!

I rubbed my eyes, doubting whether we had not slept and dreamt these things by reason of the fungus we had eaten, and suddenly discovered the blood upon my face, and then that my shirt was sticking painfully to my shoulder and arm.

"Confound it!" I said, gauging my injuries with an investigatory hand, and suddenly that distant tunnel-mouth became, as it were, a watching eye.

"Cavor!" I said, "what are they going to do now? And what are we going to do?"

He shook his head, with his eyes fixed upon the tunnel. "How can one tell what they will do?"

"It depends on what they think of us, and I don't see how we can begin to guess that. And it depends upon what they have in reserve. It's as you say, Cavor: we have touched the merest outside of this world. They may have all sorts of things inside here. Even with those shooting things they might make it bad for us. . . .

"Yet, after all," I said, "even if we don't find the

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sphere at once, there is a chance for us. We might hold out. Even through the night. We might go down there again and make a fight for it."

I stared about me with speculative eyes. The character of the scenery had altered altogether by reason of the enormous growth and subsequent drying of the scrub. The crest on which we sat was high and commanded a wide prospect of the crater and landscape and we saw it now all sere and dry in the late autumn of the lunar afternoon. Rising one behind the other were long slopes and fields of trampled brown where the mooncalves had pastured, and far away in the full blaze of the sun a drove of them basked slumberously, scattered shapes, each with a blot of shadow against it like sheep on the side of a down. But not a sign of Selenite was to be seen. Whether they had fled on our emergence from the interior passages or whether they were accustomed to retire after driving out the mooncalves I cannot guess. At the time I believed the former was the case.

"If we were to set fire to all this stuff," I said, "we might find the sphere among the ashes."

Cavor did not seem to hear me. He was peering under his hand at the stars, that still, in spite of the intense sunlight, were abundantly visible in the sky. "How long do you think we have been here?" he asked at last.

"Been where?"

"On the moon."

"Two earthly days, perhaps."

"More nearly ten. Do you know, the sun is past

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its zenith, and sinking in the west? In four days' time or less it will be night."

"But—we've only eaten once!"

"I know that. And—but there are the stars!"

"But why should time seem different because we are on a smaller planet?"

"I don't know. There it is!"

"How does one tell time?"

"Hunger—fatigue—all those things are different. Everything is different. Everything. To me it seems that since first we came out of the sphere it has been only a question of hours—long hours. At most."

"Ten days," I said; "that leaves—" I looked up at the sun for a moment and then saw that it was half-way from the zenith to the western edge. "Four days! . . . Cavor, we mustn't sit here and dream. How do you think we can begin?"

I stood up. "We must get a fixed point which we can recognise. We might hoist a flag, or a handkerchief or something—and quarter the ground and work round that."

He stood up beside me.

"Yes," he said, "there is nothing for it but to hunt for the sphere. Nothing. We may find it—certainly we may find it. And if not——"

"We must keep on looking."

He looked this way and that, glanced up at the sky and down at the tunnel and astonished me by a sudden gesture of impatience. "Oh! but we have done foolishly! To have come to this pass! Think how it might have been and the things we might have done!"

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"We may do something yet."

"Never the thing we might have done. Here below our feet is a world. Think of what that world must be! Think of that machine we saw and the lid and the shaft! They were just remote outlying suggestions, and those creatures we have seen and fought with, no more than ignorant peasants, dwellers in the outskirts, yokels and labourers half akin to brutes. Down below! Caverns beneath caverns, tunnels, structures, ways. . . . It must open out and be greater and wider and more populous as one descends. Assuredly. Right down at last to the central sea that washes round the core of the moon. Think of its inky waters under the spare lights! If indeed their eyes need lights. Think of the cascading tributaries pouring down their channels to feed it. Think of the tides upon its surface and the rush and swirl of its ebb and flow. Perhaps they have ships that go upon it, perhaps down there are mighty cities and swarming ways and wisdom and order passing the wit of man. And we may die here upon it and never see the masters who must be—ruling over these things! We may freeze and die here and the air will freeze and thaw upon us, and then—! Then they will come upon us, come on our stiff and silent bodies and find the sphere we cannot find and they will understand at last, too late, all the thought and effort that ended here in vain!" His voice through all that speech sounded like the voice of some one heard in a telephone, weak and far away.

"But the darkness," I said.

"One might get over that."

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"How?"

"I don't know. How am I to know? One might carry a torch, one might have a lamp— The others —might understand."

He stood for a moment with his hands held down and a rueful face, staring out over the waste that defied him. Then with a gesture of renunciation he turned towards me with proposals for the systematic hunting of the sphere.

"We can return," I said.

He looked about him. "First of all we shall have to get to earth."

"We could bring back lamps to carry and climbing irons and a hundred necessary things."

"Yes," he said.

"We can take back an earnest of success in this gold."

He looked at my golden crowbars and said nothing for a space. He stood with his hands clasped behind his back staring across the crater. At last he sighed and spoke. "It was I found the way here, but to find a way isn't always to be master of a way. If I take my secret back to earth what will happen? I do not see how I can keep my secret for a year, for even a part of a year. Sooner or later it must come out, even if other men rediscover it. And then . . . Governments and powers will struggle to get hither, they will fight against one another and against these moon people. It will only spread warfare and multiply the occasions of war. In a little while, in a very little while if I tell my secret, this planet to its deepest galleries will be strewn with human dead. Other

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things are doubtful, but that is certain. . . . It is not as though man had any use for the moon. What good would the moon be to men? Even of their own planet what have they made but a battle ground and theatre of infinite folly? Small as his world is, and short as his time, he has still in his little life down there far more than he can do. No! Science has toiled too long forging weapons for fools to use. It is time she held her hand. Let him find it out for himself again—in a thousand years' time."

"There are methods of secrecy," I said.

He looked up at me and smiled. "After all," he said, "why should one worry? There is little chance of our finding the sphere and down below trouble is brewing for us. It's simply the human habit of hoping till we die, that makes us think of return. Our troubles are only beginning. We have shown these moon-folk violence, we have given them a taste of our quality and our chances are about as good as a tiger's that has got loose and killed a man in Hyde Park. The news of us must be running down from gallery to gallery, down towards the central parts. . . . No sane beings will ever let us take that sphere back to earth, after so much as they have seen of us."

"We aren't improving our chances," said I, "by sitting here."

We stood up side by side.

"Afte rall," he said, "we must separate. We must fasten up a handkerchief on these tall spikes here and stick it firmly and from this as a centre we must work over the crater. You must go westward,

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moving out in semicircles to and from the setting sun. You must move first with your shadow on your right until it is at right angles with the direction of your handkerchief and then with your shadow on your left. And I will do the same to the east. We will look into every gully, examine every skerry of rocks, we will do all we can to find my sphere. If we see Selenites we will hide from them as well as we can. For drink we must take snow, and if we feel the need of food we must kill a mooncalf, if we can, and eat such flesh as it has,—raw, and so each will go his own way."

"And if one of us comes upon the sphere?"

"He must come back to the white handkerchief and stand by it and signal to the other."

"And if neither——?"

Cavor glanced up at the sun. "We go on seeking until the night and cold overtake us."

"Suppose the Selenites have found the sphere and hidden it?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Or if presently they come hunting us?"

He made no answer.

"You had better take a club," I said.

He shook his head and stared away from me across the waste.

But for a moment he did not start. He looked round at me shyly, hesitated. "*Au revoir*," he said.

I felt an odd stab of emotion. A sense of how we had galled each other and particularly how I must have galled him came to me. "Confound it!" thought I, "we might have done better!" I was on the point

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of asking him to shake hands—for that was how I felt just then—when he put his feet together and leaped away from me towards the north. He drifted through the air as a dead leaf would do, fell lightly and leaped again. I stood for a moment watching him, then faced westward reluctantly, pulled myself together, and, with something of the feeling of a man who leaps into icy water, selected a point and plunged forward to explore my solitary half of the moon world. I dropped rather clumsily among rocks, stood up and looked about me, clambered to a rocky slab and leaped again. . . . When presently I looked for Cavor he was hidden from my eyes, but the handkerchief showed out bravely on its headland, white in the blaze of the sun.

I determined not to lose sight of that handkerchief whatever might betide.

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XVIII

MR. BEDFORD ALONE

In a little while it seemed to me as if I had always been alone on the moon. I hunted for a time with a certain intentness, but the heat was still very great and the thinness of the air felt like a hoop about one's chest. I came presently into a hollow basin bristling with tall brown dry fronds about its edge and I sat down under these to rest and cool. I intended to stay for only a little while. I put down my club beside me and sat resting my chin on my hands. I saw with a colourless interest that the rocks of the basin, where here and there the crackling dry lichens had shrunk away to show them, were all veined and splattered with gold, that here and there bosses of rounded and wrinkled gold projected from among the litter. What did that matter now? A sort of languor had possession of my limbs and mind, I did not believe for a moment that we should ever find the sphere in that vast desiccated wilderness. I seemed to lack a motive for effort until the Selenites should come. Then I supposed I should exert myself, obeying that unreasonable imperative that urges a man before all things to preserve and defend his life, albeit he may preserve it only to die more painfully in a little while.

Why had we come to the moon?

The thing presented itself to me as a perplexing problem. What is this spirit in man that urges him

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for ever to depart from happiness and security, to toil, to place himself in danger, even to risk a reasonable certainty of death? It dawned upon me up there in the moon as a thing I ought always to have known, that man is not made simply to go about being safe and comfortable and well fed and amused. Against his interest, against his happiness he is constantly being driven to do unreasonable things. Some force not himself impels him and go he must. But why? Why? Sitting there in the midst of that useless moon gold, amidst the things of another world, I took count of all my life. Assuming I was to die a castaway upon the moon, I failed altogether to see what purpose I had served; I got no light on that point, but it was clearer to me than it had ever been in my life before that I was not serving my own purpose; that all my life I had in truth never served the purposes of my private life. Whose purpose was I serving? . . . I ceased to speculate on why we had come to the moon and took a wider sweep. Why had I come to the earth? Why had I a private life at all? . . . I lost myself at last in bottomless speculation.

My thoughts became vague and cloudy, no longer leading in definite directions. I had not felt heavy or weary—I cannot imagine one doing so upon the moon—but I suppose I was greatly fatigued. At any rate I slept.

Slumbering there rested me greatly, and the sun was setting and the violence of the heat abating through all the time I slumbered. When at last I was roused from my slumbers by a remote clamour,

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I felt active and capable again. I rubbed my eyes and stretched my arms. I rose to my feet—I was a little stiff—and at once prepared to resume my search. I shouldered my golden clubs one on each shoulder and went on out of the ravine of the gold-veined rocks.

The sun was certainly lower, much lower than it had been, the air was very much cooler. I perceived I must have slept some time. It seemed to me that a faint touch of misty blueness hung about the western cliff. I leaped to a little boss of rock, and surveyed the crater. I could see no signs of mooncalves or Selenites, nor could I see Cavor, but I could see my handkerchief afar off spread out on its thicket of thorns. I looked about me, and then sprang forward to the next convenient viewpoint.

I beat my way round in a semicircle and back again in a still remoter crescent. It was very fatiguing and hopeless. The air was really very much cooler and it seemed to me that the shadow under the westward cliff was growing broad. Ever and again I stopped and reconnoitred, but there was no sign of Cavor, no sign of Selenites, and it seemed to me the mooncalves must have been driven in to the interior again—I could see none of them. I became more and more desirous of seeing Cavor. The winged outline of the sun had sunk now until it was scarcely the distance of its diameter from the rim of the sky. I was oppressed by the idea that the Selenites would presently close their lids and valves and shut us out under the inexorable onrush of the lunar night. It seemed to me high time that he abandoned his

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search and that we took counsel together. I felt how urgent it was that we should decide soon as to our course. We had failed to find the sphere, we no longer had time to seek it. Once these valves were closed, with us outside, we were lost men. The great night of space would descend upon us, that blackness of the void which is the only absolute death. All my being shrank from that approach. We must get into the moon again, though we were slain in doing it. I was haunted by a vision of our freezing to death, of our hammering with our last strength on the valve of the great pit.

I took no thought any more of the sphere. I thought only of finding Cavor again. I was half inclined to go back into the moon without him rather than seek him until it was too late. I was already half-way back towards our handkerchief, when suddenly——

I saw the sphere!

I did not find it so much as it found me. It was lying much farther to the westward than I had gone and the sloping rays of the sinking sun reflected from its glass had suddenly proclaimed its presence in a dazzling beam. For an instant I thought this was some new device of the Selenites against us, and then I understood.

I threw up my arms, shouted a ghostly shout and set off in vast leaps towards it. I missed one of my leaps and dropped into a deep ravine and twisted my ankle and after that I stumbled at almost every leap. I was in a state of hysterical agitation, trembling violently and quite breathless long before I

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got to it. Three times at least I had to stop with my hands resting on my sides, and in spite of the thin dryness of the air the perspiration was wet upon my face.

I thought of nothing but the sphere until I reached it, I forgot even my trouble of Cavor's whereabouts. My last leap flung me with my hands hard against its glass; then I lay against it panting and trying vainly to shout "Cavor! Here is the sphere!" When I had recovered a little I peered through the thick glass and the things inside seemed tumbled. I stooped to peer closer. Then I attempted to get in. I had to hoist it over a little to get my head through the manhole. The screw stopper was inside and I could see now that nothing had been touched, nothing had suffered. It lay there as we had left it when we had dropped out amidst the snow. For a time I was wholly occupied in making and remaking this inventory. I found I was trembling violently. It was good to see that familiar dark interior again! I cannot tell you how good. Presently I crept inside and sat down among the things. I looked through the glass at the moon world and shivered. I placed up my gold clubs upon the bale and sought out and took a little food, not so much because I wanted it but because it was there. Then it occurred to me that it was time to go out and signal for Cavor. But I did not go out and signal for Cavor forthwith. Something held me to the sphere.

After all, everything was coming right. There would still be time for us to get more of the magic stone that gives one mastery over men. There was gold for the picking up, and the sphere would travel

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as well half full of gold as though it were empty. We could go back now masters of ourselves and our world, and then——

I roused myself at last and with an effort got myself out of the sphere. I shivered as I emerged, for the evening air was growing very cold. I stood in the hollow, staring about me. I scrutinised the bushes round me very carefully before I leaped to the rocky shelf hard by and took once more what had been my first leap in the moon. But this time I made it with no effort whatever.

The growth and decay of the vegetation had gone on apace and the whole aspect of the rocks had changed, but still it was possible to make out the slope on which the seeds had germinated and the rocky mass from which we had taken our first view of the crater. But the spiky shrub on the slope stood brown and sere now and thirty feet high, and cast long shadows that stretched out of sight; and the little seeds that clustered in its upper branches were brown and ripe. Its work was done, it was brittle and ready to fall and crumple under the freezing air, so soon as the nightfall came. And the huge cacti that had swollen as we watched them had long since burst and scattered their spores to the four quarters of the moon. Amazing little corner in the universe—the landing-place of men!

Some day, thought I, I will have an inscription standing there right in the midst of the hollow. It came to me if only this teeming world within could know of the full import of that moment how curious its tumult would become!

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But as yet it could scarcely be dreaming of the significance of our coming. For if it did the crater would surely be an uproar of pursuit. I looked about for some place from which I might signal to Cavor, and saw that same patch of rock to which he had leaped from my present standpoint still bare and barren in the sun. For a moment I hesitated at going so far from the sphere. Then with a pang of shame at that hesitation I leaped. . . .

From this vantage point I surveyed the crater again. Far away at the top of the enormous shadow I cast was the little white handkerchief fluttering on the bushes. It was very little and very far. Cavor was not in sight. It seemed to me that by this time he ought to be looking for me. That was the agreement. But he was nowhere to be seen.

I stood waiting and watching, hands shading my eyes, expecting every moment to distinguish him. Very probably I stood there for a long time. I tried to shout and was reminded of the thinness of the air. I made an undecided step back towards the sphere. But a lurking dread of the Selenites made me hesitate to signal my whereabouts by hoisting one of our sleeping blankets on to the adjacent scrub. My eyes searched the crater again.

It had an effect of emptiness that chilled me. All sound of the Selenites in the world beneath had died away. It was as still as death. Save for the faint stir of the shrub about me in the little breeze that was rising, there was no sound, no shadow of a sound. And the breeze blew chill.

Confound Cavor!

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I took a deep breath. I put my hands to the sides of my mouth. "Cavor!" I bawled and the sound was like some mannikin shouting far away.

I looked at the handkerchief, I looked behind me at the broadening shadow of the westward cliff, I looked under my hand at the sun. It seemed to me that almost visibly it was creeping down the sky.

I felt I must act instantly if I was to save Cavor. I whipped off my vest and flung it as a mark on the sere bayonets of the shrubs behind me, and then set off in a straight line towards the handkerchief. Perhaps it was a couple of miles away—a matter of a few hundred leaps and strides. I have already told how one seemed to hang through those lunar leaps. In each suspense I sought Cavor and marvelled why he should be hidden. In each leap I could feel the sun setting behind me. Each time I touched the ground I was tempted to go back.

A last leap and I was in the depression below our handkerchief, a stride and I stood on our former vantage point within arm's reach of it. I stood up straight and scanned the world about me, between its lengthening bars of shadow. Far away, down a long declivity was the opening of the tunnel up which we had fled, and my shadow reached towards it, reached towards it and touched it like a finger of the night.

Not a sign of Cavor, not a sound in all the stillness, only that the stir and waving of the scrub and of the shadows increased. And suddenly and violently I shivered. "Cav—" I began and realised

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once more the uselessness of the human voice in that thin air.

Silence. The silence of death.

Then it was my eye caught something—a little thing, lying perhaps fifty yards away down the slope, amidst a litter of bent and broken branches. What was it? I knew, and yet for some reason I would not know.

I went nearer to it. It was the little cricket cap Cavor had worn. I did not touch it. I stood looking at it.

I saw then that the scattered branches about it had been forcibly smashed and trampled. I hesitated, stepped forward and picked it up.

I stood with Cavor's cap in my hand, staring at the trampled reeds and thorns about me. On some of them were little smears of something dark, something that I dared not touch. A dozen yards away, perhaps, the rising breeze dragged something into view, something small and vividly white.

It was a little piece of paper crumpled as though it had been clutched tightly. I picked it up, and on it were smears of red. My eye caught faint pencil marks. I smoothed it out and saw uneven and broken writing ending at last in a crooked streak upon the paper.

I set myself to decipher this.

"I have been injured about the knee, I think my kneecap is hurt, and I cannot run or crawl," it began—pretty distinctly written.

Then less legibly: "They have been chasing me for some time and it is only a question of"—the

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word "time" seemed to have been written here and erased in favour of something illegible—"before they get me. They are beating all about me."

Then the writing became convulsive. "I can hear them," I guessed the tracing meant; and then it was quite unreadable for a space. Then came a little string of words that were quite distinct, "a different sort of Selenite altogether, who appear to be directing the—" The writing became a mere hasty confusion again.

"They have larger brain-cases—much larger, and slender bodies and very short legs. They make gentle noises and move with organised deliberation. . . .

"And though I am wounded and helpless here, their appearance still gives me hope." That was like Cavor. "They have not shot at me or attempted —injury. I intend——"

Then came the sudden streak of the pencil across the paper, and on the back and edges—blood!

And as I stood there, stupid and perplexed, with this dumfounding relic in my hand, something very, very soft and light and chill touched my hand for a moment and ceased to be, and then a thing, a little white speck drifted athwart a shadow. It was a tiny snowflake, the first snowflake, the herald of the night.

I looked up with a start and the sky had darkened now almost to blackness and was thick with a gathering multitude of coldly watchful stars. I looked eastward, and the light of that shrivelled world was touched with a sombre bronze, westward, and the sun—robbed now by a thickening white mist of half its heat and splendour—was touching the

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crater rim, was sinking out of sight and all the shrubs and jagged and tumbled rocks stood out against it in a bristling disorder of black shapes. Into the great lake of darkness westward, a vast wreath of mist was sinking. A cold wind set all the crater shivering. Suddenly for a moment I was in a puff of falling snow and all the world about me grey and dim.

And then it was I heard, not loud and penetrating as at first, but faint and dim like a dying voice, that tolling, that same tolling that had welcomed the coming of the day: Boom. . . . Boom. . . . Boom. . . .

It went about the crater; it seemed to throb with the throbbing of the greater stars; the blood-red crescent of the sun's disc sank as it tolled out: Boom. . . . Boom. . . . Boom. . . .

What had happened to Cavor? All through that tolling I stood there stupidly, and at last the tolling ceased. And suddenly the open mouth of the tunnel down below there shut like an eye and vanished out of sight.

Then indeed was I alone.

Over me, about me, closing in on me, embracing me ever nearer, was the Eternal, that which was before the beginning and that which triumphs over the end; that enormous void in which all light and life and being is but the thin and vanishing splendour of a falling star, the cold, the stillness, the silence,—the infinite and final Night of space.

The sense of solitude and desolation became the sense of an overwhelming Presence, that stooped towards me, that almost touched me.

"No," I cried, "no! Not yet! not yet! Wait.

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Wait! Oh wait!" My voice went up to a faint shriek. I flung the crumpled paper from me, scrambled back to the crest to take my bearings, and then, with all the will that was in me, leaped out towards the mark I had left, dim and distant now in the very margin of the shadow.

Leap, leap, leap, and each leap was seven ages.

Before me the pale serpent-girdled sector of the sun sank and sank and the advancing shadow swept to seize the sphere before I could reach it. I was two miles away—a hundred leaps or more—and the air about me was thinning out as it thins under an air pump, and the cold was gripping at my joints. But had I died, I should have died leaping. Once, and then again my foot slipped on the gathering snow and shortened my leap; once I fell short into bushes that crashed and smashed into dusty chips and nothingness, and once I stumbled as I dropped and rolled head over heels into a gully and rose bruised and bleeding and confused as to my direction.

But such incidents were as nothing to the intervals, those awful pauses when one drifted through the air towards that pouring tide of night. My breathing made a piping noise, and it was as though knives were whirling in my lungs. My heart seemed to beat against the top of my brain. "Shall I reach it? Oh Heaven! shall I reach it?"

My whole being became anguish.

"Lie down," screamed my pain and despair, "lie down."

The nearer I struggled, the more impossibly remote it seemed. I was numb, I stumbled, I bruised and cut myself and did not bleed.

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It was in sight.

I fell on all fours and my lungs whooped.

I crawled. The frost gathered on my lips, icicles hung from my moustache and beard, I was white with the freezing atmosphere.

I was a dozen yards from it. My eyes had become dim. "Lie down," screamed despair, "lie down!"

I touched it and halted. "Too late!" screamed despair, "lie down!"

I fought stiffly with it. I was on the manhole lip, a stupefied, half dead being. The snow was all about me. I pulled myself in. There lurked within a little warmer air. The snowflakes—the airflakes—danced in about me, as I tried with chilling hands to thrust the valve in and spin it tight and hard. I sobbed, "I *will*." I chattered on my teeth. And then with fingers that quivered and felt brittle I turned to the shutter studs.

As I fumbled with the switches—for I had never controlled them before—I could see dimly through the steaming glass, the blazing red streamers of the sinking sun, dancing and flickering through the snowstorm and the black forms of the scrub thickening and bending and breaking beneath the accumulating snow. Thicker whirled the snow and thicker, black against the light. What if even now the switches overcame me?

Then something clicked under my hands and in an instant that last vision of the moon world was hidden from my eyes. I was in the silence and darkness of the inter-planetary sphere.

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XIX

MR. BEDFORD IN INFINITE SPACE

It was almost as though I had been killed. Indeed I could imagine a man suddenly and violently killed would feel very much as I did. One moment, a passion of agonising existence and fear; the next, darkness and stillness, neither light nor life nor sun, moon nor stars, the black Infinite. Although the thing was done by my own act, although I had already tasted this very effect in Cavor's company, I felt astonished, dumfounded and overwhelmed. I seemed to be borne upwards into an enormous darkness. My fingers floated off the studs, I hung as if I were annihilated, and at last very softly and gently I came against the bale and the golden chain and the crowbars that had drifted to the middle of the sphere.

I do not know how long that drifting took. In the sphere, of course, even more than on the moon one's earthly time-sense was ineffectual. At the touch of the bale it was as if I had awakened from a dreamless sleep. I immediately perceived that if I wanted to keep awake and alive I must get a light or open a window so as to get a grip of something with my eyes. And besides I was cold. I kicked off from the bale therefore, clawed on to the thin cords within the glass, crawled along until I got to the manhole rim, and so got my bearings for the light and blind studs, took a shove off, and flying once

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round the bale and getting a scare from something big and flimsy that was drifting loose, I got my hand on the cord quite close to the studs and reached them. I lit the little lamp first of all to see what it was I had collided with, and discovered that old copy of *Lloyds' News* had slipped its moorings, and was adrift in the void. That brought me out of the Infinite to my own proper dimensions again. It made me laugh and pant for a time and suggested the idea of a little oxygen from one of the cylinders. After that I lit the heater until I felt warm and then I took food. Finally I set to work in a very gingerly fashion on the Cavorite blinds to see if I could guess by any means how the sphere was travelling.

The first blind I opened I shut at once, and hung for a time flattened and blinded by the sunlight that had hit me. After thinking a little I started upon the windows at right angles to this one, and got the huge crescent moon and the second time the little crescent earth behind it. I was amazed to find how far I was from the moon. I had reckoned that not only should I have little or none of the "kick-off" that the earth's atmosphere had given us at our start, but that the tangential "fly off" of the moon's spin would be at least twenty-eight times less than the earth's. I had expected to discover myself hanging over our crater and on the edge of the night, but all that was now only a part of the outline of the white crescent that filled the sky. And Cavor——?

He was already infinitesimal.

I tried to imagine what could have happened to him. But at that time I could think of nothing but

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death. I seemed to see him bent and smashed at the foot of some interminably high cascade of blue. And all about him the stupid insects stared. . . .

Under the inspiring touch of the drifting newspaper I became very practical again for a while. It was quite clear to me that what I had to do was to get back to earth, but as far as I could see I was drifting away from it. Whatever had happened to Cavor, even if he was still alive, which seemed to me incredible after that blood-stained scrap, I was powerless to help him. There he was, living or dead behind the mantle of that rayless night, and there he must remain at least until I could summon our fellow men to his assistance. Should I do that? Something of the sort I had in my mind; to come back to earth, if it were possible, and then as maturer consideration might determine, either to show and explain the sphere to a few discreet persons and act with them, or else to keep my secret, sell my gold, obtain weapons, provisions and an assistant, and return with these advantages to deal on equal terms with the flimsy people of the moon; to rescue Cavor if that were still possible, and at any rate to procure a sufficient supply of gold to place my subsequent proceedings on a firmer basis.

But that was hoping far; I had first to get back. I set myself to decide just exactly how the return to earth could be contrived. As I struggled with that problem I ceased to worry about what I should do when I got there. My only care was to get back.

I puzzled out at last that my best chance would be to drop back towards the moon as near as I dared

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in order to gather velocity, then to shut my windows and fly behind it, and when I was past to open my earthward windows and so get off at a good pace homeward. But whether I should ever reach the earth by that device or whether I might simply find myself spinning about it in some hyperbolic or parabolic curve or other, I could not tell. Later I had a happy inspiration, and by opening certain windows to the moon, which had appeared in the sky in front of the earth, I turned my course aside so as to head off the earth, behind which, without some such expedient, it had become evident to me I must pass. I did a very great deal of complicated thinking over these problems—for I am no mathematician—and in the end I am certain it was much more my good luck than my reasoning that enabled me to hit the earth. Had I known then, as I know now, the mathematical chances that were against me, I doubt if I should have troubled even to touch the studs to make any attempt. And having puzzled out what I considered the thing to do, I opened all my moonward windows, and squatted down—the effort lifted me for a time some foot or so into the air and I hung there in the oddest way—and waited for the crescent to get bigger and bigger until I felt I was near enough for safety. Then I would shut the windows, fly past the moon with the velocity I had got from it—if I did not smash upon it—and so go on towards the earth.

And that is what I did.

At last I felt my moonward start was sufficient, I shut out the sight of the moon from my eyes, and

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in a state of mind that was, I now recall, incredibly free from anxiety or any distressful quality, I sat down to begin a vigil in that little speck of matter in infinite space that would last until I should strike the earth. The heater had made the sphere tolerably warm, the air had been refreshed by the oxygen, and except for that faint congestion of the head that was always with me while I was away from earth, I felt entire physical comfort. I had extinguished the light again lest it should fail me in the end; I was in darkness save for the earthshine and the glitter of the stars below me. Everything was so absolutely silent and still that I might indeed have been the only being in the universe, and yet, strangely enough, I had no more feeling of loneliness or fear than if I had been lying in bed on earth. Now this seems all the stranger to me since during my last hours in the crater of the moon the sense of my utter loneliness had been an agony. . . .

Incredible as it will seem, this interval of time that I spent in space has no sort of proportion to any other interval of time in my life. Sometimes it seemed as though I sat through immeasurable eternities like some god upon a lotus leaf, and again as though there was a momentary pause as I journeyed from moon to earth. In truth, it was altogether some weeks of earthly time. But I had done with care and anxiety, hunger or fear, for that space. I floated, thinking with a strange breadth and freedom of all that we had undergone and of all my life and motives and the secret issues of my being. I seemed to myself to have grown greater and greater, to have lost

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all sense of movement, to be floating amidst the stars; and always the sense of earth's littleness and the infinite littleness of my life upon it, was in my thoughts.

I can't profess to explain what happened in my mind. No doubt it could all be traced directly or indirectly to the curious physical conditions under which I was living. I set it down here just for what it is worth and without any comment. The most prominent quality of it was a pervading doubt of my own identity. I became, if I may so express it, dissociate from Bedford, I looked down on Bedford as a trivial incidental thing with which I chanced to be connected, I saw Bedford in many relations—as an ass or as a poor beast where I had hitherto been inclined to regard him with a quiet pride as a very spirited and rather forcible person. I saw him not only as an ass, but as the son of many generations of asses. I reviewed his school days and his early manhood and his first encounter with love very much as one might review the proceedings of an ant in the sand. . . . I regret that something of that period of lucidity still hangs about me, and I doubt if I shall ever recover the full-bodied self-satisfaction of my early days. But at the time, the thing was not in the least painful, because I had that extraordinary persuasion that as a matter of fact I was no more Bedford than I was any one else, but only a mind floating in the still serenity of space. Why should I be disturbed about this Bedford's shortcomings? I was not responsible for him or them.

For a time I struggled against this really very gro-

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tesque delusion. I tried to summon the memory of vivid moments, of tender or intense emotions to my assistance; I felt that if I could recall one genuine twinge of feeling the growing rupture would be stopped. But I could not do it. I saw Bedford rushing down Chancery Lane, hat on the back of his head, coat tails flying out, *en route* for his public examination. I saw him dodging and bumping against and even saluting other similar little creatures in that swarming gutter of people. Me? I saw Bedford that same evening in the sitting-room of a certain lady, and his hat was on the table beside him and it badly wanted brushing and he was in tears. Me? I saw him with that lady in various attitudes and emotions,—I never felt so detached before. . . . I saw him hurrying off to Lympne to write a play, and accosting Cavor, and in his shirt sleeves working at the sphere, and walking out to Canterbury because he was afraid to come. Me? I did not believe it.

I still reasoned that all this was hallucination due to my solitude and the fact that I had lost all weight and sense of resistance. I had endeavoured to recover that sense by banging myself about the sphere, by pinching my hands and clasping them together. Among other things I lit the light, captured that torn copy of *Lloyds'* and read those convincingly realistic advertisements again, about the Cutaway bicycle, and the gentleman of private means and the lady in distress who was selling those "forks and spoons." There was no doubt *they* existed surely enough, and, said I: "This is your world, and you are Bedford and you are going back to live among things like

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that for all the rest of your life." But the doubts within me could still argue: "It is not you that is reading, it is Bedford—but *you are not Bedford*, you know. That's just where the mistake comes in."

"Confound it!" I cried, "and if I am not Bedford, what *am* I?"

But in that direction no light was forthcoming, though the strangest fancies came drifting into my brain, queer remote suspicions like shadows seen from far away. . . . Do you know I had an idea that really I was something quite outside not only the world, but all worlds, and out of space and time, and that this poor Bedford was just a peephole through which I looked at life. . . .

Bedford! However I disavowed him, there I was most certainly bound up with him, and I knew that wherever and whatever I might be I must needs feel the stress of his desires and sympathise with all his joys and sorrows until his life should end. And with the dying of Bedford—what then? . . .

Enough of this remarkable phase of my experiences. I tell it here simply to show how one's isolation and departure from this planet touched not only the functions and feeling of every organ of the body but indeed also the very fabric of the mind with strange and unanticipated disturbances. All through the major portion of that vast space-journey I hung thinking of such immaterial things, hung dissociated and apathetic, a cloudy megalomaniac as it were, amidst the stars and planets in the void of space, and not only the world to which I was returning, but the blue-lit caverns of the Selenites,

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their helmet faces, their gigantic and wonderful machines, and the fate of Cavor, dragged helpless into that world, were facts infinitely minute and altogether trivial.

Until at last I began to feel the pull of the earth upon my being, drawing me back again to the life that is real for men. And then indeed it grew clearer and clearer to me that I was quite certainly Bedford after all, and returning after amazing adventures to this world of ours, and with a life that I was very likely to lose in this return. I set myself to puzzle out the conditions under which I must fall to earth.

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XX

MR. BEDFORD AT LITTLESTONE

My line of flight was about parallel with the surface as I came into the upper air. The temperature of the sphere began to rise forthwith. I knew it behoved me to drop at once. Far below me in a darkling twilight stretched a great expanse of sea. I opened every window I could and fell—out of sunshine into evening and out of evening into night. Vaster grew the earth and vaster, swallowing up the stars, and the silvery translucent starlit veil of cloud it wore spread out to catch me. At last the world seemed no longer a sphere, but flat, and then concave. It was no longer a planet in the sky, but the world of Man. I shut all but an inch or so of earthward window and dropped with a slackening velocity. The broadening water, now so near that I could see the dark glitter of the waves, rushed up to meet me. I snapped the last strip of window and sat scowling and biting my knuckles waiting for the impact. . . .

The sphere hit the water with a huge splash: it must have sent it fathoms high. At the splash I flung the Cavorite shutters open. Down I went, but slower and slower, and then I felt the sphere pressing against my feet and so drove up again as a bubble drives. And at the last I was floating and rocking

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upon the surface of the sea and my journey in space was at an end.

The night was dark and overcast. Two yellow pin-points far away showed the passing of a ship, and nearer was a red glare that came and went. Had not the electricity of my glow-lamp exhausted itself, I could have got picked up that night. In spite of the inordinate fatigue I was beginning to feel, I was excited now and for a time hopeful in a feverish, impatient way that so my travelling might end.

But at last I ceased to move about, and sat, wrists on knees, staring at a distant red light. It swayed up and down, rocking, rocking. My excitement passed. I realised I had yet to spend at least another night in the sphere. I perceived myself infinitely heavy and fatigued. And so I fell asleep.

A change in my rhythmic motion awakened me. I peered through the refracting glass and saw that I had come aground upon a huge shallow of sand. Far away I saw houses and trees, and seaward a curved vague distortion of a ship hung between sea and sky.

I stood up and staggered. My one desire was to emerge. The manhole was upward and I wrestled with the screw. Slowly I opened the manhole. At last the air was singing in again as once it had sung out. But this time I did not wait until the pressure was adjusted. In another moment I had the weight of the window on my hands and it was open, wide open, to the old familiar sky of earth.

The air hit me on the chest so that I gasped. I dropped the glass screw. I cried out, put my hands

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to my chest and sat down. For a time I was in pain. Then I took deep breaths. At last I could rise and move about again.

I tried to thrust my head through the manhole, and the sphere rolled over. It was as though something had lugged my head down as it emerged. I ducked back sharply or I should have been pinned face under water. After some wriggling and shoving I managed to crawl out upon sand, over which the retreating waves still came and went.

I did not attempt to stand up. It seemed to me that my body must be suddenly changed to lead. Mother Earth had her grip on me now—no Cavorite intervening. I sat down heedless of the water that came over my feet.

It was dawn, a grey dawn, rather overcast but showing here and there a long patch of greenish grey. Some way out a ship was lying at anchor, a pale silhouette of a ship with one yellow light. The water came rippling in in long shallow waves. Away to the right curved the land, a shingle bank with little hovels, and at last a lighthouse, a sailing mark and a point. Inland stretched a space of level sand, broken here and there by pools of water and ending a mile away perhaps in a low shore of scrub. To the north-east some isolated watering place was visible; a row of gaunt lodging houses, the tallest objects that I could see on earth, dull dabs against the brightening sky. What strange men can have reared these vertical piles in such an amplitude of space I do not know. There they are like pieces of Brighton lost in the waste.

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For a long time I sat there, yawning and rubbing my face. At last I struggled to rise. It made me feel that I was lifting a weight. I stoodup.

I stared at the distant houses. For the first time since our starvation in the crater I thought of earthly food. "Bacon," I whispered, "eggs. Good toast and good coffee. . . . And how the devil am I going to get all this stuff to Lympne?" I wondered where I was. It was an east shore, anyhow, and I had seen Europe before I dropped.

I heard footsteps crunching in the sand and a little round-faced friendly-looking man in flannels, with a bathing towel wrapped about his shoulders and his bathing dress over his arm, appeared up the beach. I knew instantly that I must be in England. He was staring most intently at the sphere and me. He advanced, staring. I dare say I looked a ferocious savage enough—dirty, unkempt to an indescribable degree, but it did not occur to me at the time. He stopped at a distance of twenty yards. "Hul-lo, my man!" he said doubtfully.

"Hullo yourself!" said I.

He advanced reassured by that. "What on earth is that thing?" he asked.

"Can you tell me where I am?" I asked.

"That's Littlestone," he said, pointing to the houses; "and that's Dungeness! Have you just landed? What's that thing you've got? Some sort of machine?"

"Yes."

"Have you floated ashore? Have you been wrecked or something? What is it?"

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I meditated swiftly. I made an estimate of the little man's appearance as he drew nearer. "By Jove!" he said, "you've had a time of it! I thought you— Well— Where were you cast away? Is that a sort of floating thing for saving life?"

I decided to take that line for the present. I made a few vague affirmatives. "I want help," I said hoarsely. "I want to get some stuff up the beach —stuff I can't very well leave about." I became aware of three other pleasant-looking young men with towels, blazers, and straw hats coming down the sand towards me. Evidently the early bathing section of this Littlestone.

"Help!" said the young man; "rather!" He became vaguely active. "What particularly do you want done?" He turned round and gesticulated. The three young men accelerated their pace. In a minute they were about me plying me with questions I was disinclined to answer. "I'll tell all that later," I said. "I'm dead beat. I'm a rag."

"Come up to the hotel," said the foremost little man. "We'll look after that thing there."

I hesitated. "I can't," I said. "In that sphere there's two big bars of gold."

They looked incredulously at one another, then at me with a new inquiry. I went to the sphere, stooped, crept in, and presently they had the Selenites' crowbars and the broken chain before them. If I had not been so horribly fagged I could have laughed at them. It was like kittens round a beetle. They didn't know what to do with the stuff. The fat little man stooped and lifted the end of one of the

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bars and then dropped it with a grunt. Then they all did.

"It's lead or gold!" said one.

"Oh, it's gold!" said another.

"Gold right enough," said the third.

Then they all stared at me and then they all stared at the ship lying at anchor.

"I say!" cried the little man. "But where did you get that?"

I was too tired to keep up a lie. "I got it in the moon."

I saw them stare at one another.

"Look here!" said I, "I'm not going to argue now. Help me carry these lumps of gold up to the hotel—I guess with rests two of you can manage one and I'll trail this chain thing—and I'll tell you more when I've had some food."

"And how about that thing?"

"It won't hurt there," I said. "Anyhow—confound it!—it must stop there now. If the tide comes up, it will float all right."

And in a state of enormous wonderment these young men most obediently hoisted my treasures on their shoulders, and with limbs that felt like lead I headed a procession towards that distant fragment of "sea-front." Half-way there we were reinforced by two awe-stricken little girls with spades, and later appeared a lean little boy with a penetrating sniff. He was, I remember, wheeling a bicycle and he accompanied us at a distance of about a hundred yards on our right flank and then I suppose gave us up as uninteresting, mounted his bicycle and

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rode off over the level sands in the direction of the sphere.

I glanced back after him.

"He won't touch it," said the stout young man reassuringly, and I was only too willing to be reassured.

At first something of the grey of the morning was in my mind, but presently the sun disengaged itself from the level clouds of the horizon and lit the world and turned the leaden sea to glittering waters. My spirits rose. A sense of the vast importance of the things I had done and had yet to do came with the sunlight into my mind. I laughed aloud as the foremost man staggered under my gold. When indeed I took my place in the world, how amazed the world would be!

If it had not been for my inordinate fatigue the landlord of the Littlestone hotel would have been amusing as he hesitated between my gold and my respectable company on one hand and my filthy appearance on the other. But at last I found myself in a terrestrial bathroom once more, with warm water to wash myself with and a change of raiment, preposterously small indeed, but clean, that the genial little man had lent me. He lent me a razor, too, but I could not screw up my resolution to attack even the outposts of the bristling beard that covered my face.

I sat down to an English breakfast and ate with a sort of languid appetite, an appetite many weeks old and very decrepit, and stirred myself to answer the questions of the four young men. And I told them the truth.

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"Well," said I, "as you press me,—I got it in the moon."

"The moon?"

"Yes, the moon in the sky."

"But how do you mean?"

"What I say, confound it!"

"That you have just come from the moon?"

"Exactly! through space—in that ball." And I took a delicious mouthful of egg. I made a private note that when I went back to the moon I would take a box of eggs.

I could see clearly that they did not believe one word of what I told them, but evidently they considered me the most respectable liar they had ever met. They glanced at one another and then concentrated the fire of their eyes on me. I fancy they expected a clue to me in the way I helped myself to salt. They seemed to find something significant in my peppering my egg. Those strangely shaped masses of gold they had staggered under held their minds. There the lumps lay in front of me, each worth thousands of pounds and as impossible for any one to steal as a house or a piece of land. As I looked at their curious faces over my coffee cup I realised something of the enormous wilderness of explanations into which I should have to wander to render myself comprehensible again.

"You don't really mean," began the youngest young man in the tone of one who speaks to an obstinate child.

"Just pass me that toast rack," I said, and shut him up completely.

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"But look here, I say," began one of the others. "We're not going to believe that, you know."

"Ah, well," said I, and shrugged my shoulders.

"He doesn't want to tell us," said the youngest young man in a stage voice aside, and then with an appearance of great *sang-froid:* "You don't mind if I have a cigarette?"

I waved him a cordial assent, and proceeded with my breakfast. Two of the others went and looked out of the farther window and talked inaudibly. I was struck by a thought. "The tide," I said, "is running out?"

There was a pause as to who should answer me. "It's near the ebb," said the little fat man.

"Well, anyhow," I said, "it won't float far."

I decapitated my third egg and began a little speech. "Look here," I said. "Please don't imagine I'm surly or telling you uncivil lies or anything of that sort. I'm forced almost to be a little short and mysterious. I can quite understand this is as queer as it can be and that your imaginations must be going it. I can assure you, you're in at a memorable time. But I can't make it clear to you now,—it's impossible. I give you my word of honour I've come from the moon, and that's all I can tell you. . . . All the same I'm tremendously obliged to you, you know, tremendously. I hope that my manner hasn't in any way given you offence."

"Oh no, not in the least!" said the youngest young man affably. "We can quite understand," and staring hard at me all the time he heeled his chair back until it very nearly upset, and recovered

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with some exertion. "Not a bit of it," said the fat young man. "Don't you imagine that!" and they all got up and dispersed and walked about and lit cigarettes and generally tried to show they were perfectly amiable and disengaged and entirely free from the slightest curiosity about me and the sphere. "I'm going to keep an eye on that ship out there all the same," I heard one of them remarking in an undertone. If only they could have forced themselves to it they would, I believe, even have gone out and left me. I went on with my third egg.

"The weather," the fat little man remarked presently, "has been immense, has it not? I don't know when we have had such a summer. . . ."

Phoo-whizz! Like a tremendous rocket!

And somewhere a window was broken. . . .

"What's that?" said I.

"It isn't —?" cried the little man and rushed to the corner window.

All the others rushed to the window likewise. I sat staring at them.

Suddenly I leaped up, knocked over my third egg, and rushed for the window also. I had just thought of something. "Nothing to be seen there," cried the little man, rushing for the door.

"It's that boy!" I cried, bawling in hoarse fury; "it's that accursed boy!" and turning about I pushed the waiter aside—he was just bringing me some more toast—and rushed violently out of the room and down and out upon the queer little esplanade in front of the hotel.

The sea, which had been smooth, was rough now

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with hurrying cats'-paws, and all about where the sphere had been was tumbled water like the wake of a ship. Above, a little puff of cloud whirled like dispersing smoke, and the three or four people on the beach were staring up with interrogative faces towards the point of that unexpected report. And that was all! Boots and waiter and the four young men in blazers came rushing out behind me. Shouts came from windows and doors and all sorts of worrying people came into sight—agape.

For a time I stood there too overwhelmed by this new development to think of the people. At first I was too stunned to see the thing as any definite disaster—I was just stunned as a man is by some accidental violent blow. It is only afterwards he begins to appreciate his specific injury.

"Good Lord!"

I felt as though somebody was pouring funk out of a can down the back of my neck. My legs became feeble. I had got the first intimation of what the disaster meant for me. There was that confounded boy—sky high! I was utterly "left." There was the gold in the coffee room, my only possession on earth. How would it all work out? The general effect was of a gigantic unmanageable confusion.

"I say," said the voice of the little man behind, "I say, you know."

I wheeled about and there were twenty or thirty people all bombarding me with dumb interrogation, with infinite doubt and suspicion. I felt the compulsion of their eyes intolerably. I groaned aloud.

"I *can't*," I shouted. "I tell you I can't! I'm

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not equal to it! You must puzzle and—and be damned to you!"

I gesticulated convulsively. He receded a step as though I had threatened him. I made a bolt through them into the hotel. I charged back into the coffee room, rang the bell furiously. I gripped the waiter as he entered. "D'y hear?" I shouted. "Get help and carry these bars up to my room right away."

He failed to understand me and I shouted and raved at him. A scared-looking little old man in a green apron appeared and two of the young men in flannels. I made a dash at them and commandeered their services. As soon as the gold was in my room I felt free to quarrel. "Now get out," I shouted; "all o' you get out if you don't want to see a man go mad before your eyes!" And I helped the waiter by the shoulder as he hesitated in the doorway. And then as soon as I had the door locked on them all I tore off the little man's clothes again, shied them right and left, and got into bed forthwith. And there I lay swearing and panting and cooling for a long time.

At last I was calm enough to get out of bed and ring up the round-eyed waiter for a flannel night-shirt, a soda and whiskey and some good cigars. And these things being procured me after an exasperating delay that drove me several times to the bell, I locked the door again and proceeded very deliberately to look the entire situation in the face.

The net result of the great experiment presented itself as an absolute failure. It was a rout and I was the sole survivor. It was an absolute collapse

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and this was the final disaster. There was nothing for it but to save myself, and as much as I could in the way of prospects from our *débâcle*. At one fatal crowning blow all my vague resolutions of return and recovery had vanished. My intention of going back to the moon, of getting a sphereful of gold and afterwards of having a fragment of Cavorite analysed and so recovering the great secret, perhaps finally even of recovering Cavor's body, all these ideas vanished altogether.

I was the sole survivor, and that was all.

I think that going to bed was one of the luckiest ideas I have ever had in an emergency. I really believe I should either have got looseheaded or done some fatal, indiscreet thing. But there, locked in and secure from all interruption I could think out the position in all its bearings and make my arrangements at leisure.

Of course what had happened to the boy was quite clear to me. He had crawled into the sphere, meddled with the studs, shut the Cavorite windows and gone up. It was highly improbable he had screwed in the manhole stopper, and even if he had the chances were a thousand to one against his getting back. It was fairly evident that he would gravitate with my bales to somewhere near the middle of the sphere and remain there and so cease to be a legitimate terrestrial interest, however remarkable he might seem to the inhabitants of some remote quarter of space. I very speedily convinced myself on that point. And as for any responsibility I might

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have in the matter, the more I reflected the clearer it became that if only I kept quiet, I need not trouble myself about that. If I was faced by sorrowing parents demanding their lost boy, I had merely to demand my lost sphere—or ask them what they meant. At first I had had a vision of weeping parents and guardians and all sorts of complications, but now I saw that I simply had to keep my mouth shut and nothing in that way could arise. And indeed the more I lay and smoked and thought the more evident became the wisdom of impenetrability.

It is within the right of every British citizen, provided he does not commit damage nor indecorum, to appear suddenly wherever he pleases and as ragged and filthy as he pleases, and with whatever amount of virgin gold he sees fit to encumber himself, and no one has any right at all to hinder and detain him in this procedure. I formulated that at last to myself and repeated it over as a sort of private Magna Carta of my liberty.

Once I had put that issue on one side I could take up and consider in an equable manner certain considerations I had scarcely dared think of before, namely, those arising out of the circumstances of my bankruptcy. But now looking at this matter calmly and at leisure, I could see that if only I suppressed my identity by a temporary assumption of some less well-known name, and retained my two months' beard, the risks of any annoyance from the spiteful creditors to whom I have already alluded became very small indeed. From that to a definite course of rational worldly action was plain sailing.

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It was all amazingly petty, no doubt, but what was there remaining for me to do? Whatever I did I was resolved that I would keep myself level and right side up.

I ordered up writing materials and addressed a letter to the new Romney bank—the nearest, the waiter informed me—telling the manager I wished to open an account with him and requesting him to send two trustworthy persons properly authenticated in a cab with a good horse to fetch some hundredweight of gold with which I happened to be encumbered. I signed the letter "Wells," which seemed to me to be a thoroughly respectable sort of name. This done, I got a Folkestone blue book, chose an outfitter, and asked him to send a cutter to measure me for a drab tweed suit, ordering at the same time a valise, dressing bag, brown boots, shirts, hats (to fit), and so forth, and from a watchmaker I also ordered a watch. And these letters being despatched, I had up as good a lunch as the hotel could give, and then lay smoking a cigar, as calm as possible until in accordance with my instructions two duly authenticated clerks came from the bank and weighed and took away my gold. After that I pulled the clothes over my ears in order to drown any knocking and went very comfortably to sleep.

I went to sleep. No doubt it was a prosaic thing for the first man back from the moon to do, and I can imagine that the young and imaginative reader will find my behaviour disappointing. But I was horribly fatigued and bothered, and, confound it! what else was there to do? There certainly was not

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the remotest chance of my being believed, if I had told my story then, and it would certainly have subjected me to intolerable annoyances. I went to sleep. When at last I awoke I was ready to face the world, as I have always been accustomed to face it since I came to years of discretion. And so I got away to Italy and there it is I am writing this story. If the world will not have it as fact, then the world may take it as fiction. It is no concern of mine.

And now that the account is finished, I am amazed to think how completely this adventure is gone and done with. Everybody believes that Cavor was a not very brilliant scientific experimenter who blew up his house and himself at Lympne, and they explain the bang that followed my arrival at Littlestone by a reference to the experiments with explosives that are going on continually at the government establishment of Lydd, two miles away. I must confess that hitherto I have not acknowledged my share in the disappearance of Master Tommy Simmons, which was that little boy's name. That perhaps may prove a difficult bit of corroboration to explain away. They account for my appearance in rags with two bars of indisputable gold upon the Littlestone beach in various ingenious ways—it doesn't worry me what they think of me. They say I have strung all these things together to avoid being questioned too closely as to the source of my wealth. I would like to see the man who could invent a story that would hold together like this one. Well, they must take it as fiction—there it is.

I have told my story—and now I suppose I have

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to take up the worries of this terrestrial life again. Even if one has been to the moon, one has still to earn a living. So I am working here at Amalfi on the scenario of that play I sketched before Cavor came walking into my world, and I am trying to piece my life together as it was before ever I saw him. I must confess that I find it hard to keep my mind on the play when the moonshine comes into my room. It is full moon here, and last night I was out on the pergola for hours staring away at that shining blankness that hides so much. Imagine it! tables and chairs and trestles and bars of gold! Confound it!—if only one could hit on that Cavorite again! But such a thing as that doesn't come twice in a life. Here I am, a little better off than I was at Lympne, and that is all. And Cavor has sought death in a more elaborate way than any human being ever did before. So the story closes as finally and completely as a dream. It fits in so little with all the other things of life, so much of it is so utterly remote from all human experience, the leaping, the queer eating, the hard breathing of those weightless times, that indeed there are moments when, in spite of my moon gold, I do more than half believe myself that the whole thing was a dream.

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XXI

THE ASTONISHING COMMUNICATION OF MR. JULIUS WENDIGEE

When I had finished the account of my return to the earth at Littlestone I wrote "The End," made a flourish, and threw my pen aside, fully believing that the whole story of the First Men in the Moon was told. Not only had I done this, but I had placed my manuscript in the hands of a literary agent, had permitted it to be sold, had seen the greater portion of it appear in *The Strand Magazine*, and was setting to work again upon the scenario of the play I had commenced at Lympne before I realised that the end was not yet. Following me from Amalfi to Algiers, there reached me (it is now about six weeks ago) one of the most astounding communications I have ever been fated to receive. Briefly, it informed me that Mr. Julius Wendigee, a Dutch electrician, who has been experimenting with certain apparatus akin to the apparatus used by Mr. Tesla in America, in the hope of discovering some method of communication with Mars, was receiving day by day a curiously fragmentary message in English, which was indisputably emanating from Mr. Cavor in the moon.

At first I thought the thing was an elaborate practical joke by some one who had seen the manuscript of my narrative. I answered Mr. Wendigee

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jestingly, but he replied in a manner that put such suspicion altogether aside, and in a state of inconceivable excitement I hurried from Algiers to the little observatory upon the Monte Rosa in which he was working. In the presence of his record and his appliances—and above all of the messages from Mr. Cavor that were coming to hand—my lingering doubts vanished. I decided at once to accept his proposal to remain with him, assisting him to take down the record from day to day, and endeavouring with him to send a message back to the moon. Cavor, we learnt, was not only alive but free in the midst of an almost inconceivable community of these ant-like beings, these ant-men, in the blue darkness of the lunar caves. He was lamed, it seemed, but otherwise in quite good health—in better health, he distinctly said, than he usually enjoyed on earth. He had had a fever, but it had left no bad effects. And naturally enough he seemed to be labouring under a conviction that I was either dead in the moon crater or lost in the deep of space.

Mr. Wendigee was engaged in quite a different investigation when he received the first message from the moon. The reader will no doubt recall the little excitement that began the century, arising out of an announcement by Mr. Nikola Tesla, the American electrical celebrity, that he had received a message from Mars. His announcement recalled attention to a fact that had long been familiar to scientific people, namely: that from some unknown source in space, waves of electro-magnetic disturbance, entirely similar to those used by Signor Marconi for

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his wireless telegraphy, are constantly reaching the earth. Besides Mr. Tesla several other observers have been engaged in perfecting apparatus for receiving and recording these vibrations, though few would go so far as to consider them actual messages from some extraterrestrial sender. Among those few however we must certainly count Mr. Wendigee. Ever since 1898 he had devoted himself almost entirely to this subject, and being a man of ample means he had erected an observatory on the flanks of Monte Rosa, in a position adapted in every way for such observations.

My scientific attainments, I must admit, are not great, but so far as they enable me to judge, Mr. Wendigee's contrivances for detecting and recording any disturbances in the electro-magnetic conditions of space are eminently original and ingenious. And by a happy combination of circumstances, they were set up and in operation about two months before Cavor made his first attempt to call up the earth. Consequently we have fragments of his communication even from the beginning. Unhappily, they are only fragments, and the most momentous of all the things that he had to tell humanity, the instructions, that is, for the making of Cavorite, if indeed he ever transmitted them, have throbbed themselves away unrecorded into space. We never succeeded in getting a response back to Cavor. He did not know therefore what we had received or what we had missed; nor indeed did he certainly know that any one on earth was really aware of his efforts to reach us. And the persistence he displayed in sending

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eighteen long descriptions of lunar affairs—as they would be if we had them complete—shows how much his mind must have turned back towards his native planet since he left it two years ago.

You can imagine how amazed Mr. Wendigee must have been when he discovered his record of electro-magnetic disturbances interlaced by Cavor's straightforward English. Mr. Wendigee knew nothing of our wild journey moonward, and suddenly—this English out of the void!

It is well the reader should understand the conditions under which these messages were sent. Somewhere within the moon Cavor certainly had access for a time to a considerable amount of electrical apparatus, and it would seem he rigged up—perhaps furtively—a transmitting arrangement of the Marconi type. This he was able to operate at irregular intervals: sometimes for only half an hour or so, sometimes for three or four hours at a stretch. At these times he transmitted his earthward message, regardless of the fact that the relative position of the moon and points upon the earth's surface is constantly altering. As a consequence of this and of the necessary imperfections of our recording instruments his communication comes and goes in our records in an extremely fitful manner; it becomes blurred; it "fades out" in a mysterious and altogether exasperating way. And added to this is the fact that he was not an expert operator; he had partly forgotten, or never completely mastered, the code in general use, and as he became fatigued he dropped words and misspelt in a curious manner.

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Altogether we have probably missed quite half of the communications he made, and much we have is damaged, broken, and partly effaced. In the abstract that follows the reader must be prepared therefore for a considerable amount of break, hiatus, and change of topic. Mr. Wendigee and I are collaborating in a complete and annotated edition of the Cavor record, which we hope to publish, together with a detailed account of the instruments employed, beginning with the first volume in January next. That will be the full and scientific report, of which this is only the popular first transcript. But here we give at least sufficient to complete the story I have told, and to give the broad outlines of the state of that kindred world so near, and yet so dissimilar to our own.

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XXII

AN ABSTRACT OF THE SIX MESSAGES FIRST RECEIVED FROM MR. CAVOR

THE two earlier messages of Mr. Cavor may very well be reserved for that larger volume. They simply tell with greater brevity and with a difference in several details that is interesting, but not of any vital importance, the bare facts of the making of the sphere and our departure from the world. Throughout, Cavor speaks of me as a man who is dead, but with a curious change of temper as he approaches our landing on the moon. "Poor Bedford," he says of me, and "this poor young man," and he blames himself for inducing a young man, "by no means well equipped for such adventures," to leave a planet "on which he was indisputably fitted to succeed" on so precarious a mission. I think he underrates the part my energy and practical capacity played in bringing about the realisation of his theoretical sphere. "We arrived," he says, with no more account of our passage through space than if we had made a journey in a railway train.

And then he becomes increasingly unfair to me. Unfair, indeed, to an extent I should not have expected in a man trained in the search for truth. Looking back over my previously written account of these things I must insist that I have been altogether juster to Cavor than he has been to me. I

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have extenuated little and suppressed nothing. But his account is:

"It speedily became apparent that the entire strangeness of our circumstances and surroundings —great loss of weight, attenuated but highly oxygenated air, consequent exaggeration of the results of muscular effort, rapid development of weird plants from obscure spores, lurid sky—was exciting my companion unduly. On the moon his character seemed to deteriorate. He became impulsive, rash, and quarrelsome. In a little while his folly in devouring some gigantic vesicles and his consequent intoxication led to our capture by the Selenites—before we had had the slightest opportunity of properly observing their ways. . . ."

(He says, you observe, nothing of his own concession to these same "vesicles.")

And he goes on from that point to say: "We came to a difficult passage with them, and Bedford, mistaking certain gestures of theirs"—pretty gestures they were!—"gave way to a panic violence. He ran amuck, killed three, and perforce I had to flee with him after the outrage. Subsequently we fought with a number who endeavoured to bar our way, and slew seven or eight more. It says much for the tolerance of these beings that on my recapture I was not instantly slain. We made our way to the exterior and, to increase our chances of recovering our sphere, separated in the crater of our arrival. But presently I came upon a body of Selenites, led by two who were curiously different, even in form, from any of those we had seen hitherto, with larger

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heads and smaller bodies and much more elaborately wrapped about. After evading them for some time I fell into a crevasse, cut my head rather badly and displaced my patella, and, finding crawling very painful, decided to surrender—if they would still permit me to do so. This they did, and perceiving my helpless condition carried me with them again into the moon. And of Bedford I have heard or seen nothing more nor, so far as I can gather, has any Selenite. Either the night overtook him in the crater, or else, which is more probable, he found the sphere, and desiring to steal a march upon me made off with it—only, I fear, to find it uncontrollable, and to meet a more lingering fate in outer space."

And with that Cavor dismisses me and goes on to more interesting topics. I dislike the idea of seeming to use my position as his editor to deflect his story in my own interest, but I am obliged to protest here against the turn he gives these occurrences. He says nothing about that gasping message on the blood-stained paper in which he told, or attempted to tell, a very different story. The dignified self-surrender is an altogether new view of the affair that has come to him, I must insist, since he began to feel secure among the lunar people; and as for the "stealing a march" conception, I am quite willing to let the reader decide between us on what he has before him. I know I am not a model man—I have made no pretence to be. But am I *that?*

However, that is the sum of my wrongs. From this point I can edit Cavor with an untroubled mind, for he mentions me no more.

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It would seem that the Selenites who came upon him carried him to some point in the interior down "a great shaft" by means of what he describes as "a sort of balloon." We gather from the rather confused passage in which he describes this, and from a number of chance allusions and hints in other and subsequent messages, that this "great shaft" is one of an enormous system of artificial shafts that run, each from what is called a lunar "crater" downwards for very nearly a hundred miles towards the central portion of our satellite. These shafts communicate by transverse tunnels, they throw out abysmal caverns and expand into great globular places; the whole of the moon's substance for a hundred miles inward, indeed, is a mere sponge of rock. "Partly," says Cavor, "this sponginess is natural, but very largely it is due to the enormous industry of the Selenites in the past. The great circular mounds of the excavated rock and earth that form these great circles about the tunnels are known to earthly astronomers (misled by a false analogy) as volcanoes."

It was down this shaft they took him, in this "sort of balloon" he speaks of, at first into an inky blackness and then into a region of continually increasing phosphorescence. Cavor's despatches show him to be, for a scientific man, curiously regardless of detail, but we gather that this light was due to the streams and cascades of water—"no doubt containing some phosphorescent organism"—that flowed ever more abundantly downward towards the Central Sea. And as he descended, he says: "The Sele-

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nites also became luminous." And at last far below him he saw as it were a lake of heatless fire, the waters of the Central Sea, glowing and eddying in strange perturbation, "like luminous blue milk that is about to boil."

"This Lunar Sea," says Cavor, in a later passage, "is not a stagnant ocean; a solar tide sends it in a perpetual flow around the lunar axis, and strange storms and boilings and rushings of its waters occur, and at times cold winds and thunderings that ascend out of it into the busy ways of the great anthill above. It is only when the water is in motion that it gives out light; in its rare seasons of calm it is black. Commonly, when one sees it, its waters rise and fall in an oily swell, and flakes and big rafts of shining, bubbly foam drift with the sluggish, faintly glowing current. The Selenites navigate its cavernous straits and lagoons in little shallow boats of a canoe-like shape; and even before my journey to the galleries about the Grand Lunar, who is Master of the Moon, I was permitted to make a brief excursion on its waters.

"The caverns and passages are naturally very tortuous. A large proportion of these ways are known only to expert pilots among the fishermen, and not infrequently Selenites are lost for ever in their labyrinths. In their remoter recesses, I am told, strange creatures lurk, some of them so terrible and dangerous that all the science of the moon has been unable to exterminate them. There is particularly the Rapha, an inextricable mass of clutching tentacles that one hacks to pieces only to multiply; and the

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Tzee, a darting creature that is never seen, so subtly and suddenly does it slay. . . ."

He gives us a gleam of description.

"I was reminded on this excursion of what I have read of the Mammoth Caves; if only I had a yellow flambeau instead of the pervading blue light, and a solid-looking boatman with an oar instead of a scuttle-faced Selenite working an engine at the back of the canoe, I could have imagined I had suddenly got back to earth. The rocks about us varied, sometimes black, sometimes pale blue and veined, and once they flashed and glittered as though we had come into a mine of sapphires. And below one saw the ghostly phosphorescent fishes flash and vanish in the hardly less phosphorescent deep. Then presently a long ultramarine vista down the turgid stream of one of the channels of traffic, and a landing-stage, and then perhaps a glimpse up the enormous crowded shaft of one of the vertical ways.

"In one great place heavy with glistening stalactites a number of boats was anchored. We went alongside one of these and watched the long-armed fishing Selenites winding in a net. They were little, hunchbacked insects with very strong arms, short, bandy legs, and crinkled face-masks. As they pulled, the net seemed the heaviest thing I had come upon in the moon; it was loaded with weights—no doubt of gold—and it took a long time to draw, for in those waters the larger and more edible fish lurk deep. The fish in the net came up like a blue moonrise—a blaze of darting, tossing blue.

"Among their catch was a many-tentaculate evil-

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eyed black thing, ferociously active, whose appearance they greeted with shrieks and twitters, and which they hacked to pieces with quick, nervous movements. All its dissevered limbs continued to lash and writhe in a vicious manner. Afterwards when fever had hold of me I dreamt again and again of that bitter, furious creature rising so vigorous and active out of the unknown sea. It was the most active and malignant thing of all the living creatures I have yet seen in this world inside the moon. . . .

"The surface of this sea must be very nearly two hundred miles (if not more) below the level of the moon's exterior; all the cities of the moon lie, I learned, immediately above this Central Sea, in such cavernous spaces and artificial galleries as I have described, and they communicate with the exterior by enormous vertical shafts which open invariably in what are called by earthly astronomers the 'craters' of the moon. The lid covering one such aperture I had already seen during the wanderings that had preceded my capture.

"Upon the condition of the less central portion of the moon I have not yet arrived at very precise knowledge. There is an enormous system of caverns in which the mooncalves shelter during the night; and there are abattoirs and the like—in one of these it was that Bedford and I fought with the Selenite butchers—and I have seen since balloons laden with meat descending out of the upper dark. I have as yet scarcely learned as much of these things as a Zulu in London will learn about the British corn supplies in the same time. It is clear, however, that these verti-

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cal shafts and the vegetation of the surface must play an essential *rôle* in ventilating and keeping fresh the atmosphere of the moon. At one time, and particularly on my first emergence from my prison, there was certainly a cold wind blowing *down* the shaft, and later there was a kind of sirocco upwards that corresponded with my fever. For at the end of about three weeks I fell ill of an indefinable fever, and in spite of sleep and the quinine tabloids that very fortunately I had brought in my pocket, I remained ill and fretting miserably, almost to the time when I was taken into the palace of the Grand Lunar, who is Master of the Moon.

"I will not dilate on the wretchedness of my condition," he remarks, "during those days of ill-health." Nevertheless he goes on with great amplitude with details I omit here. "My temperature," he concludes, "kept abnormally high for a long time, and I lost all desire for food. I had stagnant waking intervals and sleep tormented by dreams, and at one phase I was, I remember, so weak as to be earth-sick and almost hysterical. I longed almost intolerably for colour to break the everlasting blue. . . ."

He reverts again presently to the topic of this sponge-caught lunar atmosphere. I am told by astronomers and physicists that all he tells is in absolute accordance with what was already known of the moon's condition. Had earthly astronomers had the courage and imagination to push home a bold induction, says Mr. Wendigee, they might have foretold almost everything that Cavor has to say of the general structure of the moon. They know now pretty certainly that moon and earth are not so

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much satellite and primary as smaller and greater sisters, made out of one mass, and consequently made of the same material. And since the density of the moon is only three-fifths that of the earth, there can be nothing for it but that she is hollowed out by a great system of caverns. There was no necessity, said Sir Jabez Flap, F. R. S., that most entertaining exponent of the facetious side of the stars, that we should ever have gone to the moon to find out such easy inferences, and points the pun with an allusion to Gruyère; but he certainly might have announced his knowledge of the hollowness of the moon before. And if the moon is hollow, then the apparent absence of air and water is, of course, quite easily explained. The sea lies within at the bottom of the caverns, and the air travels through the great sponge of galleries, in accordance with simple physical laws. The caverns of the moon, on the whole, are very windy places. As the sunlight comes round the moon, the air in the outer galleries on that side is heated, its pressure increases, some flows out on the exterior and mingles with the evaporating air of the craters (where the plants remove its carbonic acid), while the greater portion flows round through the galleries to replace the shrinking air of the cooling side that the sunlight had left. There is, therefore, a constant eastward breeze in the air of the outer galleries, and an up-flow during the lunar day up the shafts, complicated, of course, very greatly by the varying shape of the galleries and the ingenious contrivances of the Selenite mind. . . .

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XXIII

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE SELENITES

THE messages of Cavor from the sixth up to the sixteenth are for the most part so much broken, and so abounding in repetitions, that they scarcely form a consecutive narrative. They will be given in full, of course, in the scientific report, but here it will be far more convenient to continue simply to abstract and quote as in the former chapter. We have subjected every word to a keen critical scrutiny, and my own brief memories and impressions of lunar things have been of inestimable help in interpreting what would otherwise have been impenetrably dark. And, naturally, as living beings, our interest centres far more upon the strange community of lunar insects in which he is living, it would seem as an honoured guest, than upon the mere physical condition of their world.

I have already made it clear, I think, that the Selenites I saw resembled man in maintaining the erect attitude and in having four limbs, and I have compared the general appearance of their heads and the jointing of their limbs to that of insects. I have mentioned too the peculiar consequence of the smaller gravitation of the moon on their fragile slightness. Cavor confirms me upon all these points. He calls them "animals," though of course they fall under no

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division of the classification of earthly creatures, and he points out "the insect type of anatomy had, fortunately for men, never exceeded a relatively very small size on earth." The largest terrestrial insects, living or extinct, do not as a matter of fact measure six inches in length; "but here, against the lesser gravitation of the moon, a creature certainly as much insect as vertebrate seems to have been able to attain to human and ultra-human dimensions."

He does not mention the ant, but throughout his allusions the ant is continually brought before my mind, in its sleepless activity, its intelligence, its social organisation and, more particularly, the fact that it displays, in addition to the two forms, the male and the female, produced by almost all other animals, a great variety of sexless creatures—workers, soldiers, and the like, differing from one another in structure, character, power and use and yet all members of the same species. And these Selenites are of course if only by reason of this widely extended adaptation, incomparably greater than ants. And instead of the four or five different forms of ant that are found there are almost innumerably different forms of Selenite. I have endeavoured to indicate the very considerable difference observable in such Selenites of the outer crust as I happened to encounter; the differences in size, hue, and shape were certainly as wide as the differences between the most widely separated races of men. But such differences as I saw fade absolutely to nothing in comparison with the huge distinctions of which Cavor tells. It would seem the exterior Selenites I saw were, indeed, mostly of one colour and

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occupation—mooncalf herds, butchers, fleshers, and the like. But within the moon, practically unsuspected by me, there are, it seems, a host of variations. The moon is indeed a kind of super-ant-hill. But in place of the five distinctive types—the worker, soldier, winged male, queen, and slave of the ant-world—there are amongst the moon-folk not only hundreds of differentiations, but, within each, and linking one to the other, a whole series of fine gradations. And these Selenites are not merely colossally superior to ants, but, according to Cavor, colossally, in intelligence, morality and social wisdom, higher than man.

It would seem the discovery came upon Cavor very speedily. I infer rather than learn from his narrative that he was captured by the mooncalf hinds under the direction of those other Selenites who "have larger brain-cases (heads?) and very much shorter legs." Finding he would not walk even under the goad, they carried him into darkness, crossed a narrow, plank-like bridge that may have been the very bridge I had refused, and put him down in something that must have seemed at first to be some sort of lift. This was the balloon—it had certainly been absolutely invisible to us in the darkness—and what had seemed to me a mere plank-walking into the void was really, no doubt, the passage of the gangway. In this he descended towards constantly more luminous strata of the moon. At first they descended in silence—save for the twitterings of the Selenites—and then into a stir of windy movement. In a little while the profound blackness

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had made his eyes so sensitive that he began to see more and more of the things about him, and at last the vague took shape.

"Conceive an enormous cylindrical space," says Cavor in his seventh message, "a quarter of a mile across, perhaps; very dimly lit at first and then bright, with big platforms twisting down its sides in a spiral that vanishes at last below in a blue profundity; and lit ever more brightly—one could not tell how or why. Think of the well of the very largest spiral staircase or lift-shaft that you have ever looked down, and magnify that by a hundred. Imagine it at twilight seen through blue glass. Imagine yourself looking down that; only imagine also that you feel extraordinarily light and have got rid of any giddy feeling you might have on earth, and you will have the first conditions of my impression. Round this enormous shaft imagine a broad gallery running in a much steeper spiral than would be credible on earth, and forming a steep road protected from the gulf only by a little parapet that vanishes at last in perspective a couple of miles below.

"Looking up, I saw the very fellow of the downward vision; it had of course the effect of looking into a very steep cone. A wind was blowing down the shaft, and far above I fancy I heard, growing fainter and fainter, the bellowing of the mooncalves that were being driven down again from their evening pasturage on the exterior. And up and down the spiral galleries were scattered numerous moon people, pallid, faintly self-luminous insects, regarding our appearance or busied on unknown errands.

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"Either I fancied it or a flake of snow came drifting swiftly down on the icy breeze. And then, falling like a snowflake, a little figure, a little man-insect clinging to a parachute, drove down very swiftly towards the central places of the moon.

"The big-headed Selenite sitting beside me, seeing me move my head with the gesture of one who saw, pointed with his trunk-like 'hand' and indicated a sort of jetty coming into sight very far below: a little landing-stage, as it were, hanging into the void. As it swept up towards us our pace diminished very rapidly, and in a few moments as it seemed we were abreast of it and at rest. A mooring-place was flung and grasped, and I found myself pulled down to a level with a great crowd of Selenites, who jostled to see me.

"It was an incredible crowd. Suddenly and violently there was forced upon my attention the vast amount of difference there is amongst these beings of the moon.

"Indeed, there seemed not two alike in all that jostling multitude. They differed in shape, they differed in size! Some bulged and overhung, some ran about among the feet of their fellows, some twined and interlaced like snakes. All of them had the grotesque and disquieting suggestion of an insect that has somehow contrived to burlesque humanity; all seemed to present an incredible exaggeration of some particular feature; one had a vast right fore-limb, an enormous antennal arm, as it were; one seemed all leg, poised, as it were, on stilts; another protruded an enormous nose-like organ beside a sharply specu-

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lative eye that made him startlingly human until one saw his expressionless mouth. One has seen punchinellos made of lobster claws—he was like that. The strange and (except for the want of mandibles and palps) most insect-like head of the mooncalf-minders underwent astounding transformations; here it was broad and low, here high and narrow, here its vacuous brow was drawn out into horns and strange features, here it was whiskered and divided, and there with a grotesquely human profile. There were several brain-cases distended like bladders to a huge size. The eyes, too, were strangely varied, some quite elephantine in their small alertness, some huge pits of darkness. There were amazing forms with heads reduced to microscopic proportions and blobby bodies; and fantastic, flimsy things that existed, it would seem, only as a basis for vast, white-rimmed, glaring eyes. And oddest of all, two or three of these weird inhabitants of a subterranean world, a world sheltered by innumerable miles of rock from sun or rain, *carried umbrellas* in their tentaculate hands! —real terrestrial-looking umbrellas! And then I thought of the parachutist.

"These moon people behaved exactly as a human crowd might have done in similar circumstances: they jostled and thrust one another, they shoved one another aside, they even clambered upon one another to get a glimpse of me. Every moment they increased in numbers, and pressed more urgently upon the discs of my ushers"—Cavor does not explain what he means by this—"every moment fresh shapes forced themselves upon my astounded attention.

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And presently I was signed and helped into a sort of litter, and lifted up on the shoulders of strong-armed bearers and so borne over this seething nightmare towards the apartments that were provided for me in the moon. All about me were eyes, faces, masks, tentacles, a leathery noise like the rustling of beetle wings, and a great bleating and twittering of Selenite voices."

We gather he was taken to a "hexagonal apartment," and there for a space he was confined. Afterwards he was given a much more considerable liberty; indeed, almost as much freedom as one has in a civilised town on earth. And it would appear that the mysterious being who is the ruler and master of the moon appointed two Selenites "with large heads" to guard and study him, and to establish whatever mental communications were possible with him. Amazing and incredible as it may seem, these two creatures, these fantastic men-insects, these beings of another world, were presently communicating with Cavor by means of terrestrial speech.

Cavor speaks of them as Phi-oo and Tsi-puff. Phi-oo, he says, was about five feet high; he had small, slender legs about eighteen inches long, and slight feet of the common lunar pattern. On these balanced a little body, throbbing with the pulsations of his heart. He had long, soft, many-jointed arms ending in a tentacled grip, and his neck was many-jointed in the usual way, but exceptionally short and thick. "His head," says Cavor—apparently alluding to some previous description that has gone astray in space—"is of the common lunar type, but

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strangely modified. The mouth has the usual expressionless gape, but it is unusually small and pointing downwards, and the mask is reduced to the size of a large flat nose-flap. On either side are the little hen-like eyes. The rest of the head is distended into a huge globe, and the chitinous leathery cuticle of the mooncalf hinds thins out to a mere membrane, through which the pulsating brain movements are distinctly visible. He is a creature, indeed, with a tremendously hypertrophied brain, and with the rest of his organism both relatively and absolutely dwarfed." In another passage Cavor compares the back view of him to Atlas supporting the world. Tsi-puff, it seems, was a similar insect, but his "face" was drawn out to a considerable length, and the brain hypertrophy being in different regions, his head was not round but pear-shaped, with the stalk downward. There were also in Cavor's retinue litter-carriers, lop-sided beings with enormous shoulders, very spidery ushers, and a squat foot-attendant.

The manner in which Phi-oo and Tsi-puff attacked the problem of speech was fairly obvious. They came into this "hexagonal cell" in which Cavor was confined, and began imitating every sound he made, beginning with a cough. He seems to have grasped their intention with great quickness, and to have begun repeating words to them and pointing to indicate the application. The procedure was probably always the same. Phi-oo would attend to Cavor for a space, then point also and say the word he had heard. The first word he mastered was "man," and the second "mooney"—which Cavor on the spur of the moment

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seems to have used instead of "Selenite" for the moon race. As soon as Phi-oo was assured of the meaning of a word he repeated it to Tsi-puff, who remembered it infallibly. They mastered over one hundred English nouns at their first session.

Subsequently it seems they brought an artist with them to assist the work of explanation with sketches and diagrams—Cavor's drawings being rather crude. "He was," says Cavor, "a being with an active arm and an arresting eye," and he seemed to draw with incredible swiftness.

The eleventh message is undoubtedly only a fragment of a longer communication. After some broken sentences, the record of which is unintelligible, it goes on:

"But it will interest only linguists, and delay me too long, to give the details of the series of intent parleys of which these were the beginning, and, indeed, I very much doubt if I could give in anything like the proper order all the twistings and turnings that we made in our pursuit of mutual comprehension. Verbs were soon plain sailing—at least, such active verbs as I could express by drawings; some adjectives were easy, but when it came to abstract nouns, to prepositions, and the sort of hackneyed figures of speech by means of which so much is expressed on earth, it was like diving in cork jackets. Indeed, these difficulties were insurmountable until to the sixth lesson came a fourth assistant, a being with a huge, football-shaped head, whose *forte* was clearly the pursuit of intricate analogy. He entered in a preoccupied manner, stumbling against a stool,

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and the difficulties that arose had to be presented to him with a certain amount of clamour and hitting and pricking before they reached his apprehension. But once he was involved his penetration was amazing. Whenever there came a need of thinking beyond Phi-oo's by no means limited scope, this prolate-headed person was in request, but he invariably told the conclusion to Tsi-puff, in order that it might be remembered; Tsi-puff was ever the arsenal for facts. And so we advanced again.

"It seemed long and yet brief—a matter of days before I was positively talking with these insects of the moon. Of course, at first it was an intercourse infinitely tedious and exasperating, but imperceptibly it has grown to comprehension. And my patience has grown to meet its limitations. Phi-oo it is who does all the talking. He does it with a vast amount of meditative provisional 'M'm—M'm,' and he has caught up one or two phrases, 'If I may say,' 'If you understand,' and adorns all his speech with them.

"Thus he would discourse. Imagine him explaining his artist.

" 'M'm—M'm—he—if I may say—draw. Eat little—drink little—draw. Love draw. No other thing. Hate all who not draw like him. Angry. Hate all who draw like him better. Hate most people. Hate all who not think all world for to draw. Angry. M'm. All things mean nothing to him—only draw. He like you . . . if you understand. . . . New thing to draw. Ugly—striking. Eh?'

" 'He'—turning to Tsi-puff—'love remember words. Remember wonderful more than any. Think no, draw no—remember. Say'—here he referred to

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his gifted assistant for a word—'histories—all things. He hear once—say ever.'

"It is more wonderful to me than the most wonderful dream to hear these extraordinary creatures—for even familiarity fails to weaken the inhuman effect of their appearance—continually piping a nearer approach to coherent earthly speech, asking questions, giving answers. I feel that I am casting back to the fable-hearing period of childhood again when the ant and the grasshopper talked together and the bee judged between them. . . ."

And while these linguistic exercises were going on Cavor seems to have experienced a considerable relaxation of his confinement. The first dread and distrust our unfortunate conflict aroused was being, he says, "continually effaced by the deliberate rationality of all I do. . . . I am now able to come and go as I please, or I am restricted only for my own good. So it is I have been able to get at this apparatus, and, assisted by a happy find among the material that is littered in this enormous store-cave, I have contrived to despatch these messages. So far not the slightest attempt has been made to interfere with me in this, though I have made it quite clear to Phi-oo that I am signalling to the earth.

" 'You talk to other?' he asked, watching me.

" 'Others,' said I.

" 'Others,' he said. 'Oh, yes. Men?'

"And I went on transmitting."

Cavor was continually making corrections in his previous accounts of the Selenites, as fresh facts

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flowed in upon him to modify his conclusions, and accordingly one gives the quotations that follow with a certain amount of reservation. They are quoted from the ninth, thirteenth and sixteenth messages, and, altogether vague and fragmentary as they are, they probably give as complete a picture of the social life of this strange community as mankind can now hope to have for some generations.

"In the moon," says Cavor, "every citizen knows his place. He is born to that place, and the elaborate discipline of training and education and surgery he undergoes fits him at last so completely to it that he has neither ideas nor organs for any purpose beyond it. 'Why should he?' Phi-oo would ask. If, for example, a Selenite is destined to be a mathematician, his teachers and trainers set out at once to that end. They check any incipient disposition to other pursuits, they encourage his mathematical bias with a perfect psychological skill. His brain grows, or at least the mathematical faculties of his brain grow, and the rest of him only so much as is necessary to sustain this essential part of him. At last, save for rest and food, his one delight lies in the exercise and display of his faculty, his one interest in its application, his sole society the other specialists in his own line. His brain grows continually larger, at least so far as the portions engaging in mathematics are concerned; they bulge ever larger and seem to suck all life and vigour from the rest of his frame. His limbs shrivel, his heart and digestive organs diminish, his insect face is hidden under its bulging contours. His voice becomes a mere squeak for the stat-

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ing of formulæ; he seems deaf to all but properly enunciated problems. The faculty of laughter, save for the sudden discovery of some paradox, is lost to him; his deepest emotion is the evolution of a novel computation. And so he attains his end.

"Or again, a Selenite appointed to be a minder of mooncalves is from his earliest years induced to think and live mooncalf, to find his pleasure in mooncalf lore, his exercise in their tending and pursuit. He is trained to become wiry and active, his eye is indurated to the tight wrappings, the angular contours that constitute a 'smart mooncalfishness.' He takes at last no interest in the deeper part of the moon; he regards all Selenites not equally versed in mooncalves with indifference, derision, or hostility. His thoughts are of mooncalf pastures, and his dialect an accomplished mooncalf technique. So also he loves his work, and discharges in perfect happiness the duty that justifies his being. And so it is with all sorts and conditions of Selenites—each is a perfect unit in a world machine. . . .

"These beings with big heads to whom the intellectual labours fall, form a sort of aristocracy in this strange society, and at the head of them, quintessential of the moon, is that marvellous gigantic ganglion the Grand Lunar, into whose presence I am finally to come. The unlimited development of the minds of the intellectual class is rendered possible by the absence in the lunar anatomy of the bony skull, that strange box of bone that clamps about the developing brain of man, imperiously insisting 'thus far and no farther' to all his possi-

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bilities. They fall into three main classes differing greatly in influence and respect. These are the administrators, of whom Phi-oo was one, Selenites of considerable initiative and versatility, responsible each for a certain cubic content of the moon's bulk; the experts, like the football-headed thinkers who are trained to perform certain special operations; and the erudite, who are repositories of all knowledge. To this latter class belongs Tsi-puff, the first lunar professor of terrestrial languages. With regard to these latter it is a curious little thing to note that the unlimited growth of the lunar brain has rendered unnecessary the invention of all those mechanical aids to brain work which have distinguished the career of man. There are no books, no records of any sort, no libraries, nor inscriptions. All knowledge is stored in distended brains much as the honey-ants of Texas store honey in their distended abdomens. The lunar Somerset House and the lunar British Museum Library are collections of living brains. . . .

"The less specialised administrators, I note, do for the most part take a very lively interest in me whenever they encounter me. They will come out of their way and stare at me and ask questions to which Phi-oo will reply. I see them going hither and thither with a retinue of bearers, attendants, shouters, parachute-carriers, and so forth—queer groups to see. The experts for the most part ignore me completely, even as they ignore each other, or notice me only to begin a clamorous exhibition of their distinctive skill. The erudite with very few exceptions

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are rapt in an impervious and apoplectic complacency from which only a denial of their erudition can rouse them. Usually they are led about by little watchers and attendants, and often there are small and active-looking creatures, small females usually, that I am inclined to think are a sort of wife to them; but some of the profounder scholars are altogether too great for locomotion, and are carried from place to place in a kind of sedan tub, wabbling jellies of knowledge that enlist my respectful astonishment. I have just passed one in coming to this place where I am permitted to amuse myself with these electrical toys, a vast, shaven, shaky head, bald and thin-skinned, carried on his grotesque stretcher. In front and behind came his bearers, and curious, almost trumpet-faced, news disseminators shrieked his fame.

"I have already mentioned the retinues that accompanied most of the intellectuals: ushers, bearers, valets, extraneous tentacles and muscles as it were, to replace the abortive physical powers of these hypertrophied minds. Porters almost invariably accompany them. There are also extremely swift messengers with spider-like legs, and 'hands' for grasping parachutes, and attendants with vocal organs that could well-nigh wake the dead. Apart from their controlling intelligence, these subordinates are as inert and helpless as umbrellas in a stand. They exist only in relation to the orders they have to obey, the duties they have to perform.

"The bulk of these insects, however, who go to and fro upon the spiral ways, who fill the ascending balloons and drop past me clinging to flimsy para-

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chutes, are, I gather, of the operative class. 'Machine hands,' indeed some of these are in actual fact—it is no figure of speech; the single tentacle of the mooncalf hind is replaced by huge single or paired bunches of three, or five, or seven digits for clawing, lifting, guiding, the rest of them no more than subordinate appendages to these important parts. Some, who I suppose deal with bell-striking mechanism, have enormous rabbit-like ears just behind the eyes; some whose work lies in delicate chemical operations project a vast olfactory organ; others again have flat feet for treadles with anchylosed joints; and others—who I have been told are glass-blowers—seem mere lung-bellows. But every one of these common Selenites is exquisitely adapted to the social need it meets. Fine work is done by fined-down workers amazingly dwarfed and neat. Some I could hold on the palm of my hand. There is even a sort of turnspit Selenite, very common, whose duty and only delight it is to supply the motive power for various small appliances. And to rule over these things and order any erring tendency there might be in some aberrant natures are the finest muscular beings I have seen in the moon, a sort of lunar police, who must have been trained from their earliest years to give a perfect respect and obedience to the swollen heads.

"The making of these various sorts of operative must be a very curious and interesting process. I am still much in the dark about it, but quite recently I came upon a number of young Selenites, confined in jars from which only the fore-limbs protruded,

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who were being compressed to become machine-minders of a special sort. The extended 'hand' in this highly developed system of technical education is stimulated by irritants and nourished by injection while the rest of the body is starved. Phi-oo, unless I misunderstood him, explained that in the earlier stages these queer little creatures are apt to display signs of suffering in their various cramped situations, but they easily become indurated to their lot; and he took me on to where a number of flexible-limbed messengers were being drawn out and broken in. It is quite unreasonable, I know, but these glimpses of the educational methods of these beings have affected me disagreeably. I hope, however, that may pass off and I may be able to see more of this aspect of this wonderful social order. That wretched-looking hand sticking out of its jar seemed to appeal for lost possibilities; it haunts me still, although, of course, it is really in the end a far more humane proceeding than our earthly method of leaving children to grow into human beings, and then making machines of them.

"Quite recently, too—I think it was on the eleventh or twelfth visit I made to this apparatus—I had a curious light upon the lives of these operatives. I was being guided through a short cut hither instead of going down the spiral and by the quays of the Central Sea. From the devious windings of a long, dark gallery we emerged into a vast, low cavern, pervaded by an earthy smell and rather brightly lit. The light came from a tumultuous growth of livid fungoid shapes—some indeed singularly like our

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terrestrial mushrooms, but standing as high or higher than a man.

"'Mooneys eat these?' said I to Phi-oo.

"'Yes, food.'

"'Goodness me!' I cried, 'what's that?'

"My eye had just caught the figure of an exceptionally big and ungainly Selenite lying motionless among the stems, face downwards. We stopped.

"'Dead?' I asked. For as yet I have seen no dead in the moon, and I have grown curious.

"'*No!*' exclaimed Phi-oo. 'Him—worker—no work to do. Get little drink then—make sleep—till we him want. What good him wake, eh? No want him walking about.'

"'There's another!' cried I.

"And indeed all that huge extent of mushroom ground was, I found, peppered with these prostrate figures sleeping under an opiate until the moon had need of them. There were scores of them of all sorts, and we were able to turn some of them over, and examine them more precisely than I had been able to do previously. When disturbed they breathed noisily, but did not wake. One I remember very distinctly; he left a strong impression, I think, because some trick of the light and of his attitude was strongly suggestive of a drawn-up human figure. His forelimbs were long, delicate tentacles—he was some kind of refined manipulator—and the pose of his slumber suggested a submissive suffering. No doubt it was quite a mistake for me to interpret his expression in that way, but I did. And as Phi-oo rolled him over into the darkness among the livid fleshiness

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again, I felt a distinctly unpleasant sensation, although as he rolled the insect in him was confessed.

"It simply illustrates the unthinking way in which one acquires habits of thought and feeling. To drug the worker one does not want and toss him aside is surely far better than to expel him from his factory to wander starving in the streets. In every complicated social community there is necessarily a certain intermittency in the occupation of all specialised labour, and in this way the trouble of an unemployed problem is altogether anticipated. And yet, so unreasonable are even scientifically trained minds, I still do not like the memory of those prostrate forms amidst those quiet, luminous arcades of fleshy growth, and I avoid that short cut in spite of the inconveniences of its longer, more noisy, and more crowded alternative.

"My alternative route takes me round by a huge, shadowy cavern, very crowded and clamorous, and here it is I see peering out of the hexagonal openings of a sort of honeycomb wall, or parading a large open space behind, or selecting the toys and amulets made to please them by the acephalic dainty-fingered jewellers who work in kennels below, the mothers of the moon world—the queen bees, as it were, of the hive. They are noble-looking beings, fantastically and sometimes quite beautifully adorned, with a proud carriage and, save for their mouths, almost microscopic heads. . . .

"Of the condition of the moon sexes, marrying and giving in marriage, and of birth and so forth among the Selenites, I have as yet been able to learn

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very little. With the steady progress of Phi-oo in English, however, my ignorance will no doubt as steadily disappear. I am of opinion that, as with the ants and bees, there is in this community a large majority of the members of the neuter sex. Of course on earth in our cities there are now many who never live that life of parentage which is the natural life of man. Here, as with the ants, this thing has become a normal condition of the race; and the whole of such replacement as is necessary falls upon this special and by no means numerous class of matrons, the mothers of the moon world, large and stately beings beautifully fitted to bear the larval Selenite. Unless I misunderstand an explanation of Phi-oo's, they are absolutely incapable of cherishing the young they bring into the moon; periods of foolish indulgence alternate with moods of aggressive violence; and as soon as possible the little creatures, who are quite soft and flabby and pale-coloured, are transferred to the charge of a variety of celibate females, women 'workers,' as it were, who in some cases possess brains of almost masculine dimensions."

Just at this point, unhappily, this message broke off. Fragmentary and tantalising as the matter constituting this chapter is, it does nevertheless give a vague, broad impression of an altogether strange and wonderful world—a world with which our own must now prepare to reckon sooner or later. This intermittent trickle of messages, this whispering of a record needle in the darkness of the mountain slopes, is the first warning of such a change in human con-

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ditions as mankind has scarcely imagined heretofore. In that planet there are new elements, new appliances, new traditions, an overwhelming avalanche of new ideas, a strange race with whom we must inevitably struggle for mastery—gold as common as iron or wood. . . .

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XXIV

THE GRAND LUNAR

THE penultimate message describes, occasionally even with elaborate detail, the encounter between Cavor and the Grand Lunar, who is the ruler or master of the moon. Cavor seems to have sent most of it without interference, but to have been interrupted in the concluding portion. The second came after an interval of a week.

The first message begins: "At last I am able to resume this—"; it then becomes illegible for a space, and after a time resumes in mid-sentence.

The missing words of the following sentence are probably "The crowd." There follows quite clearly: "grew even denser as we drew near the palace of the Grand Lunar—if I may call a series of excavations a palace. Everywhere faces stared at me—blank, chitinous gapes and masks, big eyes peering over tremendous nose tentacles, and little eyes beneath monstrous forehead plates; below, an undergrowth of smaller creatures dodged and yelped; and grotesque heads poised on sinuous, swan-like, long-jointed necks appeared craning over shoulders and beneath armpits. Keeping a welcome space about me marched a cordon of stolid, scuttle-headed guards who had joined us on our leaving the boat in which we had come along the channels of the Central Sea.

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The flea-like artist with the little brain joined us also, and a thick bunch of lean porter-ants swayed and struggled under the multitude of conveniences that were considered essential to my state. I was carried in a litter during the final stage of our journey. It was made of some very ductile metal that looked dark to me, meshed and woven and with bars of paler metal, and about me as I advanced there grouped itself a long and complicated procession.

"In front, after the manner of heralds, marched four trumpet-faced creatures making a devastating bray; and then came squat, almost beetle-like ushers before and behind, and on either hand a galaxy of learned heads, a sort of animated encyclopædia, who were, Phi-oo explained, to stand about the Grand Lunar for purposes of reference. Not a thing in lunar science, not a point of view or method of thinking, that these wonderful beings did not carry in their heads. Followed guards and porters, and then Phi-oo's shivering brain borne also on a litter. Then came Tsi-puff in a slightly less important litter; then myself on a litter of greater elegance than any other and surrounded by my food and drink attendants. More trumpeters came next, splitting the ear with vehement outcries, and then several big brains, special correspondents one might well call them or historiographers, charged with the task of observing and remembering every detail of this epoch-making interview. A company of attendants, bearing and dragging banners and masses of scented fungi and curious symbols, completed the procession. The way was lined by ushers and officers in caparisons

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that gleamed like steel, and beyond their line the heads and tentacles of that enormous crowd surged on either hand.

"I will own that I am still by no means indurated to the peculiar effect of the Selenite appearance, and to find myself as it were adrift on this broad sea of excited entomology was by no means agreeable. Just for a space I had something like the 'horrors.' It had come to me before in these lunar caverns, when on occasion I had found myself weaponless and with an undefended back amidst a crowd of these Selenites, but never quite so vividly. It is, of course, as absolutely irrational a feeling as one could well have, and I hope gradually to subdue it. But just for a moment, as I swept forward into the welter of the vast crowd, it was only by gripping my litter tightly and summoning all my will-power that I succeeded in stifling an outcry or some such manifestation. It lasted perhaps three minutes; then I had myself in hand again.

"We ascended the spiral of a vertical way for some time and then passed through a series of huge halls, dome-roofed, and gloriously decorated. The approach to the Grand Lunar was certainly contrived to give one a vivid impression of his greatness. The halls—all happily sufficiently luminous for my terrestrial eye—were a cunning and elaborate crescendo of space and decoration. The effect of their progressive size was enhanced by the steady diminution in the lighting, and by a thin haze of incense that thickened as one advanced. In the earlier ones the vivid, clear light made everything finite and concrete to me. I

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seemed to advance continually to something larger, dimmer, and less material.

"I must confess that all this splendour made me feel extremely shabby and unworthy. I was unshaven and unkempt; I had brought no razor; I had a coarse beard over my mouth. On earth I have always been inclined to despise any attention to my person beyond a proper care for cleanliness; but under the exceptional circumstances in which I found myself, representing, as I did, my planet and my kind, and depending very largely upon the attractiveness of my appearance for a proper reception, I would have given much for something a little more artistic and dignified than the husks I wore. I had been so serene in the belief that the moon was uninhabited as to overlook such precautions altogether. As it was I was dressed in a flannel jacket, knickerbockers, and golfing stockings, stained with every sort of dirt the moon offered; slippers (of which the left heel was wanting), and a blanket, through a hole in which I thrust my head. (These clothes, indeed, I still wear.) Sharp bristles are anything but an improvement to my cast of features, and there was an unmended tear at the knee of my knickerbocker that showed conspicuously as I squatted in my litter; my right stocking, too, persisted in getting about my ankle. I am fully alive to the injustice my appearance did humanity, and if by any expedient I could have improvised something a little out of the way and imposing I would have done so. But I could hit upon nothing. I did what I could with my blanket—folding it somewhat after the fashion of a

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toga, and for the rest I sat as upright as the swaying of my litter permitted.

"Imagine the largest hall you have ever been in, elaborately decorated with blue and whitish-blue majolica, lit by blue light, you know not how, and surging with metallic or livid-white creatures of such a mad diversity as I have hinted. Imagine this hall to end in an open archway beyond which is a still larger hall, and beyond this yet another and still larger one, and so on. At the end of the vista a flight of steps, like the steps of Ara Cœli at Rome, ascends out of sight. Higher and higher these steps appear to go as one draws nearer their base. But at last I came under a huge archway and beheld the summit of these steps, and upon it the Grand Lunar exalted on his throne.

"He was seated in a blaze of incandescent blue. A hazy atmosphere filled the place so that its walls seemed invisibly remote. This gave him an effect of floating in a blue-black void. He seemed at first a small, self-luminous cloud, brooding on his glaucous throne; his brain-case must have measured many yards in diameter. For some reason that I cannot fathom a number of blue search-lights coming from behind the throne gave a star-like radiance to the halo immediately surrounding him. About him, and little and indistinct in this glow, a number of body-servants sustained and supported him, and overshadowed and standing in a huge semicircle beneath him were his intellectual subordinates, his remembrancers and computators and searchers, his flatterers and servants, and all the distinguished insects

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of the court of the moon. Still lower stood ushers and messengers, and then all down the countless steps of the throne were guards, and at the base, enormous, various, indistinct, a vast swaying multitude of the minor dignitaries of the moon. Their feet made a perpetual scraping whisper on the rocky floor, their limbs moved with a rustling murmur.

"As I entered the penultimate hall the music rose and expanded into an imperial magnificence of sound, and the shrieks of the news-bearers died away. . . .

"I entered the last and greatest hall. . . .

"My procession opened out like a fan. My ushers and guards went right and left, and the three litters bearing myself and Phi-oo and Tsi-puff marched across a shiny waste of floor to the foot of the giant stairs. Then began a vast throbbing hum that mingled with the music. The two Selenites dismounted, but I was bidden remain seated—I imagine as a special honour. The music ceased, but not that humming, and by a simultaneous movement of ten thousand respectful eyes, my attention was directed to the enhaloed supreme intelligence that hovered above us.

"At first as I peered into the radiating blaze, this quintessential brain looked very much like a thin, featureless bladder with dim, undulating ghosts of convolutions writhing visibly within. Then beneath its enormity and just above the edge of the throne one saw with a start minute elfin eyes peering out of the blaze. No face, but eyes, as if they peered through holes. At first I could see no more than these two staring little eyes, and then below I distinguished

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the little dwarfed body and its insect-jointed limbs, shrivelled and white. The eyes stared down at me with a strange intensity, and the lower part of the swollen globe was wrinkled. Ineffectual-looking little hand-tentacles steadied this shape on the throne. . . .

"It was great. It was pitiful. One forgot the hall and the crowd.

"I ascended the staircase by jerks. It seemed to me that the purple-glowing brain-case above us spread over me, and took more and more of the whole effect into itself as I drew nearer. The tiers of attendants and helpers grouped about their master seemed to dwindle and fade into the glare. I saw that the shadowy attendants were busy spraying that great brain with a cooling spray, and patting and sustaining it. For my own part I sat gripping my swaying litter and staring at the Grand Lunar, unable to turn my gaze aside. And at last, as I reached a little landing that was separated only by ten steps or so from the supreme seat, the woven splendour of the music reached a climax and ceased, and I was left naked, as it were, in that vastness, beneath the still scrutiny of the Grand Lunar's eyes.

"He was scrutinising the first man he had ever seen. . . .

"My eyes dropped at last from his greatness to the faint figures in the blue mist about him, and then down the steps to the massed Selenites, still and expectant in their thousands, packed on the floor below. Once again an unreasonable horror reached out towards me . . . and passed.

"After the pause came the salutation. I was

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assisted from my litter, and stood awkwardly while a number of curious and no doubt deeply symbolical gestures were vicariously performed for me by two slender officials. The encyclopædic galaxy of the learned that had accompanied me to the entrance of the last hall appeared two steps above me and left and right of me, in readiness for the Grand Lunar's need, and Phi-oo's white brain placed itself about half-way up to the throne in such a position as to communicate easily between us without turning his back on either the Grand Lunar or myself. Tsi-puff took up a position behind him. Dexterous ushers sidled sidewise towards me, keeping a full face to the Presence. I seated myself Turkish fashion, and Phi-oo and Tsi-puff also knelt down above me. There came a pause. The eyes of the nearer court went from me to the Grand Lunar and came back to me, and a hissing and piping of expectation passed across the hidden multitudes below and ceased.

"That humming ceased.

"For the first and last time in my experience the moon was silent.

"I became aware of a faint wheezy noise. The Grand Lunar was addressing me. It was like the rubbing of a finger upon a pane of glass.

"I watched him attentively for a time and then glanced at the alert Phi-oo. I felt amidst those filmy beings ridiculously thick and fleshy and solid; my head all jaw and black hair. My eyes went back to the Grand Lunar. He had ceased; his attendants were busy, and his shining superficies was glistening and running with cooling spray.

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"Phi-oo meditated through an interval. He consulted Tsi-puff. Then he began piping his recognisable English—at first a little nervously, so that he was not very clear.

"'M'm—the Grand Lunar—wished to say—wishes to say—he gathers you are—m'm—men—that you are a man from the planet earth. He wishes to say that he welcomes you—welcomes you—and wishes to learn—learn, if I may use the word—the state of your world, and the reason why you came to this.'

"He paused. I was about to reply when he resumed. He proceeded to remarks of which the drift was not very clear, though I am inclined to think they were intended to be complimentary. He told me that the earth was to the moon what the sun is to the earth, and that the Selenites desired very greatly to learn about the earth and men. He then told me, no doubt in compliment also, the relative magnitude and diameter of earth and moon, and the perpetual wonder and speculation with which the Selenites had regarded our planet. I meditated with downcast eyes and decided to reply that men too had wondered what might lie in the moon, and had judged it dead, little recking on such magnificence as I had seen that day. The Grand Lunar, in token of recognition, caused his blue search-light to rotate in a very confusing manner, and all about the great hall ran the pipings and whisperings and rustlings of the report of what I had said. He then proceeded to put to Phi-oo a number of inquiries which were easier to answer.

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"He understood, he explained, that we lived on the surface of the earth, that our air and sea were outside the globe; the latter part, indeed, he already knew from his astronomical specialists. He was very anxious to have more detailed information of what he called this extraordinary state of affairs, for from the solidity of the earth there had always been a disposition to regard it as uninhabitable. He endeavoured first to ascertain the extremes of temperature to which we earth beings were exposed, and he was deeply interested by my descriptive treatment of clouds and rain. His imagination was assisted by the fact that the lunar atmosphere in the outer galleries of the night side is not infrequently very foggy. He seemed inclined to marvel that we did not find the sunlight too intense for our eyes, and was interested in my attempt to explain that the sky was tempered to a bluish color through the refraction of the air, though I doubt if he clearly understood that. I explained how the iris of the human eyes can contract the pupil and save the delicate internal structure from the excess of sunlight, and was allowed to approach within a few feet of the Presence in order that this structure might be seen. This led to a comparison of the lunar and terrestrial eyes. The former is not only excessively sensitive to such light as men can see, but it can also *see* heat, and every difference in temperature within the moon renders objects visible to it.

"The iris was quite a new organ to the Grand Lunar. For a time he amused himself by flashing his rays into my face and watching my pupils con-

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tract. As a consequence, I was dazzled and blinded for some little time. . . .

"But in spite of that discomfort, I found something reassuring by insensible degrees in the rationality of this business of question and answer. I could shut my eyes, think of my answer, and almost forget that the Grand Lunar has no face. . . .

"When I had descended again to my proper place the Grand Lunar asked how we sheltered ourselves from heat and storms, and I expounded to him the arts of building and furnishing. Here we wandered into misunderstandings and cross-purposes, due largely, I must admit, to the looseness of my expressions. For a long time I had great difficulty in making him understand the nature of a house. To him and his attendant Selenites it seemed no doubt the most whimsical thing in the world that men should build houses when they might descend into excavations, and an additional complication was introduced by the attempt I made to explain that men had originally begun their homes in caves, and that they were now taking their railways and many establishments beneath the surface. Here I think a desire for intellectual completeness betrayed me. There was also a considerable tangle due to an equally unwise attempt on my part to explain about mines. Dismissing this topic at last in an incomplete state, the Grand Lunar inquired what we did with the interior of our globe.

"A tide of twittering and piping swept into the remotest corners of that great assembly when it was at last made clear that we men know absolutely

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nothing of the contents of the world upon which the immemorial generations of our ancestors have been evolved. Three times had I to repeat that of all the 4,000 miles of substance between the earth and its centre men knew only to the depth of a mile, and that very vaguely. I understood the Grand Lunar to ask why I had come to the moon seeing we had scarcely touched our own planet yet, but he did not trouble me at that time to proceed to an explanation, being too anxious to pursue the details of this mad inversion of all his ideas.

"He reverted to the question of weather, and I tried to describe the perpetually changing sky, and snow, and frost and hurricanes. 'But when the night comes,' he asked, 'is it not cold?'

"I told him it was colder than by day.

" 'And does not your atmosphere freeze?'

"I told him not; that it was never cold enough for that, because our nights were so short.

" 'Not even liquefy?'

"I was about to say 'No,' but then it occurred to me that one part at least of our atmosphere, the water vapour of it, does sometimes liquefy and form dew and sometimes freeze and form frost—a process perfectly analogous to the freezing of all the external atmosphere of the moon during its longer night. I made myself clear on this point, and from that the Grand Lunar went on to speak with me of sleep. For the need of sleep that comes so regularly every twenty-four hours to all things is part also of our earthly inheritance. On the moon they rest only at rare intervals and after exceptional exertions. Then

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I tried to describe to him the soft splendours of a summer night, and from that I passed to a description of those animals that prowl by night and sleep by day. I told him of lions and tigers, and here it seemed that we had come to a deadlock. For, save in their waters, there are no creatures in the moon not absolutely domestic and subject to his will, and so it has been for immemorial years. They have monstrous water creatures, but no evil beasts, and the idea of anything strong and large existing 'outside' in the night is very difficult for them."

[The record is here too broken to transcribe for the space of perhaps twenty words or more.]

"He talked with his attendants, as I suppose, upon the strange superficiality and unreasonableness of (man), who lives on the mere surface of a world, a creature of waves and winds and all the chances of space, who cannot even unite to overcome the beasts that prey upon his kind, and yet who dares to invade another planet. During this aside I sat thinking, and then at his desire I told him of the different sorts of men. He searched me with questions. 'And for all sorts of work you have the same sort of men. But who thinks? Who governs?'

"I gave him an outline of the democratic method.

"When I had done he ordered cooling sprays upon his brow, and then requested me to repeat my explanation, conceiving something had miscarried.

"'Do they not do different things then?' said Phi-oo.

"Some I admitted were thinkers and some officials;

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some hunted, some were mechanics, some artists, some toilers. 'But *all* rule,' I said.

" 'And have they not different shapes to fit them to their different duties?'

" 'None that you can see,' I said, 'except perhaps their clothes. Their minds perhaps differ a little,' I reflected.

" 'Their minds must differ a great deal,' said the Grand Lunar, 'or they would all want to do the same things.'

"In order to bring myself into a closer harmony with his preconceptions, I said that his surmise was right. 'It was all hidden in the brain,' I said; 'but the difference was there. Perhaps if one could see the minds and souls of men they would be as varied and unequal as the Selenites. There were great men and small men, men who could reach out far and wide, and men who could go swiftly; noisy, trumpet-minded men, and men who could remember without thinking. . . .' "

[The record is indistinct for three words.]

"He interrupted me to recall me to my previous statement. 'But you said all men rule?' he pressed.

" 'To a certain extent,' I said, and made, I fear, a denser fog with my explanation.

"He reached out to a salient fact. 'Do you mean,' he asked, 'that there is no Grand Earthly?'

"I thought of several people, but assured him finally there was none. I explained that such autocrats and emperors as we had tried upon earth had usually ended in drink, or vice, or violence, and that

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the large and influential section of the people of the earth to which I belonged, the Anglo-Saxons, did not mean to try that sort of thing again. At which the Grand Lunar was even more amazed.

"'But how do you keep even such wisdom as you have?' he asked; and I explained to him the way we helped our limited"

[A word omitted here, probably "brains."]

"with libraries of books. I explained to him how our science was growing by the united labours of innumerable little men, and on that he made no comment save that it was evident we had mastered much in spite of our social savagery, or we could not have come to the moon. Yet the contrast was very marked. With knowledge the Selenites grew and changed; mankind stored their knowledge about them and remained brutes—equipped. He said this . . ."

[Here there is a short piece of the record indistinct.]

"He then caused me to describe how we went about this earth of ours, and I described to him our railways and ships. For a time he could not understand that we had had the use of steam only one hundred years, but when he did he was clearly amazed. I may mention as a singular thing that the Selenites use years to count by, just as we do on earth, though I can make nothing of their numeral system. That, however, does not matter, because Phi-oo understands ours. From that I went on to tell him that mankind had dwelt in cities only for nine or ten

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thousand years, and that we were still not united in one brotherhood, but under many different forms of government. This astonished the Grand Lunar very much, when it was made clear to him. At first he thought we referred merely to administrative areas.

"'Our States and Empires are still the rawest sketches of what order will some day be,' I said, and so I came to tell him . . ."

[At this point a length of record that probably represents thirty or forty words is totally illegible.]

"The Grand Lunar was greatly impressed by the folly of men in clinging to the inconvenience of diverse tongues. 'They want to communicate and yet not to communicate,' he said, and then for a long time he questioned me closely concerning war.

"He was at first perplexed and incredulous. 'You mean to say,' he asked, seeking confirmation, 'that you run about over the surface of your world—this world, whose riches you have scarcely begun to scrape—killing one another for beasts to eat?'

"I told him that was perfectly correct.

"He asked for particulars to assist his imagination. 'But do not your ships and your poor little cities get injured?' he asked, and I found the waste of property and conveniences seemed to impress upon him almost as much as the killing. 'Tell me more,' said the Grand Lunar; 'make me see pictures. I cannot conceive these things.'

"And so, for a space, though something loath, I told him the story of earthly War.

"I told him of the first orders and ceremonies of

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war, of warnings and ultimatums, and the marshaling and marching of troops. I gave him an idea of manœuvres and positions and battle joined. I told him of sieges and assaults, of starvation and hardship in trenches, and of sentinels freezing in the snow. I told him of routs and surprises, and desperate last stands and faint hopes, and the pitiless pursuit of fugitives and the dead upon the field. I told, too, of the past, of invasions and massacres, of the Huns and Tartars, and the wars of Mahomet and the Caliphs and of the Crusades. And as I went on, and Phi-oo translated, the Selenites cooed and murmured in a steadily intensified emotion.

"I told them an ironclad could fire a shot of a ton twelve miles, and go through twenty feet of iron—and how we could steer torpedoes under water. I went on to describe a Maxim gun in action and what I could imagine of the Battle of Colenso. The Grand Lunar was so incredulous that he interrupted the translation of what I had said in order to have my verification of my account. They particularly doubted my description of the men cheering and rejoicing as they went into battle.

"'But surely they do not like it!' translated Phi-oo.

"I assured them men of my race considered battle the most glorious experience of life, at which the whole assembly was stricken with amazement.

"'But what good is this war?' asked the Grand Lunar, sticking to his theme.

"'Oh! as for *good!*' said I, 'it thins the population!'

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"'But why should there be a need——?' . . .
"There came a pause, the cooling sprays impinged upon his brow, and then he spoke again."

[At this point there suddenly becomes predominant in the record a series of undulations that have been apparent as a perplexing complication as far back as Cavor's description of the silence that fell before the first speaking of the Grand Lunar. These undulations are evidently the result of radiations proceeding from the lunar source, and their persistent approximation to the alternating signals of Cavor is curiously suggestive of some operator deliberately seeking to mix them in with his message and render it illegible. At first they are small and regular, so that with a little care and the loss of very few words we have been able to disentangle Cavor's message; then they become broad and larger, then suddenly they are irregular, with an irregularity that gives the effect at last of some one scribbling through a line of writing. For a long time nothing can be made of this madly zigzagging trace; then quite abruptly the interruption ceases, leaves a few words clear, and then resumes and continues for all the rest of the message, completely obliterating whatever Cavor was attempting to transmit. Why, if this is indeed a deliberate intervention, the Selenites should have preferred to let Cavor go on transmitting his message in happy ignorance of their obliteration of its record, when it was clearly quite in their power and much more easy and convenient for them to stop his proceedings at any time, is a problem to which I can contribute nothing. The thing seems to have happened so, and that is all I can say. This last rag of his description of the Grand Lunar begins, in mid-sentence:—]

"interrogated me very closely upon my secret. I was able in a little while to get to an understanding with them, and at last to elucidate what has been a puzzle to me ever since I realised the vastness of their science, namely, how it is they themselves

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have never discovered 'Cavorite.' I find they know of it as a theoretical substance, but they have always regarded it as a practical impossibility, because for some reason there is no helium in the moon, and helium——"

[Across the last letters of helium slashes the resumption of that obliterating trace. Note that word "secret," for on that, and that alone, I base my interpretation of the last message, as both Mr. Wendigee and myself now believe it to be, that he is ever likely to send us.]

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XXV

THE LAST MESSAGE CAVOR SENT TO THE EARTH

In this unsatisfactory manner the penultimate message of Cavor dies out. One seems to see him away there amidst his blue-lit apparatus intently signalling us to the last, all unaware of the curtain of confusion that drops between us; all unaware, too, of the final dangers that even then must have been creeping upon him. His disastrous want of vulgar common sense had utterly betrayed him. He had talked of war, he had talked of all the strength and irrational violence of men, of their insatiable aggressions, their tireless futility of conflict. He had filled the whole moon world with this impression of our race, and then I think it is plain he admitted that upon himself alone hung the possibility—at least for a long time—of any other men reaching the moon. The line the cold, inhuman reason of the moon would take seems plain enough to me, and a suspicion of it, and then perhaps some sudden sharp realisation of it, must have come to him. One imagines him going about the moon with the remorse of this fatal indiscretion growing in his mind. During a certain time most assuredly the Grand Lunar was deliberating the new situation, and for all that time Cavor went as free as ever he had gone. We imagine that obstacles of some sort prevented his getting

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to his electro-magnetic apparatus again after that last message I have given. For some days we received nothing. Perhaps he was having fresh audiences, and trying to evade his previous admissions. Who can hope to guess?

And then suddenly, like a cry in the night, like a cry that is followed by a stillness, came the last message. It is the briefest fragment, the broken beginnings of two sentences.

The first was:

"I was mad to let the Grand Lunar know——"

There was an interval of perhaps a minute. One imagines some interruption from without. A departure from the instrument—a dreadful hesitation among the looming masses of apparatus in that dim, blue-lit cavern—a sudden rush back to it, full of a resolve that came too late. Then, as if it were hastily transmitted, came:

"Cavorite made as follows: take——"

There followed one word, a quite unmeaning word as it stands——

"uless."

And that is all.

It may be he made a hasty attempt to spell "useless" when his fate was close upon him. Whatever it was that was happening about that apparatus, we cannot tell. Whatever it was we shall never, I know, receive another message from the moon. For my own part a vivid dream has come to my help, and I see, almost as plainly as though I had seen it in actual fact, a blue-lit dishevelled Cavor struggling in the grip of a great multitude of those insect Selenites,

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struggling ever more desperately and hopelessly as they swarm upon him, shouting, expostulating, perhaps even at last fighting, and being forced backward step by step out of all speech or sign of his fellows, for evermore into the Unknown—into the dark, into that silence that has no end.

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THOUGHTS ON CHEAPNESS AND MY AUNT CHARLOTTE

THE world mends. In my younger days people believed in mahogany—some of my readers will remember it—a heavy shining substance, having a singularly close resemblance to raw liver, exceedingly heavy to move, and esteemed on one or other count the noblest of all woods. Such of us as were very poor and had no mahogany pretended to have mahogany; and the proper hepatite tint was got by veneering. That makes one incline to think it was the colour that pleased people. In those days there was a word "trashy," now almost lost to the world. My dear Aunt Charlotte used that epithet when in her feminine way she swore at people she did not like. "Trashy" and "paltry" and "Brummagem" was the very worst she could say of them. And she had, I remember, an intense aversion to plated goods and bronze halfpence. The halfpence of her youth had been vast and corpulent red-brown discs, which it was folly to speak of as small change. They were fine handsome coins, and almost as inconvenient as crown-pieces. I remember she corrected me once when I was very young. "Don't call a penny a copper, dear," she said; "copper is a metal. The pennies they have nowadays are bronze." It is odd how our childish impressions cling to us. I still regard bronze

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as a kind of upstart intruder, a mere trashy pretender among metals.

All my Aunt Charlotte's furniture was thoroughly good, and most of it extremely uncomfortable; there was not a thing for a little boy to break and escape damnation in the household. Her china was the only thing with a touch of beauty in it—at least I remember nothing else—and each of her blessed plates was worth the happiness of a mortal for days together. And they dressed me in a Nessus suit of valuable garments. I learned the value of thoroughly good things only too early. I knew the equivalent of a teacup to the very last scowl, and I have hated good, handsome property ever since. For my part I love cheap things, trashy things, things made of the commonest rubbish that money can possibly buy; things as vulgar as primroses, and as transitory as a morning's frost.

Think of all the advantages of a cheap possession —cheap and nasty, if you will—compared with some valuable substitute. Suppose you need this or that. "Get a good one," advises Aunt Charlotte; "one that will last." You do—and it does last. It lasts like a family curse. These great plain valuable things, as plain as good women, as complacently assured of their intrinsic worth—who does not know them? My Aunt Charlotte scarcely had a new thing in her life. Her mahogany was avuncular; her china remotely ancestral; her feather beds and her bedsteads!—they were haunted; the births, marriages, and deaths associated with the best one was the history of our race for three generations. There was

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more in her house than the tombstone rectitude of the chair-backs to remind me of the graveyard. I can still remember the sombre aisles of that house, the vault-like shadows, the magnificent window curtains that blotted out the windows. Life was too trivial for such things. She never knew she tired of them, but she did. That was the secret of her temper, I think; they engendered her sombre Calvinism, her perception of the trashy quality of human life. The pretence that they were the accessories to human life was too transparent. *We* were the accessories; we minded them for a little while, and then we passed away. They wore us out and cast us aside. We were the changing scenery; they were the actors who played on through the piece. It was even so with clothing. We buried my other maternal aunt—Aunt Adelaide—and wept, and partly forgot her, but her wonderful silk dresses—they would stand alone—still went rustling cheerfully about an ephemeral world.

All that offended my sense of proportion, my feeling of what is due to human life, even when I was a little boy. I want things of my own, things I can break without breaking my heart, and since one can live but once I want some change in my life; to have this kind of thing and then that. I never valued Aunt Charlotte's good old things until I sold them. They sold remarkably well, those chairs like nether millstones for the grinding away of men; the fragile china—an incessant anxiety until accident broke it and the spell of it at the same time; those silver spoons, by virtue of which Aunt Charlotte went in

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fear of burglary for six-and-fifty years; the bed from which I alone of all my kindred had escaped; the wonderful old, erect, high-shouldered, silver-faced clock.

But, as I say, our ideas are changing—mahogany has gone, and rep curtains. Articles are made for man nowadays, and not man, by careful early training, for articles. I feel myself to be in many respects a link with the past. Commodities come like the spring flowers, and vanish again. "Who steals my watch steals trash," as some poet has remarked; the thing is made of I know not what metal, and if I leave it on the mantel for a day or so it goes a deep blackish purple that delights me exceedingly. My grandfather's hat—I understood when I was a little boy that I was to have that some day. But now I get a hat for ten shillings or less two or three times a year. In the old days buying clothes was well-nigh as irrevocable as marriage. Our flat is furnished with glittering things—wanton arm-chairs just strong enough not to collapse under you, books in gay covers, carpets you are free to drop lighted fusees upon; you may scratch what you like, upset your coffee, cast your cigar ash to the four quarters of heaven. Our guests, at any rate, are not snubbed by our furniture. It knows its place.

But it is in the case of art and adornment that cheapness is most delightful. The only thing that betrayed a care for beauty on the part of my aunt was her dear old flower garden, and even there she was not above suspicion. Her favourite flowers were tulips, rigid tulips with opulent crimson streaks. She

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despised wildings. Her ornaments were simply displays of the precious metal. Had she known the price of platinum she would have worn that by preference. Her chains and brooches and rings were bought by weight. She would have turned her back on Benvenuto Cellini if he was not 22 carats fine. She despised water-colour art; her conception of a picture was a vast domain of oily brown by an Old Master. The Babbages at the Hall had a display of gold plate swaggering in the corner of the dining-room; and the visitor (restrained by a plush rope from examining the workmanship) was told the value, and so passed on. I like my art unadorned: thought and skill and the other strange quality that is added thereto to make things beautiful—and nothing more. A farthing's worth of paint and paper, and, behold! a thing of beauty!—as they do it in Japan. And if it should fall into the fire—well, it has gone like yesterday's sunset, and to-morrow there will be another.

These Japanese are indeed the apostles of cheapness. The Greeks lived to teach the world beauty, the Hebrews to teach it morality, and now the Japanese are hammering in the lesson that men may be honourable, daily life delightful, and a nation great without either freestone houses, marble mantelpieces, or mahogany sideboards. I have sometimes wished that my Aunt Charlotte could have travelled among the Japanese nation. She would, I know, have called it a "parcel of trash." Their use of paper—paper suits, paper pocket-handkerchiefs—would have made her rigid with contempt. I have tried, but I cannot imagine my Aunt Charlotte in paper

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underclothing. Her aversion to paper was extraordinary. Her Book of Beauty was printed on satin, and all her books were bound in leather, the boards regulated rather than decorated with a severe oblong. Her proper sphere was among the ancient Babylonians, among which massive populace even the newspapers were built of brick. She would have compared with the King's daughter whose raiment was of wrought gold. When I was a little boy I used to think she had a mahogany skeleton. However, she is gone, poor old lady, and at least she left me her furniture. Her ghost was torn in pieces after the sale—must have been. Even the old china went this way and that. I took what was perhaps a mean revenge on her for the innumerable black-holeings, bread-and-water dinners, summary chastisements, and impossible tasks she inflicted upon me for offences against her too solid possessions. You will see it at Woking. It is a light and graceful cross. It is a mere speck of white between the monstrous granite paper-weights that oppress the dead on either side of her. Sometimes I am half sorry for that. When the end comes I shall not care to look her in the face—she will be so humiliated.

THE TROUBLE OF LIFE

I DO not know whether this will awaken a sympathetic lassitude in, say, fifty per cent. of its readers, or whether my experience is unique and my testimony simply curious. At any rate, it is as true as I can make it. Whether this is a mere mood, and a certain flagrant exhilaration my true attitude to-

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wards things, or this is my true attitude and the exuberant phase a lapse from it, I cannot say. Probably it does not matter. The thing is that I find life an extremely troublesome affair. I do not want to make any railing accusations against life; it is—to my taste—neither very sad nor very horrible. At times it is distinctly amusing. Indeed, I know nothing in the same line that can quite compare with it. But there is a difference between general appreciation and uncritical acceptance. At times I find life a Bother.

The kind of thing that I object to is, as a good example, all the troublesome things one has to do every morning in getting up. There is washing. This is an age of unsolicited personal confidences, and I will frankly confess that if it were not for Euphemia I do not think I should wash at all. There is a vast amount of humbug about washing. Vulgar people not only profess a passion for the practice, but a physical horror of being unwashed. It is a sort of cant. I can understand a sponge bath being a novelty the first time and exhilarating the second and third. But day after day, week after week, month after month, and nothing to show at the end of it all! Then there is shaving. I have to get shaved because Euphemia hates me with a blue jowl, and I will admit I hate myself. Yet if I were left alone I do not think my personal taste would affect my decision; I will say that for myself. Either I hack about with a blunt razor—my razors are always blunt—until I am a kind of Whitechapel Horror, and with hair in tufts upon my chin like the top of a

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Bosjeman's head, or else I have to spend all the morning being dabbed about the face by a barber with damp hands. In either case it is a repulsive thing to have eating into one's time when one might be living, and I have calculated that all the hair I have lost in this way put end to end would reach to Berlin. All that vital energy thrown away! However, "Thorns and bristles shall it bring forth to thee;" I suppose it is part of the primal curse, and I try and stand it like a man. But the thing is a bother all the same.

Then after shaving comes the hunt for the collar-stud. Of all idiotic inventions the modern collar is the worst. A man who has to write things for such readers as mine cannot think overnight of where he puts his collar-stud; he has to keep his mind at an altogether higher level. Consequently he walks about the bedroom, thinking hard, and dropping things about: here a vest and there a collar, and sowing a bitter harvest against the morning. Or he sits on the edge of the bed jerking his garments this way and that. "I shot a slipper in the air," as the poet sings, and in the morning it turns up in the most impossible quarters, and where you least expect it. And, talking of going to bed, before Euphemia took the responsibility over I was always forgetting to wind my watch. But now that is one of the things she neglects.

Then after getting up there is breakfast. Autolycus of the *Pall Mall Gazette* may find heaven there, but I am differently constituted. There is, to begin with the essence of the offence—the stuff that has

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to be eaten somehow. Then there is the paper. Unless it is the face of a fashionable beauty, I know of nothing more absolutely uninteresting than a morning paper. You always expect to find something in it, and never do. It wastes half my morning sometimes, going over and over the thing, and trying to find out why they publish it. If I edited a daily I think I should do like my father does when he writes to me. "Things much the same," he writes; "the usual fussing about the curate's red socks"—a long letter for him. The rest margin. And, by-the-bye, there are letters every morning at breakfast, too!

Now I do not grumble at letters. You can read them instead of getting on with your breakfast. They are entertaining in a way, and you can tear them up at the end, and in that respect at least they are better than people who come to see you. Usually, too, you need not make a reply. But sometimes Euphemia gets hold of some still untorn, and says in her dictatorial way that they *have* to be answered —insists—says I *must*. Yet she knows that nothing fills me with a livelier horror than having to answer letters. It paralyses me. I waste whole days sometimes mourning over the time that I shall have to throw away presently, answering some needless impertinence, requests for me to return books lent to me, reminders from the London Library that my subscription is overdue, proposals for me to renew my ticket at the stores—Euphemia's business really —invitations for me to go and be abashed before impertinent distinguished people—all kinds of bothering things.

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And speaking of letters and invitations brings me round to friends. I dislike most people—in London they get in one's way in the street and fill up railway carriages, and in the country they stare at you—but I *hate* my friends. Yet Euphemia says I *must* "keep up" my friends. They would be all very well if they were really true friends and respected my feelings and left me alone, just to sit quiet. But they come wearing shiny clothes, and mop and mow at me and expect me to answer their gibberings. Polite conversation always appears to me to be a wicked perversion of the blessed gift of speech, which, I take it, was given us to season our lives rather than to make them insipid. New friends are the worst in this respect. With old friends one is more at home; you give them something to eat or drink, or look at, or something—whatever they seem to want—and just turn round and go on smoking quietly. But every now and then Euphemia or Destiny inflicts a new human being upon me. I do not mean a baby, though the sentence has got that turn somehow, but an introduction; and the wretched thing, all angles and offence, keeps bobbing about me and discovering new ways of worrying me, trying, I believe, to find out what topics interest me, though the fact is no topics interest me. Once or twice, of course, I have met human beings I think I could have got on with very well after a time; but in this mood, at least, I doubt if any human being is quite worth the bother of a new acquaintance.

These are just sample bothers—shaving, washing, answering letters, talking to people. I could specify

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hundreds more. Indeed, in my sadder moments it seems to me life is all compact of bothers. There are the details of business—knowing the date approximately (an incessant anxiety) and the time of day. Then having to buy things. Euphemia does most of this, it is true, but she draws the line at my boots and gloves and hosiery and tailoring. Then doing up parcels and finding pieces of string or envelopes or stamps—which Euphemia might very well manage for me. Then finding your way back after a quiet, thoughtful walk. Then having to get matches for your pipe. I sometimes dream of a better world, where pipe, pouch, and matches all keep together instead of being mutually negatory. But Euphemia is always putting everything into some hiding hole or other which she calls its "place." Trivial things in their way, you may say, yet each levying so much toll on my brain and nervous system, and demanding incessant vigilance and activity. I calculated once that I wasted a masterpiece upon these mountainous little things about every three months of my life. Can I help thinking of them, then, and asking why I suffer thus? And can I avoid seeing at last how it is they hang together?

For there is still one other bother, a kind of *bother botherum*, to tell of, though I hesitate at the telling. It brings this rabble herd of worries into line and makes them formidable; it is, so to speak, the Bother Commander-in-Chief. Well! Euphemia. I simply worship the ground she treads upon, mind, but at the same time the truth is the truth. Euphemia is a bother. She is a brave little woman, and helps me

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in every conceivable way. But I wish she would not. It is so obviously all her doing. She makes me get up of a morning—I would not stand as much from anybody else—and keeps a sharp eye on my chin and collar. If it were not for her I could sit about always with no collar or tie on in that old jacket she gave to the tramp, and just smoke and grow a beard and let all the bothers slide. I would never wash, never shave, never answer any letters, never go to see any friends, never do any work—except, perhaps, an insulting postcard to a publisher now and again. I would just sit about.

Sometimes I think this may be peculiar in me. At other times I fancy I am giving voice to the secret feeling of every member of my sex. I suspect, then, that we would all do as the noble savage does, take our things off and lie about comfortable, if only some one had the courage to begin. It is these women—all love and reverence to Euphemia notwithstanding—who make us work and bother us with Things. They keep us decent, and remind us we have a position to support. And really, after all, this is not my original discovery! There is the third chapter of Genesis, for instance. And then who has not read Carlyle's gloating over a certain historical suit of leather? It gives me a queer thrill of envy, that Quaker Fox and his suit of leather. Conceive it, if you can! One would never have to quail under the scrutiny of a tailor any more. Thoreau too, come to think of it, was by way of being a prophet, a pioneer in this Emancipation of Man from Bothery.

Then the silent gentry who brew our Chartreuse;

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what are they in retirement for? Looking back into history, with the glow of discovery in my eyes, I find records of wise men—every one acknowledged they were wise men—who lived apart. In every age the same associate of solitude, silence, and wisdom. The holy hermits! . . . I grant it they professed to flee wickedness and seek after righteousness, but now my impression is that they fled bothers. We all know they had an intense aversion to any savour of domesticity, and they never shaved, washed, dined, visited, had new clothes. Holiness, indeed! They were *viveurs*. . . . We have witnessed Religion without Theology, and why not an Unsectarian Thebaid? I sometimes fancy it needs only one brave man to begin. . . . If it were not for the fuss Euphemia would make I certainly should. But I know she would come and worry me worse than St. Anthony was worried until I put them all on again, and that keeps me from the attempt.

I am curious whether mine is the common experience. I fancy, after all, I am only seeing in a clearer way, putting into modern phrase, so to speak, an observation old as the Pentateuch. And looking up I read upon a little almanac with which Euphemia has cheered my desk:—

> "The world was sad" (sweet sadness!)
> "The garden was a wild" (a picturesque wild)
> "And man the hermit" (he made no complaint)
> "Till the woman smiled."—CAMPBELL.

[And very shortly after he had, as you know, all that bother about the millinery.]

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ON THE CHOICE OF A WIFE

WIFE-CHOOSING is an unending business. This sounds immoral, but what I mean will be clearer in the context. People have lived—innumerable people—exhausted experience, and yet other people keep on coming to hand, none the wiser, none the better. It is like a waterfall more than anything else in the world. Every year one has to turn to and warn another batch about these stale old things. Yet it is one's duty—the last thing that remains to a man. And as a piece of worldly wisdom that has nothing to do with wives, always leave a few duties neglected for the comfort of your age. There are such a lot of other things one can do when one is young.

Now the kind of wife a young fellow of eight or nine and twenty insists on selecting is something of one and twenty or less, inexperienced, extremely pretty, graceful, and well dressed, not too clever, accomplished—but I need not go on, for the youthful reader can fill in the picture himself from his own ideal. Every young man has his own ideal as a matter of course, and they are all exactly alike. Now I do not intend to repeat all the stale old saws of out-of-date wiseacres. Most of them are even more foolish than the follies they reprove. Take for instance the statement that "beauty fades." Absurd; every one knows perfectly well that as the years creep on beauty simply gets more highly coloured. And then, "beauty is only skin-deep." Fantastically wrong! Some of it is not that; and for the rest, is a woman like a toy balloon?—just a surface? To hear that

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proverb from a man is to know him at once for a phonographic kind of fool. The fundamental and enduring grace of womanhood goes down to the skeleton; you cannot have a pretty face without a pretty skull, just as you cannot have one without a good temper.

Yet all the same there is an excellent reason why one should shun beauty in a prospective wife, at any rate obvious beauty—the kind of beauty people talk about, and which gets into the photographers' windows. The common beautiful woman has a style of her own, a favourite aspect. After all she cannot be perfect. She comes upon you, dazzles you, marries you; there is a time of ecstasy. People envy you, continue to envy you. After a time you envy yourself—yourself of the day before yesterday. For the imperfection, the inevitable imperfection—in one case I remember it was a smile—becomes visible to you, becomes your especial privilege. That is the real reason. No beauty is a beauty to her husband. But with the plain woman—the thoroughly plain woman—it is different. At first—I will not mince matters—her ugliness is an impenetrable repulse. Face it. After a time little things begin to appear through the violent discords: little scraps of melody—a shy tenderness in her smile that peeps out at you and vanishes, a something that is winning looking out of her eyes. You find a waviness of her hair that you never saw at the beginning, a certain surprising, pleasing, enduring want of clumsiness in part of her ear. And it is yours. You can see she strikes the beholder with something of a shock, and while the beauty of the

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beauty is common for all the world to rejoice in, you will find in your dear plain wife beauty enough to spare, exquisite; for it is all your own, your treasure-trove, your safely hidden treasure. . . .

Then in the matter of age; though young fellows do not imagine it, it is very easy to marry a wife too young. Marriage has been defined as a foolish bargain in which one man provides for another man's daughter, but there is no reason why this should go so far as completing her education. If your conception of happiness is having something pretty and innocent and troublesome about you, something that you can cherish and make happy, a pet rabbit is in every way preferable. At the worst that will nibble your boots. I have known several cases of the girl wife, and it always began like an idyll, charmingly, the tenderest care on one hand, winsome worship on the other, until some little thing, a cut chin or a missing paper, startled the pure and natural man out of his veneer, dancing and blaspheming, with the most amazing consequences. Only a proven saint should marry a girl wife, and his motives might be misunderstood. The idyllic wife is a beautiful thing to read about, but in practice idylls should be kept episodes; in practice the idyllic life is a little too like a dinner that is all dessert. A common man, after a time, tires of winsome worship; he craves after companionship, and a sympathy based on experience. The ordinary young man, with the still younger wife, I have noticed, continues to love her with all his heart —and spends his leisure telling somebody else's wife all about it. If in these days of blatant youth an

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experienced man's counsel is worth anything, it would be to marry a woman considerably older than oneself, if one must marry at all. And while upon this topic—and I have lived long—the ideal wife, I am persuaded, from the close observation of many years, is invariably, by some mishap, a widow. . . .

Avoid social charm. It was the capacity for entertaining visitors that ruined Paradise. It grows upon a woman. An indiscriminating personal magnetism is perhaps the most dreadful vice a wife can have. You think you have married the one woman in the world and you find you have married a host—that is to say, a hostess. Instead of making a home for you she makes you something between an ethnographical museum and a casual ward. You find your rooms littered with people and teacups and things, strange creatures that no one could possibly care for, that seem scarcely to care for themselves. You go about the house treading upon chance geniuses, and get tipped by inexperienced guests. And even when she does not entertain, she is continually going out. I do not deny that charming people are charming, that their company should be sought, but seeking it in marriage is an altogether different matter.

Then I really must insist that young men do not understand the real truth about accomplishments. There comes a day when the most variegated wife comes to the end of her tunes, and another when she ends them for the second time; *Vita longa, ars brevis*—at least, as regards the art of the schoolgirl. It is only like marrying a slightly more complicated barrel-organ. And for another point, watch the young per-

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son you would honour with your hand for the slightest inkling of economy or tidiness. Young men are so full of poetry and emotion that it does not occur to them how widely the sordid vices are distributed in the other sex. If you are an hotel proprietor, a school proprietor, or a day labourer, such weaknesses become a strength, of course, but not otherwise. For a literary person—if perchance you are a literary person—it is altogether too dreadful. You are always getting swept and garnished, straightened up and sent out to be shaved. And home—even your study—becomes a glittering, spick-and-span mechanism. But you know the parable of the seven devils?

To conclude, a summary. The woman you choose should be plain, as plain as you can find, as old or older than yourself, devoid of social gifts or accomplishment, poor—for your self-respect—and with a certain amiable untidiness. Of course no young man will heed this, but at least I have given my counsel, and very excellent reasons for that counsel. And possibly I shall be able to remind him that I told him as much in the course of a few years' time. And, by-the-bye, I had almost forgotten! Never by any chance marry a girl whose dresses do up at the back, unless you can afford her a maid or so of her own.

THE HOUSE OF DI SORNO

A MANUSCRIPT FOUND IN A BOX

And the box, Euphemia's. Brutally raided it was by an insensate husband eager for a tie and too unreasonably impatient to wait an hour or so until she

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could get home and find it for him. There was, of course, no tie at all in that box, for all his stirring—as any one might have known; but if there was no tie there were certain papers that at least suggested a possibility of whiling away the time until the Chooser and Distributer of Ties should return. And after all there is no reading like your accidental reading come upon unawares.

It was a discovery indeed that Euphemia *had* papers. At the first glance these close-written sheets suggested a treasonable Keynote, and the husband gripped it with a certain apprehension mingling with his relief at the opiate of reading. It was, so to speak, the privilege of police he exercised, so he justified himself. He began to read. But what is this? "She stood on the balcony outside the window, while the noblest-born in the palace waited on her every capricious glance, and watched for an unbending look to relieve her hauteur, but in vain." None of your snippy-snappy Keynote there!

Then he turned over a page or so of the copy, doubting if the privilege of police still held good. Standing out by virtue of a different ink, and coming immediately after "bear her to her proud father," were the words, "How many yards of carpet ¾ yds. wide will cover room, width 16 ft., length, 27½ ft.?" Then he knew he was in the presence of the great romance that Euphemia wrote when she was sixteen. He had heard something of it before. He held it doubtfully in his hands, for the question of conscience still troubled him. "Bah!" he said abruptly, "not to find it irresistible was to slight the authoress and her

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skill." And with that he sat plump down among the things in the box very comfortably and began reading, and, indeed, read until Euphemia arrived. But she, at the sight of his head and legs, made several fragmentary and presumably offensive remarks about crushing some hat or other, and proceeded with needless violence to get him out of the box again. However, that is my own private trouble. We are concerned now with the merits of Euphemia's romance.

The hero of the story is a Venetian named (for some unknown reason) Ivan di Sorno. So far as I ascertained, he is the entire house of Di Sorno referred to in the title. No other Di Sornos transpired. Like others in the story, he is possessed of untold wealth, tempered by a profound sorrow for some cause which remains unmentioned, but which is possibly internal. He is first displayed "pacing a sombre avenue of ilex and arbutus that reflected with singular truth the gloom of his countenance," and "toying sadly with the jewelled hilt of his dagger." He meditates upon his loveless life and the burden of riches. Presently he "paces the long and magnificent gallery," where a "hundred generations of Di Sorno, each with the same flashing eye and the same marble brow, look down with the same sad melancholy upon the beholder"—a truly monotonous exhibition. It would be too much for any one day after day. He decides that he will travel. Incognito.

The next chapter is headed "In Old Madrid," and Di Sorno, cloaked to conceal his grandeur, "moves sad and observant among the giddy throng." But

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"Gwendolen"—the majestic Gwendolen of the balcony—"marked his pallid yet beautiful countenance." And the next day at the bull-fight she "flung her bouquet into the arena, and turning to Di Sorno" —a perfect stranger, mind you—"smiled commandingly." "In a moment he had flung himself headlong down among the flashing blades of the toreadors and the trampling confusion of bulls, and in another he stood before her, bowing low with the recovered flowers in his hand. 'Fair sir,' she said, 'methinks my poor flowers were scarce worth your trouble.' " A very proper remark. And then suddenly I put the manuscript down.

My heart was full of pity for Euphemia. Thus had she gone a-dreaming. A man of imposing physique and flashing eye, who would fling you oxen here and there, and vault in and out of an arena without catching a breath, for his lady's sake—and here I sat, the sad reality, a lean and slippered literary pretender, and constitutionally afraid of cattle.

Poor little Euphemia! For after all is said and done, and the New Woman gibed out of existence, I am afraid we do undeceive these poor wives of ours a little after the marrying is over. It may be they have deceived themselves in the first place, but that scarcely affects their disappointment. These dream-lovers of theirs, these monsters of unselfishness and devotion, these tall fair Donovans and dark worshipping Wanderers! And then comes the rabble rout of us poor human men, damning at our breakfasts, wiping pens upon our coat sleeves, smelling of pipes, fearing our editors, and turning Euphemia's private

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boxes into public copy. And they take it so steadfastly—most of them. They never let us see the romance we have robbed them of, but turn to and make the best of it—and us—with such sweet grace. Only now and then—as in the instance of a flattened hat—may a cry escape them. And even then——

But a truce to reality! Let us return to Di Sorno.

This individual does not become enamoured of Gwendolen, as the crude novel reader might anticipate. He answers her "coldly," and his eye rests, the while on her "tirewoman, the sweet Margot." Then come scenes of jealousy and love, outside a castle with heavily mullioned windows. The sweet Margot, though she turns out to be the daughter of a bankrupt prince, has one characteristic of your servant all the world over—she spends all her time looking out of the window. Di Sorno tells her of his love on the evening of the bull-fight, and she cheerfully promises to "learn to love him," and thereafter he spends all his days and nights "spurring his fiery steed down the road" that leads by the castle containing the young scholar. It becomes a habit with him—in all he does it seventeen times in three chapters. Then, "ere it is too late," he implores Margot to fly.

Gwendolen, after a fiery scene with Margot, in which she calls her a "petty minion"—pretty language for a young gentlewoman—"sweeps with unutterable scorn from the room," never, to the reader's huge astonishment, to appear in the story again, and Margot flies with Di Sorno to Grenada, where the Inquisition, consisting apparently of a single

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monk with a "blazing eye," becomes extremely machinatory. A certain Countess di Morno, who intends to marry Di Sorno, and who has been calling into the story in a casual kind of way since the romance began, now comes prominently forward. She has denounced Margot for heresy, and at a masked ball the Inquisition, disguised in a yellow domino, succeeds in separating the young couple, and in carrying off "the sweet Margot" to a convent.

"Di Sorno, half distraught, flung himself into a cab and drove to all the hotels in Grenada" (he overlooked the police station), and, failing to find Margot, becomes mad. He goes about ejaculating "Mad, mad!" than which nothing could be more eloquent of his complete mental inversion. In his paroxysms the Countess di Morno persuades him to "lead her to the altar," but on the way (with a certain indelicacy they go to church in the same conveyance) she lets slip a little secret. So Di Sorno jumps out of the carriage, "hurling the crowd apart," and, "flourishing his drawn sword," "clamoured at the gate of the Inquisition" for Margot. The Inquisition, represented by the fiery-eyed monk, "looked over the gate at him." No doubt it felt extremely uncomfortable.

Now it was just at this thrilling part that Euphemia came home, and the trouble about the flattened hat began. I never flattened her hat. It was in the box, and so was I; but as for deliberate flattening— It was just a thing that happened. She should not write such interesting stories if she expects me to go on tiptoe through the world looking about for her hats. To have that story taken away

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just at that particular moment was horrible. There was fully as much as I had read still to come, so that a lot happened after this duel of Sword *v.* Fiery Eye. I know from a sheet that came out of place that Margot stabbed herself with a dagger ("richly jewelled"), but of all that came between I have not the faintest suspicion. That is the peculiar interest of it. At this particular moment the one book I want to read in all the world is the rest of this novel of Euphemia's. And simply on the score of a new hat needed, she keeps it back and haggles!

IN A LITERARY HOUSEHOLD

In the literary household of fiction and the drama, things are usually in a distressing condition enough. The husband, as you know, has a hacking cough, and the wife a dying baby, and they write in the intervals of these cares among the litter of the breakfast things. Occasionally a comic, but sympathetic, servant brings in an armful—"heaped up and brimming over"—of rejected MSS., for, in the dramatic life, it never rains but it pours. Instead of talking about editors in a bright and vigorous fashion, as the recipients of rejections are wont, the husband groans and covers his face with his hands, and the wife, leaving the touching little story she is writing—she posts this about 9 p.m., and it brings in a publisher and 100*l.* or so before 10.30—comforts him by flopping suddenly over his shoulder. "Courage," she says, stroking his hyacinthine locks (whereas all real literary men are more or less grey or bald). Sometimes, as in "Our

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Flat," comic tradesmen interrupt the course of true literature with their ignoble desire for cash payment, and sometimes, as in "Our Boys," uncles come and weep at the infinite pathos of a bad breakfast egg. But it's always a very sordid, dusty, lump-in-your-throaty affair, and no doubt it conduces to morality by deterring the young and impressionable from literary vices. As for its truth, that is another matter altogether.

Yet it must not be really imagined that a literary household is just like any other. There is the brass paper-fastener, for instance. I have sometimes thought that Euphemia married me with an eye to these conveniences. She has two in her grey gloves, and one (with the head inked) in her boot in the place of a button. Others I suspect her of. Then she fastened the lamp shade together with them, and tried one day to introduce them instead of pearl buttons as efficient anchorage for cuffs and collars. And she made a new handle for the little drawer under the inkstand with one. Indeed, the literary household is held together, so to speak, by paper-fasteners, and how other people get along without them we are at a loss to imagine. And another point, almost equally important, is that the husband is generally messing about at home.

That is, indeed, to a superficial observer, one of the most remarkable characteristics of the literary household. Other husbands are cast out in the morning to raven for income and return to a home that is swept and garnished towards the end of the day; but the literary husband is ever in possession. His work

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must not be disturbed even when he is merely thinking. The study is consequently a kind of domestic cordite factory, and you are never certain when it may explode. The concussion of a dust-pan and brush may set it going, the sweeping of a carpet in the room upstairs. Then behold a haggard, brain-weary man, fierce and dishevelled, and full of shattered masterpiece—expostulating. Other houses have their day for cleaning out this room, and their day for cleaning out that; but in the literary household there is one uniform date for all such functions, and that is "to-morrow." So that Mrs. Mergles makes her purifying raids with her heart in her mouth, and has acquired a way of leaving the pail and brush or whatever artillery she has with her, in a manner that unavoidably engages the infuriated brute's attention and so covers her retreat.

It is a problem that has never been probably solved, this discord of order and orderly literary work. Possibly it might be done by making the literary person live elsewhere or preventing literary persons from having households. However it might be done, it is not done. This is a thing innocent girls exposed to the surreptitious proposals of literary men do not understand. They think it will be very fine to have photographs of themselves and their "cosey nooks" published in magazines to illustrate the man's interviews, and the full horror of having this feral creature always about the house, and scarcely ever being able to do any little thing without his knowing it, is not brought properly home to them until escape is impossible.

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And then there is the taint of "copy" everywhere. That is really the fundamental distinction. It is the misfortune of literary people that they have to write about something. There is no reason, of course, why they should, but the thing is so. Consequently they are always looking about them for something to write about. They cannot take a pure-minded interest in anything in earth or heaven. Their servant is no servant, but a character; their cat is a possible reservoir of humorous observation; they look out of window and see men as columns walking. Even the sanctity of their own hearts, their self-respect, their most private emotions are disregarded. The wife is infected with the taint. Her private opinion of her husband she makes into a short story—forgets its origin and shows it him with pride—while the husband decants his heartbeats into occasional verse and minor poetry. It is amazing what a lot of latter-day literature consists of such breaches of confidence. And not simply latter-day literature.

The visitor is fortunate who leaves no marketable impression behind. The literary entertainers eye you over, as if they were dealers in a slave mart, and speculate on your uses. They try to think how you would do as a scoundrel, and mark your little turns of phrase and kinks of thought to that end. The innocent visitor bites his cake and talks about theatres, while the meditative person in the arm-chair may be in imagination stabbing him, or starving him on a desert island, or even—horrible to tell!—flinging him headlong into the arms of the young lady to the right and "covering her face with a thousand passionate

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kisses." A manuscript in the rough of Euphemia's that I recently suppressed was an absolutely scandalous example of this method of utilising one's acquaintances. Mrs. Harborough, who was indeed Euphemia's most confidential friend for six weeks or more, she had made to elope with Scrimgeour—as steady and honourable a man as we know, though unpleasant to Euphemia on account of his manner of holding his teacup. I believe there really was something —quite harmless, of course—between Mrs. Harborough and Scrimgeour, and that imparted in confidence had been touched up with vivid colour here and there and utilised freely. Scrimgeour is represented as always holding teacups in his peculiar way, so that any one would recognise him at once. Euphemia calls that character. Then Harborough, who is really on excellent terms with his wife, and, in spite of his quiet manner, a very generous and courageous fellow, is turned aside from his headlong pursuit of the fugitives across Wimbledon Common—they elope, by-the-bye, on Scrimgeour's tandem bicycle—by the fear of being hit by a golf ball. I pointed out to Euphemia that these things were calculated to lose us friends, and she promises to destroy the likeness; but I have no confidence in her promise. She will probably clap a violent auburn wig on Mrs. Harborough and make Scrimgeour squint and give Harborough a big beard. The point that she won't grasp is that with that fatal facility for detail which is one of the most indisputable proofs of woman's intellectual inferiority, she has reproduced endless remarks and mannerisms of these excellent people with

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more than photographic fidelity. But this is really a private trouble, though it illustrates very well the shameless way in which those who have the literary taint will bring to market their most intimate affairs.

ON SCHOOLING AND THE PHASES OF MR. SANDSOME

I DO not know if you remember your "dates." Indeed, I do not know if any one does. My own memory is of a bridge; like that bridge of Goldsmith's, standing firm and clear on its hither piers and then passing into a cloud. In the beginning of days was "William the Conqueror, 1066," and the path lay safe and open to Henry the Second; then came Titanic forms of kings, advancing and receding, elongating and dwindling, exchanging dates, losing dates, stealing dates from battles and murders and great enactments—even inventing dates, vacant years that were really no dates at all. The things I have suffered—prisons, scourgings, beating with rods, wild masters, in bounds often, a hundred lines often, standing on forms and holding out books often—on account of these dates! I knew, and knew well before I was fifteen, what these "heredity" babblers are only beginning to discover—that the past is the curse of the present. But I never knew my dates—never. And I marvel now that all little boys do not grow up to be Republicans, seeing how much they suffer for the mere memory of Kings.

Then there were pedigrees, and principal parts and conjugations, and county towns. Every county had

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a county town, and it was always on a river. Mr. Sandsome never allowed us a town without that colophon. I remember in my early manhood going to Guildford on the Wey, and trying to find that unobtrusive rivulet. I went over the Downs for miles. It is not only the Wey I have had a difficulty in finding. There are certain verses—Heaven help me, but I have forgotten them!—about "*i* vel *e* dat" (*was* it dat?) "utrum malis"—if I remember rightly—and all that about *amo*, *amas*, *amat*. There was a multitude of such things I acquired, and they lie now in the remote box-rooms and lumber recesses of my mind, a rusting armoury far gone in decay. I have never been able to find a use for them. I wonder even now why Mr. Sandsome equipped me with them. Yet he seemed to be in deadly earnest about this learning, and I still go in doubt. In those early days he impressed me, chiefly in horizontal stripes, with the profoundest respect for his mental and physical superiority. I credited him then, and still incline to believe he deserved to be credited, with a sincere persuasion that unless I learned these things I should assuredly go—if I may be frank—to the devil. It may be so. I may be living in a fool's paradise, prospering—like that wicked man the Psalmist disliked. Some unsuspected gulf may open, some undreamt-of danger thrust itself through the phantasmagoria of the universe, and I may learn too late the folly of forgetting my declensions.

I remember Mr. Sandsome chiefly as sitting at his desk in a little room full of boys, a humming hive whose air was thick with dust, as the slanting sun-

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beams showed. When we were not doing sums or writing copies, we were always learning or saying lessons. In the early morning Mr. Sandsome sat erect and bright, his face animated, his ruddy eyes keen and observant, the cane hanging but uncertainly upon its hook. There was a standing up of classes, a babble of repetition, now and then a crisis. How long the days were then! I have heard that scientific people—Professor C. Darwin is their leader unless I err, which probably I do, for names and dates I have hated from my youth up—say the days grow longer. Anyhow, whoever says it, it is quite wrong. But as the lank hours of that vast school-time drawled on, Mr. Sandsome lost energy, drooped like a flower,—especially if the day was at all hot,—his sandy hair became dishevelled, justice became nerveless, hectic, and hasty. Finally came copy-books; and yawns and weird rumblings from Mr. Sandsome. And so the world aged to the dinner-hour.

When I had been home—it was a day school, for my aunt, who had an appetite for such things, knew that boarding schools were sinks of iniquity—and returned, I had Mr. Sandsome at another phase. He had dined—for we were simple country folk. The figurative suggestions of that "phase" are irresistible —the lunar quality. May I say that Mr. Sandsome was at his full? We now stood up, thirty odd of us altogether, to read, reading out of books in a soothing monotone, and he sat with his reading-book before him, ruddy as the setting sun, and slowly, slowly settling down. But now and then he would jerk back suddenly into staring wakefulness as though he were

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fishing—with himself as bait—for schoolboy crimes in the waters of oblivion, and fancied a nibble. That was a dangerous time, full of anxiety. At last he went right under and slept, and the reading grew cheerful, full of quaint glosses and unexpected gaps, leaping playfully from boy to boy instead of travelling round with a proper decorum. But it never ceased, and little Hurkley's silly little squeak of a voice never broke in upon its mellow flow. (It took a year for Hurkley's voice to break.) Any such interruption and Mr. Sandsome woke up and into his next phase forthwith—a disagreeable phase always, and one we made it our business to postpone as long as possible.

During that final period, the last quarter, Mr. Sandsome was distinctly malignant. It was hard to do right; harder still to do wrong. A feverish energy usually inspired our government. "Let us try to get some work done," Mr. Sandsome would say—and I have even known him teach things then. More frequently, with a needless bitterness, he set us upon impossible tasks, demanding a colossal tale of sums perhaps, scattering pens and paper and sowing the horrors of book-keeping, or chastising us with the scorpions of parsing and translation. And even in wintry weather the little room grew hot and stuffy, and we terminated our school-day much exhausted, with minds lax, lounging attitudes, and red ears. What became of Mr. Sandsome after the giving-out of homework, the concluding prayer, and the aftermath of impositions, I do not know. I stuffed my books, such as came to hand—very dirty they were inside, and very neat out with my Aunt Charlotte's

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chints covers—into my green baize bag, and went forth from the mysteries of schooling into the great world, up the broad white road that went slanting over the Down.

I say "the mysteries of schooling" deliberately. I wondered then, I wonder still, what it was all for. Reading, almost my only art, I learned from Aunt Charlotte; a certain facility in drawing I acquired at home and took to school, to my own undoing. "Undoing," again, is deliberate—it was no mere swish on the hand, gentle reader. But the things I learned, more or less partially, at school, lie in my mind like the "Sarsen" stones of Wiltshire—great disconnected, time-worn chunks amidst the natural herbage of it. "The Rivers of the East Coast; the Tweed, the Tyne, the Wear, the Tees, the Humber" —why is that, for instance, sticking up among my ferns and wild flowers? It is not only useless but misleading, for the Humber is not another Tweed. I sometimes fancy the world may be mad—yet that seems egotistical. The fact remains that for the greater part of my young life Mr. Sandsome got an appetite upon us from nine till twelve, and digested his dinner, at first placidly and then with petulance, from two until five—and we thirty odd boys were sent by our twenty odd parents to act as a sort of chorus to his physiology. And he was fed (as I judge) more than sufficiently, clothed, sheltered, and esteemed on account of this relation. I think, after all, there must have been something in that schooling. I can't believe the world mad. And I have forgotten it—or as good as forgotten it—all! At times I feel

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a wild impulse to hunt up all those chints-covered books, and brush up my dates and paradigms, before it is too late.

THE POET AND THE EMPORIUM

"I AM beginning life," he said, with a sigh. "Great Heavens! I have spent a day—*a day!*—in a shop. Three bedroom suites and a sideboard are among the unanticipated pledges of our affection. Have you lithia? For a man of twelve limited editions this has been a terrible day."

I saw to his creature comforts. His tie was hanging outside his waistcoat, and his complexion was like white pasteboard that has got wet. "Courage," said I. "It will not occur again——"

"It will," said he. "We have to go there again to-morrow. We have—what is it?—carpets, curtains——"

He produced his tablets. I was amazed. Those receptacles of choice thoughts?

"The amber sunlight splashing through the leaky—leafy interlacing green," he read. "No!—that's not it. Ah, here! Curtains! Drawing-room—not to cost more than thirty shillings! And there's all the Kitchen Hardware! (Thanks.) Dining-room chairs—query—rush bottoms? What's this? G. L. I. S.—ah! Glistering thro' deeps of glaucophane—that's nothing. Mem. to see can we afford Indian needle-work chairs—*57s. 6d.*? It's dreadful, Bellows!"

He helped himself to a cigarette.

"Find the salesman pleasant?" said I.

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"Delightful. Assumed I was a spendthrift millionaire at first. Produced in an offhand way an eighty-guinea bedroom suite—we're trying to do the entire business, you know, on about two hundred pounds. Well—that's ten editions, you know. Came down, with evidently dwindling respect, to things that were still ruinously expensive. I told him we wanted an idyll—love in a cottage, and all that kind of thing. He brushed that on one side, said idols were upstairs in the Japanese Department, and that perhaps we might *do* with a servant's set of bedroom furniture. Do with a set! He was a gloomy man with (I should judge) some internal pain. I tried to tell him that there was quite a lot of middle-class people like myself in the country, people of limited or precarious means, whose existence he seemed to ignore; assured him some of them led quite beautiful lives. But he had no ideas beyond wardrobes. I quite forgot the business of shopping in an attempt to kindle a little human enthusiasm in his heart. We were in a great vast place full of wardrobes, with a remote glittering vista of brass bedsteads—skeleton beds, you know—and I tried to inspire him with some of the poetry of his emporium; tried to make him imagine these beds and things going east and west, north and south, to take sorrow, servitude, joy, worry, failing strength, restless ambition in their impartial embraces. He only turned round to Annie, and asked her if she thought she could *do* with 'enamelled.' But I was quite taken with my idea— Where is it? I left Annie to settle with this misanthrope, amidst his raw frameworks of the Homes of the Future."

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He fumbled with his tablets. "Mats for hall—not to exceed 3*s.* 9*d.* . . . Kerbs . . . inquire tiled hearth . . . Ah! Here we are: 'Ballade of the Bedroom Suite':—

" 'Noble the oak you are now displaying,
  Subtly the hazel's grainings go,
Walnut's charm there is no gainsaying,
  Red as red wine is your rosewood's glow,
Brave and brilliant the ash you show,
  Rich your mahogany's hepatite shine,
Cool and sweet your enamel: But oh!
  Where are the wardrobes of Painted Pine?'

"They have 'em in the catalogue at five guineas, with a picture—quite as good they are as the more expensive ones. To judge by the picture."

"But that's scarcely the idea you started with," I began.

"No. It went wrong. Ballades often do. The preoccupation of the 'Painted Pine' was too much for me. What's this? 'N.B.—Sludge sells music stools at ——' No. Here we are (first half unwritten):—

" 'White enamelled, like driven snow,
  Picked with just one delicate line.
Price you were saying is? Fourteen!—No!
  Where are the wardrobes of Painted Pine?'

"Comes round again, you see! Then *L'Envoy*:—

" 'Salesman, sad is the truth I trow:
  Winsome walnut can never be mine.
Poets are cheap. And their poetry. So
  Where are the wardrobes of Painted Pine?'

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"Prosaic! As all true poetry is, nowadays. But, how I tired as the afternoon moved on! At first I was interested in the shopman's amazing lack of imagination, and the glory of that fond dream of mine—love in a cottage, you know—still hung about me. I had ideas come—like that Ballade—and every now and then Annie told me to write notes. I think my last gleam of pleasure was in choosing the drawing-room chairs. There is scope for fantasy in chairs. Then——"

He took some more whisky.

"A kind of grey horror came upon me. I don't know if I can describe it. We went through vast vistas of chairs, of hall-tables, of machine-made pictures, of curtains, huge wildernesses of carpets, and ever this cold, unsympathetic shopman led us on, and ever and again made us buy this or that. He had a perfectly grey eye—the colour of an overcast sky in January—and he seemed neither to hate us nor to detest us, but simply to despise us, to feel such an overwhelming contempt for our petty means and our petty lives as an archangel might feel for an apple-maggot. It made me think. . . ."

He lit a fresh cigarette.

"I had a kind of vision. I do not know if you will understand. The Warehouse of Life, with our Individual Fate hurrying each of us through. Showing us with a covert sneer all the good things that we cannot afford. A magnificent Rosewood love affair, for instance, deep and rich, fitted complete, some hours of perfect life, some acts of perfect self-sacrifice, perfect self-devotion. . . . You ask the price."

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He shrugged his shoulders.

"Where are the wardrobes of Painted Pine?" I quoted.

"That's it. All the things one might do, if the purse of one's courage were not so shallow. If it wasn't for the lack of that coinage, Bellows, every man might be magnificent. There's heroism, there's such nobility as no one has ever attained to, ready to hand. Any one, if it were not for this lack of means, might be a human god in twenty-four hours. . . . You see the article. You cannot buy it. No one buys it. It stands in the emporium, I suppose, for show—on the chance of a millionaire. And the shopman waves his hand to it on your way to the Painted Pine.

"Then you meet other couples and solitary people going about, each with a gloomy salesman leading. The run of them look uncomfortable; some are hot about the ears and in the spiteful phase of ill-temper; all look sick of the business except the raw newcomers. It's the only time they will ever select any furniture, their first chance and their last. Most of their selections are hurried a little. The salesman must not be kept all day. . . . Yet it goes hard with you if you buy your Object in Life and find it just a 'special line' made to sell. . . . We're all amateurs at living, just as we are all amateurs at furnishing—or dying. Some of the poor devils one meets carry tattered little scraps of paper, and fumble conscientiously with stumpy pencils. It's a comfort to see how you go, even if you do have to buy rubbish. 'If we have *this* so good, dear, I don't know *how* we shall manage in the kitchen,' says the careful house-

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wife. . . . So it is we do our shopping in the Great Emporium."

"You will have to re-write your Ballade," said I, "and put all that in."

"I wish I could," said the Poet.

"And while you were having these very fine moods?"

"Annie and the shopman settled most of the furniture between them. Perhaps it's just as well. I was never very good at the practical details of life. . . . Cigarette's out! Have you any more matches?"

"Horribly depressed you are!" I said.

"There's to-morrow. Well, well. . . ."

And then he went off at a tangent to tell me what he expected to make by his next volume of poems, and so came to the congenial business of running down his contemporaries, and became again the cheerful little Poet that I know.

THE LITERARY REGIMEN

At the risk of offending the young beginner's illusions, he must be reminded of one or two homely but important facts bearing upon literary production. Homely as they are, they explain much that is at first puzzling. This perplexing question of distinction; the quality of being somehow *fresh*—individual. Really it is a perfectly simple matter. It is common knowledge that, after a prolonged fast, the brain works in a feeble manner, the current of one's thoughts is pallid and shallow, it is difficult to fix the attention and impossible to mobilise the full

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forces of the mind. On the other hand, immediately after a sound meal the brain feels massive, but static. Tea is conducive to a gentle flow of pleasing thoughts, and any one who has taken Easton's syrup of the hypophosphites will recall at once the state of cerebral erethism, of general mental alacrity, that followed on a dose. Again, champagne (followed perhaps by a soupçon of whisky) leads to a mood essentially humorous and playful, while about three dozen oysters taken fasting, will in most cases produce a profound and even ominous melancholy. One might enlarge further upon this topic, on the brutalising influence of beer, the sedative quality of lettuce, the stimulating consequences of curried chicken; but enough has been said to point our argument. It is that such facts as this can surely indicate only one conclusion, and that is the entire dependence of literary qualities upon the diet of the writer.

I may remind the reader, in confirmation of this suggestion, of what is perhaps the most widely known fact about Carlyle, that on one memorable occasion he threw his breakfast out of the window. Why did he throw his breakfast out of the window? Surely his friends have cherished the story out of no petty love of depreciatory detail? There are, however, those who would have us believe it was mere childish petulance at a chilly rasher or a hard-boiled egg. Such a supposition is absurd. On the other hand, what is more natural than an outburst of righteous indignation at the ruin of some carefully studied climax of feeding? The thoughtful literary beginner who is not altogether submerged in foolish theories

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of inspiration and natural genius will, we fancy, see pretty clearly that I am developing what is perhaps after all the fundamental secret of literary art.

To come now to more explicit instructions. It is imperative if you wish to write with any power and freshness at all, that you should utterly ruin your digestion. Any literary person will confirm this statement. At any cost the thing must be done, even if you have to live on German sausage, onions, and cheese to do it. So long as you turn all your dietary to flesh and blood you will get no literature out of it. "We learn in suffering what we teach in song." This is why men who live at home with their mothers, or have their elder sisters to see after them, never by any chance, however great their literary ambition may be, write anything but minor poetry. They get their meals at regular hours and done to a turn, and that plays the very devil—if you will pardon the phrase—with one's imagination.

A careful study of the records of literary men in the past, and a considerable knowledge of living authors, suggests two chief ways of losing one's digestion and engendering literary capacity. You go and live in humble lodgings—we could name dozens of prominent men who have fed a great ambition in this way,—or you marry a nice girl who does not understand housekeeping. The former is the more efficacious method, because, as a rule, the nice girl wants to come and sit on your knee all day, and that is a great impediment to literary composition. Belonging to a club—even a literary club—where you can dine is absolute ruin to the literary beginner.

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Many a bright young fellow who has pushed his way, or has been pushed by indiscreet friends, into the society of successful literary men, has been spoilt by this fatal error, and he has saved his stomach to lose his reputation.

Having got rid of your digestion then, the common condition of all good literature, the next thing is to arrange your dietary for the particular literary effect you desire. And here we may point out the secrecy observed in such matters by literary men. Stevenson fled to Samoa to hide his extremely elaborate methods, and to keep his kitchen servants out of the reach of bribery. Even Sir Walter Besant, though he is fairly communicative to the young aspirant, has dropped no hints of the plain, pure, and wholesome menu he follows. Sala professed to eat everything, but that was probably his badinage. Possibly he had one staple, and took the rest as condiment. Then what did Shakespeare live on? Bacon? And Mr. Barrie, though he has written a delightful book about his pipe and tobacco, full of suggestion to the young humourist, lets out nothing or next to nothing of his meat and drink. His hints about pipes are very extensively followed, and nowadays every ambitious young pressman smokes in public at least one well-burnt briar with an eccentric stem—even at some personal inconvenience. But this jealous reticence on the part of successful men—you notice they never let even the interviewer see their kitchens or the débris of a meal—necessarily throws one back upon rumour and hypothesis in this matter. Mr. Andrew Lang, for instance, is popularly associated

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with salmon, but that is probably a wilful delusion. Excessive salmon, far from engendering geniality, will be found in practice a vague and melancholy diet, tending more towards the magnificent despondency of Mr. Hall Caine.

Nor does Mr. Haggard feed entirely on raw meat. Indeed, for lurid and somewhat pessimistic narrative, there is nothing like the ordinary currant bun, eaten new and in quantity. A light humorous style is best attained by soda-water and dry biscuits, following café-noir. The soda-water may be either Scotch or Irish as the taste inclines. For a florid, tawdry style the beginner must take nothing but boiled water, stewed vegetables, and an interest in the movements against vivisection, opium, alcohol, tobacco, sarcophagy, and the male sex.

For contributions to the leading reviews, boiled pork and cabbage may be eaten, with bottled beer, followed by apple dumpling. This effectually suppresses any tendency to facetiousness, or what respectable English people call *double entendre*, and brings you *en rapport* with the serious people who read these publications. So soon as you begin to feel wakeful and restless discontinue writing. For what is vulgarly known as the *fin-de-siècle* type of publication, on the other hand, one should limit oneself to an aërated bread shop for a week or so, with the exception of an occasional tea in a literary household. All people fed mainly on scones become clever. And this regimen, with an occasional debauch upon macaroons, chocolate, and cheap champagne, and brisk daily walks from Oxford Circus through Regent

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Street, Piccadilly and the Green Park, to Westminster and back, should result in an animated society satire.

It is not known what Mr. Kipling takes to make him so peculiar. Many of us would like to know. Possibly it is something he picked up in the jungle —berries or something. A friend who made a few tentative experiments to this end turned out nothing beyond a will, and that he dictated and left incomplete. (It was scarcely on the lines of an ordinary will, being blasphemous, and mentioning no property except his inside.) For short stories of the detective type, strong cold tea and hard biscuits are fruitful eating, while for a social science novel one should take an abundance of boiled rice and toast and water.

However, these remarks are mainly by way of suggestion. Every writer in the end, so soon as his digestion is destroyed, must ascertain for himself the peculiar diet that suits him best—that is, which disagrees with him the most. If everything else fails he might try some chemical food. "Jabber's Food for Authors," by-the-bye, well advertised, and with portraits of literary men in their drawing-rooms, "Fed entirely on Jabber's Food," with medical certificates of its unwholesomeness and favourable and expurgated reviews of works written on it, ought to be a brilliant success among literary aspirants. A small but sufficient quantity of arsenic might with advantage be mixed in.

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HOUSE-HUNTING AS AN OUTDOOR AMUSEMENT

SINCE Adam and Eve went hand in hand out of the gates of Paradise, the world has travailed under an infinite succession of house-hunts. To-day in every eligible suburb you may see New Adams and New Eves by the score, with rusty keys and pink order-forms in hand, wandering still in search of the ideal home. To them it is anything but an amusement. Most of these poor pilgrims look simply tired, some are argumentative in addition, but all are disappointed, anxious, and unhappy, their hands dirty with prying among cisterns, and their garments soiled from cellar walls. All, in the exaltation of the wooing days, saw at least the indistinct reflection of the perfect house, but now the Quest is irrevocably in hand they seek and do not find. And such a momentous question it is to them. Are they not choosing the background, the air and the colour, as it were, of the next three or four years, the cardinal years, too! of their lives?

Perhaps the exquisite exasperation of the business for the man who hunts among empty houses for a home is that it is so entirely a choice of second-hand, or at least ready-made goods. To me, at least, there is a decided suggestion of the dead body in your empty house that has once been occupied. Here, like pale ghosts upon the wall paper, are outlined the pictures of the departed tenant; here are the nails of the invisible curtains, this dent in the wall is all that is sensible of a vanished piano. I could fancy all

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these things creeping back to visibility as the light grew dim. Some one was irritable in the house, perhaps, and a haunting fragrance of departed quarrels is to be found in the loose door-handles and the broken bell-pull. Then the blind in the bedroom has a broken string. He was a beer-drinker, for the drip of the tap has left its mark in the cellar; a careless man, for this wall is a record of burst water-pipes; and rough in his methods, as his emendation of the garden gate—a remedy rather worse than the disease—shows. The mark of this prepotent previous man is left on the house from cellar to attic. It is his house really, not mine. And against these haunting individualities set the horrible wholesale flavour, the obvious dexterous builder's economies of a new house. Yet, whatever your repulsion may be, the end is always the same. After you have asked for your ideal house a hundred times or so you begin to see you do not get it. You go the way of your kind. All houses are taken in despair.

But such disgusts as this are for the man who really aims at taking a house. The artist house-hunter knows better than that. He hunts for the hunt's sake, and does not mar his work with a purpose. Then house-hunting becomes a really delightful employment, and one strangely neglected in this country. I have heard, indeed, of old ladies who enlivened the intervals of their devotions in this manner, but to the general run of people the thing is unknown. Yet a more entertaining way of spending a half-holiday—having regard to current taste—it should be difficult to imagine. An empty house is

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realistic literature in the concrete, full of hints and allusions if a little wanting in tangible humanity, and it outdoes the modern story in its own line, by beginning as well as ending in a note of interrogation. That it is not more extensively followed I can only explain by supposing that its merits are generally unsuspected. In which case this book should set a fashion.

One singular thing the house-hunter very speedily discovers is, that the greater portion of the houses in this country are owned by old gentlemen or old ladies who live next door. After a certain age, and especially upon retired tradespeople, house property, either alone or in common with gardening, exercises an irresistible fascination. You always know you are going to meet a landlord or landlady of this type when you read on your order to view, "Key next door but one." Calling next door but one, you are joined after the lapse of a few minutes by a bald, stout gentleman, or a lady of immemorial years, who offers to go over "the property" with you. Apparently the intervals between visits to view are spent in slumber, and these old people come out refreshed and keen to scrutinise their possible new neighbours. They will tell you all about the last tenant, and about the present tenants on either side, and about themselves, and how all the other houses in the neighbourhood are damp, and how they remember when the site of the house was a cornfield, and what they do for their rheumatism. As one hears them giving a most delightful vent to their loquacity, the artistic house-hunter feels all the righteous self-applause of a

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kindly deed. Sometimes they get extremely friendly. One old gentleman—to whom any one under forty must have seemed puerile—presented the gentle writer with three fine large green apples as a kind of earnest of his treatment: apples, no doubt, of some little value, since they excited the audible envy of several little boys before they were disposed of.

Sometimes the landlord has even superintended the building of the house himself, and then it often has peculiar distinctions—no coal cellar, or a tower with turrets, or pillars of ornamental marble investing the portico with disproportionate dignity. One old gentleman, young as old gentlemen go, short of stature, of an agreeable red colour, and with short iron-grey hair, had a niche over the front door containing a piece of statuary. It gave one the impression of the Venus of Milo in chocolate pyjamas. "It was nood at first," said the landlord, "but the neighbourhood is hardly educated up to art, and objected. So I gave it that brown paint."

On one expedition the artistic house-hunter was accompanied by Euphemia. Then it was he found Hill Crest, a vast edifice at the incredible rent of £40 a year, with which a Megatherial key was identified. It took the two of them, not to mention an umbrella, to turn this key. The rent was a mystery, and while they were in the house—a thunderstorm kept them there some time—they tried to imagine the murder. From the top windows they could see the roofs of the opposite houses in plan.

"I wonder how long it would take to get to the top of the house from the bottom?" said Euphemia.

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"Certainly longer than we could manage every day," said the artistic house-hunter. "Fancy looking for my pipe in all these rooms. Starting from the top bedroom at the usual time, I suppose one would arrive downstairs to breakfast about eleven, and then we should have to be getting upstairs again by eight o'clock if we wanted any night's rest worth having. Or we might double or treble existence, live a Gargantuan life to match the house, make our day of forty-eight hours instead of twenty-four. By doubling everything we should not notice the hole it made in our time getting about the place. Perhaps by making dinner last twice as long, eating twice as much, and doing everything on the scale of two to one, we might adapt ourselves to our environment in time, grow twice as big."

"*Then* we might be very comfortable here," said Euphemia.

They went downstairs again. By that time it was thundering and raining heavily. The rooms were dark and gloomy. The big side door, which would not shut unless locked from the outside, swayed and banged as the gusts of wind swept round the house. But they had a good time in the front kitchen, playing cricket with an umbrella and the agent's order crumpled into a ball. Presently the artistic house-hunter lifted Euphemia on to the tall dresser, and they sat there swinging their feet patiently until the storm should leave off and release them.

"I should feel in this kitchen," said Euphemia, "like one of my little dolls must have felt in the dolls'-house kitchen I had once. The top of her head

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just reached the level of the table. There were only four plates on the dresser, but each was about half her height across——"

"Your reminiscences are always entertaining," said the artistic house-hunter; "still they fail to explain the absorbing mystery of this house being to let at £40 a year." The problem raised his curiosity, but though he made inquiries he found no reason for the remarkably low rent or the continued emptiness of the house. It was a specimen puzzle for the house-hunter. A large house with a garden of about half an acre, and with accommodation for about six families, going begging for £40 a year. Would it let at eighty? Some such problem, however, turns up in every house-hunt, and it is these surprises that give the sport its particular interest and delight. Always provided the mind is not unsettled by any ulterior notion of settling down.

THE VETERAN CRICKETER

My old cricketer was seized, he says, some score of years ago now, by sciatica, clutched indeed about the loins thereby, and forcibly withdrawn from the practice of the art; since when a certain predisposition to a corpulent habit has lacked its natural check of exercise, and a broadness almost Dutch has won upon him. Were it not for this, which renders his contours and his receding aspect unseemly, he would be indeed a venerable-looking person, having a profile worthy of a patriarch, tinged though it may be with an unpatriarchal jollity, and a close curly

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beard like that of King David. He lives by himself in a small cottage outside the village—hating women with an unaccountable detestation—and apparently earns a precarious livelihood, and certainly the sincere aversion of the country-side, by umpiring in matches, and playing whist and "Nap" with such as will not be so discreet and economical as to bow before his superior merit.

His neighbours do not like him because he will not take their cricket or their whist seriously, because he will persist in offering counsel and the stimulus of his gift of satire. All whist than his he avers is "Bumble-puppy." His umpiring is pedagogic in tone; he fails to see the contest in the game. To him, who has heard his thousands roar as the bails of the best of all England went spinning, these village matches are mere puerile exercises to be corrected. His corrections, too, are Olympian, done, as it were, in red ink, vivid, and without respect of persons. Particularly he gibes. He never uses vulgar bad language himself, but has a singular power of engendering it in others. He has a word "gaby," which he will sometimes enlarge to "stuppid gaby," the which, flung neatly into a man who has just missed a catch, will fill the same with a whirl of furious curses difficult to restrain. And if perchance one should escape, my ancient cricketer will be as startled as Cadmus at the crop he has sown. And not only startled but pained at human wickedness and the follies of a new generation. "Why can't you play without swearing, Muster Gibbs?" he will say, catching the whispered hope twenty yards away, and proclaiming it to a censorious world. And so Gibbs, our grocer and draper, and

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one made much of by the vicar, is shamed before the whole parish and damned even as he desired.

To our vicar, a well-meaning, earnest, and extremely nervous man, he displays a methodical antagonism. Our vicar is the worst of all possible rural vicars, unripe, a glaring modern, no classical scholar, no lover of nature, offensively young and yet not youthful, an indecent politician. He was meant to labour amid Urban Myriads, to deal with Social Evils, Home Rule, the Woman Question, and the Reunion of Christendom, attend Conferences and go with the Weltgeist, damn him, wherever the Weltgeist is going. He presents you jerkily a tall lean man of ascetic visage and ample garments, a soul clothed not so much in a fleshy body as in black flaps that ever trail behind its energy. Where they made him Heaven knows. No university owns him. It may be he is a renegade Dissenting minister, neither good Church nor wholesome Nonconformity. Him my cricketer regards with malignant respect. Respect he shows by a punctilious touching of his hat brim, directed to the sacred office; all the rest is malignity, and aimed at the man that fills it. They come into contact on the cricket-field, and on the committee of our reading-room. For our vicar, in spite of a tendency to myopia, conceives it his duty to encourage cricket by his participation. *Duty*—to encourage cricket! So figure the scene to yourself. The sunlit green, and a match in progress. The ball has just snipped a stump askew. My ancient leaning on a stout cabbage stick, and with the light overcoat that is sacred to umpires upon his arm.

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"*Out*, Billy Durgan," says he, and adds, *ex cathedrâ*, "and one you ought to ha' hit for four."

Then appears our vicar in semi-canonicals, worn "to keep up his position" or some such folly, nervous about the adjustment of his hat and his eyeglasses. He approaches the pitch, smiling the while to show his purely genial import and to anticipate and explain any amateurish touches. He reaches the wicket and poses himself as the convenient book he has studied directs. "You'll be caught, Muster Shackleforth, if you keep your shoulder up like that," says the umpire. "Ya-a-ps! that's worse!"—forgeting himself in his zeal for attitude. And then a voice cries "Play!"

The vicar swipes wildly, cuts the ball for two, and returns to his wicket breathless but triumphant. Next comes a bye, and then over. The misguided cleric, ever pursuing a theory of foolish condescension to his betters at the game, and to show there is no offence at the "Yaaps," takes the opportunity, although panting, of asking my ancient if his chicks —late threatened with staggers—are doing well. What would he think if my cricketer retaliated by asking in the pause before the sermon how the vicarage pony took his last bolus? The two men do not understand one another. My cricketer waves the hens aside, and revenges himself, touching his hat at intervals, by some offensively obvious remarks—as to a mere beginner—about playing with a straight bat. And the field sniggers none too furtively. I sympathise with his malice. Cricket is an altogether too sacred thing to him to be tampered with on merely

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religious grounds. However, our vicar gets himself caught at the first opportunity, and so being removed from my veteran's immediate environment to their common satisfaction, the due ritual of the great game is resumed.

My ancient cricketer abounds in reminiscence of the glorious days that have gone for ever. He can still recall the last echoes of the "throwing" controversy that agitated Nyren, when over-arm bowling began, and though he never himself played in a beaver hat, he can, he says, recollect seeing matches so played. In those days every one wore tall hats, the policeman, the milkman, workmen of all sorts. Some people I fancy must have bathed in them and gone to bed wearing them. He recalls the Titans of that and the previous age, and particularly delights in the legend of Noah Mann, who held it a light thing to walk twenty miles from Northchapel to Hambledon to practise every Tuesday afternoon, and wander back after dark. He himself as a stripling would run a matter of four miles after a day's work in the garden where he was employed, to attend an hour's practice over the Downs before the twilight made the balls invisible. And afterwards came Teutonic revelry or wanderings under the summer starlight as the mood might take him. For there was a vein of silent poetry in the youth of this man.

He hates your modern billiard-table pitch, and a batting of dexterous snickery. He likes "character" in a game, gigantic hitting forward, bowler-planned leg catches, a cunning obliquity in a wicket that would send the balls mysteriously askew. But dra-

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matic breaks are now a thing unknown in trade cricket. One legend of his I doubt; he avers that once at Brighton, in a match between Surrey and Sussex, he saw seven wickets bowled by some such aid in two successive overs. I have never been able to verify this. I believe that as a matter of fact the thing has never occurred, but he tells it often in a fine crescendo of surprise, and the refrain, "Out HE came." His first beginning is a cheerful anecdote of a crew of "young gentlemen" from Cambridge staying at the big house, and a challenge to the rustic talent of "me and Billy Hall," who "played a bit at that time," of "me and Billy Hall" winning the pitch and going in first, of a memorable if uncivil stand at the wickets through a long hot afternoon, and a number of young gentlemen from Cambridge painfully discovering local talent by exhaustive fielding in the park, a duty they honourably discharged.

I am fond of my old cricketer in spite of a certain mendacious and malign element in him. His yarns of gallant stands and unexpected turns of fortune, of memorable hits and eccentric umpiring, albeit tending sometimes incredibly to his glory, are full of the flavour of days well spent, of bright mornings of play, sunlit sprawlings beside the score tent, warmth, the flavour of bitten grass stems and the odour of crushed turf. One seems to hear the clapping hands of village ancients, and their ululations of delight. One thinks of stone jars with cool drink swishing therein, of shouting victories and memorable defeats, of eleven men in a drag, and tuneful and altogether glorious home-comings by the light of the moon. His

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were the Olympian days of the sport, when noble squires were its patrons, and every village a home and nursery of stalwart cricketers, before the epoch of special trains, gate-money, star elevens, and the tumultuous gathering of idle cads to jabber at a game they cannot play.

CONCERNING A CERTAIN LADY

THIS lady wears a blue serge suit and a black hat without flippancy; she is a powerfully built lady and generally more or less flushed, and she is aunt, apparently, to a great number of objectionable-looking people. I go in terror of her. Yet the worm will turn at last, and so will the mild, pacific literary man. Her last outrage was too much even for my patience. It was committed at Gloucester Road Station the other afternoon. I was about to get into a train for Wimbledon,—and there are only two of them to the hour,—and, so far as I could see, the whole world was at peace with me. I felt perfectly secure. The ægis of the *pax Britannica*—if you will pardon the expression—was over me. For the moment the thought of the lady in the blue serge was quite out of my mind. I had just bought a newspaper, and had my hand on the carriage door. The guard was fluttering his flag.

Then suddenly she swooped out of space, out of the infinite unknown, and hit me. She always hits me when she comes near me, and I infer she hits every one she comes across. She hit me this time in the chest with her elbow and knocked me away from

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the door-handle. She hit me very hard; indeed, she was as fierce as I have ever known her. With her there were two nieces and a nephew, and the nephew hit me too. He was a horrid little boy in an Eton suit of the kind that they do not wear at Eton, and he hit me with his head and pushed at me with his little pink hands. The nieces might have been about twenty-two and thirteen respectively, and I infer that they were apprenticed to her. All four people seemed madly excited. "It's just starting!" they screamed, and the train was, indeed, slowly moving. Their object—so far as they had an object and were not animated by mere fury—appeared to be to assault me and then escape in the train. The lady in blue got in and then came backwards out again, sweeping the smaller girl behind her upon the two others, who were engaged in hustling me. "It's 'smoking!'" she cried. I could have told her that, if she had asked instead of hitting me. The elder girl, by backing dexterously upon me, knocked my umbrella out of my hand, and when I stooped to pick it up the little boy knocked my hat off. I will confess they demoralised me with their archaic violence. I had some thought of joining in their wild amuck, whooping, kicking out madly, perhaps assaulting a porter,—I think the lady in blue would have been surprised to find what an effective addition to her staff she had picked up,—but before I could collect my thoughts sufficiently to do any definite thing the whole affair was over. A porter was slamming doors on them, the train was running fast out of the station, and I was left alone with an un-

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mannerly newsboy and an unmannerly porter on the platform. I waited until the porter was out of the way, and then I hit the newsboy for laughing at me, but even with that altercation it was a tedious wait for the next train to Wimbledon.

This is the latest of my encounters with this lady, but it has decided me to keep silence no longer. She has been persecuting me now for years in all parts of London. It may be I am her only victim, but on the other hand she may be in the habit of annoying the entire class of slender and inoffensive young men. If so, and they will communicate with me through the publishers of this little volume, we might do something towards suppressing her, found an Anti-Energetic-Lady-League or something of that sort. For if there was ever a crying wrong that clamoured for suppression it is this violent woman.

She is, even now, flagrantly illegal. She might be given in charge for hitting people at any time, and be warned, or fined, or given a week. But somehow it is only when she is overpast and I am recovering my wits that I recollect that she might be dealt with in this way. She is the chartered libertine of British matrons, and assaulteth where she listeth. The blows I have endured from her! She fights people who are getting into 'buses. It is no mere accidental jostling, but a deliberate shouldering, poking with umbrellas, and clawing. It is her delight to go to the Regent Circus corner of Piccadilly about half-past seven in the evening, accompanied by a genteel rout of daughters, and fill up whole omnibuses with them. At that hour there are work-girls and tired clerks and the like

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worn-out anæmic humanity trying to get home for an hour or so of rest before bed, and they crowd round the 'buses very eagerly. Being ill-nourished and tired from the day's work, they are little able to cope with her exuberant vitality, and she simply mows through them and fills up every vacant place they covet before their eyes. Then I can never count change even when my mind is tranquil, and she knows that, and swoops threateningly upon me in booking offices and stationers' shops. When I am dodging cabs at crossings she will appear from behind an omnibus or carriage and butt into me furiously. She holds her umbrella in her folded arms just as the Punch puppet does his staff, and with as deadly effect. Sometimes she discards her customary navy blue and puts on a glittering bonnet with bead trimmings, and goes and hurts people who are waiting to enter the pit at theatres, and especially to hurt me. She is fond of public shows, because they afford such possibilities of hurting me. Once I saw her standing partly on a seat and partly on another lady in the church of St. George's, Hanover Square, ostensibly indeed watching a bride cry, but chiefly, I expect, scheming how she could get round to me and hurt me. Then there was an occasion at the Academy when she was peculiarly aggressive. I was sitting next my lame friend when she marked me. Of course she came at once and sat right upon us. "Come along, Jane," I heard her say, as I struggled to draw my flattened remains from under her; "this gentleman will make room."

My friend was not so entangled and had escaped

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on the other side. She noticed his walk. "Oh, don't *you* get up," she said. "*This* gentleman," she indicated my convulsive struggles to free myself, "will do that. *I did not see that you were a cripple.*"

It may be some of my readers will recognise the lady now. It can be—for the honour of womankind—only one woman. She is an atavism, a survival of the age of violence, a Palæolithic squaw in petticoats. I do not know her name and address or I would publish it. I do not care if she kills me the next time she meets me, for the limits of endurance have been passed. If she kills me I shall die a martyr in the cause of the Queen's peace. And if it is only one woman, then it was the same, more than half intoxicated, that I saw in the Whitechapel Road cruelly illtreating a little costermonger. If it was not she it was certainly her sister, and I do not care who knows it.

What to do with her I do not know. A League, after all, seems ineffectual; she would break up any League. I have thought of giving her in charge for assault, but I shrink from the invidious publicity of that. Still, I am in grim earnest to do something. I think at times that the compulsory adoption of a narrow doorway for churches and places of public entertainment might be some protection for quiet, inoffensive people. How she would rage outside to be sure! Yet that seems a great undertaking.

But this little paper is not so much a plan of campaign as a preliminary defiance. Life is a doubtful boon while one is never safe from assault, from hitting and shoving, from poking with umbrellas, being

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sat upon, and used as a target for projectile nephews and nieces. I warn her—possibly with a certain quaver in my voice—that I am in revolt. If she hits me again— I will not say the precise thing I will do, but I warn her, very solemnly and deliberately, that she had better not hit me again.

And so for the present the matter remains.

THE SHOPMAN

If I were really opulent, I would not go into a shop at all—I would have a private secretary. If I were really determined, Euphemia would do these things. As it is, I find buying things in a shop the most exasperating of all the many trying duties of life. I am sometimes almost tempted to declare myself Adamite to escape it. The way the shopman eyes you as you enter his den, the very spread of his fingers, irritate me. "What can I have the pleasure?" he says, bowing forward at me, and with his eye on my chin —and so waits.

Now I hate incomplete sentences, and confound his pleasure! I don't go into a shop to give a shopman pleasure. But your ordinary shopman must needs pretend you delight and amuse him. I say, trying to display my dislike as plainly as possible, "Gloves." "Gloves. Yessir," he says. Why should he? I suppose he thinks I require to be confirmed in my persuasion that I want gloves. "Calf—kid—dogskin?" How should *I* know the technicalities of his traffic? "Ordinary gloves," I say, disdaining his petty distinctions. "About what price, sir?" he asks.

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Now that always maddens me. Why should I be expected to know the price of gloves? I'm not a commercial traveller nor a wholesale dealer, and I don't look like one. Neither am I constitutionally parsimonious nor petty. I am a literary man, unworldly, and I wear long hair and a soft hat and a peculiar overcoat to indicate the same to ordinary people. Why, I say, should I know the price of gloves? I know they are some ordinary price, elevenpence-halfpenny, or three-and-six, or seven-and-six, or something—one of those prices that everything is sold at—but further I don't go. Perhaps I say elevenpence-halfpenny at a venture.

His face lights up with quiet malice. "Don't keep them, sir," he says. I can tell by his expression that I am ridiculously low and so being snubbed. I think of trying with three-and-six, or seven-and-six; the only other probable prices for things that I know, except a guinea and five pounds. Then I see the absurdity of the business, and my anger comes surging up.

"Look here!" I say, as bitterly as possible. "I don't come here to play at Guessing Games. Never mind your prices. I want some gloves. Get me some!"

This cows him a little, but very little. "May I ask your size, sir?" he says, a trifle more respectfully.

One would think I spent all my time remembering the size of my gloves. However, it is no good resenting it. "It's either seven or nine," I say in a tired way.

He just begins another question, and then he

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catches my eye and stops and goes away to obtain some gloves, and I get a breathing space. But why do they keep on with this cross-examination? If I knew exactly what I wanted, description, price, size, I should not go to a shop at all, it would save me such a lot of trouble just to send a cheque to the Stores. The only reason why I go into a tradesman's shop is because I don't know what I want exactly, am in doubt about the name or the size, or the price, or the fashion, and want a specialist to help me. The only reason for having shopmen instead of automatic machines is that one requires help in buying things. When I want gloves, the shopman ought to understand his business sufficiently well to know better than I do what particular kind of gloves I ought to be wearing, and what is a fair price for them. I don't see why I should teach him what is in fashion and what is not. A doctor does not ask you what kind of operation you want and what price you will pay for it. But I really believe these outfitter people would let me run about London wearing white cotton gloves and a plaid comforter without lifting a finger to prevent me.

And, by-the-bye, that reminds me of a scandalous trick these salesmen will play you. Sometimes they have not the thing you want, and then they make you buy other things. I happen to have, through no fault of my own, a very small head, and consequently for one long summer I wore a little boy's straw hat about London with the colours of a Paddington Board school, simply because a rascal outfitter hadn't my size in a proper kind of headgear, and

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induced me to buy the thing by specious representations. He must have known perfectly well it was not what I ought to wear. It seems never to enter into a shopman's code of honour that he ought to do his best for his customer. Since that, however, I have noticed lots of people about who have struck me in a new light as triumphs of the salesman, masterpieces in the art of incongruity; age in the garb of youth, corpulence put off with the size called "slender men's"; unhappy, gentle, quiet men with ties like oriflammes, breasts like a kingfisher's, and cataclysmal trouser patterns. Even so, if the shopkeeper had his will, should we all be. Those poor withered maiden ladies, too, who fill us with a kind of horror, with their juvenile curls, their girlish crudity of colouring, their bonnets, giddy, tottering, hectic. It overcomes me with remorse to think that I myself have accused them of vanity and folly. It overcomes me with pain to hear the thoughtless laugh aloud after them, in the public ways. For they are simply short-sighted trustful people, the myopic victims of the salesman and saleswoman. The little children gibe at them, pelt even. . . . And somewhere in the world a draper goes unhung.

However, the gloves are brought. I select a pair haphazard, and he pretends to perceive they fit perfectly by putting them over the back of my hand. I make him assure me of the fit, and then buy the pair and proceed to take my old ones off and put the new on grimly. If they split or the fingers are too long—glovemakers have the most erratic conceptions of the human finger—I have to buy another pair.

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But the trouble only begins when you have bought your thing. "Nothing more, sir!" he says. "Nothing," I say. "Braces?" he says. "No, thank you," I say. "Collars, cuffs?" He looks at mine swiftly but keenly, and with an unendurable suspicion.

He goes on, item after item. Am I in rags, that I should endure this thing? And I get sick of my everlasting "No, thank you"—the monotony shows up so glaringly against his kaleidoscope variety. I feel all the unutterable pettiness, the mean want of enterprise of my poor little purchase compared with the catholic fling he suggests. I feel angry with myself for being thus played upon, furiously angry with him. "*No, no!*" I say.

"These tie-holders are new." He proceeds to show me his infernal tie-holders. "They prevent the tie puckering," he says with his eye on mine. It's no good. "How much?" I say.

This whets him to further outrage. "Look here, my man!" I say at last, goaded to it, "I came here for gloves. After endless difficulties I at last induced you to let me have gloves. I have also been intimidated by the most shameful hints and insinuations into buying that *beastly* tie-holder. I'm not a child that I don't know my own needs. Now *will* you let me go? How much do you want?"

That usually checks him.

The above is a fair specimen of a shopman—a favourable rendering. There are other things they do, but I simply cannot write about them because it irritates me so to think of them. One infuriating manœuvre is to correct your pronunciation. Another

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is to make a terrible ado about your name and address —even when it is quite a well-known name.

After I have bought things at a shop I am quite unfit for social intercourse. I have to go home and fume. There was a time when Euphemia would come and discuss my purchase with a certain levity, but on one occasion . . .

Some day these shopmen will goad me too far. It's almost my only consolation, indeed, to think what I am going to do when I do break out. There is a salesman somewhere in the world, he going on his way and I on mine, who will, I know, prove my last straw. It may be he will read this—amused—recking little of the mysteries of fate. . . . Is killing a salesman murder, like killing a human being?

DUNSTONE'S DEAR LADY

THE story of Dunstone is so slight, so trivial in its cardinal incidents, such a business of cheap feathers and bits of ribbon on the surface, that I should hesitate to tell it were it not for its Inwardness, what one might call the symbolism of the thing. Frankly, I do not clearly see what that symbolism is, but I feel it hovering in some indefinable way whenever I recall his case. It is one of those things that make a man extend his arm and twiddle his fingers, and say, blinking, "Like *that*, you know." So do not imagine for one moment that this is a shallow story, simply because it is painted, so to speak, not in heart's blood but in table claret.

Dunstone was a strong, quiet kind of man—a man

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of conspicuous mediocrity, and rising rapidly, therefore, in his profession. He was immensely industrious, and a little given to melancholia in private life. He smoked rather too many cigars, and took his social occasions seriously. He dressed faultlessly, with a scrupulous elimination of style. Unlike Mr. Grant Allen's ideal man, he was not constitutionally a lover; indeed, he seemed not to like the ordinary girl at all —found her either too clever or too shallow, lacking a something. I don't think *he* knew quite what it was. Neither do I—it is a case for extended hand and twiddling fingers. Moreover, I don't think the ordinary girl took to Dunstone very much.

He suffered, I fancy, from a kind of mental greyness; he was all subtle tones; the laughter of girls jarred upon him; foolish smartness or amiable foolishness got on his nerves; he detested, with equal sincerity, bright dressing, artistic dabbling, piety, and the glow of health. And when, as his confidential friend—confidential, that is, so far as his limits allowed—I heard that he intended to marry, I was really very much surprised.

I expected something quintessential; I was surprised to find she was a visiting governess. Harringay, the artist, thought there was nothing in her, but Sackbut, the art critic, was inclined to admire her bones. For my own part, I took rather a liking to her. She was small and thin, and, to be frank, I think it was because she hardly got enough to eat—of the delicate food she needed. She was shabby, too, dressed in rusty mourning—she had recently lost her mother. But she had a sweet, low voice, a shrinking

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manner, rather a graceful carriage I thought, and, though she spoke rarely, all she said was sweet and sane. She struck me as a refined woman in a blatant age. The general effect of her upon me was favourable; upon Dunstone it was tremendous. He lost a considerable proportion of his melancholia, and raved at times like a common man. He called her in particular his "Dear Lady" and his "Sweet Lady," things that I find eloquent of what he found in her. What that was I fancy I understand, and yet I cannot say it quite. One has to resort to the extended arm and fingers vibratile.

Before he married her—which he did while she was still in half-mourning—there was anxiety about her health, and I understood she needed air and exercise and strengthening food. But she recovered rapidly after her marriage, her eyes grew brighter; we saw less of Sackbut's "delicious skeleton." And then in the strangest way she began to change. It is none of my imagining; I have heard the change remarked upon by half a dozen independent observers. Yet you would think a girl of three-and-twenty (as she certainly was) had attained her development as a woman. I have heard her compared to a winter bud, cased in its sombre scales, until the sun shone, and the warm, moist winds began to blow. I noticed first that the delicate outline of her cheek was filling, and then came the time when she reverted to colour in her dress.

Her first essays were charitably received. Her years of struggle, her year of mourning, had no doubt dwarfed her powers in this direction; presently her

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natural good taste would reassert itself. But the next effort and the next were harder to explain. It was not the note of nervousness or inexperience we saw; there was an undeniable decision, and not a token of shame. The little black winter bud grew warm-coloured above, and burst suddenly into extravagant outlines and chromatic confusion. Harringay, who is a cad, first put what we were all feeling into words. "I've just seen Dunstone and his donah," he said. Clearly she was one of those rare women who cannot dress. And that was not all. A certain buoyancy, hitherto unsuspected, crept into her manner as the corpuscles multiplied in her veins—an archness. She talked more, and threw up a spray of playfulness. And with a growing energy she began to revise the exquisite æsthetic balance of Dunstone's house. She even enamelled a chair.

For a year or so I was in the East. When I returned Mrs. Dunstone amazed me. In some odd way she had grown, she had positively grown. She was taller, broader, brighter—infinitely brighter. She wore a diamond brooch in the afternoon. The "delicious skeleton" had vanished in plumpness. She moved with emphasis. Her eye—which glittered—met mine bravely, and she talked as one who would be heard. In the old days you saw nothing but a rare timid glance from under the pretty lids. She talked now of this and that, of people of "good family," and the difficulty of getting a suitable governess for her little boy. She said she objected to meeting people "one would not care to invite to one's house." She swamped me with tea and ruled the conversation, so

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that Dunstone and I, who were once old friends, talked civil twaddle for the space of one hour—theatres, concerts and assemblies chiefly—and then parted again. The furniture had all been altered—there were two "cosey nooks" in the room after the recipe in the *Born Lady*. It was plain to me, it is plain to every one, I find, that Mrs. Dunstone is, in the sun of prosperity, rapidly developing an extremely florid vulgarity. And afterwards I discovered that she had forgotten her music, and evidently enjoyed her meals. Yet I for one can witness that five years ago there was *that* about her—I can only extend my arm with quivering digits. But it was something very sweet and dainty, something that made her white and thoughtful, and marked her off from the rest of womankind. I sometimes fancy it may have been anæmia in part, but it was certainly poverty and mourning in the main.

You may think that this is a story of disillusionment. When I first heard the story, I thought so too. But so far as Dunstone goes, that is not the case. It is rare that I see him now, but the other day we smoked two cigars apiece together. And in a moment of confidence he spoke of her. He said how anxious he felt for her health, called her his "Dainty Little Lady," and spoke of the coarseness of other women. I am afraid this is not a very eventful story, and yet there is *that*— That very convenient gesture, an arm protruded and flickering fingers, conveys my meaning best. Perhaps you will understand.

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FOR FREEDOM OF SPELLING

THE DISCOVERY OF AN ART

It is curious that people do not grumble more at having to spell correctly. One may ask, Do we not a little over-estimate the value of orthography? This is a natural reflection enough when the maker of artless happy phrases has been ransacking the dictionary for some elusive wretch of a word which in the end proves to be not naturalised, or technical, or a mere local vulgarity; yet one does not often hear the idea canvassed in polite conversation. Dealers in small talk, of the less prolific kind, are continually falling back upon the silk hat or dress suit, or some rule of etiquette or other convention as a theme, but spelling seems to escape them. The suspicion seems quaint, but one might almost fancy that an allusion to spelling savoured a little of indelicacy. It must be admitted, though where the scruples come from would be hard to say, that there is a certain diffidence even here in broaching my doubts in the matter. For some inexplicable reason spelling has become mixed up with moral feeling. One cannot pretend to explain things in a brief paper of this kind; the fact is so. Spelling is not appropriate or inappropriate, elegant or inelegant; it is right or wrong. We do not greatly blame a man for turn-down collars when the vogue is erect; nor, in these liberal days, for theological eccentricity; but we esteem him "Nithing" and an outcast if he but drop a "p" from opportunity. It is not an anecdote but a scandal, if we say a man cannot spell his own name. There is only one

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thing judged worse before we come to the deadly crimes, and that is the softening of language by dropping the aspirate.

After all, it is an unorthodox age. We are all horribly afraid of being bourgeois, and unconventionality is the ideal of every respectable person. It is strange that we should cling so steadfastly to correct spelling. Yet again one can partly understand the business, if one thinks of the little ways of your schoolmaster and schoolmistress. This sanctity of spelling is stamped upon us in our earliest years. The writer recalls a period of youth wherein six hours a week were given to the study of spelling, and four hours to all other religious instruction. So important is it, that a writer who cannot spell is almost driven to abandon his calling, however urgent the thing he may have to say or his need of the incidentals of fame. In the crisis of such a struggle rebellious thoughts may arise. Even this: Why should correct spelling be the one absolutely essential literary merit? For it is less fatal for an ambitious scribe to be as dull as Hoxton than to spell in diverse ways.

Correct spelling of English has not been traced to revelation; there was no grammatical Sinai, with a dictionary instead of tables of stone. Indeed, we do not even know certainly when correct spelling began, which word in the language was first spelled the right way, and by whom. Correct spelling may have been evolved, or it may be the creation of some master mind. Its inventor, if it had an inventor, is absolutely forgotten. Thomas Cobbett would have invented it but that he was born more than two

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centuries too late, poor man. All that we certainly know is that contemporaneously with the rise of extreme Puritanism, the belief in orthography first spread among Elizabethan printers, and with the Hanoverian succession the new doctrine possessed the whole length and breadth of the land. At that time the world passed through what extension lecturers call, for no particular reason, the classical epoch. Nature—as, indeed, all the literature manuals testify—was in the remotest background then of human thought. The human mind, in a mood of the severest logic, brought everything to the touchstone of an orderly reason; the conception of "correctness" dominated all mortal affairs. For instance, one's natural hair with its vagaries of rat's tails, duck's tails, errant curls, and baldness, gave place to an orderly wig, or was at least decently powdered. The hoop remedied the deficiencies of the feminine form, and the gardener clipped his yews into respectability. All poetry was written to one measure in those days, and a Royal Academy with a lady member was inaugurated that art might become at least decent. Dictionaries began. The crowning glory of Hanoverian literature was a Great Lexicographer.

In those days it was believed that the spelling of every English word had been settled for all time. Thence to the present day—though the severities then inaugurated have, so far as metre and artistic composition are concerned, been generously relaxed, though we have had a Whistler, a Walt Whitman, and a Wagner—the rigours of spelling have continued unabated. There is just one right way of spelling, and

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all others are held to be not simply inelegant or undesirable, but wrong; and unorthodox spelling, like original morality, goes hand in hand with shame.

Even at the risk of shocking the religious convictions of some, may not one ask whether spelling is in truth a matter of right and wrong at all? Might it not rather be an art? It is too much to advocate the indiscriminate sacking of the alphabet, but yet it seems plausible that there is a happy medium between a reckless debauch of errant letters and our present dead rigidity. For certain words at any rate may there not be sometimes one way of spelling a little happier, sometimes another? We do something of this sort even now with our "phantasy" and "fantasie," and we might do more. How one would spell this word or that would become, if this latitude were conceded, a subtle anxiety of the literary exquisite. People are scarcely prepared to realise what shades of meaning may be got by such a simple device. Let us take one single instance. You write, let us say, to all your cousins, many of your friends, and even, it may be, to this indifferent intimate and that familiar enemy, "My dear So-and-so." But at times you feel even as you write that there is something too much and something lacking. You may even get so far in the right way occasionally as to write, "My dr. So-and-so," when your heart is chill. And people versed in the arts of social intercourse know the delicate insult of mis-spelling a person's name, or flicking it off flippantly with a mere waggling wipe of the pen. But these are mere beginnings.

Let the reader take a pen in hand and sit down

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and write, "My very dear wife." Clean, cold, and correct this is, speaking of orderly affection, settled and stereotyped long ago. In such letters is butcher's meat also "very dear." Try now, "Migh verrie deare Wyfe." Is it not immediately infinitely more soft and tender? Is there not something exquisitely pleasant in lingering over those redundant letters, leaving each word, as it were, with a reluctant caress? Such spelling is a soft, domestic, lovingly wasteful use of material. Or, again, if you have no wife, or object to an old-fashioned conjugal tenderness, try "Mye owne sweete dearrest Marrie." There is the tremble of a tenderness no mere arrangement of trim everyday letters can express in those double *r*'s. "Sweete" my ladie must be; sweet! why pump-water and inferior champagne, spirits of nitrous ether and pancreatic juice are "sweet." For my own part I always spell so, with lots of f's and g's and such like tailey, twirley, loopey things, when my heart is in the tender vein. And I hold that a man who will not do so, now he has been shown how to do it, is, in plain English, neither more nor less than a prig. The advantages of a varied spelling of names are very great. People industrious rather than intelligent have given not a little time, and such minds as they have, to the discussion of the right spelling of our great poet's name. But he himself never dreamt of tying himself down to one presentation of himself, and was —we have his hand for it—Shakespeare, Shakspear, Shakespear, Shakspeare, and so forth, as the mood might be. It would be almost as reasonable to debate whether Shakespeare smiled or frowned. My dear

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friend Simmongues is the same. He is "Sims," a mere slash of the pen, to those he scorns, Simmonds or Simmongs to his familiars, and Simmons, A. T. Simmons, Esq., to all Europe.

From such mere introductory departures from precision, such petty escapades as these, we would we might seduce the reader into an utter debauch of spelling. But a sudden Mænad dance of the letters on the page, gleeful and iridescent spelling, a wild rush and procession of howling vowels and clattering consonants, might startle the half-won reader back into orthodoxy. Besides, there is another reader—the printer's reader—to consider. For if an author let his wit run to these matters, he must write elaborate marginal exhortations to this authority, begging his mercy, to let the little flowers of spelling alone. Else the plough of that Philistine's uniformity will utterly root them out.

Such high art of spelling as is thus hinted at is an art that has still to gather confidence and brave the light of publicity. A few, indeed, practise it secretly for love—in letters and on spare bits of paper. But for the most part people do not know that there is so much as an art of spelling possible, the tyranny of orthography lies so heavily on the land. Your editors and their printers are a mere orthodox spelling police, and at the least they rigorously blot out all the delightful frolics of your artist in spelling before his writings reach the public eye. But commonly, as I have proved again and again, the slightest lapse into rococo spelling is sufficient to secure the rejection of a manuscript without further ado.

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And to end,—a word about Phonographers. It may be that my title has led the reader to anticipate some mention of these before. They are a kind of religious sect, a heresy from the orthodox spelling. They bind one another by their mysteries and a five-shilling subscription in a "soseiti to introduis an impruvd method of spelinj." They come across the artistic vision, they and their Soseiti, with an altogether indefinable offence. Perhaps the essence of it is the indescribable meanness of their motive. For this phonography really amounts to a study of the cheapest way of spelling words. These phonographers are sweaters of the Queen's English, living meanly on the selvage of honest mental commerce by clipping the coin of thought. But enough of them. They are mentioned here only to be disavowed. They would substitute one narrow orthodoxy for another, and I would unfold the banner of freedom. Spell, my brethren, as you will! Awake, arise, O language living in chains; let Butter's spelling be our Bastille! So with a prophetic vision of liberated words pouring out of the dungeons of a spelling-book, this plea for freedom concludes. What trivial arguments there are for a uniform spelling I must leave the reader to discover. This is no place to carp against the liberation I foresee, with the glow of the dawn in my eyes.

THE THEORY OF QUOTATION

THE nobler method of quotation is not to quote at all. For why should one repeat good things that are already written? Are not the words in their fittest

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context in the original? Clearly then your new setting cannot be quite so congruous; which is, forthwith, an admission of incongruity. Your quotation is evidently a plug in a leak, an apology for a gap in your own words. But your vulgar author will even go out of his way to make the clothing of his thoughts thus heterogeneous. He counts every stolen scrap he can work in an improvement—a literary caddis worm. Yet would he consider it improvement to put a piece of even the richest of old tapestry or gold embroidery into his new pair of breeks?

The passion for quotation is peculiar to literature. We do not glory to quote our costume, dress in cast-off court robes, or furnish our houses from the marine store. Neither are we proud of alien initials on the domestic silver. We like things new and primarily our own. We have a wholesome instinct against infection, except, it seems, in the matter of ideas. An authorling will deliberately inoculate his copy with the inverted-comma bacillus, till the page swims unsteadily, counting the fever a glow of pure literary healthiness. Yet this reproduction, rightly considered, is merely a proof that his appetite for books has run beyond his digestion. Or his industry may be to seek. You expect an omelette, and presently up come the unbroken eggs. A tissue of quotation wisely looked at is indeed but a motley garment, eloquent either of a fool or an idle knave in a fool's disguise.

Nevertheless at times—the truth must be told—we must quote. As for admitting that we have quoted, that is another matter altogether. But the

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other man's phrase will lie at times so close in one's mind to the trend of one's thoughts that, all virtue notwithstanding, they must needs run into the groove of it. There are phrases that lie about in the literary mind like orange peel on a pavement. You are down on them before you know where you are. But does this necessitate acknowledgment to the man, now in Hades, who sucked that orange and strewed the peel in your way? Rather is it not more becoming to be angry at his careless anticipation?

One may reasonably look at it in this way. What business has a man to think of things right in front of you, poke his head, as it were, into your light? What right has he to set up dams and tunnel out swallow-holes to deflect the current of your thoughts? Surely you may remove these obstructions if it suits you, and put them where you will. Else all literature will presently be choked up, and the making of books come to an end. One might as well walk ten miles out of one's way because some deaf oaf or other chose to sit upon a necessary stile. Surely Shakespeare or Lamb or what other source you contemplate, has had the thing long enough? Out of the road with them. Turn and turn about.

And inverted commas are so inhospitable. If you *must* take in another man's offspring, you should surely try to make the poor foundlings feel at home. Away with such uncharitable distinctions between the children of the house and the stranger within your gates. I never see inverted commas but I think of the necessary persecuted mediæval Jew in his yellow gabardine.

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At least, never put the name of the author you quote. Think of the feelings of the dead. Don't let the poor spirit take it to heart that its monumental sayings would pass unrecognised without your advertisement. You mean well, perhaps, but it is in the poorest taste. Yet I have seen Patience on a Monument honourably awarded to William Shakespeare, and fenced in by commas from all intercourse with the general text.

There is a touch of dishonesty, too, in acknowledging quotations. Possibly the good people who contrive that such signatures as "Shakespeare," "Homer," or "St. Paul," appear to be written here and there to parts of their inferior work, manage to justify the proceeding in their conscience; but it is uncommonly like hall-marking pewter on the strength of an infinitesimal tinge of silver therein. The point becomes at once clear if we imagine some obscure painter quoting the style of Raphael and fragments of his designs, and acknowledging his indebtedness by appending the master's signature. Blank forgery! And a flood of light was thrown on the matter by a chance remark of one of Euphemia's aunts—she is a great reader of pure fiction—anent a popular novel: "I am sure it must be a nice book," said she, "or she could not get all these people to write the mottoes for the chapters."

No, it is all very well to play with one's conscience. I have known men so sophisticated as to assert that unacknowledged quotation was wrong. But very few really reasonable people will, I think, refuse to agree with me that the only artistic, the only kindly, and

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the only honest method of quotation is plagiary. If you cannot plagiarise surely it were better not to quote.

ON THE ART OF STAYING AT THE SEASIDE

A MEDITATION AT EASTBOURNE

To stay at the seaside properly, one should not think. But even in staying at the seaside there are intervals, waking moments when meals come, even if there are no appointed meal-times. Moreover, now and then one must go to buy tobacco, a matter one can trust to no hireling lest he get it dry. It cannot be always seaside, even as it cannot be always May, and through the gaps thought creeps in. Going over the cliff and along the parade, and down by the circulating library to the cigar divan where they sell Perique tobacco, the swinging of one's legs seems to act like a pendulum to the clockwork of one's brain. One meditates all the way, and chiefly on how few people there are who can really—to a critical adept—be said to stay at the seaside.

People seem to think that one can take a ticket to Eastbourne or Bognor or Ventnor, and come and stay at the seaside straight away, just as I have known new-hatched undergraduates tell people they were going to play billiards. Thousands and thousands of people think they have stayed at the seaside, and have not, just as thousands of people erroneously imagine they have played whist. For the latter have played not whist but Bumblepuppy, and the former

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have only frequented a watering-place for a time. Your true staying at the seaside is an art demanding not only railway fares but special aptitude, and, moreover, needing culture, like all worthy arts.

The most insurmountable difficulty of the beginner is the classical simplicity of the whole thing. To stay at the seaside properly you just spread yourself out on the extreme edge of the land and let the sunlight soak in. Your eyes are fixed upon the horizon. Some have it that your head should be towards the sea, but the best authorities think that this determines blood to that region, and so stimulates thought. This is all the positive instruction; the rest is prohibition. You must not think, and you must not move, neither may you go to sleep. In a few minutes the adept becomes as a god, even as a god that sits upon the lotus leaf. New light and colour come into the sky and sea, and the surges chant his praises. But those who are not of the elect get pins and needles all over them.

It must be freely admitted that staying at the seaside such as this, staying at the seaside in its perfection, is a thing for a select few. You want a broad stretch of beach and all the visible sea to yourself. You cannot be disturbed by even the most idyllic children trying to bury you with sand, and suchlike playfulness, nor by boat-loads of the democracy rowing athwart your sea and sky. And the absence of friend or wife goes without saying. I notice down here a very considerable quantity of evidently married pairs, and the huge majority of the rest of the visitors run in couples and are to all appearances engaged. If they are not, I would submit that they

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ought to be. Probably there is a certain satisfaction in sitting by the sea with the girl you are in love with, or your wife for the matter of that, just as many people undoubtedly find tea with milk and sugar very nice. But the former is no more the way to get the full and perfect pleasure of staying at the seaside than the latter is the way to get the full and perfect flavour of the tea. True staying at the seaside is neither the repetition of old conversations in new surroundings nor the exposure of one's affections to ozone. It is something infinitely higher. It is pure quiescence. It is the experience of a waking inanition savouring of Buddha and the divine.

Now staying at the seaside is so rarely done well because of the littleness of man. To do it properly needs many of the elements of greatness. Your common man while he has life in him, can let neither himself nor the universe alone. He must be asserting himself in some way, even if it is only by flinging pebbles at a stick. That self-forgetfulness which should be a delight is a terror to him. He brings dogs down to the beach to stand between him and the calm of nature and yelp. He does worse than that.

The meditative man going daily over by the cliff and along the parade to get his ounce of tobacco, has a sad spectacle of what human beings may be driven to in this way. One sees altogether some hundreds of people there who have heard perhaps that staying at the seaside is good, and who have, anyhow, got thus far towards it and stopped. They have not the faintest idea how to make themselves happy. The general expression is veiled curiosity. They sit—

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mostly with their backs to the sea—talking poorly of indifferent topics and watching one another. Most obviously they want hints of what to do with themselves. Behind them is a bank of flowers like those in Battersea Park, and another parallel parade, and beyond are bathing machines. The pier completely cuts the horizon out of the background. There is a stout lady in dark blue, bathing. The only glances directed seaward are furtive ones at her. Many seem to be doubting whether this is not what they came for. Others lean dubiously to the invitations of the boatmen. Others again listen to vocalists and dramatic outcasts who, for ha'pence, render obvious the reason of their professional degradation. It seems eccentric to travel seventy or eighty miles to hear a man without a voice demonstrate that he is unfit to have one, but they do. Anyone curious in these matters need only go to a watering-place to see and, what is worse, to hear for himself. After an excursion train to Eastbourne, upwards of a thousand people have been seen thus heaped together over an oblong space of a mile long by twenty yards wide. Only three miles away there was a towering white cliff overhanging a practically desert beach; and one seagull circled above one solitary, motionless, supine man really staying at the seaside.

You cannot walk six miles anywhere along the south coast without coming upon one of these heaps of people called a watering-place. There will be a town of houses behind wherein the people lodge until, as they think, they have stayed a sufficient time at the sea, and they return, hot, cross, and mystified, to London. The sea front will be bricked or

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paved for a mile or so, and there will be rows of boats and bathing machines and other contrivances to screen off the view of the sea. And, as we have indicated, watering-places and staying by the seaside are incompatible things. The true stayer by the seaside goes into the watering-place because he must; because there is little food, and that uncooked, and no tobacco between the cliffs and the sea. Having purchased what he needs he flees forth again. What time the whole selvage of England becomes watering-place, there will be no more staying by the seaside at all in the land. But this is a gloomy train of thought that we will not pursue.

There have been those who assert that one end of staying at the seaside is bathing; but it is easy to show that this is not so. Your proper bathing place is up the river, where the trees bend to the green and brown shadows of the water. There the bath is sweet, fresh out of the sky, or but just filtered through the blue hills of the distant water-shed; and it is set about with flowers. But the sea—the sea has stood there since the beginning of things, and with small prospect of change, says Mr. Kipling, to all eternity. The water in the sea, geologists tell us, has *not been changed for fifty million years!* The same chemist who sets me against all my food with his chemical names speaks of the sea as a weak solution of drowned men. Be that as it may, it leaves the skin harsh with salt, and the hair sticky. Moreover it is such a promiscuous bathing place. However, we need scarcely depreciate the sea as a bath, for what need is there of that when the river is clearly better? No one can deny that the river is better. People who bathe in the sea

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bathe by mistake, because they have come to the side of the sea and know not how else to use it.

So, too, with the boating. It is hard to imagine how human beings who have drifted down streams and watched the brown fish in the shallows, and peered through the tall sedges at the forget-me-nots, and fought with the ropes of the water-lilies, and heard the ripple under the bows, can ever think of going to and fro, pitching spasmodically, in front of a watering-place. And as for fishing—they catch fish at sea indeed, but it is not fishing at all; neither rods nor flies have they, and there is an end to that matter.

An Eastbourne meditative man returning to where he stays, with his daily ounce of tobacco already afire, sees in the streets what are called by the natives "charry-bangs," crowded with people, and, further, cabriolets and such vehicles holding parties and families. The good folks are driving away from the sea for the better part of the day, going to Battle and other places inland. The puzzle of what to do with their sea is too much for them, and they are going away for a little to rest their minds. Regarded as a centre of drives one might think an inland place would be preferable to a seaside town, which at best commands but a half-circle. However that may be, the fact remains that one of the chief occupations of your common visitor to the seaside is going away from it. Than this fact there can be nothing more conclusive in support of my argument that ordinary people are absolutely ignorant and incapable of staying by the seaside.

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THE BOOK OF ESSAYS DEDICATORY

I HAVE been bothered about this book this three months. I have written scarcely anything since Llewellyn asked me for it, for when he asked me I had really nothing on hand. I had just published every line I had ever written, at my own expense, with Prigsbys. Yet three months should suffice for one of Llewellyn's books, which consist chiefly of decorous fly-leaves and a dedication or so, and margins. Of course you know Llewellyn's books—the most delightful things on the market: the sweetest covers, with little gilt apples and suchlike carelessly distributed over luminous grey, and bright red initials and all those delightful fopperies. But it was the very slightness of these bibelots that disorganised me. And perhaps, also, the fact that no one has ever asked me for a book before.

I had no trouble with the title though—"Lichens." I have wondered the thing was never used before. Lichens, variegated, beautiful, though on the most arid foundations, half fungoid, half vernal—the very name for a booklet of modern verse. And that, of course, decided the key of the cover and disposed of three or four pages. A fly-leaf, a leaf with "Lichens" printed fair and beautiful a little to the left of the centre, then a title-page—"Lichens. By H. G. Wells. London: MDCCCXCV. Stephen Llewellyn." Then a restful blank page, and then—the Dedication. It was the dedication stopped me. The title-page, it is true, had some points of difficulty. Should the Christian name be printed in full or not, for instance; but

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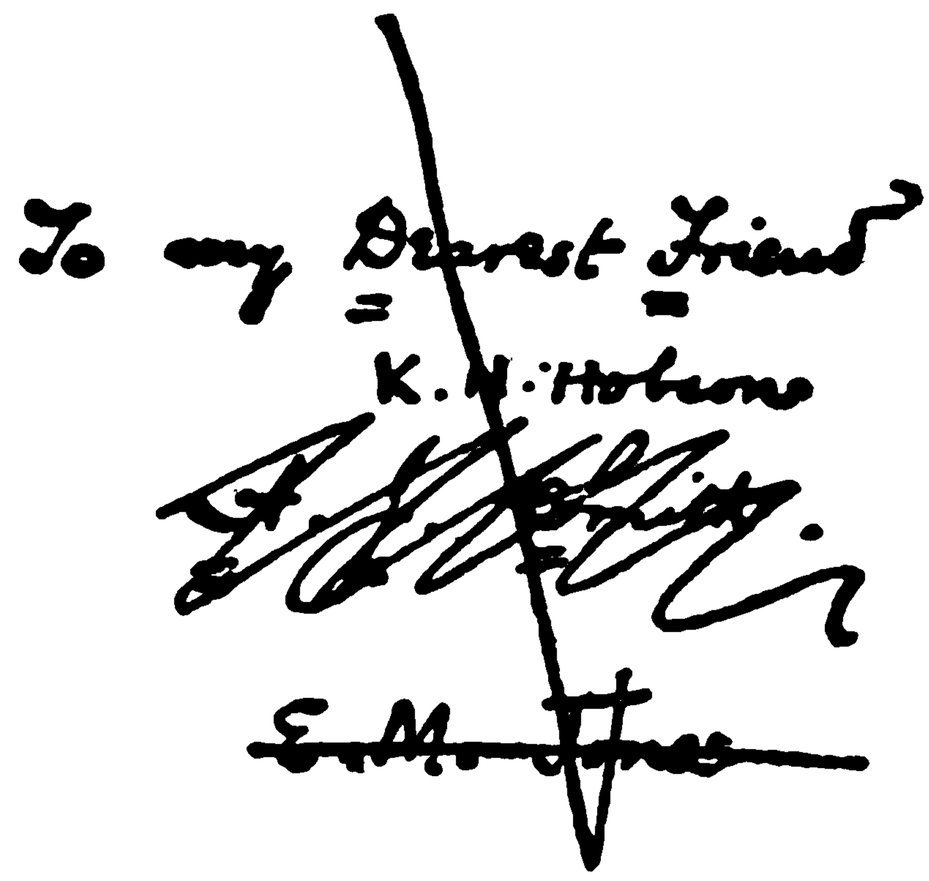
it had none of the fatal fascination of the dedicatory page. I had, so to speak, to look abroad among the ranks of men, and make one of those fretful forgotten millions—immortal. It seemed a congenial task.

I went to work forthwith.

It was only this morning that I realised the magnitude of my accumulations. Ever since then—it was three months ago—I have been elaborating this Dedication. I turned the pile over, idly at first. Presently I became interested in tracing my varying moods, as they had found a record in the heap.

This struck me——



Then again, a little essay in gratitude came to hand—

To
PROFESSOR AUGUSTUS FLOOD,
Whose Admirable Lectures on
Palæontology
First turned my Attention to
Literature.

There was a tinge of pleasantry in the latter that pleased me very greatly when I wrote it, and I find

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immediately overlying it another essay in the same line——

To the Latter-day Reviewer
These Pearls.

For some days I was smitten with the idea of dedicating my little booklet to one of my numerous personal antagonists, and conveying some subtly devised insult with an air of magnanimity. I thought, for instance, of Blizzard——

Sir Joseph Blizzard,
The most distinguished, if not the greatest, of contemporary anatomists.

I think it was "X. L's" book, "Aut Diabolus aut Nihil," that set me upon another line. There is, after all, your reader to consider in these matters, your average middle-class person to impress in some way. They say the creature is a snob, and absolutely devoid of any tinge of humour, and I must confess that I more than half believe it. At any rate, it was that persuasion inspired

To the Countess of X.,
In Memory of Many Happy Days.

I know no Countess of X. as a matter of fact, but if the public is such an ass as to think better of my work for the suspicion, I do not care how soon I incur it. And this again is a pretty utilisation of the waste desert of politics——

My Dear Salisbury,—Pray accept this unworthy tribute of my affectionate esteem.

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There were heaps of others. And looking at those heaps it suddenly came sharp and vivid before my mind that there—there was the book I needed, already written! A blank page, a dedication, a blank page, a dedication, and so on. I saw no reason to change the title. It only remained to select the things, and the book was done. I set to work at once, and in a very little while my bibelot was selected. There were dedications fulsome and fluid, dedications acrid and uncharitable, dedications in verse and dedications in the dead languages: all sorts and conditions of dedications, even the simple "To J. H. Gabbles" —so suggestive of the modest white stones of the village churchyard. Altogether I picked out one hundred and three dedications. At last only one thing remained to complete the book. And that was—the Dedication. You will scarcely credit it, but that worries me still. . . .

I am almost inclined to think that Dedications are going out of fashion.

THROUGH A MICROSCOPE

SOME MORAL REFLECTIONS

THIS dabbler person has recently disposed of his camera and obtained a microscope—a short, complacent-looking implement it is, of brass—and he goes about everywhere now with little glass bottles in his pocket, ready to jump upon any stray pollywoggle he may find, and hale it home and pry into its affairs. Within his study window are perhaps half a dozen jars and basins full of green scum and

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choice specimens of black mud in which his victims live. He persists in making me look through this instrument, though I would rather I did not. It seems to me a kind of impropriety when I do it. He gets innumerable things in a drop of green water, and puts it on a glass slip under the object glass, and, of course, they know nothing of the change in their condition, and go on living just as they did before they were observed. It makes me feel at times like a public moralist, or Peeping Tom of Coventry, or some such creature.

Certainly there are odd things enough in the water. Among others, certain queer green things that are neither plants nor animals. Most of the time they are plants, quiet green threads matted together, but every now and then the inside comes out of one, so to speak, and starts off with a fine red eye and a long flickering tail, to see the world. The dabbler says it's quite a usual thing among the lower plants—*Algæ* he calls them, for some reason—to disgorge themselves in this way and go swimming about; but it has quite upset my notions of things. If the lower plants why not the higher? It may be my abominable imagination, but since he told me about these—swarm spores, I think he called them—I don't feel nearly so safe with my geraniums as I did.

A particularly objectionable thing in these water drops the dabbler insists upon my spying at is the furious activity of everything you see in them. You look down his wretched tube, and there, bright and yellow with the lamplight in the round field of the microscope, is a perfect riot of living things. Perhaps

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it's the water he got from Hampstead, and a dozen flat things the shape of shortbreads will be fussing about. They are quite transparent and colourless, and move about like galleys by means of a lot of minute oars that stick out all over them. Never a moment's rest. And presently one sees that even the green plant threads are wriggling across the field. The dabbler tries to moralise on this in the vein of Charles Kingsley, and infer we have much to learn from these ridiculous creatures; but so far as I can see it's a direct incentive to sloth to think how low in the scale of creation these things are, in spite of all their fussing. If they had sat about more and thought, they might be fishing the dabbler out of ponds and examining him instead of his examining them. Your energetic people might do worse things than have a meditative half-hour at the microscope. Then there are green things with a red spot and a tail, that creep about like slugs, and are equally transparent. *Euglena viridis* the dabbler calls them, which seems unnecessary information. In fact all the things he shows me are transparent. Even the little one-eyed Crustacea, the size of a needle-point, that discredit the name of Cyclops. You can see their digestion and muscle and nerve, and, in fact, everything. It's at least a blessing we are not the same. Fancy the audible comments of the temperance advocate when you get in the bus! No use pulling yourself together then. "Pretty full!" And "Look," people would say, "his wife gives him cold mutton."

Speaking of the name of Cyclops reminds me that

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these scientific people have been playing a scurvy trick upon the classics behind our backs. It reminds one of Epistemon's visit to Hades, when he saw Alexander a patcher of clouts and Xerxes a crier of mustard. Aphrodite, the dabbler tells me, is a kind of dirty mud-worm, and much dissected by spectacled pretenders to the London B.Sc.; every candidate, says the syllabus, must be able to dissect, to the examiner's satisfaction, and demonstrate upon Aphrodite, Nereis, Palæmon. Were the gods ever so insulted? Then the snaky Medusa and Pandora, our mother, are jelly-fish; Astræa is still to be found on coral reefs, a poor thing, and much browsed upon by parrot fish; and Doris and Tethys and Cydippe are sea slugs. It's worse than Heine's vision of the gods grown old. They can't be content with the departed gods merely. Evadne is a water flea—they'll make something out of Mrs. Sarah Grand next—and Autolycus, my Autolycus! is a polymorphic worm, whatever subtlety of insult "polymorphic worm" may convey.

However, I wander from the microscope. These shortbread things are fussing about hither and thither across the field, and now and then an Amœba comes crawling into view. These are invertebrate jelly-like things of no particular shape, and they keep on thrusting out a part here, and withdrawing a part there, and changing and advancing just as though they were popular democratic Premiers. Then diatoms keep gliding athwart the circle. These diatoms are, to me at least, the most perplexing things in the universe. Imagine a highly ornamental thing in white

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and brown, the shape of a spectacle case, without any limbs or other visible means of progression, and without any wriggling of the body, or, indeed, any apparent effort at all, gliding along at a smart pace. That's your diatom. The dabbler really knows nothing of how they do it. He mumbles something about Bütschli and Grenfell. Imagine the thing on a larger scale, Cleopatra's Needle for instance, travelling on its side up the Thames Embankment and all unchaperoned, at the rate of four or five miles an hour.

There's another odd thing about these microscope things which redeems, to some extent at least, their singular frankness. To use the decorous phrase of the textbook, "They multiply by fission." Your Amœba or Vorticella, as the case may be, splits in two. Then there are two Amœbæ or Vorticellæ. In this way the necessity of the family, that middle-class institution so abhorrent to the artistic mind, is avoided. In my friend's drop of ditch-water, as in heaven, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. There are no waste parents—which should appeal to the scholastic mind—and the simple protozoon has none of that fitful fever of falling in love, that distressingly tender state that so bothers your mortal man. They go about their business with an enviable singleness of purpose, and when they have eaten and drunk and attained to the fulness of life, they divide and begin again with renewed zest the pastime of living.

In a sense they are immortal. For we may look at this matter in another light, and say our exuberant protozoon has shed a daughter and remains. In that

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case the Amœba I look at may have crawled among the slime of the Silurian seas when the common ancestor of myself and the Royal family was an unassuming mud-fish like those in the reptile house in the Zoo. His memoirs would be interesting. The thought gives a solemn tint to one's meditations. If the dabbler wash him off this slide into his tube of water again, this trivial creature may go on feeding and growing and dividing and presently be thrown away to wider waters, and so escape to live . . . after I am dead, after my masterpieces are forgotten, after our Empire has passed away, after the human animal has passed through I know not what vicissitudes. It may be he will still, with the utmost nonchalance, be pushing out his pseudopodia, and ingesting diatoms when the fretful transitory life of humanity has passed altogether from the earth. One may catch him in specimen tubes by the dozen, but still, when one thinks of this, it is impossible to deny him a certain envious, if qualified, respect.

And all the time these creatures are living their vigorous, fussy little lives in this drop of water they are being watched by a creature of whose presence they do not dream, who can wipe them all out of existence with a stroke of his thumb, and who is withal as finite, and sometimes as fussy and unreasonably energetic, as themselves. He sees them and they do not see him, because he has senses they do not possess, because he is too incredibly vast and strange to come, save as an overwhelming catastrophe, into their lives. Even so, it may be, the dabbler himself is being curiously observed. . . . The dab-

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bler is good enough to say that the suggestion is inconceivable. I can imagine a decent Amœba saying the same thing.

THE PLEASURE OF QUARRELLING

YOUR cultivated man is apt to pity the respectable poor on the score of their lack of small excitements, and even in the excess of his generous sympathy to go a Toynbee-Halling in their cause. And Sir Walter Besant once wrote a book about Hoxton, saying, among other things, how monotonous life was there. That is your modern fallacy respecting the lower middle class. One might multiply instances. The tenour of the pity is always the same.

"No music," says the cultivated man, "no pictures, no books to read nor leisure to read in. How can they pass their lives?"

The answer is, as Emily Brontë knew, simple enough. They quarrel. And an excellent way of passing the time it is; so excellent, indeed, that the pity were better inverted. But we all lack the knowledge of our chiefest needs. In the first place and mainly, it is hygienic to quarrel, it disengages floods of nervous energy, the pulse quickens, the breathing is accelerated, the digestion improved. Then it sets one's stagnant brains astir and quickens the imagination, it clears the mind of vapours as thunder clears the air. And finally it is a natural function of the body. In his natural state man is always quarrelling —by instinct. Not to quarrel is indeed one of the vices of our civilisation, one of the reasons why we are neurotic and anæmic and all these things. And

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at last our enfeebled palates have even lost the capacity for enjoying a "jolly good row."

There can be no more melancholy sight in the world than that of your young man or young woman suffering from suppressed pugnacity. Up to the end of the school years it was well with them; they had ample scope for this wholesome commerce, the neat give and take of offence. In the family circle, too, there are still plentiful chances of acquiring the taste. Then, suddenly, they must be gentle and considerate and all the rest of it. A wholesome shindy, so soon as toga and long skirts arrive, is looked upon as positively wrong; even the dear old institution of the "cut" is falling into disrepute. The quarrelling is all forced back into the system, as it were; it poisons the blood. This is why our literature grows sinister and bitter, and our daughters yearn after this and that, write odd books, and ride about on bicycles in remarkable clothes. They have shut down the safety valve, they suffer from the present lamentable increase of gentleness. They must find some outlet or perish. If they could only put their arms akimbo and give each other a piece of their minds for a little in the ancient way, there can be not the slightest doubt that much of this *fin de siècle* unwholesomeness would disappear.

Possibly this fashion of gentleness will pass. Yet it has had increasing sway now for some years. An unhealthy generation has arisen—at least among the more educated class—that quarrels little, regards the function, as the East-ender does a taste for fine art or literature, as a vice or a nuisance. We seem indeed

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to be getting altogether out of the way of it. Rare quarrels no doubt occur to every one, but rare quarrelling is no quarrelling at all. Like beer, smoking, sea-bathing, cycling, and the like delights, you cannot judge of quarrelling by the early essay. But to show how good it is—did you ever know a quarrelsome person give up the use? Alcohol you may wean a man from, Barrie says he gave up the Arcadia Mixture; and De Quincey conquered opium. But once you are set as a quarreller you quarrel and quarrel till you die.

How to quarrel well and often has ever been something of an art, and it becomes more of an art with the general decline of spirit. For it takes two to make a quarrel. Time was when you turned to the handiest human being, and with small care or labour had the comfortable warmth you needed in a minute or so. There was theology, even in the fifties it was ample cause with two out of three you met. Now people will express a lamentable indifference. Then politics again, but a little while ago fat for the fire of any male gathering, is now a topic of mere tepidity. So you are forced to be more subtle, more patient in your quarrelling. You play, like a little boy playing cricket with his sisters, with those who do not understand. A fellow votary is a rare treat. As a rule you have to lure and humour your antagonist like a child. The wooing is as intricate and delicate as any wooing can well be. To quarrel now, indeed, requires an infinity of patience. The good old days of thumb-biting—"Do you bite your thumbs at us, sir?" and so to clash and stab—are gone for ever.

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There are certain principles in quarrelling, however, that the true quarreller ever bears in mind, and which, duly observed, do much to facilitate encounters. In the first place cultivate Distrust. Have always before you that this is a wicked world, full of insidious people, and that you never can know what villainous encroachments may be hidden under fair-seeming appearances. That is the flavour of it. At the first suspicion "stick up for your rights," as the vulgar say. And see that you do it suddenly. Smite promptly, and the surprise and sting of your injustice should provoke an excellent reply. And where there is least ground for suspicion, there, remember, is the most. The right hand of fellowship extended towards you is one of the best openings you have. "Not such a fool," is the kind of attitude to assume, and "You don't put upon *me* so easy." Your adversary resents this a little, and, rankling, tries to explain. You find a personal inference in the expostulation.

Next to a wariness respecting your interests is a keen regard for your honour. Have concealed in the privacy of your mind a code of what is due to you. Expand or modify it as occasion offers. Be as it were a collector of what are called "slights," and never let one pass you. Watch your friend in doorways, passages; when he eats by you, when he drinks with you, when he addresses you, when he writes you letters. It will be hard if you cannot catch him smuggling some deadly insult into your presence. Tax him with it. He did not think, forsooth! Tell him no gentleman would do such a thing, thinkingly or not; that you certainly will not stand it again. Say you

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will show him. He will presently argue or contradict. So to your climax.

Then, again, there is the personal reference. "Meaning me, sir?" Your victim with a blithe heart babbles of this or that. You let him meander here and there, watching him as if you were in ambush. Presently he comes into your spring. "Of course," you say, "I saw what you were driving at a minute ago, when you mentioned mustard in salad dressing, but if I am peppery I am not mean. And if I have a thing to say I say it straight out." A good gambit this, and well into him from the start. The particular beauty of it is that you get him apologetic at first, and can score heavily before he rises to the defensive.

Then finally there is your abstract cause, once very fruitful indeed, but now sadly gone in decay, except perhaps in specialist society. As an example, let there be one who is gibing genially at some topic or other, at Japanese king-crabs, or the inductive process, or any other topic which cannot possibly affect you one atom. Then is the time to drop all these merely selfish interests, and to champion the cause of truth. Fall upon him in a fine glow of indignation, and bring your contradiction across his face—whack!—so that all the table may hear. Tell him, with his pardon, that the king-crab is no more a crab than you are a jelly-fish, or that Mill has been superseded these ten years. Ask: "How can you say such things?" From thence to his general knowledge is a short flight, and so to his veracity, his reasoning powers, his mere common sense. "Let me tell you, sir," is the special incantation for the storm.

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These are the four chief ways of quarrelling, the four gates to this delightful city. For it is delightful, once your 'prentice days are past. In a way it is like a cold bath on a winter's morning, and you glow all day. In a way as the nimble aggravation dances to and fro it is like football. In a way it is like chess. Indeed, all games of skill are watered quarrels, quarrel and soda, come to see them in a proper light. And without quarrelling you have not fully appreciated your fellow man. For in the ultimate it is the train and complement of Love, the shadow that rounds off the delight we take in poor humanity. It is the vinegar and pepper of existence, and long after our taste for sweets has vanished it will be the solace of our declining years.

THE AMATEUR NATURE-LOVER

It is possible that an education entirely urban is not the best conceivable preparation for descriptive articles upon the country. On the other hand, your professional nature-lover is sometimes a little over-familiar with his subject. He knows the names of all the things, and he does not spare you. Besides, he is subtle. The prominent features are too familiar to him, and he goes into details. What respectable townsman, for instance, knows what "scabiosa" is? It sounds very unpleasant. Then the professional nature-lover assumes that you know trees. No Englishman can tell any tree from any other tree, except a very palpable oak or poplar. So that we may at least, as an experiment, allow a good Londoner to take his unsophisticated eyes out into the sweet

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country for once, and try his skill at nature-loving though his botany has been learned over the counter of flower-shops, and his zoology on Saturday afternoons when they have the band in the Gardens. He makes his way, then, over by Epsom Downs towards Sutton, trying to assimilate his mood to the proper flavour of appreciation as he goes, and with a little notebook in the palm of his hand to assist an ill-trained memory. And the burden of his song is of course the autumn tints.

The masses of trees towards Epsom and Ewell, with the red houses and Elizabethan façades peeping through their interstices, contain, it would seem, every conceivable colour, except perhaps sky-blue; there are brilliant yellow trees, and a kind of tree of the most amazing gamboge green, almost the green of spring come back, and tan-coloured trees, deep brown, red, and deep crimson trees. Here and there the wind has left its mark, and the grey-brown branches and their purple tracery of twigs, with a suggestion of infinite depth behind, show through the rents in the leafy covering. There are deep green trees—the amateur nature-lover fancies they may be yews—with their dense warm foliage arranged in horizontal masses, like the clouds low down in a sunset, and certain other evergreens, one particularly, with a bluish-green covering of upstanding needles, are intensely conspicuous among the flame tints around. On a distant church tower, and nearer, disputing the possession of a gabled red house with a glowing creeper, is some ivy, and never is the perennial green of ivy so delightful as it is now, when all

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else is alight with the sombre fire of the sunset of the year. . . .

The amateur nature-lover proceeds over the down, appreciating all this as hard as he can appreciate, and anon gazing up at the grey and white cloud shapes melting slowly from this form to that, and showing lakes, and wide expanses, and serene distances of blue between their gaps. And then he looks round him for a zoological item. Underfoot the grass of the down is recovering from the summer drought and growing soft and green again, and plentiful little flattened snail shells lie about, and here and there a late harebell still nods in the breeze. Yonder bolts a rabbit, and then something whizzes by the amateur nature-lover's ear.

They shoot here somewhere, he remembers suddenly; and then looking round in a palpitating state is reassured by the spectacle of a lone golfer looming over the brow of the down, and gesticulating black and weird against the sky. The Londoner, with an abrupt affectation of nonchalance, flings himself flat upon his back, and so remains comparatively safe until the golfer has passed. These golfers are strange creatures, rabbit-coloured, except that many are bright red about the middle, and they repel and yet are ever attracted by a devil in the shape of a little white ball, which leads them on through toothed briers, sharp furzes, pricking gorse and thorns, cursing the thing, weeping even, and anon laughing at their own foolish rambling muttering, heeding no one to the right or left of their career, demented creatures, as though these balls were their souls that they ever

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sought to lose, and ever repented losing. And silent, ever at the heel of each, is a familiar spirit, an eerie human hedgehog, all set about with walking-sticks, a thing like a cylindrical umbrella-stand with a hat and boots and a certain suggestion of leg. And so they pass and are gone.

Rising, the amateur nature-lover finds he has been reclining on a puff ball. These puff balls are certainly the most remarkable example of adaptation to circumstances known to English botanists. They grow abundantly on golf grounds, and are exactly like golf balls in external appearance. They are, however, Pharisees and whited sepulchres, and within they are full of a soft mess of a most unpleasant appearance—the amateur nature-lover has some on him now—which stuff contains the spores. It is a case of what naturalists call "mimicry"—one of nature's countless adaptations. The golf-player smites these things with force, covering himself with ridicule—and spores, and so disseminating this farsighted and ingenious fungus far and wide about the links.

The amateur nature-lover passes off the down, and towards Banstead village. He is on the watch for characteristic objects of the country-side, and rustling through the leaves beneath a chestnut avenue he comes upon an old boot. It is a very, very old boot, all its blacking washed off by the rain, and two spreading chestnut leaves, yellow they are with blotches of green, with their broad fingers extended, rest upon it as if they would protect and altogether cover the poor old boot in its last resting-place. It is as if Mother Nature, who lost sight of her product

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at the tanner's yard, meant to claim her own trampled child again at last after all its wanderings. So we go on, noting a sardine tin gleaming brightly in the amber sunlight, through a hazel hedge, and presently another old boot. Some hawthorn berries, some hoary clematis we notice—and then another old boot. Altogether, it may be remarked, in this walk the amateur nature-lover saw eleven old boots, most of them dropped in the very sweetest bits of hedge tangle and grassy corner about Banstead.

It is natural to ask, "Whence come all these old boots?" They are, as every one knows, among the commonest objects in a country walk, so common indeed that the professional nature-lover says very little about them. They cannot grow there, they cannot be dropped from above—they are distinctly earth-worn boots. I have inquired of my own domestic people, and caused inquiry to be made in a large number of households, and there does not appear to be any regular custom of taking boots away to remote and picturesque spots to abandon them. Some discarded boots of my own were produced, but they were quite different from the old boot of the outer air. These homekept old boots were lovely in their way, hoary with mould running into the most exquisite tints of glaucophane and blue-grey, but it was a different way altogether from that of the wild boot.

A friend says that these boots are cast away by tramps. People, he states, give your tramp old boots and hats in great profusion, and the modesty of the recipient drives him to these picturesque and secluded

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spots to effect the necessary change. But no nature-lover has ever observed the tramp or tramp family in the act of changing their clothes, and since there are even reasons to suppose that their garments are not detachable, it seems preferable to leave the wayside boot as a pleasant flavouring of mystery to our ramble. Another point, which also goes to explode this tramp theory, is that these country-side boots *never occur in pairs*, as any observer of natural history can testify. . . .

So our Cockney Jefferies proceeds, presently coming upon a cinder path. They use cinders a lot about Sutton, to make country paths with; it gives you an unexpected surprise the first time it occurs. You drop suddenly out of a sweetly tangled lane into a veritable bit of the Black Country, and go on with loathing in your soul for your fellow-creatures. There is also an abundance of that last product of civilisation, barbed wire. Oh that I were Gideon! with thorns and briers of the wilderness would I teach these elders of Sutton! But a truce to dark thoughts!

We take our last look at the country from the open down above Sutton. Blue hills beyond blue hills recede into the remote distance; from Banstead Down one can see into Oxfordshire. Windsor Castle is in minute blue silhouette to the left, and to the right and nearer is the Crystal Palace. And closer, clusters red-roofed Sutton and its tower, then Cheam with its white spire, and further is Ewell, set in a variegated texture of autumn foliage. Water gleams—a silver thread—at Ewell, and the sinking sun behind us catches a window here and there, and turns it

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into an eye of flame. And so to Sutton station and home to Cockneydom once more.

THE MODE IN MONUMENTS

STRAY THOUGHTS IN HIGHGATE CEMETERY

On a sharp sunlight morning, when the white clouds are drifting swiftly across the luminous blue sky, there is no finer walk about London than the Highgate ridge. One may stay awhile on the Archway looking down upon the innumerable roofs of London stretching southward into the haze and shining here and there with the reflection of the rising sun, and then wander on along the picturesque road by the college of Saint Aloysius to the new Catholic church, and so through the Waterlow Park to the cemetery. The Waterlow Park is a pleasant place, full of aged persons and children in perambulators during the middle hours of the day, and in the summer evening time a haunt of young lovers; but your early wanderer finds it solitary save for Vertumnus, who, with L.C.C. on the front of him, is putting in crocuses. So we wander down to the little red lodge whence a sinuous road runs to Hampstead, and presently into the close groves of monuments that whiten the opposite slope.

How tightly these white sepulchres are packed here! How different this congestion of sorrow from the mossy latitude of God's Acre in the country! The dead are crammed together as closely as the living seemed in that bird's-eye view from the Archway. There is no ample shadow of trees, no tangled corners

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where mother earth may weave flower garlands over her returning children. The monuments positively jostle and elbow each other for frontage upon the footways. And they are so rawly clean and assertive. Most of them are conspicuously new whitened, with freshly blackened or newly gilt inscriptions, bare of lichen, moss, or mystery, and altogether so restless that it seems to the meditative man that the struggle for existence, for mere standing room and a show in the world, still rages among the dead. The unstable slope of the hill, with its bristling array of obelisks, crosses and urns craning one above another, is as directly opposed to the restfulness of the village churchyard with its serene outspreading yews as midday Fleet Street to a Sabbath evening amidst the Sussex hills. This cemetery is, indeed, a veritable tumult of tombs.

Another thing that presently comes painfully home to one is the lack of individuality among all these dead. Not a necessary lack of individuality so much as a deliberate avoidance of it. As one wanders along the steep, narrow pathways one is more and more profoundly impressed by the wholesale flavour of the mourning, the stereotyping of the monuments. The place is too modern for *memento mori* and the hourglass and the skull. Instead, Slap and Dash, that excellent firm of monumental masons, everywhere crave to be remembered. Truly the firm of Slap and Dash have much to answer for among these graves, and they do not seem to be ashamed of it.

From one elevated point in this cemetery one can count more than a hundred urns, getting at last

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weary and confused with the receding multitude. The urn is not dissimilar to the domestic mantel ornament, and always a stony piece of textile fabric is feigned to be thrown over its shoulder. At times it is wreathed in stony flowers. The only variety is in the form. Sometimes your urn is broad and squat, a Silenus among urns, sometimes fragile and high-shouldered, like a slender old maid, here an "out-size" in urns stalwart and strong, and there a dwarf peeping quaintly from its wrapping. The obelisks, too, run through a long scale of size and refinement. But the curious man finds no hidden connection between the quality of the monument and the character of the dead. Messrs. Slap and Dash apparently take the urn or obelisk that comes readiest to hand. One wonders dimly why mourners have this overwhelming proclivity for Messrs. Slap and Dash and their obelisk and urn.

The reason why the firm produces these articles may be guessed at. They are probably easy to make, and require scarcely any skill. The contemplative man has a dim vision of a grimy shed in a back street, where a human being passes dismally through life the while he chips out an unending succession of these cheap urns and obelisks for his employers' retailing. But the question why numberless people will profane the memory of their departed by these public advertisements of Slap and Dash and their evil trade, is a more difficult problem. For surely nothing could be more unmeaning or more ungainly than the monumental urn, unless it be the monumental obelisk. The plain cross by contrast has the tenderest mean-

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ing, and is a simple and fitting monument that no repetition can stale.

The artistic cowardice of the English is perhaps the clue to the mystery. Your Englishman is always afraid to commit himself to criticism without the refuge of a *tu quoque*. He is covered dead, just as he is covered living, with the "correct thing." A respectable stock-in-trade is proffered him by the insinuating shopman to whom it is our custom to go. He is told this is selling well, or that is much admired. Heaven defend that he should admire on his own account! He orders the stock urn or the stock slab because it is large and sufficiently expensive for his means and sorrow, and because he knows of nothing better. So we mourn as the stonemason decrees, or after the example and pattern of the Smiths next door. But some day it will dawn upon us that a little thought and a search after beauty are far more becoming than an order and a cheque to the nearest advertising tradesman. Or it may be we shall conclude that the anonymous peace of a grassy mound is better than his commercial brutalities, and so there will be an end of him.

One may go from end to end of this cemetery and find scarcely anything beautiful, appropriate, or tender. A lion, ill done and yet to some degree impressive, lies complacently above a menagerie keeper, and near this is a tomb of some imagination, with reliefs of the life of Christ. In one place is to be seen a grotesque horse, with a head disproportionately vast. Perhaps among all these monuments the one to Mrs. Blake is the most pleasing. It is a simply

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and quaintly executed kneeling figure, with a certain quiet and pathetic reverence of pose that is strangely restful against the serried vulgarity around it.

But the tradesman ghoul will not leave us; he follows us up and down, indecently clamouring his name and address, and at last turns our meditation to despair. Certain stock devices become as painful as popular autotypes. There is the lily broken on its stalk; we meet it here on a cross and there on an obelisk, presently on the pedestal of an urn. There is the hand pointing upward, here balanced on the top of an obelisk and there upon a cross. The white-robed angel, free from the remotest shadow of expression, meets us again and again. "All this is mine," says the tradesman ghoul. "Behold the names of me—Slap and Dash here, the Ugliness Company there, and this the work of the Cheap and Elegant Funeral Association. This is where we slew the art of sculpture. These are our trophies that sculpture is no more. All this marble might have been beautiful, all this sorrow might have been expressive, had it not been for us. See, this is our border No. A 5, and our pedestal No. E, and our second quality urn, along of a nice appropriate text—a pretty combination and a cheap one. Or we can do it you better in border A 3, and pedestal C, and a larger urn or a hangel——"

The meditative man is seized with a dismal horror, and retreats to the gates. Even there a wooden advertisement grins broadly at him in his discomfiture, and shouts a name athwart his route. And so down the winding road to the valley, and then up Parliament Hill towards Hampstead and its breeze-whipped

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ponds. And the mind of him is full of a dim vision of days that have been, when sculptor and stonemason were one, when the artist put his work in the porch for all the world to see, when people had leisure to think how things should be done and heart to do them well, when there was beauty in the business of life and dignity in death. And he wonders rather hopelessly if people will ever rise up against these damnable tradesmen who ruin our arts, make our lives costly and dismal, and advertise, advertise even on our graves.

HOW I DIED

It is now ten years ago since I received my death warrant. All these ten years I have been and I am and shall be, I hope, for years yet, a Doomed Man. It only occurred to me yesterday that I had been dodging—missing rather than dodging—the common enemy for such a space of time. *Then*, I know, I respected him. It seemed he marched upon me, inexorable, irresistible; even at last I felt his grip upon me. I bowed in the shadow. And he passed. Ten years ago and once since, he and I have been very near. But now he seems to me but a blind man, and we, with all our solemn folly of medicine and hygiene, but players in a game of Blind Man's Buff. The gaunt, familiar hand comes out suddenly, swiftly, this time surely. And it passes close to my shoulder; I hear some one near me cry, and it is over. . . . Another ream of paper; there is time at least for the Great Book still.

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Very close to the tragedy of life is the comedy, brightest upon the very edge of the dark, and I remember now with a queer touch of sympathetic amusement my dear departed self of the middle eighties. How the thing staggered me! I was full of the vast ambition of youth; I was still at the age when death is quite out of sight, when life is still an interminable vista of years; and then suddenly, with a gout of blood upon my knuckle, with a queer familiar taste in my mouth, that cough which had been a bother became a tragedy, and this world that had been so solid grew faint and thin. I saw through it; saw his face near to my own; suddenly found him beside me, when I had been dreaming he was far beyond there, far away over the hills.

My first phase was an immense sorrow for myself. It was a purely selfish emotion. You see I had been saving myself up, denying myself half the pride of life and most of its indulgence, drilling myself like a drill-sergeant, with my eyes on those now unattainable hills. Had I known it was to end so soon, I should have planned everything so differently. I lay in bed mourning my truncated existence. Then presently the sorrow broadened. They were so sorry, so genuinely sorry for me. And they considered me so much now. I had this and that they would never have given me before—the stateliest bedding, the costliest food. I could feel from my bed the suddenly disorganised house, the distressed friends, the newborn solicitude. Insensibly a realisation of enhanced importance came to temper my regrets for my neglected sins. The lost world, that had seemed so bril-

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liant and attractive, dwindled steadily as the days of my illness wore on. I thought more of the world's loss, and less of my own.

Then came the long journey; the princely style of it! the sudden awakening on the part of external humanity, which had hitherto been wont to jostle me, to help itself before me, to turn its back upon me, to my importance. "He has a diseased lung—cannot live long.". . .

I was going into the dark and I was not afraid—with ostentation. I still regard that, though now with scarcely so much gravity as heretofore, as a very magnificent period in my life. For nearly four months I was dying with immense dignity. Plutarch might have recorded it. I wrote—in touchingly unsteady pencil—to all my intimate friends, and indeed to many other people. I saw the littleness of hate and ambition. I forgave my enemies, and they were subdued and owned to it. How they must regret those admissions! I made many memorable remarks. This lasted, I say, nearly four months.

The medical profession, which had pronounced my death sentence, reiterated it steadily—has, indeed, done so now this ten years. Towards the end of those four months, however, dying lost its freshness for me. I began to detect a certain habitual quality in my service. I had exhausted all my memorable remarks upon the subject, and the strain began to tell upon all of us.

One day in the spring-time I crawled out alone, carefully wrapped and with a stick, to look once more—perhaps for the last time—on sky and earth

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and the first scattered skirmishers of the coming army of flowers. It was a day of soft wind, when the shadows of the clouds go sweeping over the hills. Quite casually I happened upon a girl clambering over a hedge, and her dress had caught in a bramble, and the chat was quite impromptu and most idyllic. I remember she had three or four wood anemones in her hand—"wind stars" she called them, and I thought it a pretty name. And we talked of this and that, with a light in our eyes, as young folks will.

I quite forgot I was a Doomed Man. I surprised myself walking home with a confident stride that jarred with the sudden recollection of my funereal circumstances. For a moment I tried in vain to think what it was had slipped my memory. Then it came, colourless and remote. "Oh! Death. . . . He's a Bore," I said; "I've done with him," and laughed to think of having done with him.

"And why not so?" said I.

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A SLIP UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

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A SLIP UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

Outside the laboratory windows was a watery-grey fog, and within a close warmth and the yellow light of the green-shaded gas lamps that stood two to each table down its narrow length. On each table stood a couple of glass jars containing the mangled vestiges of the crayfish, mussels, frogs, and guinea-pigs upon which the students had been working, and down the side of the room, facing the windows, were shelves bearing bleached dissections in spirits, surmounted by a row of beautifully executed anatomical drawings in white-wood frames and overhanging a row of cubical lockers. All the doors of the laboratory were panelled with blackboard, and on these were the half-erased diagrams of the previous day's work. The laboratory was empty, save for the demonstrator, who sat near the preparation-room door, and silent, save for a low, continuous murmur and the clicking of the rocker microtome at which he was working. But scattered about the room were traces of numerous students: hand-bags, polished boxes of instruments, in one place a large drawing covered by newspaper, and in another a prettily bound copy of "News from Nowhere," a book oddly at variance with its surroundings. These things had been put down hastily as the students had arrived and hurried at once to secure their seats in the adjacent lecture theatre. Deadened by the closed door, the measured accents of the professor sounded as a featureless muttering.

Presently, faint through the closed windows came

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the sound of the Oratory clock striking the hour of eleven. The clicking of the microtome ceased, and the demonstrator looked at his watch, rose, thrust his hands into his pockets, and walked slowly down the laboratory towards the lecture theatre door. He stood listening for a moment, and then his eye fell on the little volume by William Morris. He picked it up, glanced at the title, smiled, opened it, looked at the name on the fly-leaf, ran the leaves through with his hand, and put it down. Almost immediately the even murmur of the lecturer ceased, there was a sudden burst of pencils rattling on the desks in the lecture theatre, a stirring, a scraping of feet, and a number of voices speaking together. Then a firm footfall approached the door, which began to open, and stood ajar as some indistinctly heard question arrested the new-comer.

The demonstrator turned, walked slowly back past the microtome, and left the laboratory by the preparation-room door. As he did so, first one, and then several students carrying notebooks entered the laboratory from the lecture theatre, and distributed themselves among the little tables, or stood in a group about the doorway. They were an exceptionally heterogeneous assembly, for while Oxford and Cambridge still recoil from the blushing prospect of mixed classes, the College of Science anticipated America in the matter years ago—mixed socially too, for the prestige of the College is high, and its scholarships, free of any age limit, dredge deeper even than do those of the Scotch universities. The class numbered one-and-twenty, but some remained in the theatre

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questioning the professor, copying the blackboard diagrams before they were washed off, or examining the special specimens he had produced to illustrate the day's teaching. Of the nine who had come into the laboratory three were girls, one of whom, a little fair woman wearing spectacles and dressed in greyish-green, was peering out of the window at the fog, while the other two, both wholesome-looking, plain-faced schoolgirls, unrolled and put on the brown holland aprons they wore while dissecting. Of the men, two went down the laboratory to their places, one a pallid, dark-bearded man, who had once been a tailor; the other a pleasant-featured, ruddy young man of twenty, dressed in a well-fitting brown suit; young Wedderburn, the son of Wedderburn the eye specialist. The others formed a little knot near the theatre door. One of these, a dwarfed, spectacled figure with a hunch back, sat on a bent wood stool; two others, one a short, dark youngster and the other a flaxen-haired, reddish-complexioned young man, stood leaning side by side against the slate sink, while the fourth stood facing them, and maintained the larger share of the conversation.

This last person was named Hill. He was a sturdily built young fellow, of the same age as Wedderburn; he had a white face, dark grey eyes, hair of an indeterminate colour, and prominent, irregular features. He talked rather louder than was needful, and thrust his hands deeply into his pockets. His collar was frayed and blue with the starch of a careless laundress, his clothes were evidently ready-made, and there was a patch on the side of his boot near the

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toe. And as he talked or listened to the others, he glanced now and again towards the lecture theatre door. They were discussing the depressing peroration of the lecture they had just heard, the last lecture it was of the introductory course in zoology. "From ovum to ovum is the goal of the higher vertebrata," the lecturer had said in his melancholy tones, and so had neatly rounded off the sketch of comparative anatomy he had been developing. The spectacled hunchback had repeated it with noisy appreciation, had tossed it towards the fair-haired student with an evident provocation, and had started one of those vague, rambling discussions on generalities so unaccountably dear to the student mind all the world over.

"That is our goal, perhaps—I admit it, as far as science goes," said the fair-haired student, rising to the challenge. "But there are things above science."

"Science," said Hill confidently, "is systematic knowledge. Ideas that don't come into the system—must anyhow—be loose ideas." He was not quite sure whether that was a clever saying or a fatuity until his hearers took it seriously.

"The thing I cannot understand," said the hunchback, at large, "is whether Hill is a materialist or not."

"There is one thing above matter," said Hill promptly, feeling he made a better point this time; aware, too, of some one in the doorway behind him, and raising his voice a trifle for her benefit, "and that is, the delusion that there is something above matter."

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"So we have your gospel at last," said the fair student. "It's all a delusion, is it? All our aspirations to lead something more than dogs' lives, all our work for anything beyond ourselves. But see how inconsistent you are. Your socialism, for instance. Why do you trouble about the interests of the race? Why do you concern yourself about the beggar in the gutter? Why are you bothering yourself to lend that book"—he indicated William Morris by a movement of the head—"to every one in the lab.?"

"Girl," said the hunchback indistinctly, and glanced guiltily over his shoulder.

The girl in brown, with the brown eyes, had come into the laboratory, and stood on the other side of the table behind him, with her rolled-up apron in one hand, looking over her shoulder, listening to the discussion. She did not notice the hunchback, because she was glancing from Hill to his interlocutor. Hill's consciousness of her presence betrayed itself to her only in his studious ignoring of the fact; but she understood that, and it pleased her. "I see no reason," said he, "why a man should live like a brute because he knows of nothing beyond matter, and does not expect to exist a hundred years hence."

"Why shouldn't he?" said the fair-haired student.

"Why *should* he?" said Hill.

"What inducement has he?"

"That's the way with all you religious people. It's all a business of inducements. Cannot a man seek after righteousness for righteousness' sake?"

There was a pause. The fair man answered, with a kind of vocal padding, "But—you see—inducement

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—when I said inducement," to gain time. And then the hunchback came to his rescue and inserted a question. He was a terrible person in the debating society with his questions, and they invariably took one form—a demand for a definition. "What's your definition of righteousness?" said the hunchback at this stage.

Hill experienced a sudden loss of complacency at this question, but even as it was asked, relief came in the person of Brooks, the laboratory attendant, who entered by the preparation-room door, carrying a number of freshly killed guinea-pigs by their hind legs. "This is the last batch of material this session," said the youngster who had not previously spoken. Brooks advanced up the laboratory, smacking down a couple of guinea-pigs at each table. The rest of the class, scenting the prey from afar, came crowding in by the lecture theatre door, and the discussion perished abruptly as the students who were not already in their places hurried to them to secure the choice of a specimen. There was a noise of keys rattling on split rings as lockers were opened and dissecting instruments taken out. Hill was already standing by his table, and his box of scalpels was sticking out of his pocket. The girl in brown came a step towards him, and leaning over his table said softly, "Did you see that I returned your book, Mr. Hill?"

During the whole scene she and the book had been vividly present in his consciousness; but he made a clumsy pretence of looking at the book and seeing it for the first time. "Oh, yes," he said, taking it up. "I see. Did you like it?"

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"I want to ask you some questions about it—some time."

"Certainly," said Hill. "I shall be glad." He stopped awkwardly. "You liked it?" he said.

"It's a wonderful book. Only some things I don't understand."

Then suddenly the laboratory was hushed by a curious, braying noise. It was the demonstrator. He was at the blackboard ready to begin the day's instruction, and it was his custom to demand silence by a sound midway between the "Er" of common intercourse and the blast of a trumpet. The girl in brown slipped back to her place: it was immediately in front of Hill's, and Hill, forgetting her forthwith, took a notebook out of the drawer of his table, turned over its leaves hastily, drew a stumpy pencil from his pocket, and prepared to make a copious note of the coming demonstration. For demonstrations and lectures are the sacred text of the College students. Books, saving only the Professor's own, you may—it is even expedient to—ignore.

Hill was the son of a Landport cobbler, and had been hooked by a chance blue paper the authorities had thrown out to the Landport Technical College. He kept himself in London on his allowance of a guinea a week, and found that, with proper care, this also covered the cost of his clothing, an occasional waterproof collar, that is; and ink and needles and cotton and such-like necessaries for a man about town. This was his first year and his first session, but the brown old man in Landport had already got himself detested in many public-houses by boasting of his

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son, "the Professor." Hill was a vigorous youngster, with a serene contempt for the clergy of all denominations and a fine ambition to reconstruct the world. He regarded his scholarship as a brilliant opportunity. He had begun to read at seven, and had read steadily whatever came in his way, good or bad, since then. His worldly experience had been limited to the island of Portsea, and acquired chiefly in the wholesale boot factory in which he had worked by day, after passing the seventh standard of the Board school. He had a considerable gift of speech, as the College Debating Society, which met amidst the crushing machines and mine models in the metallurgical theatre downstairs, already recognised—recognised by a violent battering of desks whenever he rose. And he was just at that fine emotional age when life opens at the end of a narrow pass like a broad valley at one's feet, full of the promise of wonderful discoveries and tremendous achievements. And his own limitations, save that he knew that he knew neither Latin nor French, were all unknown to him.

At first his interest had been divided pretty equally between his biological work at the College and social and theological theorising, an employment which he took in deadly earnest. Of a night, when the big museum library was not open, he would sit on the bed of his room in Chelsea with his coat and a muffler on, and write out the lecture notes and revise his dissection memoranda until Thorpe called him out by a whistle—the landlady objected to open the door to attic visitors—and then the two would go prowling

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about the shadowy, shiny, gas-lit streets, talking, very much in the fashion of the sample just given, of the God idea and Righteousness and Carlyle and the Reorganisation of Society. And in the midst of it all, Hill, arguing not only for Thorpe but for the casual passer-by, would lose the thread of his argument glancing at some pretty painted face that looked meaningly at him as he passed. Science and Righteousness! But once or twice lately there had been signs that a third interest was creeping into his life, and he had found his attention wandering from the fate of the mesoblastic somites or the probable meaning of the blastopore, to the thought of the girl with the brown eyes who sat at the table before him.

She was a paying student; she descended inconceivable social altitudes to speak to him. At the thought of the education she must have had, and the accomplishments she must possess, the soul of Hill became abject within him. She had spoken to him first over a difficulty about the alisphenoid of a rabbit's skull, and he had found that, in biology at least, he had no reason for self-abasement. And from that, after the manner of young people starting from any starting-point, they got to generalities, and while Hill attacked her upon the question of socialism—some instinct told him to spare her a direct assault upon her religion—she was gathering resolution to undertake what she told herself was his æsthetic education. She was a year or two older than he, though the thought never occurred to him. The loan of "News from Nowhere" was the beginning of a series of cross loans. Upon some absurd first principle of his, Hill

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had never "wasted time" upon poetry, and it seemed an appalling deficiency to her. One day in the lunch hour, when she chanced upon him alone in the little museum where the skeletons were arranged, shamefully eating the bun that constituted his midday meal, she retreated, and returned to lend him, with a slightly furtive air, a volume of Browning. He stood sideways towards her and took the book rather clumsily, because he was holding the bun in the other hand. And in the retrospect his voice lacked the cheerful clearness he could have wished.

That occurred after the examination in comparative anatomy, on the day before the College turned out its students and was carefully locked up by the officials for the Christmas holidays. The excitement of cramming for the first trial of strength had for a little while dominated Hill to the exclusion of his other interests. In the forecasts of the result in which every one indulged he was surprised to find that no one regarded him as a possible competitor for the Harvey Commemoration Medal, of which this and the two subsequent examinations disposed. It was about this time that Wedderburn, who so far had lived inconspicuously on the uttermost margin of Hill's perceptions, began to take on the appearance of an obstacle. By a mutual agreement, the nocturnal prowlings with Thorpe ceased for the three weeks before the examination, and his landlady pointed out that she really could not supply so much lamp oil at the price. He walked to and fro from the College with little slips of mnemonics in his hand, lists of crayfish appendages, rabbits' skull-bones, and verte-

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brate nerves, for example, and became a positive nuisance to foot passengers in the opposite direction.

But by a natural reaction, Poetry and the girl with the brown eyes ruled the Christmas holiday. The pending results of the examination became such a secondary consideration that Hill marvelled at his father's excitement. Even had he wished it, there was no comparative anatomy to read in Landport, and he was too poor to buy books, but the stock of poets in the library was extensive and Hill's attack was magnificently sustained. He saturated himself with the fluent numbers of Longfellow and Tennyson, and fortified himself with Shakespeare; found a kindred soul in Pope and a master in Shelley, and heard and fled the siren voices of Eliza Cook and Mrs. Hemans. But he read no more Browning, because he hoped for the loan of other volumes from Miss Haysman when he returned to London.

He walked from his lodgings to the College with that volume of Browning in his shiny black bag, and his mind teeming with the finest general propositions about poetry. Indeed, he framed first this little speech and then that with which to grace the return. The morning was an exceptionally pleasant one for London; there was a clear hard frost and undeniable blue in the sky, a thin haze softened every outline, and warm shafts of sunlight struck between the house blocks and turned the sunny side of the street to amber and gold. In the hall of the College he pulled off his glove and signed his name with fingers so stiff with cold that the characteristic dash under the signature he cultivated became a quivering line.

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He imagined Miss Haysman about him everywhere. He turned at the staircase, and there, below, he saw a crowd struggling at the foot of the notice-board. This, possibly, was the biology list. For the moment, he forgot Browning and Miss Haysman and joined the scrimmage. And at last, with his cheek flattened against the sleeve of the man on the step above him, he read the list—

CLASS I

H. J. Somers Wedderburn
William Hill

and thereafter followed a second class that is outside our present sympathies. It was characteristic that he did not trouble to look for Thorpe on the physics list, but backed out of the struggle at once, and in a curious emotional state between pride over common second-class humanity and acute disappointment at Wedderburn's success, went on his way upstairs. At the top, as he was hanging up his coat in the passage, the zoological demonstrator, a young man from Oxford who secretly regarded him as a blatant "mugger" of the very worst type, offered his heartiest congratulations.

At the laboratory door Hill stopped for a second to get his breath, and then entered. He looked straight up the laboratory and saw all five girl students grouped in their places, and Wedderburn, the once retiring Wedderburn, leaning rather gracefully against the window, playing with the blind tassel and talking apparently to the five of them. Now Hill could talk bravely enough and even overbearingly to

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one girl, and he could have made a speech to a roomful of girls, but this business of standing at ease and appreciating, fencing, and returning quick remarks round a group was, he knew, altogether beyond him. Coming up the staircase his feelings for Wedderburn had been generous, a certain admiration perhaps, a willingness to shake his hand conspicuously and heartily as one who had fought but the first round. But before Christmas Wedderburn had never gone up to that end of the room to talk. In a flash Hill's mist of vague excitement condensed abruptly to a vivid dislike of Wedderburn. Possibly his expression changed. As he came up to his place, Wedderburn nodded carelessly to him, and the others glanced round. Miss Haysman looked at him and away again, the faintest touch of her eyes. "I can't agree with you, Mr. Wedderburn," she said.

"I must congratulate you on your first-class, Mr. Hill," said the spectacled girl in green, turning round and beaming at him.

"It's nothing," said Hill, staring at Wedderburn and Miss Haysman talking together, and eager to hear what they talked about.

"We poor folks in the second class don't think so," said the girl in spectacles.

What was it Wedderburn was saying? Something about William Morris! Hill did not answer the girl in spectacles, and the smile died out of his face. He could not hear, and failed to see how he could "cut in." Confound Wedderburn! He sat down, opened his bag, hesitated whether to return the volume of Browning forthwith, in the sight of all, and instead

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drew out his new notebooks for the short course in elementary botany that was now beginning, and which would terminate in February. As he did so, a fat heavy man with a white face and pale grey eyes —Bindon, the professor of botany, who came up from Kew for January and February—came in by the lecture theatre door, and passed, rubbing his hands together and smiling, in silent affability down the laboratory.

In the subsequent six weeks Hill experienced some very rapid and curiously complex emotional developments. For the most part he had Wedderburn in focus—a fact that Miss Haysman never suspected. She told Hill (for in the comparative privacy of the museum she talked a good deal to him of socialism and Browning and general propositions) that she had met Wedderburn at the house of some people she knew, and "he's inherited his cleverness; for his father, you know, is the great eye specialist."

"*My* father is a cobbler," said Hill, quite irrelevantly, and perceived the want of dignity even as he said it. But the gleam of jealousy did not offend her. She conceived herself the fundamental source of it. He suffered bitterly from a sense of Wedderburn's unfairness, and a realisation of his own handicap. Here was this Wedderburn had picked up a prominent man for a father, and instead of his losing so many marks on the score of that advantage, it was counted to him for righteousness! And while Hill had to introduce himself and talk to Miss Haysman clumsily over mangled guinea-pigs in the laboratory, this Wedderburn, in some backstairs way, had access

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to her social altitudes, and could converse in a polished argot that Hill understood perhaps, but felt incapable of speaking. Not, of course, that he wanted to. Then it seemed to Hill that for Wedderburn to come there day after day with cuffs unfrayed, neatly tailored, precisely barbered, quietly perfect, was in itself an ill-bred, sneering sort of proceeding. Moreover, it was a stealthy thing for Wedderburn to behave insignificantly for a space, to mock modesty, to lead Hill to fancy that he himself was beyond dispute the man of the year, and then suddenly to dart in front of him, and incontinently to swell up in this fashion. In addition to these things, Wedderburn displayed an increasing disposition to join in any conversational grouping that included Miss Haysman; and would venture, and indeed seek occasion, to pass opinions derogatory to socialism and atheism. He goaded Hill to incivilities by neat, shallow, and exceedingly effective personalities about the socialist leaders, until Hill hated Bernard Shaw's graceful egotisms, William Morris's limited editions and luxurious wall-papers, and Walter Crane's charmingly absurd ideal working men, almost as much as he hated Wedderburn. The dissertations in the laboratory, that had been his glory in the previous term, became a danger, degenerated into inglorious tussles with Wedderburn, and Hill kept to them only out of an obscure perception that his honour was involved. In the debating society Hill knew quite clearly that, to a thunderous accompaniment of banged desks, he could have pulverised Wedderburn. Only Wedderburn never attended the debating society to be pul-

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verised, because—nauseous affectation!—he "dined late."

You must not imagine that these things presented themselves in quite such a crude form to Hill's perception. Hill was a born generaliser. Wedderburn to him was not so much an individual obstacle as a type, the salient angle of a class. The economic theories that, after infinite ferment, had shaped themselves in Hill's mind, became abruptly concrete at the contact. The world became full of easy-mannered, graceful, gracefully dressed, conversationally dexterous, finally shallow Wedderburns, Bishops Wedderburn, Wedderburn M.P.'s, Professors Wedderburn, Wedderburn landlords, all with finger-bowl shibboleths and epigrammatic cities of refuge from a sturdy debater. And every one ill-clothed or ill-dressed, from the cobbler to the cab-runner, was, to Hill's imagination, a man and a brother, a fellow-sufferer. So that he became, as it were, a champion of the fallen and oppressed, albeit to outward seeming only a self-assertive, ill-mannered young man, and an unsuccessful champion at that. Again and again a skirmish over the afternoon tea that the girl students had inaugurated left Hill with flushed cheeks and a tattered temper, and the debating society noticed a new quality of sarcastic bitterness in his speeches.

You will understand now how it was necessary, if only in the interests of humanity, that Hill should demolish Wedderburn in the forthcoming examination and outshine him in the eyes of Miss Haysman; and you will perceive, too, how Miss Haysman fell into some common feminine misconceptions. The

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Hill-Wedderburn quarrel, for in his unostentatious way Wedderburn reciprocated Hill's ill-veiled rivalry, became a tribute to her indefinable charm; she was the Queen of Beauty in a tournament of scalpels and stumpy pencils. To her confidential friend's secret annoyance, it even troubled her conscience, for she was a good girl, and painfully aware, through Ruskin and contemporary fiction, how entirely men's activities are determined by women's attitudes. And if Hill never by any chance mentioned the topic of love to her, she only credited him with the finer modesty for that omission.

So the time came on for the second examination, and Hill's increasing pallor confirmed the general rumour that he was working hard. In the aërated bread shop near South Kensington Station you would see him, breaking his bun and sipping his milk with his eyes intent upon a paper of closely written notes. In his bedroom there were propositions about buds and stems round his looking-glass, a diagram to catch his eye, if soap should chance to spare it, above his washing basin. He missed several meetings of the debating society, but he found the chance encounters with Miss Haysman in the spacious ways of the adjacent art museum, or in the little museum at the top of the College, or in the College corridors, more frequent and very restful. In particular they used to meet in a little gallery full of wrought-iron chests and gates near the art library, and there Hill used to talk, under the gentle stimulus of her flattering attention, of Browning and his personal ambitions. A characteristic she found remarkable in him was his freedom from

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avarice. He contemplated quite calmly the prospect of living all his life on an income below a hundred pounds a year. But he was determined to be famous, to make, recognisably in his own proper person, the world a better place to live in. He took Bradlaugh and John Burns for his leaders and models, poor, even impecunious, great men. But Miss Haysman thought that such lives were deficient on the æsthetic side, by which, though she did not know it, she meant good wall-paper and upholstery, pretty books, tasteful clothes, concerts, and meals nicely cooked and respectfully served.

At last came the day of the second examination, and the professor of botany, a fussy, conscientious man, rearranged all the tables in a long narrow laboratory to prevent copying, and put his demonstrator on a chair on a table (where he felt, he said, like a Hindoo god), to see all the cheating, and stuck a notice outside the door, "Door closed," for no earthly reason that any human being could discover. And all the morning from ten till one the quill of Wedderburn shrieked defiance at Hill's, and the quills of the others chased their leaders in a tireless pack, and so also it was in the afternoon. Wedderburn was a little quieter than usual, and Hill's face was hot all day, and his overcoat bulged with textbooks and notebooks against the last moment's revision. And the next day, in the morning and in the afternoon, was the practical examination, when sections had to be cut and slides identified. In the morning Hill was depressed because he knew he had cut a thick section, and in the afternoon came the mysterious slip.

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It was just the kind of thing that the botanical professor was always doing. Like the income tax, it offered a premium to the cheat. It was a preparation under the microscope, a little glass slip held in its place on the stage of the instrument by light steel clips, and the inscription set forth that the slip was not to be moved. Each student was to go in turn to it, sketch it, write in his book of answers what he considered it to be, and return to his place. Now to move such a slip is a thing one can do by a chance movement of the finger, and in a fraction of a second. The professor's reason for decreeing that the slip should not be moved depended on the fact that the object he wanted identified was characteristic of a certain tree stem. In the position in which it was placed it was a difficult thing to recognise, but once the slip was moved so as to bring other parts of the preparation into view, its nature was obvious enough.

Hill came to this, flushed from a contest with staining re-agents, sat down on the little stool before the microscope, turned the mirror to get the best light, and then, out of sheer habit, shifted the slip. At once he remembered the prohibition, and, with an almost continuous motion of his hands, moved it back, and sat paralysed with astonishment at his action.

Then, slowly, he turned his head. The professor was out of the room; the demonstrator sat aloft on his impromptu rostrum, reading the *Q. Jour. Mi. Sci.*; the rest of the examinees were busy, and with their backs to him. Should he own up to the accident now? He knew quite clearly what the thing was. It was a

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lenticel, a characteristic preparation from the elder-tree. His eyes roved over his intent fellow-students, and Wedderburn suddenly glanced over his shoulder at him with a queer expression in his eyes. The mental excitement that had kept Hill at an abnormal pitch of vigour these two days gave way to a curious nervous tension. His book of answers was beside him. He did not write down what the thing was, but with one eye at the microscope he began making a hasty sketch of it. His mind was full of this grotesque puzzle in ethics that had suddenly been sprung upon him. Should he identify it? or should he leave this question unanswered? In that case Wedderburn would probably come out first in the second result. How could he tell now whether he might not have identified the thing without shifting it? It was possible that Wedderburn had failed to recognise it, of course. Suppose Wedderburn too had shifted the slide? He looked up at the clock. There were fifteen minutes in which to make up his mind. He gathered up his book of answers and the coloured pencils he used in illustrating his replies and walked back to his seat.

He read through his manuscript, and then sat thinking and gnawing his knuckle. It would look queer now if he owned up. He *must* beat Wedderburn. He forgot the examples of those starry gentlemen, John Burns and Bradlaugh. Besides, he reflected, the glimpse of the rest of the slip he had had was after all quite accidental, forced upon him by chance, a kind of providential revelation rather than an unfair advantage. It was not nearly so dishonest

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to avail himself of that as it was of Broome, who believed in the efficacy of prayer, to pray daily for a first-class. "Five minutes more," said the demonstrator, folding up his paper and becoming observant. Hill watched the clock hands until two minutes remained; then he opened the book of answers, and, with hot ears and an affectation of ease, gave his drawing of the lenticel its name.

When the second pass list appeared, the previous positions of Wedderburn and Hill were reversed, and the spectacled girl in green, who knew the demonstrator in private life (where he was practically human), said that in the result of the two examinations taken together Hill had the advantage of a mark—167 to 166 out of a possible 200. Every one admired Hill in a way, though the suspicion of "mugging" clung to him. But Hill was to find congratulations and Miss Haysman's enhanced opinion of him, and even the decided decline in the crest of Wedderburn, tainted by an unhappy memory. He felt a remarkable access of energy at first, and the note of a democracy marching to triumph returned to his debating-society speeches; he worked at his comparative anatomy with tremendous zeal and effect, and he went on with his æsthetic education. But through it all, a vivid little picture was continually coming before his mind's eye—of a sneakish person manipulating a slide.

No human being had witnessed the act, and he was cocksure that no higher power existed to see it; but for all that it worried him. Memories are not dead things but alive; they dwindle in disuse, but they harden and develop in all sorts of queer ways if they

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are being continually fretted. Curiously enough, though at the time he perceived clearly that the shifting was accidental, as the days wore on his memory became confused about it, until at last he was not sure—although he assured himself that he *was* sure—whether the movement had been absolutely involuntary. Then it is possible that Hill's dietary was conducive to morbid conscientiousness; a breakfast frequently eaten in a hurry, a midday bun, and, at such hours after five as chanced to be convenient, such meat as his means determined, usually in a chop-house in a back street off the Brompton Road. Occasionally he treated himself to threepenny or ninepenny classics, and they usually represented a suppression of potatoes or chops. It is indisputable that outbreaks of self-abasement and emotional revival have a distinct relation to periods of scarcity. But apart from this influence on the feelings, there was in Hill a distinct aversion to falsity that the blasphemous Landport cobbler had inculcated by strap and tongue from his earliest years. Of one fact about professed atheists I am convinced; they may be—they usually are—fools, void of subtlety, revilers of holy institutions, brutal speakers, and mischievous knaves, but they lie with difficulty. If it were not so, if they had the faintest grasp of the idea of compromise, they would simply be liberal churchmen. And, moreover, this memory poisoned his regard for Miss Haysman. For she now so evidently preferred him to Wedderburn that he felt sure he cared for her, and began reciprocating her attentions by timid marks of personal regard; at one time he even bought a bunch of vio-

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lets, carried it about in his pocket, and produced it with a stumbling explanation, withered and dead, in the gallery of old iron. It poisoned, too, the denunciation of capitalist dishonesty that had been one of his life's pleasures. And, lastly, it poisoned his triumph over Wedderburn. Previously he had been Wedderburn's superior in his own eyes, and had raged simply at a want of recognition. Now he began to fret at the darker suspicion of positive inferiority. He fancied he found justifications for his position in Browning, but they vanished on analysis. At last—moved, curiously enough, by exactly the same motive forces that had resulted in his dishonesty—he went to Professor Bindon, and made a clean breast of the whole affair. As Hill was a paid student, Professor Bindon did not ask him to sit down, and he stood before the professor's desk as he made his confession.

"It's a curious story," said Professor Bindon, slowly realising how the thing reflected on himself, and then letting his anger rise,—"a most remarkable story. I can't understand your doing it, and I can't understand this avowal. You're a type of student—Cambridge men would never dream—I suppose I ought to have thought—why *did* you cheat?"

"I didn't cheat," said Hill.

"But you have just been telling me you did."

"I thought I explained——"

"Either you cheated or you did not cheat."

"I said my movement was involuntary."

"I am not a metaphysician, I am a servant of science—of fact. You were told not to move the slip. You did move the slip. If that is not cheating——"

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"If I was a cheat," said Hill, with the note of hysterics in his voice, "should I come here and tell you?"

"Your repentance, of course, does you credit," said Professor Bindon, "but it does not alter the original facts."

"No, sir," said Hill, giving in in utter self-abasement.

"Even now you cause an enormous amount of trouble. The examination list will have to be revised."

"I suppose so, sir."

"Suppose so? Of course it must be revised. And I don't see how I can conscientiously pass you."

"Not pass me?" said Hill. "Fail me?"

"It's the rule in all examinations. Or where should we be? What else did you expect? You don't want to shirk the consequences of your own acts?"

"I thought, perhaps—" said Hill. And then, "Fail me? I thought, as I told you, you would simply deduct the marks given for that slip."

"Impossible!" said Bindon. "Besides, it would still leave you above Wedderburn. Deduct only the marks! Preposterous! The Departmental Regulations distinctly say——"

"But it's my own admission, sir."

"The Regulations say nothing whatever of the manner in which the matter comes to light. They simply provide——"

"It will ruin me. If I fail this examination, they won't renew my scholarship."

"You should have thought of that before."

"But, sir, consider all my circumstances——"

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"I cannot consider anything. Professors in this College are machines. The Regulations will not even let us recommend our students for appointments. I am a machine, and you have worked me. I have to do——"

"It's very hard, sir."

"Possibly it is."

"If I am to be failed this examination, I might as well go home at once."

"That is as you think proper." Bindon's voice softened a little; he perceived he had been unjust, and, provided he did not contradict himself, he was disposed to amelioration. "As a private person," he said, "I think this confession of yours goes far to mitigate your offence. But you have set the machinery in motion, and now it must take its course. I—I am really sorry you gave way."

A wave of emotion prevented Hill from answering. Suddenly, very vividly, he saw the heavily lined face of the old Landport cobbler, his father. "Good God! What a fool I have been!" he said hotly and abruptly.

"I hope," said Bindon, "that it will be a lesson to you."

But, curiously enough, they were not thinking of quite the same indiscretion.

There was a pause.

"I would like a day to think, sir, and then I will let you know—about going home, I mean," said Hill, moving towards the door.

The next day Hill's place was vacant. The spectacled girl in green was, as usual, first with the news.

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Wedderburn and Miss Haysman were talking of a performance of *The Meistersingers* when she came up to them.

"Have you heard?" she said.

"Heard what?"

"There was cheating in the examination."

"Cheating!" said Wedderburn, with his face suddenly hot. "How?"

"That slide——"

"Moved? Never!"

"It was. That slide that we weren't to move——"

"Nonsense!" said Wedderburn. "Why! How could they find out? Who do they say——?"

"It was Mr. Hill."

"*Hill!*"

"Mr. Hill!"

"Not—surely not the immaculate Hill?" said Wedderburn, recovering.

"I don't believe it," said Miss Haysman. "How do you know?"

"I *didn't*," said the girl in spectacles. "But I know it now for a fact. Mr. Hill went and confessed to Professor Bindon himself."

"By Jove!" said Wedderburn. "Hill of all people. But I am always inclined to distrust these philanthropists-on-principle——"

"Are you quite sure?" said Miss Haysman, with a catch in her breath.

"Quite. It's dreadful, isn't it? But, you know, what can you expect? His father is a cobbler."

Then Miss Haysman astonished the girl in spectacles.

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"I don't care. I will not believe it," she said, flushing darkly under her warm-tinted skin. "I will not believe it until he has told me so himself—face to face. I would scarcely believe it then," and abruptly she turned her back on the girl in spectacles, and walked to her own place.

"It's true, all the same," said the girl in spectacles peering and smiling at Wedderburn.

But Wedderburn did not answer her. She was indeed one of those people who seemed destined to make unanswered remarks.

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MISS WINCHELSEA'S HEART

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MISS WINCHELSEA'S HEART

Miss Winchelsea was going to Rome. The matter had filled her mind for a month or more, and had overflowed so abundantly into her conversation that quite a number of people who were not going to Rome, and who were not likely to go to Rome, had made it a personal grievance against her. Some indeed had attempted quite unavailingly to convince her that Rome was not nearly such a desirable place as it was reported to be, and others had gone so far as to suggest behind her back that she was dreadfully "stuck up" about "that Rome of hers." And little Lily Hardhurst had told her friend Mr. Bins that so far as she was concerned Miss Winchelsea might "go to her old Rome and stop there; *she* (Miss Lily Hardhurst) wouldn't grieve." And the way in which Miss Winchelsea put herself upon terms of personal tenderness with Horace and Benvenuto Cellini and Raphael and Shelley and Keats—if she had been Shelley's widow she could not have professed a keener interest in his grave—was a matter of universal astonishment. Her dress was a triumph of tactful discretion, sensible but not too "touristy"—Miss Winchelsea had a great dread of being "touristy"—and her Baedeker was carried in a cover of grey to hide its glaring red. She made a prim and pleasant little figure on the Charing Cross platform, in spite of her swelling pride, when at last the great day dawned and she could start for Rome. The

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day was bright, the Channel passage would be pleasant, and all the omens promised well. There was the gayest sense of adventure in this unprecedented departure.

She was going with two friends who had been fellow-students with her at the Training College, nice honest girls both, though not so good at history and literature as Miss Winchelsea. They both looked up to her immensely, though physically they had to look down, and she anticipated some pleasant times to be spent in "stirring them up" to her own pitch of æsthetic and historical enthusiasm. They had secured seats already, and welcomed her effusively at the carriage door. In the instant criticism of the encounter she noted that Fanny had a slightly "touristy" leather strap, and that Helen had succumbed to a serge jacket with side pockets, into which her hands were thrust. But they were much too happy with themselves and the expedition for their friend to attempt any hint at the moment about these things. As soon as the first ecstasies were over—Fanny's enthusiasm was a little noisy and crude, and consisted mainly in emphatic repetitions of "Just *fancy!* we're going to Rome, my dear!—Rome!"—they gave their attention to their fellow-travellers. Helen was anxious to secure a compartment to themselves, and, in order to discourage intruders, got out and planted herself firmly on the step. Miss Winchelsea peeped out over her shoulder, and made sly little remarks about the accumulating people on the platform, at which Fanny laughed gleefully.

They were travelling with one of Mr. Thomas

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Gunn's parties—fourteen days in Rome for fourteen pounds. They did not belong to the personally conducted party, of course—Miss Winchelsea had seen to that—but they travelled with it because of the convenience of that arrangement. The people were the oddest mixture, and wonderfully amusing. There was a vociferous red-faced polyglot personal conductor in a pepper-and-salt suit, very long in the arms and legs and very active. He shouted proclamations. When he wanted to speak to people he stretched out an arm and held them until his purpose was accomplished. One hand was full of papers, tickets, counterfoils of tourists. The people of the personally conducted party were, it seemed, of two sorts; people the conductor wanted and could not find, and people he did not want and who followed him in a steadily growing tail up and down the platform. These people seemed, indeed, to think that their one chance of reaching Rome lay in keeping close to him. Three little old ladies were particularly energetic in his pursuit, and at last maddened him to the pitch of clapping them into a carriage and daring them to emerge again. For the rest of the time, one, two, or three of their heads protruded from the window wailing inquiries about "a little wicker-work box" whenever he drew near. There was a very stout man with a very stout wife in shiny black; there was a little old man like an aged ostler.

"What *can* such people want in Rome?" asked Miss Winchelsea. "What can it mean to them?" There was a tall curate in a very small straw hat, and a short curate encumbered by a long camera

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stand. The contrast amused Fanny very much. Once they heard some one calling for "Snooks." "I always thought that name was invented by novelists," said Miss Winchelsea. "Fancy! Snooks. I wonder which *is* Mr. Snooks." Finally they picked out a stout and resolute little man in a large check suit. "If he isn't Snooks, he ought to be," said Miss Winchelsea.

Presently the conductor discovered Helen's attempt at a corner in carriages. "Room for five," he bawled with a parallel translation on his fingers. A party of four together—mother, father, and two daughters—blundered in, all greatly excited. "It's all right, Ma—you let *me*," said one of the daughters, hitting her mother's bonnet with a handbag she struggled to put in the rack. Miss Winchelsea detested people who banged about and called their mother "Ma." A young man travelling alone followed. He was not at all "touristy" in his costume, Miss Winchelsea observed; his Gladstone bag was of good pleasant leather with labels reminiscent of Luxembourg and Ostend, and his boots, though brown, were not vulgar. He carried an overcoat on his arm. Before these people had properly settled in their places, came an inspection of tickets and a slamming of doors, and behold! they were gliding out of Charing Cross Station on their way to Rome.

"Fancy!" cried Fanny, "we are going to Rome, my dear! Rome! I don't seem to believe it, even now."

Miss Winchelsea suppressed Fanny's emotions with a little smile, and the lady who was called "Ma"

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explained to people in general why they had "cut it so close" at the station. The two daughters called her "Ma" several times, toned her down in a tactless, effective way, and drove her at last to the muttered inventory of a basket of travelling requisites. Presently she looked up. "Lor!" she said, "I didn't bring *them!*" Both the daughters said "Oh, Ma!" But what "them" was did not appear. Presently Fanny produced Hare's "Walks in Rome," a sort of mitigated guide-book very popular among Roman visitors; and the father of the two daughters began to examine his books of tickets minutely, apparently in a search after English words. When he had looked at the tickets for a long time right way up, he turned them upside down. Then he produced a fountain pen and dated them with considerable care. The young man having completed an unostentatious survey of his fellow-travellers produced a book and fell to reading. When Helen and Fanny were looking out of the window at Chislehurst—the place interested Fanny because the poor dear Empress of the French used to live there—Miss Winchelsea took the opportunity to observe the book the young man held. It was not a guide-book but a thin volume of poetry —*bound.* She glanced at his face—it seemed a refined, pleasant face to her hasty glance. He wore a gilt *pince-nez.* "Do you think she lives there now?" said Fanny, and Miss Winchelsea's inspection came to an end.

For the rest of the journey Miss Winchelsea talked little, and what she said was as agreeable and as stamped with refinement as she could make it. Her

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voice was always low and clear and pleasant, and she took care that on this occasion it was particularly low and clear and pleasant. As they came under the white cliffs the young man put his book of poetry away, and when at last the train stopped beside the boat, he displayed a graceful alacrity with the impedimenta of Miss Winchelsea and her friends. Miss Winchelsea "hated nonsense," but she was pleased to see the young man perceived at once that they were ladies, and helped them without any violent geniality; and how nicely he showed that his civilities were to be no excuse for further intrusions. None of her party had been out of England before, and they were all excited and nervous at the Channel passage. They stood in a little group in a good place near the middle of the boat—the young man had taken Miss Winchelsea's hold-all there and had told her it was a good place—and they watched the white shores of Albion recede and quoted Shakespeare and made quiet fun of their fellow-travellers in the English way.

They were particularly amused at the precautions the bigger-sized people had taken against the waves —cut lemons and flasks prevailed, one lady lay full length in a deck chair with a handkerchief over her face, and a very broad resolute man in a bright brown "touristy" suit walked all the way from England to France along the deck, with his legs as widely apart as Providence permitted. These were all excellent precautions, and nobody was ill. The personally conducted party pursued the conductor about the deck with inquiries, in a manner that suggested

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to Helen's mind the rather vulgar image of hens with a piece of bacon rind, until at last he went into hiding below. And the young man with the thin volume of poetry stood in the stern watching England receding, looking, to Miss Winchelsea's eye, rather lonely and sad.

And then came Calais and tumultuous novelties, and the young man had not forgotten Miss Winchelsea's hold-all and the other little things. All three girls, though they had passed Government examinations in French to any extent, were stricken with a dumb shame of their accents, and the young man was very useful. And he did not intrude. He put them in a comfortable carriage and raised his hat and went away. Miss Winchelsea thanked him in her best manner—a pleasing, cultivated manner—and Fanny said he was "nice" almost before he was out of earshot. "I wonder what he can be," said Helen. "He's going to Italy, because I noticed green tickets in his book." Miss Winchelsea almost told them of the poetry, and decided not to do so. And presently the carriage windows seized hold upon them and the young man was forgotten. It made them feel that they were doing an educated sort of thing to travel through a country whose commonest advertisements were in idiomatic French, and Miss Winchelsea made unpatriotic comparisons because there were weedy little sign-board advertisements by the rail side instead of the broad hoardings that deface the landscape in our land. But the north of France is really uninteresting country, and after a time Fanny reverted to Hare's "Walks," and

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Helen initiated lunch. Miss Winchelsea awoke out of a happy reverie; she had been trying to realise, she said, that she was actually going to Rome, but she perceived at Helen's suggestion that she was hungry, and they lunched out of their baskets very cheerfully. In the afternoon they were tired and silent until Helen made tea. Miss Winchelsea might have dozed, only she knew Fanny slept with her mouth open; and as their fellow-passengers were two rather nice, critical-looking ladies of uncertain age—who knew French well enough to talk it—she employed herself in keeping Fanny awake. The rhythm of the train became insistent, and the streaming landscape outside at last quite painful to the eye. Before their night's stoppage came they were already dreadfully tired of travelling.

The stoppage for the night was brightened by the appearance of the young man, and his manners were all that could be desired and his French quite serviceable. His coupons availed for the same hotel as theirs, and by chance, as it seemed, he sat next Miss Winchelsea at the *table d'hôte*. In spite of her enthusiasm for Rome, she had thought out some such possibility very thoroughly, and when he ventured to make a remark upon the tediousness of travelling—he let the soup and fish go by before he did this—she did not simply assent to his proposition, but responded with another. They were soon comparing their journeys, and Helen and Fanny were cruelly overlooked in the conversation. It was to be the same journey, they found; one day for the galleries at Florence—"from what I hear," said the

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young man, "it is barely enough,"—and the rest at Rome. He talked of Rome very pleasantly; he was evidently quite well read, and he quoted Horace about Soracte. Miss Winchelsea had "done" that book of Horace for her matriculation, and was delighted to cap his quotation. It gave a sort of tone to things, this incident—a touch of refinement to mere chatting. Fanny expressed a few emotions, and Helen interpolated a few sensible remarks, but the bulk of the talk on the girls' side naturally fell to Miss Winchelsea.

Before they reached Rome this young man was tacitly of their party. They did not know his name nor what he was, but it seemed he taught, and Miss Winchelsea had a shrewd idea he was an extension lecturer. At any rate he was something of that sort, something gentlemanly and refined without being opulent and impossible. She tried once or twice to ascertain whether he came from Oxford or Cambridge, but he missed her timid opportunities. She tried to get him to make remarks about those places to see if he would say "go up" to them instead of "go down,"—she knew that was how you told a 'Varsity man. He used the word "'Varsity"—not university—in quite the proper way.

They saw as much of Mr. Ruskin's Florence as their brief time permitted; the young man met them in the Pitti Gallery and went round with them, chatting brightly, and evidently very grateful for their recognition. He knew a great deal about art, and all four enjoyed the morning immensely. It was fine to go round recognising old favourites and finding new

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beauties, especially while so many people fumbled helplessly with Baedeker. Nor was he a bit of a prig, Miss Winchelsea said, and indeed she detested prigs. He had a distinct undertow of humour, and was funny, for example, without being vulgar, at the expense of the quaint work of Beato Angelico. He had a grave seriousness beneath it all, and was quick to seize the moral lessons of the pictures. Fanny went softly among these masterpieces; she admitted "she knew so little about them," and she confessed that to her they were "all beautiful." Fanny's "beautiful" inclined to be a little monotonous, Miss Winchelsea thought. She had been quite glad when the last sunny Alp had vanished, because of the staccato of Fanny's admiration. Helen said little, but Miss Winchelsea had found her a trifle wanting on the æsthetic side in the old days and was not surprised; sometimes she laughed at the young man's hesitating, delicate jests and sometimes she didn't, and sometimes she seemed quite lost to the art about them in the contemplation of the dresses of the other visitors.

At Rome the young man was with them intermittently. A rather "touristy" friend of his took him away at times. He complained comically to Miss Winchelsea. "I have only two short weeks in Rome," he said, "and my friend Leonard wants to spend a whole day at Tivoli looking at a waterfall."

"What is your friend Leonard?" asked Miss Winchelsea abruptly.

"He's the most enthusiastic pedestrian I ever met," the young man replied—amusingly, but a little unsatisfactorily, Miss Winchelsea thought.

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They had some glorious times, and Fanny could not think what they would have done without him. Miss Winchelsea's interest and Fanny's enormous capacity for admiration were insatiable. They never flagged—through picture and sculpture galleries, immense crowded churches, ruins and museums, Judas trees and prickly pears, wine carts and palaces, they admired their way unflinchingly. They never saw a stone pine nor a eucalyptus but they named and admired it; they never glimpsed Soracte but they exclaimed. Their common ways were made wonderful by imaginative play. "Here Cæsar may have walked," they would say. "Raphael may have seen Soracte from this very point." They happened on the tomb of Bibulus. "Old Bibulus," said the young man. "The oldest monument of Republican Rome!" said Miss Winchelsea.

"I'm dreadfully stupid," said Fanny, "but who *was* Bibulus?"

There was a curious little pause.

"Wasn't he the person who built the wall?" said Helen.

The young man glanced quickly at her and laughed. "That was Balbus," he said. Helen reddened, but neither he nor Miss Winchelsea threw any light upon Fanny's ignorance about Bibulus.

Helen was more taciturn than the other three, but then she was always taciturn; and usually she took care of the tram tickets and things like that, or kept her eye on them if the young man took them, and told him where they were when he wanted them. Glorious times they had, these young people, in that pale brown cleanly city of memories that was once

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the world. Their only sorrow was the shortness of the time. They said indeed that the electric trams and the '70 buildings, and that criminal advertisement that glares upon the Forum, outraged their æsthetic feelings unspeakably; but that was only part of the fun. And indeed Rome is such a wonderful place that at times it made Miss Winchelsea forget some of her most carefully prepared enthusiasms, and Helen, taken unawares, would suddenly admit the beauty of unexpected things. Yet Fanny and Helen would have liked a shop window or so in the English quarter if Miss Winchelsea's uncompromising hostility to all other English visitors had not rendered that district impossible.

The intellectual and æsthetic fellowship of Miss Winchelsea and the scholarly young man passed insensibly towards a deeper feeling. The exuberant Fanny did her best to keep pace with their recondite admiration by playing her "beautiful" with vigour, and saying "Oh! *let's* go," with enormous appetite whenever a new place of interest was mentioned. But towards the end Helen developed a certain want of sympathy that disappointed Miss Winchelsea. She refused to see "anything" in the face of Beatrice Cenci—Shelley's Beatrice Cenci!—in the Barberini Gallery; and one day, when they were deploring the electric trams, she said rather snappishly that "people must get about somehow, and it's better than torturing horses up these horrid little hills." She spoke of the Seven Hills of Rome as "horrid little hills"!

And the day they went on the Palatine—though

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Miss Winchelsea did not know of this—she remarked suddenly to Fanny, "Don't hurry like that, my dear; *they* don't want us to overtake them. And we don't say the right things for them when we *do* get near."

"I wasn't trying to overtake them," said Fanny, slackening her excessive pace; "I wasn't indeed." And for a minute she was short of breath.

But Miss Winchelsea had come upon happiness. It was only when she came to look back across an intervening tragedy that she quite realised how happy she had been pacing among the cypress-shadowed ruins, and exchanging the very highest class of information the human mind can possess, the most refined impressions it is possible to convey. Insensibly emotion crept into their intercourse, sunning itself openly and pleasantly at last when Helen's modernity was not too near. Insensibly their interest drifted from the wonderful associations about them to their more intimate and personal feelings. In a tentative way information was supplied; she spoke allusively of her school, of her examination successes, of her gladness that the days of "Cram" were over. He made it quite clear that he also was a teacher. They spoke of the greatness of their calling, of the necessity of sympathy to face its irksome details, of a certain loneliness they sometimes felt.

That was in the Colosseum, and it was as far as they got that day, because Helen returned with Fanny—she had taken her into the upper galleries. Yet the private dreams of Miss Winchelsea, already vivid and concrete enough, became now realistic in

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the highest degree. She figured that pleasant young man lecturing in the most edifying way to his students, herself modestly prominent as his intellectual mate and helper; she figured a refined little home, with two bureaus, with white shelves of high-class books, and autotypes of the pictures of Rossetti and Burne Jones, with Morris's wall-papers and flowers in pots of beaten copper. Indeed, she figured many things. On the Pincio the two had a few precious moments together, while Helen marched Fanny off to see the *muro Torto*, and he spoke at once plainly. He said he hoped their friendship was only beginning, that he already found her company very precious to him, that indeed it was more than that.

He became nervous, thrusting at his glasses with trembling fingers as though he fancied his emotions made them unstable. "I should of course," he said, "tell you things about myself. I know it is rather unusual my speaking to you like this. Only our meeting has been so accidental—or providential—and I am snatching at things. I came to Rome expecting a lonely tour . . . and I have been so very happy, so very happy. Quite recently I have found myself in a position—I have dared to think—And——"

He glanced over his shoulder and stopped. He said "Demn!" quite distinctly—and she did not condemn him for that manly lapse into profanity. She looked and saw his friend Leonard advancing. He drew nearer; he raised his hat to Miss Winchelsea, and his smile was almost a grin. "I've been looking for you everywhere, Snooks," he said. "You

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promised to be on the Piazza steps half-an-hour ago."

Snooks! The name struck Miss Winchelsea like a blow in the face. She did not hear his reply. She thought afterwards that Leonard must have considered her the vaguest-minded person. To this day she is not sure whether she was introduced to Leonard or not, nor what she said to him. A sort of mental paralysis was upon her. Of all offensive surnames —Snooks!

Helen and Fanny were returning, there were civilities, and the young men were receding. By a great effort she controlled herself to face the inquiring eyes of her friends. All that afternoon she lived the life of a heroine under the indescribable outrage of that name, chatting, observing, with "Snooks" gnawing at her heart. From the moment that it first rang upon her ears, the dream of her happiness was prostrate in the dust. All the refinement she had figured was ruined and defaced by that cognomen's inexorable vulgarity.

What was that refined little home to her now, spite of autotypes, Morris papers, and bureaus? Athwart it in letters of fire ran an incredible inscription: "Mrs. Snooks." That may seem a small thing to the reader, but consider the delicate refinement of Miss Winchelsea's mind. Be as refined as you can and then think of writing yourself down:— "Snooks." She conceived herself being addressed as Mrs. Snooks by all the people she liked least, conceived the patronymic touched with a vague quality of insult. She figured a card of grey and silver bear-

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ing "Winchelsea" triumphantly effaced by an arrow, Cupid's arrow, in favour of "Snooks." Degrading confession of feminine weakness! She imagined the terrible rejoicings of certain girl friends, of certain grocer cousins from whom her growing refinement had long since estranged her. How they would make it sprawl across the envelope that would bring their sarcastic congratulations. Would even his pleasant company compensate her for that? "It is impossible," she muttered; "impossible! *Snooks!*"

She was sorry for him, but not so sorry as she was for herself. For him she had a touch of indignation. To be so nice, so refined, while all the time he was "Snooks," to hide under a pretentious gentility of demeanour the badge sinister of his surname seemed a sort of treachery. To put it in the language of sentimental science she felt he had "led her on."

There were, of course, moments of terrible vacillation, a period even when something almost like passion bid her throw refinement to the winds. And there was something in her, an unexpurgated vestige of vulgarity that made a strenuous attempt at proving that Snooks was not so very bad a name after all. Any hovering hesitation flew before Fanny's manner, when Fanny came with an air of catastrophe to tell that she also knew the horror. Fanny's voice fell to a whisper when she said *Snooks*. Miss Winchelsea would not give him any answer when at last, in the Borghese, she could have a minute with him; but she promised him a note.

She handed him that note in the little book of poetry he had lent her, the little book that had

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first drawn them together. Her refusal was ambiguous, allusive. She could no more tell him why she rejected him than she could have told a cripple of his hump. He too must feel something of the unspeakable quality of his name. Indeed, he had avoided a dozen chances of telling it, she now perceived. So she spoke of "obstacles she could not reveal"—"reasons why the thing he spoke of was impossible." She addressed the note with a shiver, "E. K. Snooks."

Things were worse than she had dreaded; he asked her to explain. How *could* she explain? Those last two days in Rome were dreadful. She was haunted by his air of astonished perplexity. She knew she had given him intimate hopes, she had not the courage to examine her mind thoroughly for the extent of her encouragement. She knew he must think her the most changeable of beings. Now that she was in full retreat, she would not even perceive his hints of a possible correspondence. But in that matter he did a thing that seemed to her at once delicate and romantic. He made a go-between of Fanny. Fanny could not keep the secret, and came and told her that night under a transparent pretext of needed advice. "Mr. Snooks," said Fanny, "wants to write to me. Fancy! I had no idea. But should I let him?" They talked it over long and earnestly, and Miss Winchelsea was careful to keep the veil over her heart. She was already repenting his disregarded hints. Why should she not hear of him sometimes—painful though his name must be to her? Miss Winchelsea decided it might be per-

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mitted, and Fanny kissed her good night with unusual emotion. After she had gone Miss Winchelsea sat for a long time at the window of her little room. It was moonlight, and down the street a man sang "Santa Lucia" with almost heart-dissolving tenderness. . . . She sat very still.

She breathed a word very softly to herself. The word was "*Snooks.*" Then she got up with a profound sigh, and went to bed. The next morning he said to her meaningly, "I shall hear of you through your friend."

Mr. Snooks saw them off from Rome with that pathetic interrogative perplexity still on his face, and if it had not been for Helen he would have retained Miss Winchelsea's hold-all in his hand as a sort of encyclopædic keepsake. On their way back to England Miss Winchelsea on six separate occasions made Fanny promise to write to her the longest of long letters. Fanny, it seemed, would be quite near Mr. Snooks. Her new school—she was always going to new schools—would be only five miles from Steely Bank, and it was in the Steely Bank Polytechnic, and one or two first-class schools, that Mr. Snooks did his teaching. He might even see her at times. They could not talk much of him—she and Fanny always spoke of "him," never of Mr. Snooks—because Helen was apt to say unsympathetic things about him. Her nature had coarsened very much, Miss Winchelsea perceived, since the old Training College days; she had become hard and cynical. She thought he had a weak face, mistaking refinement for weakness as people of her stamp are apt

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to do, and when she heard his name was Snooks, she said she had expected something of the sort. Miss Winchelsea was careful to spare her own feelings after that, but Fanny was less circumspect.

The girls parted in London, and Miss Winchelsea returned, with a new interest in life, to the Girls' High School in which she had been an increasingly valuable assistant for the last three years. Her new interest in life was Fanny as a correspondent, and to give her a lead she wrote her a lengthy descriptive letter within a fortnight of her return. Fanny answered very disappointingly. Fanny indeed had no literary gift, but it was new to Miss Winchelsea to find herself deploring the want of gifts in a friend. That letter was even criticised aloud in the safe solitude of Miss Winchelsea's study, and her criticism, spoken with great bitterness, was "Twaddle!" It was full of just the things Miss Winchelsea's letter had been full of, particulars of the school. And of Mr. Snooks, only this much: "I have had a letter from Mr. Snooks, and he has been over to see me on two Saturday afternoons running. He talked about Rome and you; we both talked about you. Your ears must have burnt, my dear. . . ."

Miss Winchelsea repressed a desire to demand more explicit information, and wrote the sweetest long letter again. "Tell me all about yourself, dear. That journey has quite refreshed our ancient friendship, and I do so want to keep in touch with you." About Mr. Snooks she simply wrote on the fifth page that she was glad Fanny had seen him, and that if he *should* ask after her, she was to be remem-

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bered to him *very kindly* (underlined). And Fanny replied most obtusely in the key of that "ancient friendship," reminding Miss Winchelsea of a dozen foolish things of those old school-girl days at the Training College, and saying not a word about Mr. Snooks!

For nearly a week Miss Winchelsea was so angry at the failure of Fanny as a go-between that she could not write to her. And then she wrote less effusively, and in her letter she asked point-blank, "Have you seen Mr. Snooks?" Fanny's letter was unexpectedly satisfactory. "I *have* seen Mr. Snooks," she wrote, and having once named him she kept on about him; it was all Snooks—Snooks this and Snooks that. He was to give a public lecture, said Fanny, among other things. Yet Miss Winchelsea, after the first glow of gratification, still found this letter a little unsatisfactory. Fanny did not report Mr. Snooks as saying anything about Miss Winchelsea, nor as looking white and worn, as he ought to have been doing. And behold! before she had replied, came a second letter from Fanny on the same theme, quite a gushing letter, and covering six sheets with her loose feminine hand.

And about this second letter was a rather odd little thing that Miss Winchelsea only noticed as she re-read it the third time. Fanny's natural feminity had prevailed even against the round and clear traditions of the Training College; she was one of those she-creatures born to make all her *m*'s and *n*'s and *u*'s and *r*'s and *e*'s alike, and to leave her *o*'s and *a*'s open and her *i*'s undotted. So that it

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was only after an elaborate comparison of word with word that Miss Winchelsea felt assured Mr. Snooks was not really "Mr. Snooks" at all! In Fanny's first letter of gush he was Mr. "Snooks," in her second the spelling was changed to Mr. "Senoks." Miss Winchelsea's hand positively trembled as she turned the sheet over—it meant so much to her. For it had already begun to seem to her that even the name of Mrs. Snooks might be avoided at too great a price, and suddenly—this possibility! She turned over the six sheets, all dappled with that critical name, and everywhere the first letter had the form of an *el* For a time she walked the room with a hand pressed upon her heart.

She spent a whole day pondering this change, weighing a letter of inquiry that should be at once discreet and effectual; weighing, too, what action she should take after the answer came. She was resolved that if this altered spelling was anything more than a quaint fancy of Fanny's, she would write forthwith to Mr. Snooks. She had now reached a stage when the minor refinements of behaviour disappeared. Her excuse remained uninvented, but she had the subject of her letter clear in her mind, even to the hint that "circumstances in my life have changed very greatly since we talked together." But she never gave that hint. There came a third letter from that fitful correspondent Fanny. The first line proclaimed her "the happiest girl alive."

Miss Winchelsea crushed the letter in her hand—the rest unread—and sat with her face suddenly very still. She had received it just before morning

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school, and had opened it when the junior mathematicians were well under way. Presently she resumed reading with an appearance of great calm. But after the first sheet she went on reading the third without discovering the error:—"told him frankly I did not like his name," the third sheet began. "He told me he did not like it himself—you know that sort of sudden, frank way he has"—Miss Winchelsea did know. "So I said, 'Couldn't you change it?' He didn't see it at first. Well, you know, dear, he had told me what it really meant; it means Sevenoaks, only it has got down to Snooks—both Snooks and Noaks, dreadfully vulgar surnames though they be, are really worn forms of Sevenoaks. So I said—even I have my bright ideas at times—'If it got down from Sevenoaks to Snooks, why not get it back from Snooks to Sevenoaks?' And the long and the short of it is, dear, he couldn't refuse me, and he changed his spelling there and then to Senoks for the bills of the new lecture. And afterwards, when we are married, we shall put in the apostrophe and make it Se'noks. Wasn't it kind of him to mind that fancy of mine, when many men would have taken offence? But it is just like him all over; he is as kind as he is clever. Because he knew as well as I did that I would have had him in spite of it, had he been ten times Snooks. But he did it all the same."

The class was startled by the sound of paper being viciously torn, and looked up to see Miss Winchelsea white in the face and with some very small pieces of paper clenched in one hand. For a few seconds they

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stared at her stare, and then her expression changed back to a more familiar one. "Has any one finished number three?" she asked in an even tone. She remained calm after that. But impositions ruled high that day. And she spent two laborious evenings writing letters of various sorts to Fanny, before she found a decent congratulatory vein. Her reason struggled hopelessly against the persuasion that Fanny had behaved in an exceedingly treacherous manner.

One may be extremely refined and still capable of a very sore heart. Certainly Miss Winchelsea's heart was very sore. She had moods of sexual hostility, in which she generalised uncharitably about mankind. "He forgot himself with me," she said. "But Fanny is pink and pretty and soft and a fool —a very excellent match for a Man." And by way of a wedding present she sent Fanny a gracefully bound volume of poetry by George Meredith, and Fanny wrote back a grossly happy letter to say that it was "*all* beautiful." Miss Winchelsea hoped that some day Mr. Senoks might take up that slim book and think for a moment of the donor. Fanny wrote several times before and about her marriage, pursuing that fond legend of their "ancient friendship," and giving her happiness in the fullest detail. And Miss Winchelsea wrote to Helen for the first time after the Roman journey, saying nothing about the marriage, but expressing very cordial feelings.

They had been in Rome at Easter, and Fanny was married in the August vacation. She wrote a garrulous letter to Miss Winchelsea, describing her home-

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coming and the astonishing arrangements of their "teeny, weeny" little house. Mr. Se'noks was now beginning to assume a refinement in Miss Winchelsea's memory out of all proportion to the facts of the case, and she tried in vain to imagine his cultured greatness in a "teeny, weeny" little house. "Am busy enamelling a cosy corner," said Fanny, sprawling to the end of her third sheet, "so excuse more." Miss Winchelsea answered in her best style, gently poking fun at Fanny's arrangements, and hoping intensely that Mr. Se'noks might see the letter. Only this hope enabled her to write at all, answering not only that letter but one in November and one at Christmas.

The two latter communications contained urgent invitations for her to come to Steely Bank on a visit during the Christmas holidays. She tried to think that *he* had told her to ask that, but it was too much like Fanny's opulent good-nature. She could not but believe that he must be sick of his blunder by this time; and she had more than a hope that he would presently write her a letter beginning "Dear Friend." Something subtly tragic in the separation was a great support to her, a sad misunderstanding. To have been jilted would have been intolerable. But he never wrote that letter beginning "Dear Friend."

For two years Miss Winchelsea could not go to Steely Bank, in spite of the reiterated invitations of Mrs. Sevenoaks—it became full Sevenoaks in the second year. Then one day near the Easter rest she felt lonely and without a soul to understand her in the world, and her mind ran once more on what is

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called Platonic friendship. Fanny was clearly happy and busy in her new sphere of domesticity, but no doubt *he* had his lonely hours. Did he ever think of those days in Rome, gone now beyond recalling? No one had understood her as he had done; no one in all the world. It would be a sort of melancholy pleasure to talk to him again, and what harm could it do? Why should she deny herself? That night she wrote a sonnet, all but the last two lines of the octave—which would not come; and the next day she composed a graceful little note to tell Fanny she was coming down.

And so she saw him again.

Even at the first encounter it was evident he had changed; he seemed stouter and less nervous, and it speedily appeared that his conversation had already lost much of its old delicacy. There even seemed a justification for Helen's discovery of weakness in his face—in certain lights it *was* weak. He seemed busy and preoccupied about his affairs, and almost under the impression that Miss Winchelsea had come for the sake of Fanny. He discussed his dinner with Fanny in an intelligent way. They only had one good long talk together, and that came to nothing. He did not refer to Rome, and spent some time abusing a man who had stolen an idea he had had for a textbook. It did not seem a very wonderful idea to Miss Winchelsea. She discovered he had forgotten the names of more than half the painters whose work they had rejoiced over in Florence.

It was a sadly disappointing week, and Miss Win-

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chelsea was glad when it came to an end. Under various excuses she avoided visiting them again. After a time the visitor's room was occupied by their two little boys, and Fanny's invitations ceased. The intimacy of her letters had long since faded away.

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