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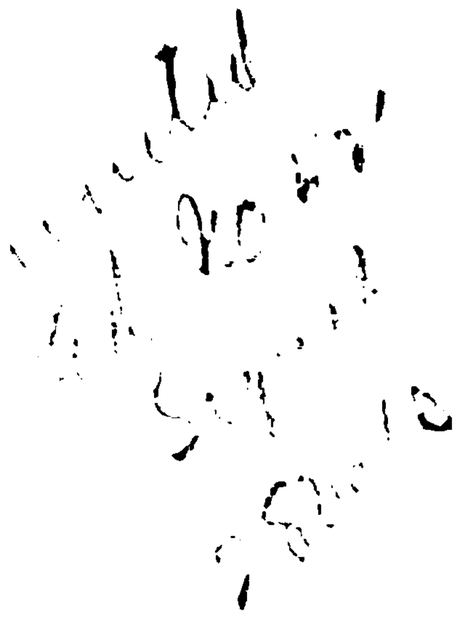

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THE WORKS OF
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ATLANTIC EDITION

VOLUME I

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THE TIME MACHINE

THE WONDERFUL VISIT

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

H. G. WELLS

LONDON

T. FISHER UNWIN LTD.

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THE WONDERFUL VISIT
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A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE ATLANTIC EDITION

WHEN a firm of publishers has the enterprise to issue a collected edition of a man's writings, and there are subscribers to such a publication, it ill becomes him to question the permanent value of the material so honoured. There is only one graceful response to this compliment, and that is to take himself as seriously as he has been taken, and to set out his writings with as brave a face as possible. "Writings" he will call them, in this preface at least, rather than "Works" as the title has it, because they are so miscellaneous and uneven.

Whatever benefit may accrue to publisher and subscriber through the publication of this edition, on the author at any rate it has inflicted the salutary discipline of rereading himself from the beginning and the necessity of a provisional summing up of his own activities. There is, he finds, a very strong temptation in this occasion to present his display as much more coherent and orderly than it is in reality. Of course, the unity due to personality was inevitable. We have, it is plain, a mind projected here upon the world, amused by the spectacle without, but rather more concerned by the urgency within. But there does also seem to be something more than the mere unity of a developing character throughout these

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writings; there is a continuous intellectual process. A group of questions shapes itself steadily and progressively; "What is the drive in me?" "What has it got to do with the other drives?" "What has it got to do with the spectacle without?"

Again and again the author returns to this group of inquiries; he takes this or that aspect of the drive in this or that relationship and experiments with possible answers. Since the human mind is a very infirm implement, and abstract and philosophical phraseology still very unsatisfactory, it has perforce to use symbols and help itself out with concrete imaginations. These writings are sometimes stories, sometimes fables and fantasies; sometimes they are discussions posed in relation to an attitude rather deliberately assumed. The idea of producing a "finished work" was never strong at any time in the writer's mind. Some of the earlier books were very carefully written; "Love and Mr. Lewisham," for example, was sedulously polished, and so was "The First Men in the Moon"; "A Modern Utopia" also was planned and written with considerable care; but most of these writings are sketches, some, like "The World Set Free," quite broken-backed sketches, intended to carry an idea or a group of ideas over to an interested reader and lacking any pretension to "finish" or "execution" or any of the implicit claims of the set and deliberate and dignified work of art. These collected writings aim at something in the flattest contrast with—what shall I call it?—the processional dignity of such a collection as that of the works of Henry James. Such works are essentially tri-

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umphs of conception and treatment, things in themselves completed, finished, and presented, they stand or fall as that; these, on the contrary, are essentially comments and enhancements of the interest of life itself. Possibly these writings, in whole or in part, are literature, but certainly, with one exception to be noted in its place, they are not Works of Art. It is far truer to call them Journalism than Art.

So the author, putting as brave a face as possible upon the matter, writes of his writings as a whole. Much of this abundant "output" of temporary interest, much that he afterwards rewrote in a more permanent form, he has excluded from this collection and thrust for ever into the waste-paper basket. Still there remains a certain amount of material, he is bound to admit, that fits very questionably into the frame of his general statement. There are things reprinted here which were done almost as casually as the faces one sketches on one's blotting-pad; things that have bubbled up from nothing in the mind, which pleased him to do and which it has pleased him to reprint.

A paragraph or so about the origins and life of the writer seems to be owing to the readers of this edition. His father, Joseph Wells, was originally a gardener, the son of Joseph Wells, the head gardener of Lord de Lisle at Penshurst. By an odd coincidence Joseph Wells, Jr., was gardener to another Joseph Wells, Joseph Wells of Redleaf, a man of considerable wealth and position, but the two families had no blood relationship whatever. The writer's mother was the daughter of George Neal, an inn-keeper at Midhurst

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in Sussex, and she was maid to Miss Featherstonehaugh of Up Park, Petersfield. But long before he was born (in 1866) his parents had left "service." His father had sunk a small inheritance in an unsuccessful crockery shop at Bromley in Kent, and was staving off bankruptcy by earning money as a professional cricketer. He was a swift and subtle bowler, and made a record at a match between Kent and Sussex at Hove in 1862 by clean bowling four wickets in succession. The writer was the youngest of four children. The home was poverty-struck and shabby but not unhappy; if food was sometimes rather short there was plenty to read, for Joseph Wells had a taste for reading and would go to sales to pick up a cheap lot of books whenever opportunity offered. Moreover Bromley possessed a Literary Institute with a lending library, and there was a small middle-class Academy kept by a teacher of some ability, Mr. Thomas Morley, which the writer attended. Before he was thirteen he had acquired the reading habit and he was filled with curiosity about this world in which he found himself. He read everything but the novels of Sir Walter Scott, which bored him indescribably, though he read and learned by heart much of "Marmion" and "The Lady of the Lake." Books bought haphazard at sales make an uneven library. The contents and omissions of the Bromley book-shelves were equally notable. Washington Irving was much in evidence in a cheap collected edition. Chaucer's works, Grote's "History of Greece," Humboldt's "Cosmos," George Eliot's "Middlemarch," bound volumes of *Punch*, an old edition of Captain

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Cook's "Travels," a fascinating middle-eighteenth century Atlas with abounding Terræ Incognitæ, are vivid among the writer's memories. On Sundays mother insisted upon the Bible, but Sturm's "Reflections" and Clarke's New Testament with its footnotes sowed the seeds of an early scepticism. Some Shakespeare he read at school, but not much of him otherwise; all of Dickens that was not at home he found at a cousin's home, and the pictures in a Wood's "Natural History" possessed by that same cousin gave him an inkling of evolution and a nightmare terror of gorillas.

When the writer was ten or eleven his father was disabled by a fall which crippled him, and when he was thirteen the little shop collapsed. His mother returned as housekeeper to her former mistress at Up Park, and his father took refuge in a small, inexpensive cottage. Further education for the writer seemed impossible. There was some trouble in finding him employment, an unhandy boy preoccupied with reading. He was tried over as a draper's apprentice, as a pupil-teacher in an elementary school, as a chemist's apprentice, and again as a draper. After two years with the second draper, a Mr. Hyde of Southsea, he prayed to have his indentures cancelled, and became a sort of pupil-teacher at the Midhurst Grammar-School. In the intervals between these attempts to begin life he took refuge in the housekeeper's room with his mother at Up Park. From the library above stairs he borrowed and read translations of Plutarch's "Lives," Plato's "Republic," and Lucretius, and, most entrancing book! "Vathek"; and he struggled

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with and partly understood the easy French of some volumes of Voltaire's works. Sir Harry Featherstonehaugh, friend of the Prince Regent, from whom the house had descended to his sister-in-law, my mother's Miss Featherstonehaugh, had been a liberal thinker. Moreover in the attic at Up Park the writer unearthed a Gregorian telescope in its box, put it together with some difficulty, and spent some chilly but wonderful nights looking at the moon, at the phases of Venus, and at Jupiter's satellites.

From Midhurst he won a studentship at what is now the Royal College of Science, South Kensington. He did three years of good work there; his biological professor was Huxley, and a little later, without much difficulty, he was able to take the London Bachelor of Science degree with first-class honours in Zoology. Thereafter came some school teaching and the direction of "cramming" classes for the science examinations in the London medical course. But insufficient food and exercise during his student days, when he had to live in London upon his weekly allowance of a guinea, had left him with an attenuated physique; a football accident close upon his twenty-first birthday crushed and destroyed one kidney, and his body did not readjust itself satisfactorily to the consequences of these misadventures until he was in his middle thirties. He had some years of not so much ill health as unstable health. Each London winter made a sustained attempt to kill him. He was almost driven by these circumstances to live out of London and to indulge his desire to write for a living.

While at the Royal College of Science he had

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started and edited the student's magazine which, as the *Phœnix*, still survives. His next published writings were in the educational papers, his first book was a little text-book of biology in two volumes for the use of his cramming-class students. Then he began to write humourous articles and sketches and short stories in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Saturday Review* and other publications. Among the students of his cramming classes in London, he met his present wife, Catherine Robbins. To her sympathy, loyalty, co-operation, and capable management of his affairs his success in the world is very largely due. For from three and twenty onward, his life has been one of steadily increasing prosperity with more freedom, more leisure, more travel, and a wider and more various circle of friends every year.

These facts will suffice to give the reader an idea of the angle from which the writings here collected were done. Those ruling questions, "What is the drive in me?" "What has it got to do with the other drives?" "What has it got to do with the spectacle without?" seem to have been almost innate. Before he left the draper's shop the writer, inspired perhaps by Lucretius, Humboldt, and the Gregorian telescope, was jotting down in a little note-book his rudimentary answers to such questions as "What is matter?" and "What is space?" and while he was still a student at the Royal College he schemed a universal history. These were not so much ambitions as attempts to satisfy an overpowering need to know—to know personally, to get hold of the hang of life as one saw it, with that clearness, that sense

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of achieved possession, which, he found, only writing down could give.

The stories and essays in this collection are arranged in an order roughly chronological. But whenever it has seemed to be more illuminating or interesting to bring things together that did not follow one another closely, the chronological order has been disregarded. Each volume will have a brief introduction placing its contents in relation to the rest of the work. It is the most difficult judgment of all to judge oneself, but the writer believes that the whole effect of the collection upon any one who finds it worth while to look through it, will be one of growth and increasing clearness. Certain ideas appear very early and develop. There is, for example, a profound scepticism about man's knowledge of final reality. While the writer was still a science student he was seized by the idea that time is a dimension of space differing only in the relation of the human consciousness towards it, and that both Newtonian space and syllogistic reasoning are simplifications of a more subtle and intangible reality, simplifications imposed upon us by the limitations and imperfections of our minds. This line of thought leads to the recognition that such ideas as the idea of Right and the idea of God may also prove to be relative and provisional, that they are attempts to simplify and so bring into the compass of human reactions what is otherwise humanly inexpressible.

And another leading idea that grows throughout these writings is the idea of a synthetic Collective Mind, arising out of and using and passing on beyond

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our individual minds. What we call Science is, in the writer's way of thinking, the knowledge in this Mind; and it develops a will for collective effort and a collective purpose in mankind. A very large proportion of these writings plays about this group of ideas. It is the basis of the writer's socialism and of his international interpretations. The theme of several of the novels is the reaction of the passionate ego-centred individual to the growing consciousness and the gathering imperatives of such a collective mind.

It is the writer's belief that human society is now undergoing changes more rapid and more profound than have ever happened to it before, and that a world community is steadily and swiftly replacing the practically separate national and racial communities of the past. Himself a child of change, born in a home that was broken up by failure in retail trade, and escaping only by very desperate exertions from a life of servitude and frustration, he has been made aware of, and he is still enormously aware of and eager to understand and express, the process of adaptation, destruction, and reconstruction of old moral and intellectual and political and economic formulæ that is going on all about us. Indeed all these volumes are about unrest and change. Even in his novels his characters, like Kipps and Mr. Polly, are either change-driven and unable to understand, or, like Benham of "The Research Magnificent" or Stratton in "The Passionate Friends," they are attempting desperately to understand, and still more desperately attempting to thrust at and interfere with change.

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Inseparable from the question "What is the drive in me?" are the questions: "What should one do?" "What ought one to do?" There is no such thing as an impersonal discussion of conduct or absolute detachment in art. Contemporary criticism is too often vitiated by a pretence that such an aloofness is possible. It would be easier to study anatomy without a body to touch and see and dissect, than to discuss conduct without experiences, personalities, and imperatives. For, to be a little franker than he was in his opening paragraphs, the writer confesses his profound disbelief in any perfect or permanent work of art. All art, all science, and still more certainly all writing are experiments in statement. There will come a time for every work of art when it will have served its purpose and be bereft of its last rag of significance. Here in these collected volumes are fantasy, fiction, discussion, and stated case, all openly and deliberately experimental, all in essence sketches and trials. This edition is a diary of imaginations and ideas much more than a set display, the record of a life lived in a time of great readjustment rather than of creative achievement.

Necessarily where the standpoint varies there are many variations in statement. Quite apart from the real blunders, the wanderings into dead alleys, and the slow tentative realisations, step by step, of a limited and fallible man, there must also be many merely apparent inconsistencies in such writings. A man may say one day that Monte Rosa lies to the right of the Matterhorn and another day he may say it lies to the left, and he may be an entirely trustworthy

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man approaching the mountains one day from Aosta and another from Zermatt. But if he should be drawn into controversies he may find that some hasty and resentful antagonist has seized upon these two statements as an illustration of his mental and moral disorders. He will be asked to stop scrapping his opinions and to make up his mind once for all whether Monte Rosa is the mountain to the left or the mountain to the right. Now at times the writer has ruffled the convictions of others and fallen into disputations, and out of the ensuing controversial give and take there has distilled an accusation that he alters his opinions frequently and completely. The other day, for instance, an amiable contemporary said of the writer that he changed his opinions as he changed his shirt. This is substantially untrue. If it were true these volumes of close upon thirty years of thinking and writing would be a poor bargain for any subscriber. But it is so far true that to the questions, "Do you believe in God?" "Do you believe in nationality?" "Do you believe in individualism, in socialism?" the writer shows himself as often disposed to answer "Yes" as "No." One cannot give precise answers to indefinable questions. In these volumes you will find the writer constantly working at the telling of just the sort of God, just the sort of England, just the sort of individual freedom and just the sort of social service he believes in, and just the sort that he repudiates and denies. Yet reading all these writings over, as this collected edition has at last obliged the writer to do, he is, he is bound to confess, surprised at his own general consistency.

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There is growth in these writings indeed, but there is continuity. He cannot venture to estimate what he may have done for other people by writing such a quantity of books and stories and articles, but on the whole—lapses due to vanity and indolence and obtuseness notwithstanding—he feels he has done well by himself. He would live and write in rather the same way if he had to live over again. There is, he believes, in the ultimate reckoning something said in these volumes that was not said before, and something shaped that was not shaped before.

H. G. WELLS.

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PREFACE TO VOLUME I

In this first volume are some of the author's earliest imaginative writings. The idea of "The Time Machine" itself, a rather forced development of the idea that time is a direction in space, came when he was still a student at the Royal College of Science. He tried to make a story of it in the students' magazine. If the old numbers of that publication for the years 1889 and 1890, or thereabouts, still exist, the curious may read there that first essay, written obviously under the influence of Hawthorne and smeared with that miscellaneous allusiveness that Carlyle and many other of the great Victorians had made the fashion. "Time Travellers" were not to be written of in those days of the twopence coloured style; the story was called, rather deliciously, "The Chronic Argonauts" and the Time Traveller was "Mr. Nebo-gipfel." Similar pigments prevailed throughout. A cleansing course of Swift and Sterne intervened before the idea was written again for Henley's *National Observer* in 1894, and his later *New Review* in 1895, and published as a book in the spring of the latter year. That version stands here unaltered. There was a slight struggle between the writer and W. E. Henley who wanted, he said, to put a little "writing" into the tale. But the writer was in reaction from that sort

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of thing, the Henley interpolations were cut out again, and he had his own way with his text.

And now the writer reads this book, "The Time Machine," and can no more touch it or change it than if it were the work of an entirely different person. He reads it again after a long interval, he does not believe he has opened its pages for twenty years, and finds it hard and "clever" and youthful. And—what is rather odd, he thinks—a little unsympathetic. He is left doubting—rather irrelevantly to the general business of this Preface—whether if the Time Machine were a sufficiently practicable method of transport for such a meeting, the H. G. Wells of 1894 and the H. G. Wells of 1922 would get on very well together. But he has found a copy of the book in which, somewhen about 1898 or 1899, he marked out a few modifications in arrangement and improvements in expression. Almost all these suggested changes he has accepted, so that what the reader gets here is a revised definitive version a quarter of a century old.

"The Jilting of Jane" and "The Cone" are also very "young" things. "The Jilting of Jane" is the sort of little deliberately pleasant and sympathetic sketch that every young journalist was doing in those days. "The Cone" is the last surviving relic of what might have been a considerable lark to write; it was to have been a vast melodrama, all at that same level of high sensation. These two were done some time before the first rewriting of "The Time Machine" but before its final revision. After them comes a string of irresponsible stories. They are just inven-

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tions that were written for magazines, and there is hardly anything more to be said for them. "The Wonderful Visit" was published as a book very soon after "The Time Machine," and it develops the method of quite a number of the writer's short stories, the method of bringing some fantastically possible or impossible thing into a commonplace group of people, and working out their reactions with the completest gravity and reasonableness. Perhaps the best and reallest of all this group of stories is the one called "The Purple Pileus," which completes this first volume.

H. G. W.

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THE TIME MACHINE

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THE TIME MACHINE

§ 1

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

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

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

"I do not mean to ask you to accept anything without reasonable ground for it. You will soon ad-

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mit as much as I need from you. You know of course that a mathematical line, a line of thickness *nil*, has no real existence. They taught you that? Neither has a mathematical plane. These things are mere abstractions."

"That is all right," said the Psychologist.

"Nor, having only length, breadth, and thickness, can a cube have a real existence."

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

"So most people think. But wait a moment. Can an *instantaneous* cube exist?"

"Don't follow you," said Filby.

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

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

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

"Now, it is very remarkable that this is so exten-

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sively overlooked," continued the Time Traveller, with a slight accession of cheerfulness. "Really this is what is meant by the Fourth Dimension, though some people who talk about the Fourth Dimension do not know they mean it. It is only another way of looking at Time. *There is no difference between Time and any of the three dimensions of Space except that our consciousness moves along it.* But some foolish people have got hold of the wrong side of that idea. You have all heard what they have to say about this Fourth Dimension?"

"*I* have not," said the Provincial Mayor.

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

"I think so," murmured the Provincial Mayor; and, knitting his brows, he lapsed into an introspective state, his lips moving as one who repeats mystic

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words. "Yes, I think I see it now," he said after some time, brightening in a quite transitory manner.

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

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

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

The Time Traveller smiled. "Are you so sure we can move freely in Space? Right and left we can go,

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backward and forward freely enough, and men always have done so. I admit we move freely in two dimensions. But how about up and down? Gravitation limits us there."

"Not exactly," said the Medical Man. "There are balloons."

"But before the balloons, save for spasmodic jumping and the inequalities of the surface, man had no freedom of vertical movement."

"Still they could move a little up and down," said the Medical Man.

"Easier, far easier down than up."

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

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

"But the great difficulty is this," interrupted the Psychologist. "You *can* move about in all directions of Space, but you cannot move about in Time."

"That is the germ of my great discovery. But you are wrong to say that we cannot move about in Time. For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly I go back to the instant of its occurrence: I become absent-minded, as you say. I jump back for a moment. Of course we have no means of stay-

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ing back for any length of time, any more than a savage or an animal has of staying six feet above the ground. But a civilised man is better off than the savage in this respect. He can go up against gravitation in a balloon, and why should he not hope that ultimately he may be able to stop or accelerate his drift along the Time-Dimension, or even turn about and travel the other way?"

"Oh, *this*," began Filby, "is all——"

"Why not?" said the Time Traveller.

"It's against reason," said Filby.

"What reason?" said the Time Traveller.

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

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

"To travel through Time!" exclaimed the Very Young Man.

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

Filby contented himself with laughter.

"But I have experimental verification," said the Time Traveller.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Of all the wild extravagant theories!" began the Psychologist.

"Yes, so it seemed to me, and so I never talked of it until——"

"Experimental verification!" cried I. "You are going to verify *that?*"

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

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

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

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

"Some sleight-of-hand trick or other," said the Medical Man, and Filby tried to tell us about a conjurer he had seen at Burslem; but before he had fin-

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ished his preface the Time Traveller came back, and Filby's anecdote collapsed.

The thing the Time Traveller held in his hand was a glittering metallic framework, scarcely larger than a small clock, and very delicately made. There was ivory in it, and some transparent crystalline substance. And now I must be explicit, for this that follows—unless his explanation is to be accepted—is an absolutely unaccountable thing. He took one of the small octagonal tables that were scattered about the room, and set it in front of the fire, with two legs on the hearth rug. On this table he placed the mechanism. Then he drew up a chair, and sat down. The only other object on the table was a small shaded lamp, the bright light of which fell full upon the model. There were also perhaps a dozen candles about, two in brass candlesticks upon the mantel and several in sconces, so that the room was brilliantly illuminated. I sat in a low armchair nearest the fire, and I drew this forward so as to be almost between the Time Traveller and the fireplace. Filby sat behind him, looking over his shoulder. The Medical Man and the Provincial Mayor watched him in profile from the right, the Psychologist from the left. The Very Young Man stood behind the Psychologist. We were all on the alert. It appears incredible to me that any kind of trick, however subtly conceived and however adroitly done, could have been played upon us under these conditions.

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

"This little affair," said the Time Traveller, resting

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

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

"It took two years to make," retorted the Time Traveller. Then, when we had all imitated the action of the Medical Man, he said: "Now I want you clearly to understand that this lever, being pressed over, sends the machine gliding into the future, and this other reverses the motion. This saddle represents the seat of a time traveller. Presently I am going to press the lever, and off the machine will go. It will vanish, pass into future Time, and disappear. Have a good look at the thing. Look at the table too, and satisfy yourselves there is no trickery. I don't want to waste this model, and then be told I'm a quack."

There was a minute's pause perhaps. The Psychologist seemed about to speak to me, but changed his mind. Then the Time Traveller put forth his finger towards the lever. "No," he said suddenly. "Lend me your hand." And turning to the Psychologist, he took that individual's hand in his own and told him to put out his forefinger. So that it was the Psychologist himself who sent forth the model Time

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Machine on its interminable voyage. We all saw the lever turn. I am absolutely certain there was no trickery. There was a breath of wind, and the lamp flame jumped. One of the candles on the mantel was blown out, and the little machine suddenly swung round, became indistinct, was seen as a ghost for a second perhaps, as an eddy of faintly glittering brass and ivory; and it was gone—vanished! Save for the lamp the table was bare.

Every one was silent for a minute. Then Filby said he was damned.

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

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

"Certainly," said the Time Traveller, stooping to light a spill at the fire. Then he turned, lighting his pipe, to look at the Psychologist's face. (The Psychologist, to show that he was not unhinged, helped himself to a cigar and tried to light it uncut.) "What is more, I have a big machine nearly finished in there" —he indicated the laboratory—"and when that is put together I mean to have a journey on my own account."

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

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"Into the future or the past—I don't, for certain, know which."

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

"Why?" said the Time Traveller.

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

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

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

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

"Of course," said the Psychologist, and reassured us. "That's a simple point of psychology. I should have thought of it. It's plain enough, and helps the paradox delightfully. We cannot see it, nor can we appreciate this machine, any more than we can the spoke of a wheel spinning, or a bullet flying through the air. If it is travelling through time fifty times or a hundred times faster than we are, if it gets through a minute while we get through a second, the impression it creates will of course be only one-fiftieth or one-hundredth of what it would make if it were not

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travelling in time. That's plain enough." He passed his hand through the space in which the machine had been. "You see?" he said, laughing.

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

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

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

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

"Upon that machine," said the Time Traveller, holding the lamp aloft, "I intend to explore time. Is that plain? I was never more serious in my life."

None of us quite knew how to take it.

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

§ 2

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

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cal Man, whom I met on Friday at the Linnæan. He said he had seen a similar thing at Tübingen, and laid considerable stress on the blowing out of the candle. But how the trick was done he could not explain.

The next Thursday I went again to Richmond—I suppose I was one of the Time Traveller's most constant guests—and, arriving late, found four or five men already assembled in his drawing-room. The Medical Man was standing before the fire with a sheet of paper in one hand and his watch in the other. I looked round for the Time Traveller, and—"It's half past seven now," said the Medical Man. "I suppose we'd better have dinner?"

"Where's ——?" said I, naming our host.

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

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

The Psychologist was the only person besides the Doctor and myself who had attended the previous dinner. The other men were Blank, the Editor aforementioned, a certain journalist, and another—a quiet, shy man with a beard—whom I didn't know, and who, as far as my observation went, never opened his mouth all the evening. There was some speculation at the dinner table about the Time Traveller's absence, and I suggested time travelling, in a half jocular spirit. The Editor wanted that explained to

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him, and the Psychologist volunteered a wooden account of the "ingenious paradox and trick" we had witnessed that day week. He was in the midst of his exposition when the door from the corridor opened slowly and without noise. I was facing the door, and saw it first. "Hallo!" I said. "At last!" And the door opened wider, and the Time Traveller stood before us. I gave a cry of surprise. "Good heavens! man, what's the matter?" cried the Medical Man, who saw him next. And the whole tableful turned towards the door.

He was in an amazing plight. His coat was dusty and dirty, and smeared with green down the sleeves; his hair disordered, and as it seemed to me greyer—either with dust and dirt or because its colour had actually faded. His face was ghastly pale; his chin had a brown cut on it—a cut half healed; his expression was haggard and drawn, as by intense suffering. For a moment he hesitated in the doorway, as if he had been dazzled by the light. Then he came into the room. He walked with just such a limp as I have seen in footsore tramps. We stared at him in silence, expecting him to speak.

He said not a word, but came painfully to the table, and made a motion towards the wine. The Editor filled a glass of champagne, and pushed it towards him. He drained it, and it seemed to do him good: for he looked round the table, and the ghost of his old smile flickered across his face. "What on earth have you been up to, man?" said the Doctor. The Time Traveller did not seem to hear. "Don't let me disturb you," he said, with a certain faltering

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articulation. "I'm all right." He stopped, held out his glass for more, and took it off at a draught. "That's good," he said. His eyes grew brighter, and a faint colour came into his cheeks. His glance flickered over our faces with a certain dull approval, and then went round the warm and comfortable room. Then he spoke again, still as it were feeling his way among his words. "I'm going to wash and dress, and then I'll come down and explain things. . . . Save me some of that mutton. I'm starving for a bit of meat."

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

He put down his glass, and walked towards the staircase door. Again I remarked his lameness and the soft padding sound of his footfall, and standing up in my place, I saw his feet as he went out. He had nothing on them but a pair of tattered, blood-stained socks. Then the door closed upon him. I had half a mind to follow, till I remembered how he detested any fuss about himself. For a minute, perhaps, my mind was wool gathering. Then, "Remarkable Behaviour of an Eminent Scientist," I heard the Editor say, thinking (after his wont) in head-lines. And this brought my attention back to the bright dinner table.

"What's the game?" said the Journalist. "Has he been doing the Amateur Cadger? I don't follow." I met the eye of the Psychologist, and read my own interpretation in his face. I thought of the Time

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Traveller limping painfully upstairs. I don't think any one else had noticed his lameness.

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

"I say," said the Editor hilariously, "these chaps

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here say you have been travelling into the middle of next week! ! Tell us all about little Rosebery, will you? What will you take for the lot?"

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

"Story!" cried the Editor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Agreed," said the Editor, and the rest of us echoed "Agreed." And with that the Time Traveller began his story as I have set it forth. He sat back in his chair at first, and spoke like a weary man. Afterwards he got more animated. In writing it down I feel with only too much keenness the inadequacy of pen and ink—and, above all, my own inadequacy—to express its quality. You read, I will suppose, at-

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tentively enough; but you cannot see the speaker's white, sincere face in the bright circle of the little lamp, nor hear the intonation of his voice. You cannot know how his expression followed the turns of his story! Most of us hearers were in shadow, for the candles in the smoking-room had not been lighted, and only the face of the Journalist and the legs of the Silent Man from the knees downward were illuminated. At first we glanced now and again at each other. After a time we ceased to do that, and looked only at the Time Traveller's face.

§ 3

"I TOLD some of you last Thursday of the principles of the Time Machine, and showed you the actual thing itself, incomplete in the workshop. There it is now, a little travel-worn, truly; and one of the ivory bars is cracked, and a brass rail bent; but the rest of it's sound enough. I expected to finish it on Friday; but on Friday, when the putting together was nearly done, I found that one of the nickel bars was exactly one inch too short, and this I had to get remade; so that the thing was not complete until this morning. It was at ten o'clock to-day that the first of all Time Machines began its career. I gave it a last tap, tried all the screws again, put one more drop of oil on the quartz rod, and sat myself in the saddle. I suppose a suicide who holds a pistol to his skull feels much the same wonder at what will come next as I felt then. I took the starting lever in one hand and the stopping one in the other, pressed the first, and almost immedi-

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ately the second. I seemed to reel; I felt a nightmare sensation of falling; and, looking round, I saw the laboratory exactly as before. Had anything happened? For a moment I suspected that my intellect had tricked me. Then I noted the clock. A moment before, as it seemed, it had stood at a minute or so past ten; now it was nearly half past three!

"I drew a breath, set my teeth, gripped the starting lever with both hands, and went off with a thud. The laboratory got hazy and went dark. Mrs. Watchett came in and walked, apparently without seeing me, towards the garden door. I suppose it took her a minute or so to traverse the place, but to me she seemed to shoot across the room like a rocket. I pressed the lever over to its extreme position. The night came like the turning out of a lamp, and in another moment came to-morrow. The laboratory grew faint and hazy, then fainter and ever fainter. To-morrow night came black, then day again, night again, day again, faster and faster still. An eddying murmur filled my ears, and a strange, dumb confusedness descended on my mind.

"I am afraid I cannot convey the peculiar sensations of time travelling. They are excessively unpleasant. There is a feeling exactly like that one has upon a switchback—of a helpless headlong motion! I felt the same horrible anticipation, too, of an imminent smash. As I put on pace, night followed day like the flapping of a black wing. The dim suggestion of the laboratory seemed presently to fall away from me, and I saw the sun hopping swiftly across the sky, leaping it every minute, and every minute marking a

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day. I supposed the laboratory had been destroyed and I had come into the open air. I had a dim impression of scaffolding, but I was already going too fast to be conscious of any moving things. The slowest snail that ever crawled dashed by too fast for me. The twinkling succession of darkness and light was excessively painful to the eye. Then, in the intermittent darknesses, I saw the moon spinning swiftly through her quarters from new to full, and had a faint glimpse of the circling stars. Presently, as I went on, still gaining velocity, the palpitation of night and day merged into one continuous greyness; the sky took on a wonderful deepness of blue, a splendid luminous colour like that of early twilight; the jerking sun became a streak of fire, a brilliant arch, in space; the moon a fainter fluctuating band; and I could see nothing of the stars, save now and then a brighter circle flickering in the blue.

"The landscape was misty and vague. I was still on the hillside upon which this house now stands, and the shoulder rose above me grey and dim. I saw trees growing and changing like puffs of vapour, now brown, now green; they grew, spread, shivered, and passed away. I saw huge buildings rise up faint and fair, and pass like dreams. The whole surface of the earth seemed changed—melting and flowing under my eyes. The little hands upon the dials that registered my speed raced round faster and faster. Presently I noted that the sun belt swayed up and down, from solstice to solstice, in a minute or less, and that consequently my pace was over a year a minute; and minute by minute the white snow flashed across the

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world, and vanished, and was followed by the bright, brief green of spring.

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

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

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

"There was the sound of a clap of thunder in my ears. I may have been stunned for a moment. A pitiless hail was hissing round me, and I was sitting on soft turf in front of the overset machine. Everything still seemed grey, but presently I remarked that the confusion in my ears was gone. I looked round me. I was on what seemed to be a little lawn in a garden, surrounded by rhododendron bushes, and I noticed that their mauve and purple blossoms were dropping in a shower under the beating of the hailstones. The rebounding, dancing hail hung in a cloud

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over the machine, and drove along the ground like smoke. In a moment I was wet to the skin. 'Fine hospitality,' said I, 'to a man who has travelled innumerable years to see you.'

"Presently I thought what a fool I was to get wet. I stood up and looked round me. A colossal figure, carved apparently in some white stone, loomed indistinctly beyond the rhododendrons through the hazy downpour. But all else of the world was invisible.

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

"I looked up again at the crouching white shape, and the full temerity of my voyage came suddenly upon me. What might appear when that hazy curtain was altogether withdrawn? What might not

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have happened to men? What if cruelty had grown into a common passion? What if in this interval the race had lost its manliness, and had developed into something inhuman, unsympathetic, and overwhelmingly powerful? I might seem some old-world savage animal, only the more dreadful and disgusting for our common likeness—a foul creature to be incontinently slain.

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

"But with this recovery of a prompt retreat my

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

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

"He struck me as being a very beautiful and graceful creature, but indescribably frail. His flushed face reminded me of the more beautiful kind of consumptive—that hectic beauty of which we used to hear so much. At the sight of him I suddenly regained confidence. I took my hands from the machine.

§ 4

"In another moment we were standing face to face, I and this fragile thing out of futurity. He came straight up to me and laughed into my eyes. The absence from his bearing of any sign of fear struck me at once. Then he turned to the two others who were

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following him and spoke to them in a strange and very sweet and liquid tongue.

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

"And then, looking more nearly into their features, I saw some further peculiarities in their Dresden-china type of prettiness. Their hair, which was uniformly curly, came to a sharp end at the neck and cheek; there was not the faintest suggestion of it on the face, and their ears were singularly minute. The mouths were small, with bright red, rather thin lips,

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and the little chins ran to a point. The eyes were large and mild; and—this may seem egotism on my part—I fancied even then that there was a certain lack of the interest I might have expected in them.

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

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

"I nodded, pointed to the sun, and gave them such a vivid rendering of a thunderclap as startled them. They all withdrew a pace or so and bowed. Then

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

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

"The arch of the doorway was richly carved, but

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

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

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

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and hungry. As I did so I surveyed the hall at my leisure.

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

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

"However, I am telling you of my fruit dinner in the distant future now. So soon as my appetite was a little checked, I determined to make a resolute attempt to learn the speech of these new men of mine.

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

"A queer thing I soon discovered about my little hosts, and that was their lack of interest. They would come to me with eager cries of astonishment, like children, but like children they would soon stop examining me and wander away after some other toy. The dinner and my conversational beginnings ended, I noted for the first time that almost all those who had surrounded me at first were gone. It is odd, too, how speedily I came to disregard these little people.

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I went out through the portal into the sunlit world again so soon as my hunger was satisfied. I was continually meeting more of these men of the future, who would follow me a little distance, chatter and laugh about me, and, having smiled and gesticulated in a friendly way, leave me again to my own devices.

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

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

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

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

"'Communism,' said I to myself.

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

"Seeing the ease and security in which these people were living, I felt that this close resemblance of the sexes was after all what one would expect; for the strength of a man and the softness of a woman, the

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institution of the family, and the differentiation of occupations are mere militant necessities of an age of physical force. Where population is balanced and abundant, much child-bearing becomes an evil rather than a blessing to the State; where violence comes but rarely and offspring are secure, there is less necessity—indeed there is no necessity—for an efficient family, and the specialisation of the sexes with reference to their children's needs disappears. We see some beginnings of this even in our own time, and in this future age it was complete. This, I must remind you, was my speculation at the time. Later, I was to appreciate how far it fell short of the reality.

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

"There I found a seat of some yellow metal that I did not recognise, corroded in places with a kind of pinkish rust and half smothered in soft moss, the arm rests cast and filed into the resemblance of griffins' heads. I sat down on it, and I surveyed the broad view of our old world under the sunset of that long day. It was as sweet and fair a view as I have ever seen. The sun had already gone below the horizon and the west was flaming gold, touched with some

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horizontal bars of purple and crimson. Below was the valley of the Thames, in which the river lay like a band of burnished steel. I have already spoken of the great palaces dotted about among the variegated greenery, some in ruins and some still occupied. Here and there rose a white or silvery figure in the waste garden of the earth, here and there came the sharp vertical line of some cupola or obelisk. There were no hedges, no signs of proprietary rights, no evidences of agriculture; the whole earth had become a garden.

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

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

"After all, the sanitation and the agriculture of to-day are still in the rudimentary stage. The science of

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our time has attacked but a little department of the field of human disease, but, even so, it spreads its operations very steadily and persistently. Our agriculture and horticulture destroy a weed just here and there and cultivate perhaps a score or so of wholesome plants, leaving the greater number to fight out a balance as they can. We improve our favourite plants and animals—and how few they are—gradually by selective breeding; now a new and better peach, now a seedless grape, now a sweeter and larger flower, now a more convenient breed of cattle. We improve them gradually, because our ideals are vague and tentative, and our knowledge is very limited; because Nature, too, is shy and slow in our clumsy hands. Some day all this will be better organised, and still better. That is the drift of the current in spite of the eddies. The whole world will be intelligent, educated, and cooperating; things will move faster and faster towards the subjugation of Nature. In the end, wisely and carefully we shall readjust the balance of animal and vegetable life to suit our human needs.

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

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putrefaction and decay had been profoundly affected by these changes.

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

"But with this change in condition comes inevitably adaptations to the change. What, unless biological science in a mass of errors, is the cause of human intelligence and vigour? Hardship and freedom: conditions under which the active, strong, and subtle survive and the weaker go to the wall; conditions that put a premium upon the loyal alliance of capable men, upon self-restraint, patience, and decision. And the institution of the family, and the emotions that arise therein, the fierce jealousy, the tenderness for offspring, parental self-devotion, all found their justification and support in the imminent dangers of the young. *Now*, where are these imminent dangers? There is a sentiment arising, and it will grow, against connubial jealousy, against fierce maternity, against passion of all sorts; unnecessary things now, and things that make us uncomfortable, savage survivals, discords in a refined and pleasant life.

"I thought of the physical slightness of the people,

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

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

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

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

§ 5

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

"I looked for the building I knew. Then my eye travelled along to the figure of the White Sphinx upon the pedestal of bronze, growing distinct as the light of the rising moon grew brighter. I could see the silver birch against it. There was the tangle of

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rhododendron bushes, black in the pale light, and there was the little lawn. I looked at the lawn again. A queer doubt chilled my complacency. 'No,' said I stoutly to myself, 'that was not the lawn.'

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

"At once, like a lash across the face, came the possibility of losing my own age, of being left helpless in this strange new world. The bare thought of it was an actual physical sensation. I could feel it grip me at the throat and stop my breathing. In another moment I was in a passion of fear and running with great leaping strides down the slope. Once I fell headlong and cut my face; I lost no time in stanching the blood, but jumped up and ran on, with a warm trickle down my cheek and chin. All the time I ran I was saying to myself, 'They have moved it a little, pushed it under the bushes out of the way.' Nevertheless, I ran with all my might. All the time, with the certainty that sometimes comes with excessive dread, I knew that such assurance was folly, knew instinctively that the machine was removed out of my reach. My breath came with pain. I suppose I covered the whole distance from the hill crest to the little lawn, two miles, perhaps, in ten minutes. And I am not a young man. I cursed aloud, as I ran, at my confident folly in leaving the machine, wasting good breath thereby. I cried aloud, and none answered. Not a creature seemed to be stirring in that moonlit world.

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

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

"I think I must have had a kind of frenzy. I remember running violently in and out among the moonlit bushes all round the sphinx, and startling some white animal that, in the dim light, I took for a small deer. I remember, too, late that night, beating the bushes with my clenched fists until my knuckles were gashed and bleeding from the broken twigs. Then, sobbing and raving in my anguish of mind, I went down to the great building of stone.

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The big hall was dark, silent, and deserted. I slipped on the uneven floor, and fell over one of the malachite tables, almost breaking my shin. I lit a match and went on past the dusty curtains, of which I have told you.

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

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

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upon God and Fate. I have a memory of horrible fatigue, as the long night of despair wore away; of looking in this impossible place and that; of groping among moonlit ruins and touching strange creatures in the black shadows; at last, of lying on the ground near the sphinx and weeping with absolute wretchedness. I had nothing left but misery. Then I slept, and when I woke again it was full day, and a couple of sparrows were hopping round me on the turf within reach of my arm.

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

"But probably the machine had only been taken away. Still, I must be calm and patient, find its hiding-place, and recover it by force or cunning. And with that I scrambled to my feet and looked about me, wondering where I could bathe. I felt weary, stiff, and travel-soiled. The freshness of the morning made me desire an equal freshness. I had

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exhausted my emotion. Indeed, as I went about my business, I found myself wondering at my intense excitement overnight. I made a careful examination of the ground about the little lawn. I wasted some time in futile questionings, conveyed, as well as I was able, to such of the little people as came by. They all failed to understand my gestures; some were simply stolid, some thought it was a jest and laughed at me. I had the hardest task in the world to keep my hands off their pretty laughing faces. It was a foolish impulse, but the devil begotten of fear and blind anger was ill curbed and still eager to take advantage of my perplexity. The turf gave better counsel. I found a groove ripped in it, about midway between the pedestal of the sphinx and the marks of my feet where, on arrival, I had struggled with the overturned machine. There were other signs of removal about, with queer narrow footprints like those I could imagine made by a sloth. This directed my closer attention to the pedestal. It was, as I think I have said, of bronze. It was not a mere block, but highly decorated with deep framed panels on either side. I went and rapped at these. The pedestal was hollow. Examining the panels with care I found them discontinuous with the frames. There were no handles or keyholes, but possibly the panels, if they were doors, as I supposed, opened from within. One thing was clear enough to my mind. It took no very great mental effort to infer that my Time Machine was inside that pedestal. But how it got there was a different problem.

"I saw the heads of two orange-clad people coming

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

"But I was not beaten yet. I banged with my fist at the bronze panels. I thought I heard something stir inside—to be explicit, I thought I heard a sound like a chuckle—but I must have been mistaken. Then I got a big pebble from the river, and came and hammered till I had flattened a coil in the decorations, and the verdigris came off in powdery flakes. The delicate little people must have heard me hammering in gusty outbreaks a mile away on either hand, but nothing came of it. I saw a crowd of them upon the slopes, looking furtively at me. At last, hot and tired, I sat down to watch the place. But I was too

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restless to watch long; I am too Occidental for a long vigil. I could work at a problem for years, but to wait inactive for twenty-four hours—that is another matter.

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

"Going through the big palace, it seemed to me that the little people avoided me. It may have been my fancy, or it may have had something to do with my hammering at the gates of bronze. Yet I felt tolerably sure of the avoidance. I was careful, however, to show no concern and to abstain from any pursuit of them, and in the course of a day or two things got back to the old footing. I made what progress I could in the language, and in addition I pushed my

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explorations here and there. Either I missed some subtle point, or their language was excessively simple—almost exclusively composed of concrete substantives and verbs. There seemed to be few, if any, abstract terms, or little use of figurative language. Their sentences were usually simple and of two words, and I failed to convey or understand any but the simplest propositions. I determined to put the thought of my Time Machine and the mystery of the bronze doors under the sphinx as much as possible in a corner of memory, until my growing knowledge would lead me back to them in a natural way. Yet a certain feeling, you may understand, tethered me in a circle of a few miles round the point of my arrival.

"So far as I could see, all the world displayed the same exuberant richness as the Thames valley. From every hill I climbed I saw the same abundance of splendid buildings, endlessly varied in material and style, the same clustering thickets of evergreens, the same blossom-laden trees and tree-ferns. Here and there water shone like silver, and beyond, the land rose into blue undulating hills, and so faded into the serenity of the sky. A peculiar feature, which presently attracted my attention, was the presence of certain circular wells, several, as it seemed to me, of a very great depth. One lay by the path up the hill, which I had followed during my first walk. Like the others, it was rimmed with bronze, curiously wrought, and protected by a little cupola from the rain. Sitting by the side of these wells, and peering down into the shafted darkness, I could see no gleam of water,

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nor could I start any reflection with a lighted match. But in all of them I heard a certain sound: a thud—thud—thud, like the beating of some big engine; and I discovered, from the flaring of my matches, that a steady current of air set down the shafts. Further, I threw a scrap of paper into the throat of one, and, instead of fluttering slowly down, it was at once sucked swiftly out of sight.

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

"And here I must admit that I learned very little of drains and bells and modes of conveyance, and the like conveniences, during my time in this real future. In some of these visions of Utopias and coming times which I have read, there is a vast amount of detail about building, and social arrangements, and so forth. But while such details are easy enough to obtain when the whole world is contained in one's imagination, they are altogether inaccessible to a real traveller amid such realities as I found here. Conceive the tale of London which a negro, fresh from Central Africa, would take back to his tribe! What would he know of railway companies, of social movements, of telephone and telegraph wires, of the Parcels De-

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livery Company, and postal orders and the like? Yet we, at least, should be willing enough to explain these things to him! And even of what he knew, how much could he make his untravelled friend either apprehend or believe? Then, think how narrow the gap between a negro and a white man of our own times, and how wide the interval between myself and these of the Golden Age! I was sensible of much which was unseen, and which contributed to my comfort; but save for a general impression of automatic organisation, I fear I can convey very little of the difference to your mind.

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

"I must confess that my satisfaction with my first theories of an automatic civilisation and a decadent humanity did not long endure. Yet I could think of no other. Let me put my difficulties. The several big palaces I had explored were mere living places, great dining-halls and sleeping apartments. I could find no machinery, no appliances of any kind. Yet these people were clothed in pleasant fabrics that must at times need renewal, and their sandals, though undecorated, were fairly complex specimens of metal-

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work. Somehow such things must be made. And the little people displayed no vestige of a creative tendency. There were no shops, no workshops, no sign of importations among them. They spent all their time in playing gently, in bathing in the river, in making love in a half-playful fashion, in eating fruit and sleeping. I could not see how things were kept going.

"Then, again, about the Time Machine: something, I knew not what, had taken it into the hollow pedestal of the White Sphinx. *Why?* For the life of me I could not imagine. Those waterless wells, too, those flickering pillars. I felt I lacked a clue. I felt—how shall I put it? Suppose you found an inscription, with sentences here and there in excellent plain English, and, interpolated therewith, others made up of words, of letters even, absolutely unknown to you? Well, on the third day of my visit, that was how the world of Eight Hundred and Two Thousand Seven Hundred and One presented itself to me!

"That day, too, I made a friend—of a sort. It happened that, as I was watching some of the little people bathing in a shallow, one of them was seized with cramp and began drifting downstream. The main current ran rather swiftly, but not too strongly for even a moderate swimmer. It will give you an idea, therefore, of the strange deficiency in these creatures, when I tell you that none made the slightest attempt to rescue the weakly crying little thing which was drowning before their eyes. When I realised this, I hurriedly slipped off my clothes, and, wading

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in at a point lower down, I caught the poor mite and drew her safe to land. A little rubbing of the limbs soon brought her round, and I had the satisfaction of seeing she was all right before I left her. I had got to such a low estimate of her kind that I did not expect any gratitude from her. In that, however, I was wrong.

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

"She was exactly like a child. She wanted to be with me always. She tried to follow me everywhere, and on my next journey out and about it went to my heart to tire her down, and leave her at last, exhausted and calling after me rather plaintively. But the problems of the world had to be mastered. I had not, I said to myself, come into the future to carry

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on a miniature flirtation. Yet her distress when I left her was very great, her expostulations at the parting were sometimes frantic, and I think, altogether, I had as much trouble as comfort from her devotion. Nevertheless she was, somehow, a very great comfort. I thought it was mere childish affection that made her cling to me. Until it was too late, I did not clearly know what I had inflicted upon her when I left her. Nor until it was too late did I clearly understand what she was to me. For, by merely seeming fond of me, and showing in her weak, futile way that she cared for me, the little doll of a creature presently gave my return to the neighbourhood of the White Sphinx almost the feeling of coming home; and I would watch for her tiny figure of white and gold so soon as I came over the hill.

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

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Weena's distress, I insisted upon sleeping away from these slumbering multitudes.

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

"The moon was setting, and the dying moonlight and the first pallor of dawn were mingled in a ghastly half-light. The bushes were inky black, the ground a sombre grey, the sky colourless and cheerless. And up the hill I thought I could see ghosts. Three several times, as I scanned the slope, I saw white figures. Twice I fancied I saw a solitary white, ape-like creature running rather quickly up the hill, and once near the ruins I saw a leash of them carrying some dark body. They moved hastily. I did not see what became of them. It seemed that they vanished among

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the bushes. The dawn was still indistinct, you must understand. I was feeling that chill, uncertain, early-morning feeling you may have known. I doubted my eyes.

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

"I think I have said how much hotter than our own was the weather of this Golden Age. I cannot account for it. It may be that the sun was hotter, or the earth nearer the sun. It is usual to assume that the sun will go on cooling steadily in the future. But people, unfamiliar with such speculations as those of the younger Darwin, forget that the planets must ultimately fall back one by one into the parent body. As

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these catastrophes occur, the sun will blaze with renewed energy; and it may be that some inner planet had suffered this fate. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that the sun was very much hotter than we know it.

"Well, one very hot morning—my fourth, I think—as I was seeking shelter from the heat and glare in a colossal ruin near the great house where I slept and fed, there happened this strange thing: Clambering among these heaps of masonry, I found a narrow gallery, whose end and side windows were blocked by fallen masses of stone. By contrast with the brilliancy outside, it seemed at first impenetrably dark to me. I entered it groping, for the change from light to blackness made spots of colour swim before me. Suddenly I halted spellbound. A pair of eyes, luminous by reflection against the daylight without, was watching me out of the darkness.

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

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blundered against a block of granite, staggered aside, and in a moment was hidden in a black shadow beneath another pile of ruined masonry.

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

"I do not know how long I sat peering down that well. It was not for some time that I could succeed in persuading myself that the thing I had seen was human. But, gradually, the truth dawned on me: that Man had not remained one species, but had differentiated into two distinct animals: that my graceful children of the Upperworld were not the sole

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descendants of our generation, but that this bleached, obscene, nocturnal Thing, which had flashed before me, was also heir to all the ages.

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

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

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the mystery of the ghosts; to say nothing of a hint at the meaning of the bronze gates and the fate of the Time Machine! And very vaguely there came a suggestion towards the solution of the economic problem that had puzzled me.

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

"Beneath my feet, then, the earth must be tunnelled enormously, and these tunnellings were the habitat of the new race. The presence of ventilating-shafts and wells along the hill slopes—everywhere, in fact, except along the river valley—showed how universal were its ramifications. What so natural, then, as to assume that it was in this artificial Underworld that such work as was necessary to the comfort of the daylight race was done? The notion was so plausible that I at once accepted it, and went on to assume the *how* of this splitting of the human

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species. I dare say you will anticipate the shape of my theory; though, for myself, I very soon felt that it fell far short of the truth.

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

"Again, the exclusive tendency of richer people—due, no doubt, to the increasing refinement of their education, and the widening gulf between them and the rude violence of the poor—is already leading to the closing, in their interest, of considerable portions of the surface of the land. About London, for instance, perhaps half the prettier country is shut in

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against intrusion. And this same widening gulf—which is due to the length and expense of the higher educational process and the increased facilities for and temptations towards refined habits on the part of the rich—will make that exchange between class and class, that promotion by intermarriage which at present retards the splitting of our species along lines of social stratification, less and less frequent. So, in the end, above ground you must have the Haves, pursuing pleasure and comfort, and beauty, and below ground the Have-nots, the Workers getting continually adapted to the conditions of their labour. Once they were there, they would no doubt have to pay rent, and not a little of it, for the ventilation of their caverns; and if they refused, they would starve or be suffocated for arrears. Such of them as were so constituted as to be miserable and rebellious would die; and, in the end, the balance being permanent, the survivors would become as well adapted to the conditions of underground life, and as happy in their way, as the Upper-world people were to theirs. As it seemed to me, the refined beauty and the etiolated pallor followed naturally enough.

"The great triumph of Humanity I had dreamed of took a different shape in my mind. It had been no such triumph of moral education and general cooperation as I had imagined. Instead, I saw a real aristocracy, armed with a perfected science and working to a logical conclusion the industrial system of today. Its triumph had not been simply a triumph over Nature, but a triumph over Nature and the fellow man. This, I must warn you, was my theory at the

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time. I had no convenient cicerone in the pattern of the Utopian books. My explanation may be absolutely wrong. I still think it is the most plausible one. But even on this supposition the balanced civilisation that was at last attained must have long since passed its zenith, and was now far fallen into decay. The too-perfect security of the Upperworlders had led them to a slow movement of degeneration, to a general dwindling in size, strength, and intelligence. That I could see clearly enough already. What had happened to the Undergrounders I did not yet suspect; but, from what I had seen of the Morlocks—that, by the bye, was the name by which these creatures were called—I could imagine that the modification of the human type was even far more profound than among the 'Eloi,' the beautiful race that I already knew.

"Then came troublesome doubts. Why had the Morlocks taken my Time Machine? For I felt sure it was they who had taken it. Why, too, if the Eloi were masters, could they not restore the machine to me? And why were they so terribly afraid of the dark? I proceeded, as I have said, to question Weena about this Underworld, but here again I was disappointed. At first she would not understand my questions, and presently she refused to answer them. She shivered as though the topic was unendurable. And when I pressed her, perhaps a little harshly, she burst into tears. They were the only tears, except my own, I ever saw in that Golden Age. When I saw them I ceased abruptly to trouble about the Morlocks, and was only concerned in banishing these

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signs of human inheritance from Weena's eyes. And very soon she was smiling and clapping her hands while I solemnly burned a match.

§ 6

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

"The next night I did not sleep well. Probably my health was a little disordered. I was oppressed with perplexity and doubt. Once or twice I had a feeling of intense fear for which I could perceive no definite reason. I remember creeping noiselessly into the great hall where the little people were sleeping in the moonlight—that night Weena was among them—and feeling reassured by their presence. It occurred to me, even then, that in the course of a few days the moon must pass through its last quarter, and the nights grow dark, when the appearances of these unpleasant creatures from below, these whitened Lemurs, this new vermin that had replaced the old, might be more abundant. And on both these days I had the restless feeling of one who shirks an inevitable duty. I felt assured that the Time Machine was only

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to be recovered by boldly penetrating these underground mysteries. Yet I could not face the mystery. If only I had had a companion it would have been different. But I was so horribly alone, and even to clamber down into the darkness of the well appalled me. I don't know if you will understand my feeling, but I never felt quite safe at my back.

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

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

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

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machine below grew louder and more oppressive. Everything save that little disk above was profoundly dark, and when I looked up again Weena had disappeared.

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

"I do not know how long I lay. I was roused by a soft hand touching my face. Starting up in the darkness I snatched at my matches and, hastily striking one, I saw three stooping white creatures similar to the one I had seen above ground in the ruin, hastily retreating before the light. Living, as they did, in what appeared to me impenetrable darkness, their eyes were abnormally large and sensitive, just as are the pupils of the abysmal fishes, and they reflected the light in the same way. I have no doubt they could see me in that rayless obscurity, and they did not seem to have any fear of me apart from the light. But, so soon as I struck a match in order to see them, they fled incontinently, vanishing into dark gutters

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and tunnels, from which their eyes glared at me in the strangest fashion.

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

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

"I have thought since how particularly ill equipped

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

"I was afraid to push my way in among all this machinery in the dark, and it was only with my last glimpse of light I discovered that my store of matches had run low. It had never occurred to me until that moment that there was any need to economise them, and I had wasted almost half the box in astonishing the Upperworlders, to whom fire was a novelty. Now, as I say, I had four left, and while I stood in the dark, a hand touched mine, lank fingers came feeling over my face, and I was sensible of a peculiar unpleasant odour. I fancied I heard the breathing of a crowd of those dreadful little beings about me. I felt the box of matches in my hand being gently disengaged, and other hands behind me plucking at my clothing. The sense of these unseen creatures examining me was indescribably unpleasant. The sudden realisation of my ignorance of their ways of thinking and doing came home to me very vividly in the darkness. I

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shouted at them as loudly as I could. They started away, and then I could feel them approaching me again. They clutched at me more boldly, whispering odd sounds to each other. I shivered violently, and shouted again—rather discordantly. This time they were not so seriously alarmed, and they made a queer laughing noise as they came back at me. I will confess I was horribly frightened. I determined to strike another match and escape under the protection of its glare. I did so, and eking out the flicker with a scrap of paper from my pocket, I made good my retreat to the narrow tunnel. But I had scarce entered this when my light was blown out, and in the blackness I could hear the Morlocks rustling like wind among leaves, and pattering like the rain, as they hurried after me.

"In a moment I was clutched by several hands, and there was no mistaking that they were trying to haul me back. I struck another light, and waved it in their dazzled faces. You can scarce imagine how nauseatingly inhuman they looked—those pale, chinless faces and great, lidless, pinkish-grey eyes!—as they stared in their blindness and bewilderment. But I did not stay to look, I promise you: I retreated again, and when my second match had ended, I struck my third. It had almost burned through when I reached the opening into the shaft. I lay down on the edge, for the throb of the great pump below made me giddy. Then I felt sideways for the projecting hooks, and, as I did so, my feet were grasped from behind, and I was violently tugged backward. I lit my last match . . . and it incontinently went out.

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But I had my hand on the climbing bars now, and, kicking violently, I disengaged myself from the clutches of the Morlocks, and was speedily clambering up the shaft, while they stayed peering and blinking up at me: all but one little wretch who followed me for some way, and well-nigh secured my boot as a trophy.

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

§ 7

"Now, indeed, I seemed in a worse case than before. Hitherto, except during my night's anguish at the loss of the Time Machine, I had felt a sustaining hope of ultimate escape, but that hope was staggered by these new discoveries. Hitherto I had merely thought myself impeded by the childish simplicity of the little people, and by some unknown forces which I had only to understand to overcome; but there was an altogether new element in the sickening quality of the Morlocks—a something inhuman and malign.

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Instinctively I loathed them. Before, I had felt as a man might feel who had fallen into a pit: my concern was with the pit and how to get out of it. Now I felt like a beast in a trap, whose enemy would come upon him soon.

"The enemy I dreaded may surprise you. It was the darkness of the new moon. Weena had put this into my head by some at first incomprehensible remarks about the Dark Nights. It was not now such a very difficult problem to guess what the coming Dark Nights might mean. The moon was on the wane: each night there was a longer interval of darkness. And I now understood to some slight degree at least the reason of the fear of the little Upper-world people for the dark. I wondered vaguely what foul villainy it might be that the Morlocks did under the new moon. I felt pretty sure now that my second hypothesis was all wrong. The Upper-world people might once have been the favoured aristocracy, and the Morlocks their mechanical servants; but that had long since passed away. The two species that had resulted from the evolution of man were sliding down towards, or had already arrived at, an altogether new relationship. The Eloi, like the Carlovingian kings, had decayed to a mere beautiful futility. They still possessed the earth on sufferance: since the Morlocks, subterranean for innumerable generations, had come at last to find the daylit surface intolerable. And the Morlocks made their garments, I inferred, and maintained them in their habitual needs, perhaps through the survival of an old habit of service. They did it as a standing horse paws with his foot, or as a

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man enjoys killing animals in sport: because ancient and departed necessities had impressed it on the organism. But, clearly, the old order was already in part reversed. The Nemesis of the delicate ones was creeping on apace. Ages ago, thousands of generations ago, man had thrust his brother man out of the ease and the sunshine. And now that brother was coming back—changed! Already the Eloi had begun to learn one old lesson anew. They were becoming reacquainted with Fear. And suddenly there came into my head the memory of the meat I had seen in the Underworld. It seemed odd how it floated into my mind: not stirred up as it were by the current of my meditations, but coming in almost like a question from outside. I tried to recall the form of it. I had a vague sense of something familiar, but I could not tell what it was at the time.

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

"I wandered during the afternoon along the valley of the Thames, but found nothing that commended

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

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

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

"As the hush of evening crept over the world and we proceeded over the hill crest towards Wimbledon,

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Weena grew tired and wanted to return to the house of grey stone. But I pointed out the distant pinnacles of the Palace of Green Porcelain to her, and contrived to make her understand that we were seeking a refuge there from her Fear. You know that great pause that comes upon things before the dusk? Even the breeze stops in the trees. To me there is always an air of expectation about that evening stillness. The sky was clear, remote, and empty save for a few horizontal bars far down in the sunset. Well, that night the expectation took the colour of my fears. In that darkling calm my senses seemed preternaturally sharpened. I fancied I could even feel the hollowness of the ground beneath my feet: could, indeed, almost see through it the Morlocks in their ant-hill going hither and thither and waiting for the dark. In my excitement I fancied that they would receive my invasion of their burrows as a declaration of war. And why had they taken my Time Machine?

"So we went on in the quiet, and the twilight deepened into night. The clear blue of the distance faded, and one star after another came out. The ground grew dim and the trees black. Weena's fears and her fatigue grew upon her. I took her in my arms and talked to her and caressed her. Then, as the darkness grew deeper, she put her arms round my neck, and, closing her eyes, tightly pressed her face against my shoulder. So we went down a long slope into a valley, and there in the dimness I almost walked into a little river. This I waded, and went up the opposite side of the valley, past a number of sleeping houses, and by a statue—a Faun, or some

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such figure, *minus* the head. Here too were acacias. So far I had seen nothing of the Morlocks, but it was yet early in the night, and the darker hours before the old moon rose were still to come.

"From the brow of the next hill I saw a thick wood spreading wide and black before me. I hesitated at this. I could see no end to it, either to the right or the left. Feeling tired—my feet in particular, were very sore—I carefully lowered Weena from my shoulder as I halted, and sat down upon the turf. I could no longer see the Palace of Green Porcelain, and I was in doubt of my direction. I looked into the thickness of the wood and thought of what it might hide. Under that dense tangle of branches one would be out of sight of the stars. Even were there no other lurking danger—a danger I did not care to let my imagination loose upon—there would still be all the roots to stumble over and the tree-boles to strike against. I was very tired, too, after the excitements of the day; so I decided that I would not face it, but would pass the night upon the open hill.

"Weena, I was glad to find, was fast asleep. I carefully wrapped her in my jacket, and sat down beside her to wait for the moonrise. The hillside was quiet and deserted, but from the black of the wood there came now and then a stir of living things. Above me shone the stars, for the night was very clear. I felt a certain sense of friendly comfort in their twinkling. All the old constellations had gone from the sky, however: that slow movement which is imperceptible in a hundred human lifetimes, had long since rearranged them in unfamiliar groupings. But

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the Milky Way, it seemed to me, was still the same tattered streamer of star-dust as of yore. Southward (as I judged it) was a very bright red star that was new to me; it was even more splendid than our own green Sirius. And amid all these scintillating points of light one bright planet shone kindly and steadily like the face of an old friend.

"Looking at these stars suddenly dwarfed my own troubles and all the gravities of terrestrial life. I thought of their unfathomable distance, and the slow inevitable drift of their movements out of the unknown past into the unknown future. I thought of the great precessional cycle that the pole of the earth describes. Only forty times had that silent revolution occurred during all the years that I had traversed. And during these few revolutions all the activity, all the traditions, the complex organisations, the nations, languages, literatures, aspirations, even the mere memory of Man as I knew him, had been swept out of existence. Instead were these frail creatures who had forgotten their high ancestry, and the white Things of which I went in terror. Then I thought of the Great Fear that was between the two species, and for the first time, with a sudden shiver, came the clear knowledge of what the meat I had seen might be. Yet it was too horrible! I looked at little Weena sleeping beside me, her face white and starlike under the stars, and forthwith dismissed the thought.

"Through that long night I held my mind off the Morlocks as well as I could, and whiled away the time by trying to fancy I could find signs of the old constellations in the new confusion. The sky kept

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

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

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mote than our cannibal ancestors of three or four thousand years ago. And the intelligence that would have made this state of things a torment had gone. Why should I trouble myself? These Eloi were mere fatted cattle, which the ant-like Morlocks preserved and preyed upon—probably saw to the breeding of. And there was Weena dancing at my side!

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

"I had at that time very vague ideas as to the course I should pursue. My first was to secure some safe place of refuge, and to make myself such arms of metal or stone as I could contrive. That necessity was immediate. In the next place, I hoped to procure some means of fire, so that I should have the weapon of a torch at hand, for nothing, I knew, would be more efficient against these Morlocks. Then I wanted to arrange some contrivance to break open the doors of bronze under the White Sphinx. I had in mind a battering-ram. I had a persuasion that if I could enter those doors and carry a blaze of light

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before me I should discover the Time Machine and escape. I could not imagine the Morlocks were strong enough to move it far away. Weena I had resolved to bring with me to our own time. And turning such schemes over in my mind I pursued our way towards the building which my fancy had chosen as our dwelling.

§ 8

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

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

"Within the big valves of the door—which were open and broken—we found, instead of the customary

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hall, a long gallery lit by many side windows. At the first glance I was reminded of a museum. The tiled floor was thick with dust, and a remarkable array of miscellaneous objects was shrouded in the same grey covering. Then I perceived, standing strange and gaunt in the centre of the hall, what was clearly the lower part of a huge skeleton. I recognised by the oblique feet that it was some extinct creature after the fashion of the Megatherium. The skull and the upper bones lay beside it in the thick dust, and in one place, where rain-water had dropped through a leak in the roof, the thing itself had been worn away. Further in the gallery was the huge skeleton barrel of a Brontosaurus. My museum hypothesis was confirmed. Going towards the side I found what appeared to be sloping shelves, and, clearing away the thick dust, I found the old familiar glass cases of our own time. But they must have been airtight, to judge from the fair preservation of some of their contents.

"Clearly we stood among the ruins of some latter-day South Kensington! Here, apparently, was the Palæontological Section, and a very splendid array of fossils it must have been, though the inevitable process of decay that had been staved off for a time, and had, through the extinction of bacteria and fungi, lost ninety-nine hundredths of its force, was, nevertheless, with extreme sureness if with extreme slowness at work again upon all its treasures. Here and there I found traces of the little people in the shape of rare fossils broken to pieces or threaded in strings upon reeds. And the cases had in some instances

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been bodily removed—by the Morlocks as I judged. The place was very silent. The thick dust deadened our footsteps. Weena, who had been rolling a sea-urchin down the sloping glass of a case, presently came, as I stared about me, and very quietly took my hand and stood beside me.

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

"To judge from the size of the place, this Palace of Green Porcelain had a great deal more in it than a Gallery of Palæontology; possibly historical galleries; it might be, even a library! To me, at least in my present circumstances, these would be vastly more interesting than this spectacle of old-time geology in decay. Exploring, I found another short gallery running transversely to the first. This appeared to be devoted to minerals, and the sight of a block of sulphur set my mind running on gunpowder. But I could find no saltpetre; indeed, no nitrates of any kind. Doubtless they had deliquesced ages ago. Yet the sulphur hung in my mind, and set up a train of thinking. As for the rest of the contents of that gallery, though on the whole they were the best preserved of all I saw, I had little interest. I am no specialist in mineralogy, and I went on down a very ruinous aisle running parallel to the first hall I had entered. Apparently this section had been devoted to natural history, but everything had long since passed out of recognition. A few shrivelled and

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blackened vestiges of what had once been stuffed animals, desiccated mummies in jars that had once held spirit, a brown dust of departed plants; that was all! I was sorry for that, because I should have been glad to trace the patient readjustments by which the conquest of animated nature had been attained. Then we came to a gallery of simply colossal proportions, but singularly ill-lit, the floor of it running downward at a slight angle from the end at which I entered. At intervals white globes hung from the ceiling—many of them cracked and smashed—which suggested that originally the place had been artificially lit. Here I was more in my element, for rising on either side of me were the huge bulks of big machines, all greatly corroded and many broken down, but some still fairly complete. You know I have a certain weakness for mechanism, and I was inclined to linger among these; the more so as for the most part they had the interest of puzzles, and I could make only the vaguest guesses at what they were for. I fancied that if I could solve their puzzles I should find myself in possession of powers that might be of use against the Morlocks.

"Suddenly Weena came very close to my side. So suddenly that she startled me. Had it not been for her I do not think I should have noticed that the floor of the gallery sloped at all.* The end I had come in at was quite above ground, and was lit by rare slit-like windows. As you went down the length, the ground came up against these windows, until at

* It may be, of course, that the floor did not slope, but that the museum was built into the side of a hill.—Ed.

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

"I took Weena's hand. Then, struck with a sudden idea, I left her and turned to a machine from which projected a lever not unlike those in a signal-box. Clambering upon the stand, and grasping this lever in my hands, I put all my weight upon it sideways. Suddenly Weena, deserted in the central aisle, began to whimper. I had judged the strength of the lever pretty correctly, for it snapped after a minute's strain, and I rejoined her with a mace in my hand more than sufficient, I judged, for any Morlock skull I might encounter. And I longed very much to kill a Morlock or so. Very inhuman, you may

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think, to want to go killing one's own descendants! But it was impossible, somehow, to feel any humanity in the things. Only my disinclination to leave Weena, and a persuasion that if I began to slake my thirst for murder my Time Machine might suffer, restrained me from going straight down the gallery and killing the brutes I heard.

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

"Then, going up a broad staircase, we came to what may once have been a gallery of technical chemistry. And here I had not a little hope of useful discoveries. Except at one end where the roof had collapsed, this gallery was well preserved. I went eagerly to every unbroken case. And at last, in one of the really air-tight cases, I found a box of matches.

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Very eagerly I tried them. They were perfectly good. They were not even damp. I turned to Weena. 'Dance,' I cried to her in her own tongue. For now I had a weapon indeed against the horrible creatures we feared. And so, in that derelict museum, upon the thick soft carpeting of dust, to Weena's huge delight, I solemnly performed a kind of composite dance, whistling *The Land of the Leal* as cheerfully as I could. In part it was a modest *cancan*, in part a step-dance, in part a skirt-dance (so far as my tail-coat permitted), and in part original. For I am naturally inventive, as you know.

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

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most helpful thing I had chanced upon. Nevertheless I left that gallery greatly elated.

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

"As the evening drew on, my interest waned. I went through gallery after gallery, dusty, silent, often ruinous, the exhibits sometimes mere heaps of rust and lignite, sometimes fresher. In one place I suddenly found myself near the model of a tin-mine, and then by the merest accident I discovered, in an air-tight case, two dynamite cartridges! I shouted 'Eureka,' and smashed the case with joy. Then came a doubt. I hesitated. Then, selecting a little side gallery, I made my essay. I never felt such a disappointment as I did in waiting five, ten, fifteen minutes

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for an explosion that never came. Of course the things were dummies, as I might have guessed from their presence. I really believe that, had they not been so, I should have rushed off incontinently and blown sphinx, bronze doors, and (as it proved) my chances of finding the Time Machine, all together into non-existence.

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

§ 9

"We emerged from the palace while the sun was still in part above the horizon. I was determined to

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

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

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ing it. I was to discover the atrocious folly of this proceeding, but it came to my mind as an ingenious move for covering our retreat.

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

"She wanted to run to it and play with it. I believe she would have cast herself into it had I not restrained her. But I caught her up, and, in spite of her struggles, plunged boldly before me into the wood. For a little way the glare of my fire lit the path. Looking back presently, I could see, through the crowded stems, that from my heap of sticks the blaze had spread to some bushes adjacent, and a curved line of fire was creeping up the grass of the hill. I laughed at that, and turned again to the dark trees before me. It was very black, and Weena clung to me convulsively, but there was still, as my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, sufficient light for me to avoid the stems. Overhead it was simply black, except where a gap of remote blue sky shone down upon us here and there. I struck none of my matches

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because I had no hand free. Upon my left arm I carried my little one, in my right hand I had my iron bar.

"For some way I heard nothing but the crackling twigs under my feet, the faint rustle of the breeze above, and my own breathing and the throb of the blood-vessels in my ears. Then I seemed to know of a pattering about me. I pushed on grimly. The pattering grew more distinct, and then I caught the same queer sounds and voices I had heard in the Underworld. There were evidently several of the Morlocks, and they were closing in upon me. Indeed, in another minute I felt a tug at my coat, then something at my arm. And Weena shivered violently, and became quite still.

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

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shadows, I knelt down and lifted her. The wood behind seemed full of the stir and murmur of a great company!

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

"The camphor flickered and went out. I lit a match, and as I did so, two white forms that had been approaching Weena dashed hastily away. One was so blinded by the light that he came straight for me and I felt his bones grind under the blow of my fist. He gave a whoop of dismay, staggered a little way, and fell down. I lit another piece of camphor, and went on gathering my bonfire. Presently I noticed how dry was some of the foliage above me, for since my arrival on the Time Machine, a matter of a week, no rain had fallen. So, instead of casting about among the trees for fallen twigs, I began leaping up and dragging down branches. Very soon I had a choking smoky fire of green wood and dry sticks, and could economise my camphor. Then I turned to

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where Weena lay beside my iron mace. I tried what I could to revive her, but she lay like one dead. I could not even satisfy myself whether or not she breathed.

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

"The strange exultation that so often seems to

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

"Stepping out from behind my tree and looking back, I saw, through the black pillars of the nearer trees, the flames of the burning forest. It was my first fire coming after me. With that I looked for Weena, but she was gone. The hissing and crackling behind me, the explosive thud as each fresh tree burst into flame, left little time for reflection. My iron bar still gripped, I followed in the Morlocks' path. It was a close race. Once the flames crept forward

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so swiftly on my right as I ran that I was outflanked and had to strike off to the left. But at last I emerged upon a small open space, and as I did so, a Morlock came blundering towards me, and past me, and went on straight into the fire!

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

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

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hill among them and avoided them, looking for some trace of Weena. But Weena was gone.

"At last I sat down on the summit of the hillock, and watched this strange incredible company of blind things groping to and fro, and making uncanny noises to each other, as the glare of the fire beat on them. The coiling uprush of smoke streamed across the sky, and through the rare tatters of that red canopy, remote as though they belonged to another universe, shone the little stars. Two or three Morlocks came blundering into me, and I drove them off with blows of my fists, trembling as I did so.

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

"I searched again for traces of Weena, but there were none. It was plain that they had left her poor little body in the forest. I cannot describe how it relieved me to think that it had escaped the awful fate to which it seemed destined. As I thought of that, I was almost moved to begin a massacre of the helpless abominations about me, but I contained my-

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self. The hillock, as I have said, was a kind of island in the forest. From its summit I could now make out through a haze of smoke the Palace of Green Porcelain, and from that I could get my bearings for the White Sphinx. And so, leaving the remnant of these damned souls still going hither and thither and moaning, as the day grew clearer, I tied some grass about my feet and limped on across smoking ashes and among black stems, that still pulsated internally with fire, towards the hiding-place of the Time Machine. I walked slowly, for I was almost exhausted, as well as lame, and I felt the intensest wretchedness for the horrible death of little Weena. It seemed an overwhelming calamity. Now, in this old familiar room, it is more like the sorrow of a dream than an actual loss. But that morning it left me absolutely lonely again—terribly alone. I began to think of this house of mine, of this fireside, of some of you, and with such thoughts came a longing that was pain.

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

§ 10

"ABOUT eight or nine in the morning I came to the same seat of yellow metal from which I had viewed the world upon the evening of my arrival. I thought of my hasty conclusions upon that evening and could not refrain from laughing bitterly at my confidence. Here was the same beautiful scene, the same abun-

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dant foliage, the same splendid palaces and magnificent ruins, the same silver river running between its fertile banks. The gay robes of the beautiful people moved hither and thither among the trees. Some were bathing in exactly the place where I had saved Weena, and that suddenly gave me a keen stab of pain. And like blots upon the landscape rose the cupolas above the ways to the Underworld. I understood now what all the beauty of the Over-world people covered. Very pleasant was their day, as pleasant as the day of the cattle in the field. Like the cattle, they knew of no enemies and provided against no needs. And their end was the same.

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

"It is a law of nature we overlook, that intellectual versatility is the compensation for change, danger, and trouble. An animal perfectly in harmony with its environment is a perfect mechanism. Nature never appeals to intelligence until habit and instinct are useless. There is no intelligence where there is no change and no need of change. Only those animals

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partake of intelligence that have to meet a huge variety of needs and dangers.

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

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

"I awoke a little before sunsetting. I now felt safe against being caught napping by the Morlocks, and, stretching myself, I came on down the hill towards

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the White Sphinx. I had my crowbar in one hand, and the other hand played with the matches in my pocket.

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

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

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

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

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

"I could already hear their murmuring laughter as they came towards me. Very calmly I tried to strike

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the match. I had only to fix on the levers and depart then like a ghost. But I had overlooked one little thing. The matches were of that abominable kind that light only on the box.

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

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

§ 11

"I HAVE already told you of the sickness and confusion that comes with time travelling. And this time I was not seated properly in the saddle, but sideways and in an unstable fashion. For an indefinite time I clung to the machine as it swayed and vibrated, quite unheeding how I went, and when I brought myself to look at the dials again I was amazed to find where I had arrived. One dial records days,

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another thousands of days, another millions of days, and another thousands of millions. Now, instead of reversing the levers I had pulled them over so as to go forward with them, and when I came to look at these indicators I found that the thousands hand was sweeping round as fast as the seconds hand of a watch—into futurity.

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

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down of its rising and setting that the work of the tidal drag was done. The earth had come to rest with one face to the sun, even as in our own time the moon faces the earth. Very cautiously, for I remembered my former headlong fall, I began to reverse my motion. Slower and slower went the circling hands until the thousands one seemed motionless and the daily one was no longer a mere mist upon its scale. Still slower, until the dim outlines of a desolate beach grew visible.

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

"The machine was standing on a sloping beach. The sea stretched away to the south-west, to rise into a sharp bright horizon against the wan sky. There were no breakers and no waves, for not a breath of wind was stirring. Only a slight oily swell rose and fell like a gentle breathing, and showed that the eternal sea was still moving and living. And along the margin where the water sometimes broke was a

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thick incrustation of salt—pink under the lurid sky. There was a sense of oppression in my head, and I noticed that I was breathing very fast. The sensation reminded me of my only experience of mountaineering, and from that I judged the air to be more rarefied than it is now.

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

"As I stared at this sinister apparition crawling towards me, I felt a tickling on my cheek as though a fly had lighted there. I tried to brush it away with my hand, but in a moment it returned, and almost immediately came another by my ear. I struck at this, and caught something threadlike. It was drawn swiftly out of my hand. With a frightful qualm, I

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turned, and saw that I had grasped the antenna of another monster crab that stood just behind me. Its evil eyes were wriggling on their stalks, its mouth was all alive with appetite, and its vast ungainly claws, smeared with an algal slime, were descending upon me. In a moment my hand was on the lever, and I had placed a month between myself and these monsters. But I was still on the same beach, and I saw them distinctly now as soon as I stopped. Dozens of them seemed to be crawling here and there, in the sombre light, among the foliated sheets of intense green.

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

"So I travelled, stopping ever and again, in great strides of a thousand years or more, drawn on by the mystery of the earth's fate, watching with a strange fascination the sun grow larger and duller in the westward sky, and the life of the old earth ebb away. At last, more than thirty million years hence, the huge red-hot dome of the sun had come to obscure

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nearly a tenth part of the darkling heavens. Then I stopped once more, for the crawling multitude of crabs had disappeared, and the red beach, save for its livid green liverworts and lichens, seemed lifeless. And now it was flecked with white. A bitter cold assailed me. Rare white flakes ever and again came eddying down. To the north-eastward, the glare of snow lay under the starlight of the sable sky, and I could see an undulating crest of hillocks pinkish white. There were fringes of ice along the sea margin, with drifting masses further out; but the main expanse of that salt ocean, all bloody under the eternal sunset, was still unfrozen.

"I looked about me to see if any traces of animal life remained. A certain indefinable apprehension still kept me in the saddle of the machine. But I saw nothing moving, in earth or sky or sea. The green slime on the rocks alone testified that life was not extinct. A shallow sand-bank had appeared in the sea and the water had receded from the beach. I fancied I saw some black object flopping about upon this bank, but it became motionless as I looked at it, and I judged that my eye had been deceived, and that the black object was merely a rock. The stars in the sky were intensely bright and seemed to me to twinkle very little.

"Suddenly I noticed that the circular westward outline of the sun had changed; that a concavity, a bay, had appeared in the curve. I saw this grow larger. For a minute perhaps I stared aghast at this blackness that was creeping over the day, and then I realised that an eclipse was beginning. Either the

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moon or the planet Mercury was passing across the sun's disk. Naturally, at first I took it to be the moon, but there is much to incline me to believe that what I really saw was the transit of an inner planet passing very near to the earth.

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

"A horror of this great darkness came on me. The cold, that smote to my marrow, and the pain I felt in breathing, overcame me. I shivered, and a deadly nausea seized me. Then like a red-hot bow in the sky appeared the edge of the sun. I got off the machine to recover myself. I felt giddy and incapable of facing the return journey. As I stood sick and confused I saw again the moving thing upon the shoal—there was no mistake now that it was a moving thing—

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against the red water of the sea. It was a round thing, the size of a football perhaps, or, it may be, bigger, and tentacles trailed down from it; it seemed black against the weltering blood-red water, and it was hopping fitfully about. Then I felt I was fainting. But a terrible dread of lying helpless in that remote and awful twilight sustained me while I clambered upon the saddle.

§ 12

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

"I saw one little thing that seemed odd to me. I think I have told you that when I set out, before my velocity became very high, Mrs. Watchett had walked across the room, travelling, as it seemed to me, like a rocket. As I returned, I passed again across that

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minute when she traversed the laboratory. But now her every motion appeared to be the exact inversion of her previous ones. The door at the lower end opened, and she glided quietly up the laboratory, back foremost, and disappeared behind the door by which she had previously entered. Just before that I seemed to see Hillyer for a moment; but he passed like a flash.

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

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

"For a time my brain went stagnant. Presently I got up and came through the passage here, limping, because my heel was still painful, and feeling sorely begrimed. I saw the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the table by the door. I found the date was indeed to-day, and looking at the timepiece, saw the hour was almost eight o'clock. I heard your voices and the clatter of plates. I hesitated—I felt so sick and weak. Then I sniffed good wholesome meat, and opened the door

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on you. You know the rest. I washed, and dined, and now I am telling you the story."

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

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

He took up his pipe, and began, in his old accustomed manner, to tap with it nervously upon the bars of the grate. There was a momentary stillness. Then chairs began to creak and shoes to scrape upon the carpet. I took my eyes off the Time Traveller's face, and looked round at his audience. They were in the dark, and little spots of colour swam before them. The Medical Man seemed absorbed in the contemplation of our host. The Editor was looking hard at the end of his cigar—the sixth. The Journalist fumbled for his watch. The others, as far as I remember, were motionless.

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

"You don't believe it?"

"Well——"

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"I thought not."

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Time Traveller hesitated. Then suddenly: "Certainly not."

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

The Time Traveller put his hand to his head. He spoke like one who was trying to keep hold of an idea that eluded him. "They were put into my pocket by Weena, when I travelled into Time." He stared round the room. "I'm damned if it isn't all going. This room and you and the atmosphere of every day is too much for my memory. Did I ever make a Time Machine, or a model of a Time Ma-

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chine? Or is it all only a dream? They say life is a dream, a precious poor dream at times—but I can't stand another that won't fit. It's madness. And where did the dream come from? . . . I must look at that machine. If there *is* one!"

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

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

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

I shared a cab with the Editor. He thought the tale a "gaudy lie." For my own part I was unable to come to a conclusion. The story was so fantastic and incredible, the telling so credible and sober. I lay awake most of the night thinking about it. I de-

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termined to go next day and see the Time Traveller again. I was told he was in the laboratory, and being on easy terms in the house, I went up to him. The laboratory, however, was empty. I stared for a minute at the Time Machine and put out my hand and touched the lever. At that the squat substantial-looking mass swayed like a bough shaken by the wind. Its instability startled me extremely, and I had a queer reminiscence of the childish days when I used to be forbidden to meddle. I came back through the corridor. The Time Traveller met me in the smoking-room. He was coming from the house. He had a small camera under one arm and a knapsack under the other. He laughed when he saw me, and gave me an elbow to shake. "I'm frightfully busy," said he, "with that thing in there."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At that I understood. At the risk of disappointing Richardson I stayed on, waiting for the Time Traveller; waiting for the second, perhaps still stranger story, and the specimens and photographs

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he would bring with him. But I am beginning now to fear that I must wait a lifetime. The Time Traveller vanished three years ago. And, as everybody knows now, he has never returned.

EPILOGUE

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

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me, for my comfort, two strange white flowers—shrivelled now, and brown and flat and brittle—to witness that even when mind and strength had gone, gratitude and a mutual tenderness still lived on in the heart of man.

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THE WONDERFUL VISIT

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THE WONDERFUL VISIT

§ 1

On the Night of the Strange Bird, many people at Sidderton (and some nearer) saw a glare on the Sidderford Moor. But no one in Sidderford saw it, for most of Sidderford was abed.

All day the wind had been rising, so that the larks on the moor chirruped fitfully near the ground or rose only to be driven like leaves before the wind. The sun set in a bloody welter of clouds, and the moon was hidden. The glare, they say, was golden like a beam shining out of the sky, not a uniform blaze but broken all over by curving flashes like the waving of swords. It lasted but a moment and left the night dark and obscure. There were letters about it in *Nature*, and a rough drawing that no one thought very like. (You may see it for yourself—the drawing that was unlike the glare—on page 42 of Vol. cclx, of that publication.)

None in Sidderford saw the light, but Annie, Hooker Durgan's wife, was lying awake, and she saw the reflection of it—a flickering tongue of gold—dancing on the wall.

She, too, was one of those who heard the sound. The others who heard the sound were Lumpy Durgan, the half-wit, and Amory's mother. They said it was a sound like children singing and a throbbing of harp-

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strings, carried on a rush of notes like that which sometimes comes from an organ. It began and ended like the opening and shutting of a door, and before and after they heard nothing but the night wind howling over the moor and the noise of the caves under Sidderford cliff. Amory's mother said she wanted to cry when she heard it, but Lumpy was only sorry he could hear no more.

That is as much as any one can tell you of the glare upon Sidderford Moor and the alleged music therewith. And whether these had any real connection with the Strange Bird whose history follows, is more than I can say. But I set it down here for reasons that will be more apparent as the story proceeds.

§ 2

Sandy Bright was coming down the road from Spinner's carrying a side of bacon he had taken in exchange for a clock. He saw nothing of the light but he heard and saw the Strange Bird. He suddenly heard a flapping and a voice like a woman wailing, and being a nervous man and all alone, he was alarmed forthwith, and turning (all a-tremble) saw something large and black against the dim darkness of the cedars up the hill. It seemed to be coming right down upon him, and incontinently he dropped his bacon and set off running, only to fall headlong.

He tried in vain—such was his state of mind—to remember the beginning of the Lord's Prayer. The

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Strange Bird flapped over him, something larger than himself, with a vast spread of wings, and, as he thought, black. He screamed and gave himself up for lost. Then it went past him, sailing down the hill, and, soaring over the Vicarage, vanished into the hazy valley towards Sidderford.

And Sandy Bright lay upon his stomach there for ever so long, staring into the darkness after the Strange Bird. At last he got upon his knees and began to thank Heaven for his merciful deliverance, with his eyes downhill. He went on down into the village, talking aloud and confessing his sins as he went, lest the Strange Bird should come back. All who heard him thought him drunk. But from that night he was a changed man, and had done with drunkenness and defrauding the revenue by selling silver ornaments without a licence. And the side of bacon lay upon the hillside until the tallyman from Portburdock found it in the morning.

The next who saw the Strange Bird was a solicitor's clerk at Iping Hanger, who was climbing the hill before breakfast to see the sunrise. Save for a few dissolving wisps of cloud the sky had been blown clear in the night. At first he thought it was an eagle he saw. It was near the zenith and incredibly remote, a mere bright speck above the pink cirri; and it seemed as if it fluttered and beat itself against the sky as an imprisoned swallow might do against a window-pane. Then down it came into the shadow of the earth, sweeping in a great curve towards Portburdock and round over the Hanger, and so vanishing behind the woods of Siddermorton Park. It seemed

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larger than a man. Just before it was hidden, the light of the rising sun smote over the edge of the downs and touched its wings, and they flashed with the brightness of flames and the colour of precious stones, and so passed, leaving the witness agape.

A ploughman going to his work, along under the stone wall of Siddermorton Park, saw the Strange Bird flash over him for a moment and vanish among the hazy interstices of the beeches. But he saw little of the colour of the wings, witnessing only that its legs, which were long, seemed pink and bare like naked flesh, and its body mottled white. It smote like an arrow through the air and was gone.

These were the first three eye-witnesses of the Strange Bird.

Now in these days one does not cower before the devil and one's own sinfulness, or see strange iridescent wings in the light of dawn and say nothing of it afterwards. The young solicitor's clerk told his mother and sisters at breakfast, and afterwards on his way to the office at Portburdock, spoke of it to the blacksmith of Hammerpond, and spent the morning with his fellow clerks marvelling instead of copying deeds. And Sandy Bright went to talk the matter over with Mr. Jekyll, the "Primitive" minister, and the ploughman told old Hugh and afterwards the Vicar of Siddermorton.

"They are not an imaginative race about here," said the Vicar of Siddermorton, "I wonder how much of that was true. Barring that he thinks the wings were brown it sounds uncommonly like a Flamingo."

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§ 3

THE Vicar of Siddermorton (which is nine miles inland from Siddermouth as the crow flies) was an ornithologist. Some such pursuit, botany, antiquity, folk-lore, is almost inevitable for a single man in his position. He was given to geometry also, propounding occasionally impossible problems in the *Educational Times*, but ornithology was his *forte*. He had already added two visitors to the list of occasional British birds. His name was well known in the columns of the *Zoologist* (I am afraid it may be forgotten by now, for the world moves apace). And on the day after the coming of the Strange Bird, came first one and then another to confirm the ploughman's story and tell him, not that it had any connection, of the glare upon Sidderford Moor.

Now, the Vicar of Siddermorton had two rivals in his scientific pursuits: Gully of Sidderton, who had actually seen the glare, and who it was sent the drawing to *Nature*, and Borland the natural-history dealer, who kept the marine laboratory at Portburdock. Borland, the Vicar thought, should have stuck to his copepods, but instead he kept a taxidermist, and took advantage of his littoral position to pick up rare seabirds. It was evident to any one who knew anything of collecting that both these men would be scouring the country after the strange visitant, before twenty-four hours were out.

The Vicar's eye rested on the back of Saunders's "British Birds," for he was in his study at the time.

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Already in two places there was entered: "the only known British specimen was secured by the Rev. K. Hillyer, Vicar of Siddermorton." A third such entry. He doubted if any other collector had that.

He looked at his watch—*two*. He had just lunched, and usually he "rested" in the afternoon. He knew it would make him feel very disagreeable if he went out into the hot sunshine—both on the top of his head and generally. Yet Gully perhaps was out, prowling observant. Suppose it was something very good and Gully got it!

His gun stood in the corner. (The thing had iridescent wings and pink legs! The chromatic conflict was certainly exceedingly stimulating.) He took his gun.

He would have gone out by the glass doors and verandah, and down the garden into the hill road, in order to avoid his housekeeper's eye. He knew his gun expeditions were not approved of. But advancing towards him up the garden, he saw the Curate's wife and her two daughters, carrying tennis-rackets. His Curate's wife was a young woman of immense will, who used to play tennis on his lawn and cut his roses, differ from him on doctrinal points, and criticise his personal behaviour all over the parish. He went in abject fear of her, was always trying to propitiate her. But so far he had clung to his ornithology. . . .

However, he went out by the front door.

§ 4

If it were not for collectors England would be full, so to speak, of rare birds and wonderful butter-

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flies, strange flowers and a thousand interesting things. But happily the collector prevents all that, either killing with his own hands or, by buying extravagantly, procuring people of the lower classes to kill such eccentricities as appear. It makes work for people, even though Acts of Parliament interfere. In this way, for instance, he is killing off the chough in Cornwall, the Bath white butterfly, the Queen of Spain Fritillary; and can plume himself upon the extermination of the Great Auk, and a hundred other rare birds and plants and insects. All that is the work of the collector and his glory alone. In the name of Science. And this is right and as it should be; eccentricity, in fact, is immorality—think over it again if you do not think so now—just as eccentricity in one's way of thinking is madness (I defy you to find another definition that will fit all the cases of either); and if a species is rare it follows that it is not Fitted to Survive. The collector is after all merely like the foot soldier in the days of heavy armour—he leaves the combatants alone and cuts the throats of those who are overthrown. So one may go through England from end to end in the summer time and see only eight or ten commonplace wild flowers, and the commoner butterflies, and a dozen or so common birds, and never be offended by any breach of the monotony, any splash of strange blossom or flutter of unknown wing. All the rest have been "collected" years ago. For which cause we should all love Collectors, and bear in mind what we owe them when their collections are displayed. These camphorated little drawers of theirs, their glass cases and blotting-

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paper books, are the graves of the Rare and the Beautiful, the symbols of the Triumph of Leisure (morally spent) over the Delights of Life. (All of which, as you very properly remark, has nothing whatever to do with the Strange Bird.)

§ 5

THERE is a place on the moor where the black water shines among the succulent moss, and the hairy sundew, eater of careless insects, spreads its red-stained hungry hands to the God who gives his creatures—one to feed another. On a ridge thereby grow birches with a silvery bark, and the soft green of the larch mingles with the dark green fir. Thither through the honey-humming heather came the Vicar in the heat of the day, carrying a gun under his arm, a gun loaded with swanshot for the Strange Bird. And over his disengaged hand he carried a pocket handkerchief wherewith, ever and again, he wiped his beady face.

He went by and on past the big pond and the pool full of brown leaves where the Sidder arises, and so by the road (which is at first sandy and then chalky) to the little gate that goes into the park. There are seven steps up to the gate and on the further side six down again—lest the deer escape—so that when the Vicar stood in the gateway his head was ten feet or more above the ground. And looking where a tumult of bracken fronds filled the hollow between two groups of beech, his eye caught something parti-coloured that wavered and went. Sud-

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denly his face gleamed and his muscles grew tense; he ducked his head, clutched his gun with both hands, and stood still. Then watching keenly, he came on down the steps into the park, and, still holding his gun in both hands, crept rather than walked towards the jungle of bracken.

Nothing stirred, and he almost feared that his eyes had played him false, until he reached the ferns and had gone rustling breast-high into them. Then suddenly rose something full of wavering colours, twenty yards or less in front of his face, and beating the air. In another moment it had fluttered above the bracken and spread its pinions wide. He saw what it was, his heart was in his mouth, and he fired out of pure surprise and habit.

There was a scream of superhuman agony, the wings beat the air twice, and the victim came slanting swiftly downward and struck the ground—a struggling heap of writhing body, broken wing and flying bloodstained plumes—upon the turfy slope behind.

The Vicar stood aghast, with his smoking gun in his hand. It was no bird at all, but a youth with an extremely beautiful face, clad in a robe of saffron and with iridescent wings, across whose pinions great waves of colour, flushes of purple and crimson, golden green and intense blue, pursued one another as he writhed in his agony. Never had the Vicar seen such gorgeous floods of colour, not stained-glass windows, not the wings of butterflies, not even the glories of crystals seen between prisms, no colours on earth could compare with them. Twice the Angel raised himself, only to fall over sideways again. Then the

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beating of the wings diminished, the terrified face grew pale, the floods of colour abated, and suddenly with a sob he lay prone, and the changing hues of the broken wings faded swiftly into one uniform dull grey hue.

"Oh! *what* has happened to me?" cried the Angel (for such it was), shuddering violently, hands outstretched and clutching the ground, and then lying still.

"Dear me!" said the Vicar. "I had no idea." He came forward cautiously. "Excuse me," he said, "I am afraid I have shot you."

It was the obvious remark.

The Angel seemed to become aware of his presence for the first time. He raised himself by one hand, his brown eyes stared into the Vicar's. Then with a gasp, and biting his nether lip, he struggled into a sitting position and surveyed the Vicar from top to toe.

"A man!" said the Angel, clasping his forehead; "a man in the maddest black clothes and without a feather upon him. Then I was not deceived. I am indeed in the Land of Dreams!"

§ 6

Now there are some things frankly impossible. The weakest intellect will admit this situation is impossible. The *Athenæum* will probably say as much should it condescend to review this. Sun-bespattered ferns, spreading beech-trees, the Vicar and the gun are acceptable enough. But this Angel is a different matter. Plain sensible people will scarcely go on

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with such an extravagant story. And the Vicar fully appreciated this impossibility. But he lacked decision. Consequently he went on with it, as you shall immediately hear. He was hot, it was after dinner, he was in no mood for mental subtleties. The Angel had him at a disadvantage, and further distracted him from the main issue by irrelevant iridescence and a violent fluttering. For the moment it never occurred to the Vicar to ask whether the Angel was possible or not. He accepted him in the confusion of the moment, and the mischief was done. Put yourself in his place, my dear *Athenæum*. You go out shooting. You hit something. That alone would disconcert you. You find you have hit an Angel, and he writhes about for a minute and then sits up and addresses you. He makes no apology for his own impossibility. Indeed, he carries the charge clean into your camp. "A man!" he says, pointing. "A man in the maddest black clothes and without a feather upon him. Then I was not deceived. I am indeed in the Land of Dreams!" You *must* answer him. Unless you take to your heels. Or blow his brains out with your second barrel as an escape from the controversy.

"The Land of Dreams! Pardon me if I suggest you have just come out of it," was the Vicar's remark.

"How can that be?" said the Angel.

"Your wing," said the Vicar, "is bleeding. Before we talk, may I have the pleasure—the melancholy pleasure—of tying it up? I am really most sincerely sorry. . . ." The Angel put his hand behind his back and winced.

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The Vicar assisted his victim to stand up. The Angel turned gravely and the Vicar, with numberless insignificant panting parentheses, carefully examined the injured wings. (They articulated, he observed with interest, to a kind of second glenoid on the outer and upper edge of the shoulder-blade. The left wing had suffered little except the loss of some of the primary wing-quills, and a shot or so in the *ala spuria*, but the humerus bone of the right was evidently smashed.) The Vicar stanched the bleeding as well as he could and tied up the bone with his pocket handkerchief and the neck wrap his housekeeper made him carry in all weathers.

"I'm afraid you will not be able to fly for some time," said he, feeling the bone.

"I don't like this new sensation," said the Angel.

"The Pain when I feel your bone?"

"The *what?*" said the Angel.

"The Pain."

"'Pain'—you call it. No, I certainly don't like the Pain. Do you have much of this Pain in the Land of Dreams?"

"A very fair share," said the Vicar. "Is it new to you?"

"Quite," said the Angel. "I don't like it."

"How curious!" said the Vicar, and bit at the end of a strip of linen to tie a knot. "I think this bandaging must serve for the present," he said. "I've studied ambulance work before, but never the bandaging up of wing wounds. Is your Pain any better?"

"It glows now instead of flashing," said the Angel.

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"I am afraid you will find it glow for some time," said the Vicar, still intent on the wound.

The Angel gave a shrug of the wing and turned round to look at the Vicar again. He had been trying to keep an eye on the Vicar over his shoulder during all their interview. He looked at him from top to toe with raised eyebrows and a growing smile on his beautiful soft-featured face. "It seems so odd," he said with a sweet little laugh, "to be talking to a Man!"

"Do you know," said the Vicar, "now that I come to think of it, it is equally odd to me that I should be talking to an Angel. I am a somewhat matter-of-fact person. A Vicar has to be. Angels I have always regarded as—artistic conceptions——"

"Exactly what we think of men."

"But surely you have seen so many men——"

"Never before to-day. In pictures and books, times enough of course. But I have seen several since the sunrise, solid real men, besides a horse or so —those Unicorn things, you know, without horns— and quite a number of those grotesque knobby things called 'cows.' I was naturally a little frightened at so many mythical monsters, and came to hide here until it was dark. I suppose it will be dark again presently like it was at first. *Phew!* This Pain of yours is poor fun. I hope I shall wake up directly."

"I don't understand quite," said the Vicar, knitting his brows and tapping his forehead with his flat hand. "Mythical monster!" The worst thing he had been called for years hitherto was a "mediæval anachronism" (by an advocate of Disestablishment). "Do I

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understand that you consider me as—as something in a dream?"

"Of course," said the Angel smiling.

"And this world about me, these rugged trees and spreading fronds——"

"Is all so *very* dream-like," said the Angel. "Just exactly what one dreams of—or artists imagine."

"You have artists then among the Angels?"

"All kinds of artists. Angels with wonderful imaginations, who invent men and cows and eagles and a thousand impossible creatures."

"Impossible creatures!" said the Vicar.

"Impossible creatures," said the Angel. "Myths."

"But I'm real!" said the Vicar. "I assure you I'm real."

The Angel shrugged his wings and winced and smiled. "I can always tell when I am dreaming," he said.

"*You*—dreaming," said the Vicar. He looked round him.

"*You* dreaming!" he repeated. His mind worked diffusely.

He held out his hand with all his fingers moving. "I have it!" he said. "I begin to see." A really brilliant idea was dawning upon his mind. He had not studied mathematics at Cambridge for nothing, after all. "Tell me, please. Some animals of *your* world . . . of the Real World, real animals, you know."

"Real animals!" said the Angel smiling. "Why—there's Griffins and Dragons—and Jabberwocks—and Cherubim—and Sphinxes—and the Hippogriff—and Mermaids—and Satyrs—and . . ."

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"Thank you," said the Vicar as the Angel appeared to be warming to his work; "thank you. That is *quite* enough. I begin to understand."

He paused for a moment, his face pursed up. "Yes . . . I begin to see it."

"See what?" asked the Angel.

"The Griffins and Satyrs and so forth. It's as clear . . ."

"I don't see them," said the Angel.

"No, the whole point is they are not to be seen in this world. But our men with imaginations have told us all about them, you know. And even I at times . . . there are places in this village where you must simply take what they set before you, or give offence—I, I say, have seen in my dreams Jabberwocks, Bogle brutes, Mandrakes . . . From our point of view, you know, they are Dream Creatures . . ."

"Dream Creatures!" said the Angel. "How singular! This is a very curious dream. A kind of topsy-turvy one. You call men real and angels a myth. It almost makes one think that in some odd way there must be two worlds as it were . . ."

"At least Two," said the Vicar.

"Lying somewhere close together, and yet scarcely suspecting . . ."

"As near as page to page of a book."

"Penetrating each other, living each its own life. This is really a delicious dream!"

"And never dreaming of each other."

"Except when people go a-dreaming!"

"Yes," said the Angel thoughtfully. "It must be

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something of the sort. And that reminds me. Sometimes when I have been dropping asleep, or drowsing under the noontide sun, I have seen strange corrugated faces just like yours, going by me, and trees with green leaves upon them, and such queer uneven ground as this. . . . It must be so. I have fallen into another world."

"Sometimes," began the Vicar, "at bedtime, when I have been just on the edge of consciousness, I have seen faces as beautiful as yours, and the strange dazzling vistas of a wonderful scene that flowed past me, winged shapes soaring over it, and wonderful—sometimes terrible—forms going to and fro. I have even heard sweet music, too, in my ears. . . . It may be that as we withdraw our attention from the world of sense, the pressing world about us, as we pass into the twilight of repose, other worlds. . . . Just as we see the stars, those other worlds in space, when the glare of day recedes. . . . And the artistic dreamers who see such things most clearly. . . ."

They looked at one another.

"And in some incomprehensible manner I have fallen into this world of yours out of my own," said the Angel, "into the world of my dreams, grown real!"

He looked about him. "Into the world of my dreams."

"It is confusing," said the Vicar. "It almost makes one think there may be (ahem) Four Dimensions after all. In which case, of course," he went on hurriedly —for he loved geometrical speculations and took a certain pride in his knowledge of them—"there may be any number of three-dimensional universes packed

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side by side, and all dimly dreaming of one another. There may be world upon world, universe upon universe. It's perfectly possible. There's nothing so incredible as the absolutely possible. But I wonder how you came to fall out of your world into mine. . . ."

"Dear me!" said the Angel; "there's deer and a stag! Just as they draw them on the coats of arms. How grotesque it all seems! Can I really be awake?"

He rubbed his knuckles into his eyes.

The half dozen of dappled deer came in Indian file obliquely through the trees and halted, watching. "It's no dream—I am really a solid concrete Angel, in Dream Land," said the Angel. He laughed. The Vicar stood surveying him. The Reverend gentleman was pulling his mouth askew after a habit he had, and slowly stroking his chin. He was asking himself whether he, too, was not in the Land of Dreams.

§ 7

Now in the World of the Angels, so the Vicar learned in the course of many conversations, there is neither pain nor trouble nor death, marrying nor giving in marriage, birth nor forgetting. Only at times new things begin. It is a land without hill or dale, a wonderfully level land, glittering with strange buildings, with incessant sunlight or full moon, and with incessant breezes blowing through the Æolian tracceries of the trees. It is Wonderland, with glittering seas hanging in the sky, across which strange fleets go sailing, none know whither. There the flowers glow in Heaven and the stars shine about one's feet and the

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breath of life is a delight. The land goes on forever—there is no solar system nor interstellar space such as there is in our universe—and the air goes upward past the sun into the uttermost abyss of their sky. And there is nothing but Beauty there—all the beauty in our art is but feeble rendering of faint glimpses of that wonderful world, and our composers, our original composers, are those who hear, however faintly, the dust of melody that drives before its winds. And the angels, and wonderful monsters of bronze and marble and living fire, go to and fro therein.

It is a land of Law—for whatever is, is under the law—but its laws all, in some strange way, differ from ours. Their geometry is different because their space has a curve in it so that all their planes are cylinders; and their law of Gravitation is not according to the law of inverse squares, and there are four-and-twenty primary colours instead of only three. Most of the fantastic things of our science are commonplaces there, and all our earthly science would seem to them the maddest dreaming. There are no flowers upon their plants, for instance, but jets of coloured fire. That, of course, will seem mere nonsense to you because you do not understand. Most of what the Angel told the Vicar, indeed the Vicar could not realise, because his own experiences, being only of this world of matter, warred against his understanding. It was too strange to imagine.

What had jolted these twin universes together so that the Angel had fallen suddenly into Sidderford, neither the Angel nor the Vicar could tell. Nor for the matter of that could the author of this story. The

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author is concerned with the facts of the case, and has neither the desire nor the confidence to explain them. Explanations are the fallacy of a scientific age. And the cardinal fact of the case is this, that out in Siddermorton Park, with the glory of some wonderful world where there is neither sorrow nor sighing still clinging to him, on the 4th of August 1895, stood an Angel, bright and beautiful, talking to the Vicar of Siddermorton about the plurality of worlds. The author will swear to the Angel, if need be; and there he draws the line.

§ 8

"I HAVE," said the Angel, "a most unusual feeling —*here*. Have had since sunrise. I don't remember ever having any feeling—*here* before."

"Not pain, I hope," said the Vicar.

"Oh, no! It is quite different from that—a kind of vacuous feeling."

"The atmospheric pressure, perhaps, is a little different," the Vicar began, feeling his chin.

"And do you know, I have also the most curious sensations in my mouth—almost as if—it's so absurd! —as if I wanted to stuff things into it."

"Bless me!" said the Vicar. "Of course! You're hungry!"

"Hungry!" said the Angel. "What's that?"

"Don't you eat?"

"Eat! The word's quite new to me."

"Put food into your mouth, you know. One has to here. You will soon learn. If you don't, you get

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thin and miserable, and suffer a great deal—*pain*, you know—and finally you die."

"Die!" said the Angel. "That's another strange word!"

"It's not strange here. It means leaving off, you know," said the Vicar.

"We never leave off," said the Angel.

"You don't know what may happen to you in this world," said the Vicar, thinking him over. "Possibly if you are feeling hungry, and can feel pain and have your wings broken, you may even have to die before you get out of it again. At any rate you had better try eating. For my own part—ahem!—there are many more disagreeable things."

"I suppose I *had* better Eat," said the Angel. "If it's not too difficult. I don't like this 'Pain' of yours, and I don't like this 'Hungry.' If your 'Die' is anything like it, I would prefer to Eat. What a very odd world this is!"

"To Die," said the Vicar, "is generally considered worse than either pain or hunger. . . . It depends."

"You must explain all that to me later," said the Angel. "Unless I wake up. At present, please show me how to eat. If you will. I feel a kind of urgency. . . ."

"Pardon me," said the Vicar, and offered an elbow. "If I may have the pleasure of entertaining you. My house lies yonder—not a couple of miles from here."

"*Your* House!" said the Angel a little puzzled; but he took the Vicar's arm affectionately, and the two, conversing as they went, waded slowly through the

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luxuriant bracken, sun-mottled under the trees, and on over the stile in the park palings, and so across the bee-swarming heather for a mile or more, down the hillside, home.

You would have been charmed at the couple could you have seen them. The Angel, slight of figure, scarcely five feet high, and with a beautiful, almost effeminate face, such as an Italian old Master might have painted. (Indeed, there is one in the National Gallery [*Tobias and the Angel*, by some artist unknown] not at all unlike him so far as face and spirit go.) He was robed simply in a purple-wrought saffron blouse, bare-kneed and bare-footed, with his wings, broken now, and a leaden grey, folded behind him. The Vicar was a short, rather stout figure, rubicund, red-haired, clean-shaven, and with bright ruddy-brown eyes. He wore a piebald straw hat with a black ribbon, a very neat white tie, and a fine gold watch-chain. He was so greatly interested in his companion that it only occurred to him when he was in sight of the Vicarage that he had left his gun lying just where he had dropped it in the bracken.

He was rejoiced to hear that the pain of the bandaged wing fell rapidly in intensity.

§ 9

Let us be plain. The Angel of this story is the Angel of Art, not the Angel that one must be irreverent to touch—neither the Angel of religious feeling nor the Angel of popular belief. The last we all know. She is alone among the angelic hosts in being dis-

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tinctly feminine: she wears a robe of immaculate, unmitigated white with sleeves, is fair, with long golden tresses, and has eyes of the blue of Heaven. Just a pure woman she is, pure maiden or pure matron, in her *robe de nuit*, and with wings attached to her shoulder-blades. Her callings are domestic and sympathetic, she watches over a cradle or assists a sister soul heavenward. Often she bears a palm-leaf, but one would not be surprised if one met her carrying a warming-pan softly to some poor chilly sinner. She it was who came down in a bevy to Marguerite in prison, in the amended last scene in *Faust* at the Lyceum; and the interesting and improving little children that are to die young, have visions of such angels in the novels of Mrs. Henry Wood. This white womanliness with her indescribable charm of lavender-like holiness, her aroma of clean, methodical lives, is, it would seem after all, a purely Teutonic invention. Latin thought knows her not; the old masters have none of her. She is of a piece with that gentle innocent ladylike school of art whereof the greatest triumph is "a lump in one's throat," and where wit and passion, scorn and pomp, have no place. The white angel was made in Germany, in the land of blonde women and the domestic sentiments. She comes to us cool and worshipful, pure and tranquil, as silently soothing as the breadth and calmness of the starlit sky, which also is so unspeakably dear to the Teutonic soul. . . . We do her reverence. And to the angels of the Hebrews, those spirits of power and mystery, to Raphael, Zadkiel, and Michael, of whom only Watts has caught the shadow, of whom

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only Blake has seen the splendour, to them too, do we do reverence.

But this Angel the Vicar shot is, we say, no such angel at all, but the Angel of Italian art, polychromatic and gay. He comes from the land of beautiful dreams and not from any holier place. At best he is a popish creature. Bear patiently, therefore, with his scattered remiges, and be not hasty with your charge of irreverence before the story is read.

§ 10

THE Curate's wife and her two daughters and Mrs. Jehoram were still playing tennis on the lawn behind the Vicar's study, playing keenly and talking in gasps about paper patterns for blouses. But the Vicar forgot and came in that way.

They saw the Vicar's hat above the rhododendrons, and a bare curly head beside him. "I must ask him about Susan Wiggin," said the Curate's wife. She was about to serve, and stood with a racket in one hand and a ball between the fingers of the other. "*He* really ought to have gone to see her—being the Vicar. Not George. I—*Ah!*"

For the two figures suddenly turned the corner and were visible. The Vicar, arm in arm with——

You see, it came on the Curate's wife suddenly. The Angel's face being towards her she saw nothing of the wings. Only a face of unearthly beauty in a halo of chestnut hair, and a graceful figure clothed in a saffron garment that barely reached the knees. The thought of those knees flashed upon the Vicar at

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once. He, too, was horror-struck. So were the two girls and Mrs. Jehoram. All horror-struck. The Angel stared in astonishment at the horror-struck group. You see, he had never seen any one horror-struck before.

"Mis—ter Hillyer!" said the Curate's wife. "This is *too* much!" She stood speechless for a moment. "*Oh!*"

She swept round upon the rigid girls. "Come!" The Vicar opened and shut his voiceless mouth. The world hummed and spun about him. There was a whirling of zephyr skirts, four impassioned faces sweeping towards the open door of the passage that ran through the Vicarage. He felt his position went with them.

"Mrs. Mendham," said the Vicar, stepping forward. "Mrs. Mendham. You don't understand——"

"*Oh!*" they all said again.

One, two, three, four skirts vanished in the doorway. The Vicar staggered half-way across the lawn and stopped, aghast. "This comes," he heard the Curate's wife say, out of the depth of the passage, "of having an unmarried vicar—." The umbrella-stand wobbled. The front door of the Vicarage slammed like a minute-gun. There was silence for a space.

"I might have thought," he said. "She is always so hasty."

He put his hand to his chin—a habit with him. Then turned his face to his companion. The Angel was evidently wellbred. He was holding up Mrs. Jehoram's sunshade—she had left it on one of the

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cane chairs—and examining it with extraordinary interest. He opened it. "What a curious little mechanism!" he said. "What can it be for?"

The Vicar did not answer. The angelic costume certainly was—the Vicar knew it was a case for a French phrase—but he could scarcely remember it. He so rarely used French. It was not *de trop*, he knew. Anything but *de trop*. The Angel was *de trop*, but certainly not his costume. Ah! *Sans culotte!*

The Vicar examined his visitor critically—for the first time. "He *will* be difficult to explain," he said to himself softly.

The Angel stuck the sunshade into the turf and went to smell the sweet-brier. The sunshine fell upon his brown hair and gave it almost the appearance of a halo. He pricked his finger. "Odd!" he said. "Pain again."

"Yes," said the Vicar, thinking aloud. "He's very beautiful and curious as he is. I should like him best so. But I am afraid I must."

He approached the Angel with a nervous cough.

§ 11

"THOSE," said the Vicar, "were ladies."

"How grotesque," said the Angel, smiling and smelling the sweet-brier. "And such quaint shapes!"

"Possibly," said the Vicar. "Did you, *ahem*, notice how they behaved?"

"They went away. Seemed, indeed, to run away. Frightened? I, of course, was frightened at things

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without wings. I hope—they were not frightened at my wings?"

"At your appearance generally," said the Vicar, glancing involuntarily at the pink feet.

"Dear me! It never occurred to me. I suppose I seemed as odd to them as you did to me." He glanced down. "And my feet. *You* have hoofs like a hippogriff."

"Boots," corrected the Vicar.

"Boots, you call them! But, anyhow, I am sorry I alarmed——"

"You see," said the Vicar, stroking his chin, "our ladies, *ahem*, have peculiar views—rather inartistic views—about, *ahem*, clothing. Dressed as you are, I am afraid, I am really afraid that—beautiful as your costume certainly is—you will find yourself somewhat, *ahem*, somewhat isolated in society. We have a little proverb: 'When in Rome, *ahem*, one must do as the Romans do.' I can assure you that, assuming you are desirous to, *ahem*, associate with us—during your involuntary stay——"

The Angel retreated a step or so as the Vicar came nearer and nearer in his attempt to be diplomatic and confidential. The beautiful face grew perplexed. "I don't quite understand. Why do you keep making those noises in your throat? Is it Die or Eat, or any of those. . . ."

"As your host," interrupted the Vicar, and stopped.

"As my host," said the Angel.

"*Would* you object, pending more permanent arrangements, to invest yourself, *ahem*, in a suit, an entirely new suit I may say, like this I have on?"

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"Oh!" said the Angel. He retreated so as to take in the Vicar from top to toe. "Wear clothes like yours!" he said. He was puzzled but amused. His eyes grew round and bright, his mouth puckered at the corners.

"Delightful!" he said, clapping his hands together. "What a mad, quaint dream this is! Where are they?" He caught at the neck of the saffron robe.

"Indoors!" said the Vicar. "This way. We will change—indoors!"

§ 12

So the Angel was invested in a pair of nether garments of the Vicar's, a shirt, ripped down the back to accommodate the wings, socks, shoes—the Vicar's dress shoes—collar, tie, and light overcoat. But putting on the latter was painful, and reminded the Vicar that the bandaging was temporary. "I will ring for tea at once, and send Grummet down for Crump," said the Vicar. "And dinner shall be earlier." While the Vicar shouted his orders over the landing rails, the Angel surveyed himself in the cheval-glass with immense delight. If he was a stranger to pain, he was evidently no stranger—thanks perhaps to dreaming—to the pleasure of incongruity.

They had tea in the drawing-room. The Angel sat on the music-stool (music-stool because of his wings). At first he wanted to lie on the hearth-rug. He looked much less radiant in the Vicar's clothes than he had done upon the moor when dressed in saffron.

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His face shone still, the colour of his hair and cheeks was strangely bright, and there was a superhuman light in his eyes, but his wings under the overcoat gave him the appearance of a hunchback. The garments, indeed, made quite a terrestrial thing of him, the trousers were puckered transversely, and the shoes a size or so too large.

He was charmingly affable and quite ignorant of the most elementary facts of civilisation. Eating came without much difficulty, and the Vicar had an entertaining time teaching him how to take tea. "What a mess it is! What a dear grotesque ugly world you live in!" said the Angel. "Fancy stuffing things into your mouth! We use our mouths just to talk and sing with. Our world, you know, is almost incurably beautiful. We get so very little ugliness, that I find all this . . . delightful."

Mrs. Hinijer, the Vicar's housekeeper, looked at the Angel suspiciously when she brought in the tea. She thought him rather a "queer customer." What she would have thought had she seen him in saffron no one can tell.

The Angel shuffled about the room with his cup of tea in one hand, and the bread and butter in the other, and examined the Vicar's furniture. Outside the French windows, the lawn with its array of dahlias and sunflowers glowed in the warm sunlight, and Mrs. Jehoram's sunshade stood thereon like a triangle of fire. He thought the Vicar's portrait over the mantel very curious indeed, could not understand what it was there for. "You have yourself round," he said, *apropos* of the portrait, "why want yourself flat?"

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and he was vastly amused at the glass fire-screen. He found the oak chairs odd. "You're not square, are you?" he said, when the Vicar explained their use. "*We* never double ourselves up. We lie about on the asphodel when we want to rest."

"The chair," said the Vicar, "to tell you the truth, has always puzzled *me*. It dates, I think, from the days when the floors were cold and very dirty. I suppose we have kept up the habit. It's become a kind of instinct with us to sit on chairs. Anyhow, if I went to see one of my parishioners, and suddenly spread myself out on the floor—the natural way of it —I don't know what she would do. It would be all over the parish in no time. Yet it seems the natural method of reposing, to recline. The Greeks and Romans——"

"What is this?" said the Angel abruptly.

"That's a stuffed kingfisher. I killed it."

"Killed it!"

"Shot it," said the Vicar, "with a gun."

"Shot! As you did me?"

"I didn't kill you, you see. Fortunately."

"Is killing making like that?"

"In a way."

"Dear me! And you wanted to make me like that—wanted to put glass eyes in me and string me up in a glass case full of ugly green and brown stuff?"

"You see," began the Vicar, "I scarcely understood——"

"Is that 'die'?" asked the Angel suddenly.

"That is dead; it died."

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"Poor little thing. I must eat a lot. But you say you killed it. *Why?*"

"You see," said the Vicar, "I take an interest in birds, and I (*ahem*) collect them. I wanted the specimen——"

The Angel stared at him for a moment with puzzled eyes. "A beautiful bird like that!" he said with a shiver. "Because the fancy took you. You wanted the specimen!"

He thought for a minute. "Do you often kill?" he asked the Vicar.

§ 13

THEN Dr. Crump arrived. Grummet had met him not a hundred yards from the Vicarage gate. He was a large, rather heavy-looking man, with a clean-shaven face and a double chin. He was dressed in a grey morning coat (he always affected grey), with a chequered black-and-white tie. "What's the trouble?" he said, entering and staring without a shadow of surprise at the Angel's radiant face.

"This—*ahem*—gentleman," said the Vicar, "or—*ah*—Angel"—the Angel bowed—"is suffering from a gunshot wound."

"Gunshot wound!" said Dr. Crump. "In July! May I look at it, Mr.—Angel, I think you said?"

"He will probably be able to assuage your pain," said the Vicar. "Let me assist you to remove your coat?"

The Angel turned obediently.

"Spinal curvature?" muttered Dr. Crump quite

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audibly, walking round behind the Angel. "No! abnormal growth. Hullo! This is odd!" He clutched the left wing. "Curious," he said. "Reduplication of the anterior limb—bifid coracoid. Possible, of course, but I've never seen it before." The Angel winced under his hands. "Humerus. Radius and Ulna. All there. Congenital, of course. Humerus broken. Curious integumentary simulation of feathers. Dear me. Almost avian. Probably of considerable interest in comparative anatomy. I never did! How did this gunshot happen, Mr. Angel?"

The Vicar was amazed at the Doctor's matter-of-fact manner.

"Our friend," said the Angel, moving his head at the Vicar.

"Unhappily it is my doing," said the Vicar, stepping forward, explanatory. "I mistook the gentleman—the Angel (*ahem*)—for a large bird——"

"Mistook him for a large bird! What next? Your eyes want seeing to," said Dr. Crump. "I've told you so before." He went on patting and feeling, keeping time with a series of grunts and inarticulate mutterings. . . . "But this is really a very good bit of amateur bandaging," said he. "I think I shall leave it. Curious malformation this is! Don't you find it inconvenient, Mr. Angel?"

He suddenly walked round so as to look in the Angel's face.

The Angel thought he referred to the wound. "It is rather," he said.

"If it wasn't for the bones I should say paint with iodine night and morning. Nothing like iodine.

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You could paint your face flat with it. But the osseous outgrowth, the bones, you know, complicate things. I could saw them off, of course. It's not a thing one should have done in a hurry——"

"Do you mean my wings?" said the Angel in alarm.

"Wings!" said the Doctor. "Eigh? Call 'em wings! Yes—what else should I mean?"

"Saw them off!" said the Angel.

"Don't you think so? It's of course your affair. I am only advising——"

"Saw them off! What a funny creature you are!" said the Angel, beginning to laugh.

"As you will," said the Doctor. He detested people who laughed. "The things are curious," he said, turning to the Vicar. "If inconvenient"—to the Angel. "I never heard of such complete reduplication before—at least among animals. In plants it's common enough. Were you the only one in your family?" He did not wait for a reply. "Partial cases of the fission of limbs are not at all uncommon, of course, Vicar—six-fingered children, calves with six feet, and cats with double toes, you know. May I assist you?" he said, turning to the Angel who was struggling with the coat. "But such a complete reduplication, and so avian, too! It would be much less remarkable if it was simply another pair of arms."

The coat was got on and he and the Angel stared at one another.

"Really," said the Doctor, "one begins to understand how that beautiful myth of the angels arose.

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You look a little hectic, Mr. Angel—feverish. Excessive brilliance is almost worse as a symptom than excessive pallor. Curious your name should be Angel. I must send you a cooling draught, if you should feel thirsty in the night. . . ."

He made a memorandum on his shirt cuff. The Angel watched him thoughtfully, with the dawn of a smile in his eyes.

"One minute, Crump," said the Vicar, taking the Doctor's arm and leading him towards the door.

The Angel's smile grew brighter. He looked down at his black-clad legs. "He positively thinks I am a man!" said the Angel. "What he makes of the wings beats me altogether. What a queer creature he must be! This is really a most extraordinary dream!"

§ 14

"THAT *is* an Angel," whispered the Vicar. "You don't understand."

"*What?*" said the Doctor in a quick, sharp voice. His eyebrows went up and he smiled.

"But the wings?"

"Quite natural, quite . . . if a little abnormal."

"Are you sure they are natural?"

"My dear fellow, everything that is, is natural. There is nothing unnatural in the world. If I thought there was I should give up practice and go into *La Grande Chartreuse*. There are abnormal phenomena, of course. And——"

"But the way I came upon him," said the Vicar.

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"Yes, tell me where you picked him up," said the Doctor. He sat down on the hall table.

The Vicar began rather hesitatingly—he was not very good at story-telling—with the rumours of a strange great bird. He told the story in clumsy sentences—for, knowing the Bishop as he did, with that awful example always before him he dreaded getting his pulpit style into his daily conversation—and at every third sentence or so, the Doctor made a downward movement of his head—the corners of his mouth tucked away, so to speak—as though he ticked off the phases of the story and so far found it just as it ought to be. "Self-hypnotism," he murmured once.

"I beg your pardon?" said the Vicar.

"Nothing," said the Doctor. "Nothing, I assure you. Go on. This is extremely interesting."

The Vicar told him he went out with his gun.

"*After* lunch, I think you said?" interrupted the Doctor.

"Immediately after," said the Vicar.

"You should not do such things, you know. But go on, please."

He came to the glimpse of the Angel from the gate.

"In the full glare," said the Doctor, in parenthesis. "It was seventy-nine in the shade."

When the Vicar had finished, the Doctor pressed his lips together tighter than ever, smiled faintly, and looked significantly into the Vicar's eyes.

"You don't . . ." began the Vicar falteringly.

The Doctor shook his head. "Forgive me," he said, putting his hand on the Vicar's arm.

"You go out," he said, "on a hot lunch and on a

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hot afternoon. Probably over eighty. Your mind, what there is of it, is whirling with avian expectations. I say, 'what there is of it,' because most of your nervous energy is down there, digesting your dinner. A man who has been lying in the bracken stands up before you and you blaze away. Over he goes—and as it happens—as it happens—he has reduplicate fore limbs, one pair being not unlike wings. It's a coincidence certainly. And as for his iridescent colours and so forth— Have you never had patches of colour swim before your eyes before, on a brilliant sunlit day? . . . Are you sure they were confined to the wings? Think."

"But he says he *is* an Angel!" said the Vicar, staring out of his little round eyes, his plump hands in his pockets.

"*Ah!*" said the Doctor with his eye on the Vicar. "I expected as much." He paused.

"But don't you think . . ." began the Vicar.

"That man," said the Doctor in a low, earnest voice, "is a mattoid."

"A what?" said the Vicar.

"A mattoid. An abnormal man. Did you notice the effeminate delicacy of his face? His tendency to quite unmeaning laughter? His neglected hair? Then consider his singular dress. . . ."

The Vicar's hand went up to his chin.

"Marks of mental weakness," said the Doctor. "Many of this type of degenerate show this same disposition to assume some vast mysterious credentials. One will call himself the Prince of Wales, another the Archangel Gabriel, another the Deity even.

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Ibsen thinks he is a Great Teacher, and Maeterlinck a new Shakespeare. I've just been reading all about it—in Nordau. No doubt his odd deformity gave him an idea. . . ."

"But really," began the Vicar.

"No doubt he's slipped away from confinement."

"I do not altogether accept . . ."

"You will. If not, there's the police, and failing that, advertisement; but of course his people may want to hush it up. It's a sad thing in a family. . . ."

"He seems so altogether . . ."

"Probably you'll hear from his friends in a day or so," said the Doctor, feeling for his watch. "He can't live far from here, I should think. He seems harmless enough. I must come along and see that wing again to-morrow." He slid off the hall table and stood up.

"Those old wives' tales still have their hold on you," he said, patting the Vicar on the shoulder. "But an Angel, you know— Ha, ha!"

"I certainly *did* think . . ." said the Vicar dubiously.

"Weigh the evidence," said the Doctor, still fumbling at his watch. "Weigh the evidence with our instruments of precision. What does it leave you? Splashes of colour, spots of fancy—*muscæ volantes*."

"And yet," said the Vicar, "I could almost swear to the glory on his wings. . . ."

"Think it over," said the Doctor (watch out); "hot afternoon—brilliant sunshine—boiling down on your head. . . . But really I *must* be going. It is

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a quarter to five. I'll see your—Angel (ha, ha!) to-morrow again, if no one has been to fetch him in the meanwhile. Your bandaging was really very good. I flatter *myself* on that score. Our ambulance classes *were* a success, you see. . . . Good afternoon."

§ 15

THE Vicar opened the door half mechanically to let out Crump, and saw Mendham, his curate, coming up the pathway by the hedge of purple vetch and meadowsweet. At that his hand went up to his chin and his eyes grew perplexed. Suppose he *was* deceived. The Doctor passed the Curate with a sweep of his hand from his hat brim. Crump was an extraordinarily clever fellow, the Vicar thought, and knew far more of one's brain than one did oneself. The Vicar felt that acutely. It made the coming explanation difficult. Suppose he were to go back into the drawing-room and find just a tramp asleep on the hearth-rug.

Mendham was a cadaverous man with a magnificent beard. He looked, indeed, as though he had run to beard as a mustard plant does to seed. But when he spoke you found he had a voice as well.

"My wife came home in a dreadful state," he brayed out at long range.

"Come in," said the Vicar; "come in. Most remarkable occurrence. Please come in. Come into the study. I'm really dreadfully sorry. But when I explain . . ."

"And apologise, I hope," brayed the Curate.

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"And apologise. No, not that way. This way. The study."

"Now what *was* that woman?" said the Curate, turning on the Vicar as the latter closed the study door.

"What woman?"

"Pah!"

"But really!"

"The painted creature in light attire—disgustingly light attire, to speak freely—with whom you were promenading the garden."

"My dear Mendham—that was an Angel!"

"A very pretty Angel?"

"The world is getting so matter-of-fact," said the Vicar.

"The world," roared the Curate, "grows blacker every day. But to find a man in your position, shamelessly, openly . . ."

"*Bother!*" said the Vicar aside. He rarely swore. "Look here, Mendham, you really misunderstand. I can assure you . . ."

"Very well," said the Curate. "Explain!" He stood with his lank legs apart, his arms folded, scowling at his Vicar over his big beard.

(Explanations, I repeat, I have always considered the peculiar fallacy of this scientific age.)

The Vicar looked about him helplessly. The world had all gone dull and dead. Had he been dreaming all the afternoon? Was there really an angel in the drawing-room? Or was he the sport of a complicated hallucination?

"Well?" said Mendham, at the end of a minute.

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The Vicar's hand fluttered about his chin. "It's such a round-about story," he said.

"No doubt it will be," said Mendham harshly.

The Vicar restrained a movement of impatience.

"I went out to look for a strange bird this afternoon. . . . Do you believe in angels, Mendham, real angels?"

"I'm not here to discuss theology. I am the husband of an insulted woman."

"But I tell you it's not a figure of speech; this *is* an angel, a real angel with wings. He's in the next room now. You do misunderstand me so . . ."

"Really, Hillyer——"

"It is true, I tell you, Mendham. I swear it is true." The Vicar's voice grew impassioned. "What sin I have done that I should entertain and clothe angelic visitants, I don't know. I only know that—inconvenient as it undoubtedly will be—I have an angel now in the drawing-room, wearing my new suit and finishing his tea. And he's stopping with me, indefinitely, at my invitation. No doubt it was rash of me. But I can't turn him out, you know, because Mrs. Mendham— I may be a weakling, but I am still a gentleman."

"Really, Hillyer——"

"I can assure you it is true." There was a note of hysterical desperation in the Vicar's voice. "I fired at him, taking him for a flamingo, and hit him in the wing."

"I thought this was a case for the Bishop. I find it is a case for the Lunacy Commissioners."

"Come and see him, Mendham!"

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"But there *are* no angels."

"We teach the people differently," said the Vicar.

"Not as material bodies," said the Curate.

"Anyhow, come and see him."

"I don't want to see your hallucinations," began the Curate.

"I can't explain anything unless you come and see him," said the Vicar. "A man who's more like an angel than anything else in heaven or earth. You simply must see if you wish to understand."

"I don't wish to understand," said the Curate. "I don't wish to lend myself to any imposture. Surely, Hillyer, if this is not an imposition, you can tell me yourself. . . . Flamingo, indeed!"

§ 16

THE Angel had finished his tea and was standing looking pensively out of the window. He thought the old church down the valley lit by the light of the setting sun was very beautiful, but he could not understand the serried ranks of tombstones that lay up the hillside beyond. He turned as Mendham and the Vicar came in.

Now Mendham could bully his Vicar cheerfully enough, just as he could bully his congregation; but he was not the sort of man to bully a stranger. He looked at the Angel, and the "strange woman" theory was disposed of. The Angel's beauty was too clearly the beauty of a youth.

"Mr. Hillyer tells me," Mendham began, in an al-

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most apologetic tone, "that you—ah—it's so curious —claim to be an Angel."

"*Are* an Angel," said the Vicar.

The Angel bowed.

"Naturally," said Mendham, "we are curious."

"Very," said the Angel. "The blackness and the shape."

"I beg your pardon?" said Mendham.

"The blackness and the flaps," repeated the Angel; "and no wings."

"Precisely," said Mendham, who was altogether at a loss. "We are, of course, curious to know something of how you came into the village in such a peculiar costume."

The Angel looked at the Vicar. The Vicar touched his chin.

"You see," began the Vicar.

"Let *him* explain," said Mendham; "I beg."

"I wanted to suggest," began the Vicar.

"And I don't want you to suggest."

"*Bother!*" said the Vicar.

The Angel looked from one to the other. "Such rugose expressions flit across your faces!" he said.

"You see, Mr.—Mr.—I don't know your name," said Mendham, with a certain diminution of suavity. "The case stands thus: My wife—four ladies, I might say—are playing lawn-tennis, when you suddenly rush out on them, sir; you rush out on them from among the rhododendra in a very defective costume. You and Mr. Hillyer."

"But I—" said the Vicar.

"I know. It was this gentleman's costume was

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defective. Naturally—it is my place in fact—to demand an explanation." His voice was growing in volume. "And I *must* demand an explanation."

The Angel smiled faintly at his note of anger and his sudden attitude of determination—arms tightly folded.

"I am rather new to the world," the Angel began.

"Nineteen at least," said Mendham. "Old enough to know better. That's a poor excuse."

"May I ask one question first?" said the Angel.

"Well?"

"Do you think I am a Man—like yourself? As the chequered man did."

"If you are not a man——"

"One other question. Have you *never* heard of an Angel?"

"I warn you not to try that story upon me," said Mendham, now back at his familiar crescendo.

The Vicar interrupted: "But Mendham—he has wings!"

"*Please* let me talk to him," said Mendham.

"You are so quaint," said the Angel; "you interrupt everything I have to say."

"But what *have* you to say?" said Mendham.

"That I really *am* an Angel. . . ."

"Pshaw!"

"There you go!"

"But tell me, honestly, how you came to be in the shrubbery of Siddermorton Vicarage—in the state in which you were. And in the Vicar's company? Cannot you abandon this ridiculous story of yours? . . ."

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The Angel shrugged his wings. "What *is* the matter with this man?" he said to the Vicar.

"My dear Mendham," said the Vicar, "a few words from me. . . ."

"Surely my question is straightforward enough!"

"But you won't tell me the answer you want, and it's no good my telling you any other."

"*Pshaw!*" said the Curate again. And then turning suddenly on the Vicar: "Where does he come from?"

The Vicar was in a dreadful state of doubt by this time.

"He *says* he is an Angel!" said the Vicar. "Why don't you listen to him?"

"No angel would alarm four ladies. . . ."

"Is *that* what it is all about?" said the Angel.

"Enough cause, too, I should think!" said the Curate.

"But I really did not know," said the Angel.

"This is altogether too much!"

"I am sincerely sorry I alarmed those ladies."

"You ought to be. But I see I shall get nothing out of you two." Mendham went towards the door. "I am convinced there is something discreditable at the bottom of this business. Or why not tell a simple straightforward story? I will confess you puzzle me. Why, in this enlightened age, you should tell this fantastic, this far-fetched story of an angel, altogether beats me. What good *can* it do? . . ."

"But stop and look at his wings!" said the Vicar.

"I can assure you he has wings!"

Mendham had his fingers on the door-handle. "I

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have seen quite enough," he said. "It may be this is simply a foolish attempt at a hoax, Hillyer."

"But Mendham!" said the Vicar.

The Curate halted in the doorway and looked at the Vicar over his shoulder. The accumulating judgment of months found vent. "I cannot understand, Hillyer, why you are in the Church. For the life of me, I cannot. The air is full of Social Movements, of Economic Change, the Woman Movement, Rational Dress, The Reunion of Christendom, Socialism, Individualism—all the great and moving Questions of the Hour! Surely, we who follow the Great Reformer . . . And here you are stuffing birds, and startling ladies with your callous disregard. . . ."

"But Mendham," began the Vicar.

The Curate would not hear him. "You shame the Apostles with your levity. . . . But this is only a preliminary inquiry," he said, with a threatening note in his sonorous voice, and so vanished abruptly (with a violent slam) from the room.

§ 17

"ARE *all* men so odd as this?" said the Angel.

"I'm in such a difficult position," said the Vicar. "You see," he said, and stopped, searching his chin for an idea.

"I'm beginning to see," said the Angel.

"They won't believe it."

"I see that."

"They will think I tell lies."

"And?"

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"That will be extremely painful to me."

"Painful! . . . Pain," said the Angel. "I hope not."

The Vicar shook his head. The good report of the village had been the breath of his life so far. "You see," he said, "it would look so much more plausible if you said you were just a man."

"But I'm not," said the Angel.

"No, you're not," said the Vicar. "So that's no good."

"Nobody here, you know, has ever seen an angel, or heard of one—except in church. If you had made your *début* in the chancel—on Sunday—it might have been different. But that's too late now. . . . (*Bother!*) Nobody, absolutely nobody, will believe in you."

"I hope I am not inconveniencing you?"

"Not at all," said the Vicar; "not at all. Only—Naturally it may be inconvenient if you tell a too incredible story. If I might suggest (*ahem*)——"

"Well?"

"You see, people in the world, being men themselves, will almost certainly regard you as a man. If you say you are not, they will simply say you do not tell the truth. Only exceptional people appreciate the exceptional. When in Rome one must—well, respect Roman prejudices a little—talk Latin. You will find it better——"

"You propose I should feign to become a man?"

"You have my meaning at once."

The Angel stared at the Vicar's hollyhocks and thought.

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"Possibly, after all," he said slowly, "I *shall* become a man. I may have been too hasty in saying I was not. You say there are no angels in this world. Who am I to set myself up against your experience? A mere thing of a day—so far as this world goes. If you say there are no angels—clearly I must be something else. I eat—angels do not eat. I *may* be a man already."

"A convenient view, at any rate," said the Vicar.

"If it is convenient to you——"

"It is. And then to account for your presence here.

"*If*," said the Vicar, after a hesitating moment of reflection, "if, for instance, you had been an ordinary man with a weakness for wading, and you had gone wading in the Sidder, and your clothes had been stolen, for instance, and I had come upon you in that position of inconvenience, the explanation I shall have to make to Mrs. Mendham—would be shorn at least of the supernatural element. There is such a feeling against the supernatural element nowadays—even in the pulpit. You would hardly believe——"

"It's a pity that was not the case," said the Angel.

"Of course," said the Vicar. "It is a great pity that was not the case. But at any rate you will oblige me if you do not obtrude your angelic nature. You will oblige every one, in fact. There is a settled opinion that angels do not do this kind of thing. And nothing is more painful—as I can testify—than a decaying settled opinion. . . . Settled opinions are mental teeth in more ways than one. For my own part,"—the Vicar's hand passed over his eyes for a

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moment—"I cannot but believe you are an angel. . . . Surely I can believe my own eyes."

"We always do ours," said the Angel.

"And so do we, within limits."

Then the clock upon the mantel chimed seven, and almost simultaneously Mrs. Hinijer announced dinner.

§ 18

The Angel and the Vicar sat at dinner. The Vicar, with his napkin tucked in at his neck, watched the Angel struggling with his soup. "You will soon get into the way of it," said the Vicar. The knife-and-fork business was done awkwardly but with effect. The Angel looked furtively at Delia, the little waiting-maid. When presently they sat cracking nuts—which the Angel found congenial enough—and the girl had gone, the Angel asked: "Was that a lady too?"

"Well," said the Vicar (*crack*). "No—she is not a lady. She is a servant."

"Yes," said the Angel; "she *had* rather a nicer shape."

"You mustn't tell Mrs. Mendham that," said the Vicar, covertly satisfied.

"She didn't stick out so much at the shoulders and hips, and there was more of her in between. And the colour of her robes was not discordant—simply neutral. And her face——"

"Mrs. Mendham and her daughters had been playing tennis," said the Vicar, feeling he ought not to

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listen to detraction even of his mortal enemy. "Do you like these things—these nuts?"

"Very much," said the Angel. *Crack.*

"You see," said the Vicar (*chum, chum, chum*), "for my own part I entirely believe you are an angel."

"Yes!" said the Angel.

"I shot you—I saw you flutter. It's beyond dispute. In my own mind. I admit it's curious and against my preconceptions, but—practically—I'm assured, perfectly assured in fact, that I saw what I certainly did see. But after the behaviour of these people. (*Crack.*) I really don't see how we are to persuade people. Nowadays people are so very particular about evidence. So that I think there is a great deal to be said for the attitude you assume. Temporarily at least I think it would be best for you to do as you propose to do, and behave as a man as far as possible. Of course there is no knowing how or when you may go back. After what has happened (*gluck, gluck, gluck*—as the Vicar refills his glass)—after what has happened I should not be surprised to see the side of the room fall away, and the hosts of Heaven appear to take you away again—take us both away even. You have so far enlarged my imagination. All these years I have been forgetting Wonderland. But still— It will certainly be wiser to break the thing gently to them."

"This life of yours," said the Angel. "I'm still in the dark about it. How do you begin?"

"Dear me!" said the Vicar. "Fancy having to explain that! We begin existence here, you know, as

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babies, silly pink helpless things wrapped in white, with goggling eyes, that yelp dismally at the Font. Then these babies grow larger and become even beautiful—when their faces are washed. And they continue to grow to a certain size. They become children, boys and girls, youths and maidens (*crack*), young men and young women. That is the finest time in life, according to many—certainly the most beautiful. Full of great hopes and dreams, vague emotions and unexpected dangers."

"*That* was a maiden?" said the Angel, indicating the door through which Delia had disappeared.

"Yes," said the Vicar, "that was a maiden." And paused thoughtfully.

"And then?"

"Then," said the Vicar, "the glamour fades and life begins in earnest. The young men and young women pair off—most of them. They come to me shy and bashful, in smart ugly dresses, and I marry them. And then little pink babies come to them, and some of the youths and maidens that were, grow fat and vulgar, and some grow thin and shrewish, and their pretty complexions go, and they get a queer delusion of superiority over the younger people, and all the delight and glory goes out of their lives. So they call the delight and glory of the younger ones, Illusion. And then they begin to drop to pieces."

"Drop to pieces!" said the Angel. "How grotesque!"

"Their hair comes off and gets dull coloured or ashen grey," said the Vicar. "*I*, for instance." He bowed his head forward to show a circular shining

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patch the size of a florin. "And their teeth come out. Their faces collapse and become as wrinkled and dry as a shrivelled apple. 'Corrugated' you called mine. They care more and more for what they have to eat and to drink, and less and less for any of the other delights of life. Their limbs get loose in the joints, and their hearts slack, or little pieces from their lungs come coughing up. Pain. . . ."

"Ah!" said the Angel.

"Pain comes into their lives more and more. And then they go. They do not like to go, but they have to—out of this world, very reluctantly, clutching its pain at last in their eagerness to stop. . . ."

"Where do they go?"

"Once I thought I knew. But now I am older I know I do not know. We have a Legend—perhaps it is not a legend. One may be a churchman and disbelieve. Stokes says there is nothing in it. . . ."

The Vicar shook his head at the bananas.

"And you?" said the Angel. "Were you a little pink baby?"

"A little while ago I was a little pink baby."

"Were you robed then as you are now?"

"Oh, no! Dear me! What a queer idea! Had long white clothes, I suppose, like the rest of them."

"And then you were a little boy?"

"A little boy."

"And then a glorious youth?"

"I was not a very glorious youth, I am afraid. I was sickly, and too poor to be radiant, and with a timid heart. I studied hard and pored over the dying thoughts of men long dead. So I lost the glory, and

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no maiden came to me, and the dulness of life began too soon."

"And you have your little pink babies?"

"None," said the Vicar with a scarce perceptible pause. "Yet all the same, as you see, I am beginning to drop to pieces. Presently my back will droop like a wilting flowerstalk. And then, in a few thousand days more I shall be done with, and I shall go out of this world of mine. . . . Whither I do not know."

"And you have to eat like this every day?"

"Eat, and get clothes and keep this roof above me. There are some very disagreeable things in this world called Cold and Rain. And the other people here—how and why is too long a story—have made me a kind of chorus to their lives. They bring their little pink babies to me and I have to say a name and some other things over each new pink baby. And when the children have grown to be youths and maidens, they come again and are confirmed. You will understand that better later. Then before they may join in couples and have pink babies of their own, they must come again and hear me read out of a book. They would be outcast, and no other maiden would speak to the maiden who had a little pink baby without I had read over her for twenty minutes out of my book. It's a necessary thing, as you will see. Odd as it may seem to you. And afterwards when they are falling to pieces, I try and persuade them of a strange world in which I scarcely believe myself, where life is altogether different from what they have had—or desire. And in the end, I bury them, and read out of my book to those who will presently follow into the unknown

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land. I stand at the beginning, and at the zenith, and at the setting of their lives. And on every seventh day, I who am a man myself, I who see no further than they do, talk to them of the Life to Come—the life of which we know nothing. If such a life there be. And slowly I drop to pieces amidst my prophesying."

"What a strange life!" said the Angel.

"Yes," said the Vicar. "What a strange life! But the thing that makes it strange to me is new. I had taken it as a matter of course until you came into my life.

"This life of ours is so insistent," said the Vicar. "It, and its petty needs, its temporary pleasures (*crack*) swathe our souls about. While I am preaching to these people of mine of another life, some are ministering to one appetite and eating sweets, others —the old men—are slumbering, the youths glance at the maidens, the grown men protrude white waistcoats and gold chains, pomp and vanity on a substratum of carnal substance, their wives flaunt garish bonnets at one another. And I go on droning away of the things unseen and unrealised—'Eye hath not seen,' I read, 'nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the imagination of man to conceive,' and I look up to catch an adult male immortal admiring the fit of a pair of three-and-sixpenny gloves. It is damping year after year. When I was ailing in my youth I felt almost the assurance of vision that beneath this temporary phantasmal world was the real world —the enduring world of the Life Everlasting. But now——"

He glanced at his chubby white hand, fingering

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the stem of his glass. "I have put on flesh since then," he said. [*Pause.*]

"I have changed and developed very much. The battle of the Flesh and Spirit does not trouble me as it did. Every day I feel less confidence in my beliefs, and more in God. I live, I am afraid, a quiescent life, duties fairly done, a little ornithology and a little chess, a trifle of mathematical trifling. My times are in His hands——"

The Vicar sighed and became pensive. The Angel watched him, and the Angel's eyes were troubled with the puzzle of him. "Gluck, gluck, gluck," went the decanter as the Vicar refilled his glass.

§ 19

So the Angel dined and talked to the Vicar, and presently the night came and he was overtaken by yawning.

"Yah—oh!" said the Angel suddenly. "Dear me! A higher power seemed suddenly to stretch my mouth open and a great breath of air went rushing down my throat."

"You yawned," said the Vicar. "Do you never yawn in the angelic country?"

"Never," said the Angel.

"And yet you are immortal!—I suppose you want to go to bed."

"Bed!" said the Angel. "Where's that?"

So the Vicar explained darkness to him and the art of going to bed. (The Angels it seems sleep only in

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order to dream, and dream, like primitive man, with their foreheads on their knees. And they sleep among the white poppy meadows in the heat of the day.) The Angel found the bedroom arrangements quaint enough.

"Why is everything raised up on big wooden legs?" he said. "You have the floor, and then you put everything you have upon a wooden quadruped. Why do you do it?" The Vicar explained with philosophical vagueness. The Angel burned his finger in the candle-flame—and displayed an absolute ignorance of the elementary principles of combustion. He was merely charmed when a line of fire ran up the curtains. The Vicar had to deliver a lecture on fire so soon as the flame was extinguished. He had all kinds of explanations to make—even the soap needed explaining. It was an hour or more before the Angel was safely tucked in for the night.

"He's very beautiful," said the Vicar, descending the staircase, quite tired out; "and he's a real angel no doubt. But I am afraid he will be a dreadful anxiety, all the same, before he gets into our earthly way with things."

He seemed quite worried. He helped himself to an extra glass of sherry before he put away the wine in the cellaret.

§ 20

THE Curate stood in front of the looking-glass and solemnly divested himself of his collar.

"I never heard a more fantastic story," said Mrs.

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Mendham from the basket chair. "The man must be mad. Are you sure——"

"Perfectly, my dear. I've told you every word, every incident——"

"*Well!*" said Mrs. Mendham, and spread her hands. "There's no sense in it."

"Precisely, my dear."

"The Vicar," said Mrs. Mendham, "must be mad."

"This hunchback is certainly one of the strangest creatures I've seen for a long time. Foreign looking, with a big bright-coloured face and long brown hair. . . . It can't have been cut for months!" The Curate put his studs carefully upon the shelf of the dressing-table. "And a kind of staring look about his eyes, and a simpering smile. Quite a silly-looking person. Effeminate."

"But who *can* he be?" said Mrs. Mendham.

"I can't imagine, my dear. Nor where he came from. He might be a chorister or something of that sort."

"But *why* should he be about the shrubbery . . . in that dreadful costume?"

"I don't know. The Vicar gave me no explanation. He simply said, 'Mendham, this is an Angel.'"

"I wonder if he drinks. . . . They may have been bathing near the spring, of course," reflected Mrs. Mendham. "But I noticed no other clothes on his arm."

The Curate sat down on his bed and unlaced his boots.

"It's a perfect mystery to me, my dear." (Flick,

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flick of laces.) "Hallucination is the only charitable——"

"You are sure, George, that it was *not* a woman."

"Perfectly," said the Curate.

"I know what men are, of course."

"It was a young man of nineteen or twenty," said the Curate.

"I can't understand it," said Mrs. Mendham. "You say the creature is staying at the Vicarage?"

"Hillyer is simply mad," said the Curate. He got up and went padding round the room to the door to put out his boots. "To judge by his manner you would really think he believed this cripple was an angel. Are your shoes out, dear?"

"They're just by the wardrobe," said Mrs. Mendham. "He always was a little queer, you know. There was always something childish about him. . . . An angel!

The Curate came and stood by the fire, fumbling with his braces. Mrs. Mendham liked a fire even in the summer. "He shirks all the serious problems in life and is always trifling with some new foolishness," said the Curate. "Angel, indeed!" He laughed suddenly. "Hillyer *must* be mad," he said.

Mrs. Mendham laughed too. "Even that doesn't explain the hunchback," she said.

"The hunchback must be mad, too," said the Curate.

"It's the only way of explaining it in a sensible way," said Mrs. Mendham. [*Pause.*]

"Angel or no angel," said Mrs. Mendham, "I know what is due to me. Even supposing the man

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thought he *was* in the company of an angel, that is no reason why he should not behave like a gentleman."

"That is perfectly true."

"You will write to the Bishop, of course?"

Mendham coughed. "No, I shan't write to the Bishop," said Mendham. "I think it seems a little disloyal. . . . And he took no notice of the last, you know."

"But surely——"

"I shall write to Austin. In confidence. He will be sure to tell the Bishop, you know. And you must remember, my dear——"

"That Hillyer can dismiss you, you were going to say. My dear, the man's much too weak! *I* should have a word to say about that. And besides, you do all his work for him. Practically, we manage the parish from end to end. I do not know what would become of the poor if it was not for me. They'd have free quarters in the Vicarage to-morrow. There is that Goody Ansell——"

"I know, my dear," said the Curate, turning away and proceeding with his undressing. "You were telling me about her only this afternoon."

§ 21

And thus in the little bedroom over the gable we reach a first resting-place in this story. And as we have been hard at it, getting our story spread out before you, it may be perhaps well to recapitulate a little.

Looking back you will see that much has been done;

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we began with a blaze of light "not uniform but broken all over by curving flashes like the waving of swords," and the sound of a mighty harping, and the advent of an Angel with polychromatic wings.

Swiftly, dexterously, as the reader must admit, wings have been clipped, halo handled off, the glory clapped into coat and trousers, and the Angel made for all practical purposes a man, under a suspicion of being either a lunatic or an impostor. You have heard, too, or at least been able to judge, what the Vicar and the Doctor and the Curate's wife thought of the strange arrival. And further remarkable opinions are to follow.

The afterglow of the summer sunset in the north-west darkens into night and the Angel sleeps, dreaming himself back in the wonderful world where it is always light, and every one is happy, where fire does not burn and ice does not chill; where rivulets of starlight go streaming through the amaranthine meadows, out to the seas of Peace. He dreams, and it seems to him that once more his wings glow with a thousand colours and flash through the crystal air of the world from which he has come.

So he dreams. But the Vicar lies awake, too perplexed for dreaming. Chiefly he is troubled by the possibilities of Mrs. Mendham; but the evening's talk has opened strange vistas in his mind, and he is stimulated by a sense as of something seen darkly by the indistinct vision of a hitherto unsuspected wonderland lying about his world. For twenty years now he has held his village living and lived his daily life, protected by his familiar creed, by the clamour of

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the details of life, from any mystical dreaming. But now interweaving with the familiar bother of his persecuting neighbour, is an altogether unfamiliar sense of strange new things.

There was something ominous in the feeling. Once, indeed, it rose above all other considerations, and in a kind of terror he blundered out of bed, bruised his shins very convincingly, found the matches at last, and lit a candle to assure himself of the reality of his own customary world again. But on the whole the more tangible trouble was the Mendham avalanche. Her tongue seemed to be hanging above him like the sword of Damocles. What might she not say of this business, before her indignant imagination came to rest?

And while the successful captor of the Strange Bird was sleeping thus uneasily, Gully of Sidderton was carefully unloading his gun after a wearisome blank day, and Sandy Bright was on his knees in prayer, with the window carefully fastened. Annie Durgan was sleeping hard with her mouth open, and Amory's mother was dreaming of washing, and both of them had long since exhausted the topics of the Sound and the Glare. Lumpy Durgan was sitting up in his bed, now crooning the fragment of a tune and now listening intently for a sound he had heard once and longed to hear again. As for the solicitor's clerk at Iping Hanger, he was trying to write poetry about a confectioner's girl at Portburdock, and the Strange Bird was quite out of his head. But the ploughman who had seen it on the confines of Siddermorton Park had a black eye. That had been one of the more tangi-

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ble consequences of a little argument about birds' legs in the *Ship*. It is worthy of this passing mention, since it is probably the only known instance of an Angel causing anything of the kind.

§ 22

THE Vicar, going to call the Angel, found him dressed and leaning out of his window. It was a glorious morning, still dewy; and the rising sunlight, slanting round the corner of the house, struck warm and yellow upon the hillside. The birds were astir in the hedges and shrubbery. Up the hillside—for it was late in August—a plough drove slowly. The Angel's chin rested upon his hands and he did not turn as the Vicar came up to him.

"How's the wing?" said the Vicar.

"I'd forgotten it," said the Angel. "Is that yonder a man?"

The Vicar looked. "That's a ploughman."

"Why does he go to and fro like that? Does it amuse him?"

"He's ploughing. That's his work."

"Work! Why does he do it? It seems a monotonous thing to do."

"It is," admitted the Vicar. "But he has to do it to get a living, you know. To get food to eat and all that kind of thing."

"How curious!" said the Angel. "Do all men have to do that? Do you?"

"Oh, no. He does it for me; does my share."

"Why?" asked the Angel.

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"Oh! in return for things I do for him, you know. We go in for division of labour in this world. Exchange is no robbery."

"I see," said the Angel, with his eyes still on the ploughman's heavy movements.

"What do you do for him?"

"That seems an easy question to you," said the Vicar, "but really!—it's difficult. Our social arrangements are rather complicated. It's impossible to explain these things all at once, before breakfast. Don't you feel hungry?"

"I think I do," said the Angel slowly, still at the window; and then abruptly: "Somehow I can't help thinking that ploughing must be far from enjoyable."

"Possibly," said the Vicar, "very possibly. But breakfast is ready. Won't you come down?"

The Angel left the window reluctantly.

"Our society," explained the Vicar on the staircase, "is a complicated organisation."

"Yes?"

"And it is so arranged that some do one thing and some another."

"And that lean, bent old man trudges after that heavy blade of iron pulled by a couple of horses while we go down to eat?"

"Yes. You will find it is perfectly just. Ah! mushrooms and poached eggs! It's the Social System. Pray be seated. Possibly it strikes you as unfair?"

"I'm puzzled," said the Angel.

"The drink I'm sending you is called coffee," said

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the Vicar. "I dare say you are. When I was a young man I was puzzled in the same way. But afterwards comes a Broader View of Things. (These black things are called mushrooms; they look beautiful.) Other Considerations. All men are brothers, of course, but some are younger brothers, so to speak. There is work that requires culture and refinement, and work in which culture and refinement would be an impediment. And the rights of property must not be forgotten. One must render unto Cæsar. . . . Do you know, instead of explaining this matter now (this is yours), I think I will lend you a little book to read (*chum, chum, chum*—these mushrooms are well up to their appearance), which sets the whole thing out very clearly."

§ 23

After breakfast the Vicar went into the little room next to his study to find a book on Political Economy for the Angel to read. For the Angel's social ignorances were clearly beyond any verbal explanations. The door stood ajar.

"What is that?" said the Angel, following him. "A violin!" He took it down.

"You play?" said the Vicar.

The Angel had the bow in his hand, and by way of answer drove it across the strings. The quality of the note made the Vicar turn suddenly.

The Angel's hand tightened on the instrument. The bow flew back and flickered, and an air the Vicar had never heard before danced in his ears. The Angel

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shifted the fiddle under his dainty chin and went on playing, and as he played his eyes grew bright and his lips smiled. At first he looked at the Vicar, then his expression became abstracted. He seemed no longer to look at the Vicar, but through him at something beyond, something in his memory or his imagination, something infinitely remote, undreamed of hitherto. . . .

The Vicar tried to follow the music. The air reminded him of a flame, it rushed up, shone, flickered and danced, passed and reappeared. No!—it did not reappear! Another air—like it and unlike it, shot up after it, wavered, vanished. Then another, the same and not the same. It reminded him of the flaring tongues that palpitate and change above a newly lit fire. There are two airs—or *motifs*, which is it?—thought the Vicar. He knew remarkably little of musical technique. They go dancing up, one pursuing the other, out of the fire of the incantation, pursuing, fluctuating, turning, up into the sky. There below was the fire burning, a flame without fuel upon a level space, and there two flirting butterflies of sound, dancing away from it, up, one over another, swift, abrupt, uncertain.

Flirting butterflies were they! What was the Vicar thinking of? Where was he? In the little room next to his study, of course! And the Angel standing in front of him smiling into his face, playing the violin, and looking through him as though he were only a window. That *motif* again, a yellow flare, spread fanlike by a gust, and now one, then with a swift eddying upward flight the other, the two things

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of fire and light pursuing one another again up into that clear immensity.

The study and the realities of life suddenly faded out of the Vicar's eyes, grew thinner and thinner like a mist that dissolves into air, and he and the Angel stood together on a pinnacle of wrought music, about which glittering melodies circled and vanished and reappeared. He was in the land of Beauty, and once more the glory of heaven was upon the Angel's face, and the glowing delights of colour pulsated in his wings. Himself the Vicar could not see. But I cannot tell you of the vision of that great and spacious land, of its incredible openness and height and nobility. For there is no space there like ours, no time as we know it; one must needs speak by bungling metaphors and own in bitterness after all that one has failed. And it was only a vision. The wonderful creatures flying through the ether saw them not as they stood there, flew through them as one might pass through a wisp of mist. The Vicar lost all sense of duration, all sense of necessity——

"Ah!" said the Angel, suddenly putting down the fiddle.

The Vicar had forgotten the book on Political Economy, had forgotten everything until the Angel had done. For a minute he sat quite still. Then he woke up with a start. He was sitting on the old iron-bound chest.

"Really," he said slowly, "you are very clever."

He looked about him in a puzzled way. "I had a kind of vision while you were playing. I seemed to see— What did I see? It has gone."

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He stood up with a dazzled expression upon his face. "I shall never play the violin again," he said. "I wish you would take it to your room—and keep it— And play to me again. I did not know anything of music until I heard you play. I do not feel as though I had ever heard any music before."

He stared at the Angel, then about him at the room. "I have never felt anything of this kind with music before," he said. He shook his head. "I shall never play again."

§ 24

VERY unwisely, as I think, the Vicar allowed the Angel to go down into the village by himself, to enlarge his ideas of humanity. Unwisely, because how was he to imagine the reception the Angel would receive? Not thoughtlessly, I am afraid. He had always carried himself with decorum in the village, and the idea of a slow procession through the little street with all the inevitable curious remarks, explanations, pointings, was too much for him. The Angel might do the strangest things, the village was certain to think them so. Peering faces. "Who's *he* got now?" Besides, was it not his duty to prepare his sermon in good time? The Angel, duly directed, went down cheerfully by himself—still innocent of most of the peculiarities of the human as distinguished from the angelic turn of mind.

The Angel walked slowly, his white hands folded behind his hunched back, his sweet face looking this way and that. He peered curiously into the eyes of

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the people he met. A little child picking a bunch of vetch and honeysuckle looked in his face, and forthwith came and put them in his hand. It was about the only kindness he had from a human being (saving only the Vicar and one other). He heard Mother Gustick scolding that granddaughter of hers as he passed the door. "You *Brazen* Faggit—you!" said Mother Gustick. "You Trumpery Baggage!"

The Angel stopped, startled at the strange sounds of Mother Gustick's voice. "Put yer best clo'es on, and yer feather in yer 'at, and off you goes to meet en, fal lal, and me at 'ome slaving for ye. 'Tis a Fancy Lady you'll be wantin' to be, my gal, a walkin' Touch and Go, with yer idleness and finery——"

The voice ceased abruptly, and a great peace came upon the battered air. "Most grotesque and strange!" said the Angel, still surveying this wonderful box of discords. "Walking Touch and Go!" He did not know that Mrs. Gustick had suddenly become aware of his existence, and was scrutinising his appearance through the window-blind. Abruptly the door flew open, and she stared out into the Angel's face. A strange apparition, grey and dusty hair, and the dirty pink dress unhooked to show the stringy throat, a discoloured gargoyle, presently to begin spouting incomprehensible abuse.

"Now then, Mister," began Mrs. Gustick. "Have ye nothin' better to do than listen at people's doors for what you can pick up?"

The Angel stared at her in astonishment.

"D'year!" said Mrs. Gustick, evidently very angry indeed. "Listenin'."

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"Have you any objection to my hearing. . . ."

"Object to my hearing! Course I have! Whad yer think? You ain't such a Ninny . . ."

"But if ye didn't want me to hear, why did you cry out so loud? I thought . . ."

"*You thought!* Softie—that's what *you* are! You silly girt staring Gaby, what don't know any better than to come holding yer girt mouth wide open for all that you can catch holt on! And then off up there to tell! You great Fat-Faced, Tale-Bearin' Silly-Billy! I'd be ashamed to come poking and peering round quiet people's houses. . . ."

The Angel was surprised to find that some inexplicable quality in her voice excited the most disagreeable sensations in him and a strong desire to withdraw. But, resisting this, he stood listening politely (as the custom is in the Angelic Land so long as any one is speaking). The entire eruption was beyond his comprehension. He could not perceive any reason for the sudden projection of this vituperative head, out of infinity so to speak. And questions without a break for an answer were outside his experience altogether.

Mrs. Gustick proceeded with her characteristic fluency, assured him he was no gentleman, inquired if he called himself one, remarked that every tramp did as much nowadays, compared him to a Stuck Pig, marvelled at his impudence, asked him if he wasn't ashamed of himself standing there, inquired if he was rooted to the ground, was curious to be told what he meant by it, wanted to know whether he robbed a scarecrow for his clothes, suggested that an

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abnormal vanity prompted his behaviour, inquired if his mother knew he was out, and finally remarking, "I got somethin'll move you, my gentleman," disappeared with a ferocious slamming of the door.

The interval struck the Angel as singularly peaceful. His whirling mind had time to analyse his sensations. He ceased bowing and smiling, and stood merely astonished.

"This is a curious painful feeling," said the Angel. "Almost worse than Hungry, and quite different. When one is hungry one wants to eat. I suppose she was a woman. Here one wants to get away. I suppose I might just as well go."

He turned slowly and went down the road meditating. He heard the cottage door reopen, and turning his head, saw through intervening scarlet runners Mrs. Gustick with a steaming saucepan full of boiling cabbage water in her hand.

"'Tis well you went, Mister Stolen Breeches," came the voice of Mrs. Gustick floating down through the vermilion blossoms. "Don't you come peeping and prying round this yer cottage again or I'll learn ye manners, I will!"

The Angel stood in a state of considerable perplexity. He had no desire to come within earshot of the cottage again—ever. He did not understand the precise import of the black pot, but his general impression was entirely disagreeable. There was no explaining it.

"I *mean* it!" said Mrs. Gustick, crescendo. "Drat it!—I *mean* it."

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The Angel turned and went on, a dazzled look in his eyes.

"She was very grotesque!" said the Angel. "*Very.* Much more than the little man in black. And she means it. But what she means I don't know!..." He became silent. "I suppose they all mean something," he said presently, still perplexed.

§ 25

THEN the Angel came in sight of the forge, where Sandy Bright's brother was shoeing a horse for the carter from Upmorton. Two hobbledehoys were standing by the forge staring in a bovine way at the proceedings. As the Angel approached, these two and then the carter turned slowly through an angle of thirty degrees and watched his approach, staring quietly and steadily at him. The expression on their faces was one of abstract interest.

The Angel became self-conscious for the first time in his life. He drew nearer, trying to maintain an amiable expression on his face, an expression that beat in vain against their granitic stare. His hands were behind him. He smiled pleasantly, looking curiously at the (to him) incomprehensible employment of the smith. But the battery of eyes seemed to angle for his regard. Trying to meet the three pairs at once, the Angel lost his alertness and stumbled over a stone. One of the yokels gave a sarcastic cough, and was immediately covered with confusion at the Angel's inquiring gaze, nudging his companion

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with his elbow to cover his disorder. None spoke, and the Angel did not speak.

So soon as the Angel had passed, one of the three hummed this tune in an aggressive tone.

Then all three of them laughed. One tried to sing something and found his throat contained phlegm. The Angel proceeded on his way.

"Who's *'e* then?" said the second hobbledehoy.

"Ping, ping, ping," went the blacksmith's hammer.

"S'pose he's one of these here foweners," said the carter from Upmorton. "Däamned silly fool he do look to be sure."

"Tas the way with them foweners," said the first hobbledehoy sagely.

"Got something very like the 'ump," said the carter from Upmorton. "Dää-ä-ämned if 'e ent."

Then the silence healed again, and they resumed their quiet expressionless consideration of the Angel's retreating figure.

"Very like the 'ump et is," said the carter after an enormous pause.

§ 26

The Angel went on through the village, finding it all wonderful enough. "They begin, and just a little while, and then they end," he said to himself in a puzzled voice. "But what are they doing mean-

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while?" Once he heard some invisible mouth chant inaudible words to the tune the man at the forge had hummed.

"That's the poor creature the Vicar shot with that great gun of his," said Sarah Glue (of 1, Church Cottages), peering over the blind.

"He looks Frenchified," said Susan Hopper, peering through the interstices of that convenient veil on curiosity.

"He has sweet eyes," said Sarah Glue, who had met them for a moment.

The Angel sauntered on. The postman passed him and touched his hat to him; further down was a dog asleep in the sun. He went on and saw Mendham, who nodded distantly and hurried past. (The Curate did not care to be seen talking to an angel in the village, until more was known about him.) There came from one of the houses the sound of a child screaming in a passion, that brought a puzzled look to the angelic face. Then the Angel reached the bridge below the last of the houses, and stood leaning over the parapet watching the glittering little cascade from the mill.

"They begin, and just a little while, and then they end," said the weir from the mill. The water raced under the bridge, green and dark and streaked with foam.

Beyond the mill rose the square tower of the church with the churchyard behind it, a spray of tombstones and wooden headboards splashed up the hillside. A half dozen of beech-trees framed the picture.

Then the Angel heard a shuffling of feet and the

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gride of wheels behind him, and turning his head saw a man dressed in dirty brown rags and a felt hat grey with dust, who was standing with a slight swaying motion and fixedly regarding the Angelic back. Beyond him was another almost equally dirty, pushing a knife-grinder's barrow over the bridge.

"Mornin'," said the first person, smiling weakly. "Goomorn." He arrested an escaping hiccough.

The Angel stared at him. He had never seen a really fatuous smile before. "Who are you?" said the Angel.

The fatuous smile faded. "No your business whoaaam. Wishergoomorn."

"Carm on," said the man with the grindstone, passing on his way.

"Wishergoomorn," said the dirty man, in a tone of extreme aggravation. "Carncher Answerme?"

"Carm *on* you fool!" said the man with the grindstone—receding.

"I don't understand," said the Angel.

"Donunderstan'. Sim'l enough. Wishergoomorn. Willyanswerme? Wonchr? gemwishergem goomorn. Cusom answer goomorn. No gem. Haverteachyer."

The Angel was puzzled. The drunken man stood swaying for a moment, then he made an unsteady snatch at his hat and threw it down at the Angel's feet. "Ver well," he said, as one who decides great issues.

"*Carm* on!" said the voice of the man with the grindstone—stopping perhaps twenty yards off.

"You *wan* fight, you—" the Angel failed to catch the word. "I'll show yer, not answer gem's goomorn."

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He began to struggle with his jacket. "Think I'm drun," he said, "I show yer." The man with the grindstone sat down on the shaft to watch. "Carm on," he said. The jacket was intricate, and the drunken man began to struggle about the road, in his attempts to extricate himself, breathing threatenings and slaughter. Slowly the Angel began to suspect, remotely enough, that these demonstrations were hostile. "Mur wun know yer when I done wi' yer," said the drunken man, coat almost over his head.

At last the garment lay on the ground, and through the frequent interstices of his reminiscences of a waistcoat, the drunken tinker displayed a fine hairy and muscular body to the Angel's observant eyes. He squared up in masterly fashion.

"Take the paint off yer," he remarked, advancing and receding, fists up and elbows out.

"Carm on," floated down the road.

The Angel's attention was concentrated on two huge hairy black fists, that swayed and advanced and retreated. "Come on d'yer say? I'll show yer," said the gentleman in rags, and then with extraordinary ferocity: "My crikey! I'll show yer."

Suddenly he lurched forward, and with a newborn instinct and raising a defensive arm as he did so, the Angel stepped aside to avoid him. The fist missed the Angelic shoulder by a hair's breadth, and the tinker collapsed in a heap with his face against the parapet of the bridge. The Angel hesitated over the writhing dusty heap of blasphemy for a moment, and then turned towards the man's companion up the road. "Lemmeget up," said the man on the

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bridge. "Lemmeget up, you swine. I'll show yer."

A strange disgust, a quivering repulsion came upon the Angel. He walked slowly away from the drunkard towards the man with the grindstone.

"What does it all mean?" said the Angel. "I don't understand it."

"Dam fool! . . . say's it's 'is silver weddin'," answered the man with the grindstone, evidently much annoyed; and then, in a tone of growing impatience, he called down the road once more: "Carm on!"

"Silver wedding!" said the Angel. "What is a silver wedding?"

"Jest 'is rot," said the man on the barrow. "But 'e's always 'avin' some 'scuse like that. Fair sickenin' it is. Lars week it wus 'is bloomin' birthday, and *then* 'e 'adn't 'ardly got sober orf a comlimentary drunk to my noo barrer. (*Carm* on, you fool.)"

"But I don't understand," said the Angel. "Why does he sway about so? Why does he keep on trying to pick up his hat like that—and missing it?"

"*Why!*" said the tinker. "Well this *is* a blasted innocent country! *Why!* Because 'e's blind! Wot else? (Carm on—*Dam* yer.) Because 'e's just as full as 'e can 'old. That's *why!*"

The Angel noticing the tone of the second tinker's voice, judged it wiser not to question him further. But he stood by the grindstone and continued to watch the mysterious evolutions on the bridge.

"Carm on! I shall 'ave to go and pick up that 'at I suppose. . . . 'E's always at it. I ne'er 'ad such a blooming pard before. *Always* at it, 'e is."

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The man with the barrow meditated. "'Taint as if 'e was a gentleman and 'adn't no livin' to get. An' 'e's such a reckless fool when 'e gets a bit on. Goes offerin' out every one 'e meets. (*There* you go!) I'm blessed if 'e didn't offer out a 'ole bloomin' Salvation Army. No judgment in it. (Oh! *Carm* on! *Carm* on!) 'Ave to go and pick this bloomin' 'at up now I s'pose. 'E don't care *wot* trouble 'e gives."

The Angel watched the second tinker walk back, and with affectionate blasphemy assist the first to his hat and his coat. Then he turned, absolutely mystified, towards the village again.

§ 27

After that incident the Angel walked along past the mill and round behind the church, to examine the tombstones.

"This seems to be the place where they put the broken pieces," said the Angel—reading the inscriptions. "Curious word—relict! Resurgam! Then they are not done with quite. What a huge pile it requires to keep her down. . . . It is spirited of her.

"Hawkins?" said the Angel softly, . . . "*Hawkins?* The name is strange to me. . . . He did not die then. . . . It is plain enough,—Joined the Angelic Hosts, May 17, 1863. He must have felt as much out of place as I do down here. But I wonder why they put that little pot thing on the top of this monument. Curious! There are several others

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about—little stone pots with a rag of stiff stone drapery over them."

Just then the boys came pouring out of the National School, and first one and then several stopped agape at the Angel's crooked black figure among the white tombs. "Ent 'e gart a bääk on en!" remarked one critic.

"'E's got 'air like a girl!" said another.

The Angel turned towards them. He was struck by the queer little heads sticking up over the lichenous wall. He smiled faintly at their staring faces, and then turned to marvel at the iron railings that enclosed the Fitz-Jarvis tomb. "A queer air of uncertainty," he said. "Slabs, piles of stone, these railings. . . . Are they afraid? . . . Do these Dead ever try and get up again? There's an air of repression —fortification——"

"Gét yer *'air* cut, Gét yer *'air* cut," sang three little boys together.

"Curious these Human Beings are!" said the Angel. "That man yesterday wanted to cut off my wings, now these little creatures want me to cut off my hair! And the man on the bridge offered to take the 'paint' off me. .They will leave nothing of me soon."

"Where did you get that *'at?*" sang another little boy. "Where did you get them clo'es?"

"They ask questions that they evidently do not want answered," said the Angel. "I can tell from the tone." He looked thoughtfully at the little boys. "I don't understand the methods of Human intercourse. These are probably friendly advances, a kind

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of ritual. But I don't know the responses. I think I will go back to the little fat man in black with the gold chain across his stomach, and ask him to explain. It is difficult."

He turned towards the lych gate. "*Oh!*" said one of the little boys, in a shrill falsetto, and threw a beech-nut husk. It came bounding across the churchyard path. The Angel stopped in surprise.

This made all the little boys laugh. A second imitating the first, said "*Oh!*" and hit the Angel. His astonishment was really delicious. They all began crying "*Oh!*" and throwing beech-nut husks. One hit the Angel's hand, another stung him smartly by the ear. The Angel made ungainly movements towards them. He spluttered some expostulation and made for the roadway. The little boys were amazed and shocked at his discomfiture and cowardice. Such sawney behaviour could not be encouraged. The pelting grew vigorous. You may perhaps be able to imagine those vivid moments, daring small boys running in close and delivering shots, milder small boys rushing round behind with flying discharges. Milton Screever's mongrel dog was roused to yelping ecstasy at the sight, and danced (full of wild imaginings) nearer and nearer to the angelic legs.

"Hi, hi!" said a vigorous voice. "I never did! Where's Mr. Jarvis? Manners, manners! you young rascals."

The youngsters scattered right and left, some over the wall into the playground, some down the street.

"Frightful pest these boys are getting!" said

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Crump, coming up. "I'm sorry they have been annoying you."

The Angel seemed quite upset. "I don't understand," he said. "These Human ways. . . ."

"Yes, of course. Unusual to you. How's your excrescence?"

"My what?" said the Angel.

"Bifid limb, you know. How is it? Now you're down this way, come in. Come in and let me have a look at it again. You young roughs! And meanwhile these little louts of ours will be getting off home. They're all alike in these villages. *Can't* understand anything abnormal. See an odd-looking stranger. Chuck a stone. No imagination beyond the parish. . . . (I'll give you physic if I catch you annoying strangers again.) . . . I suppose it's what one might expect. . . . Come along this way."

So the Angel, horribly perplexed still, was hurried into the surgery to have his wound redressed.

§ 28

In Siddermorton Park is Siddermorton House, where old Lady Hammergallow lives, chiefly upon Burgundy and the little scandals of the village, a dear old lady with a ropy neck, a ruddled countenance and spasmodic gusts of odd temper, whose three remedies for all human trouble among her dependents are a bottle of gin, a pair of charity blankets, or a new crown piece. The House is a mile and a half out of Siddermorton. Almost all the village is hers, saving a fringe to the south which belongs to Sir John

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Gotch, and she rules it with an autocratic rule, refreshing in these days of divided government. She orders and forbids marriages, drives objectionable people out of the village by the simple expedient of raising their rent, dismisses labourers, obliges heretics to go to church, and made Annie Dangett, who wanted to call her little girl "Euphemia," have the infant christened "Mary-Anne." She is a sturdy Broad Protestant and disapproves of the Vicar's going bald like a tonsure. She is on the Village Council, which obsequiously trudges up the hill and over the moor to her, and (as she is a trifle deaf) speaks all its speeches into her ear-trumpet instead of a rostrum. She takes no interest now in politics, but until last year she was an active enemy of "that Gladstone." She has parlour-maids instead of footmen to do her waiting, because of Hockley, the American stockbroker, and his four Titans in plush.

She exercises what is almost a fascination upon the village. If in the bar-parlour of the Cat and Cornucopia you swear by God no one would be shocked, but if you swore by Lady Hammergallow they would probably be shocked enough to turn you out of the room. When she drives through Siddermorton she always calls upon Bessy Flump, the postmistress, to hear all that has happened, and then upon Miss Finch, the dressmaker, to check back Bessy Flump. Sometimes she calls upon the Vicar, sometimes upon Mrs. Mendham whom she snubs, and even sometimes on Crump. Her sparkling pair of greys almost ran over the Angel as he was walking down to the village.

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"So *that's* the genius!" said Lady Hammergallow, and turned and looked at him through the gilt glasses on a stick that she always carried in her shrivelled and shaky hand. "Lunatic, indeed! The poor creature has rather a pretty face. I'm sorry I've missed him."

But she went on to the vicarage nevertheless, and demanded news of it all. The conflicting accounts of Miss Flump, Miss Finch, Mrs. Mendham, Crump, and Mrs. Jehoram had puzzled her immensely. The Vicar, hard pressed, did all he could to say into her ear-trumpet what had really happened. He toned down the wings and the saffron robe. But he felt the case was hopeless. He spoke of his protégé as "Mr." Angel. He addressed pathetic asides to the kingfisher. The old lady noticed his confusion. Her queer old head went jerking backwards and forwards, now the ear-trumpet in his face when he had nothing to say, then the shrunken eyes peering at him, oblivious of the explanation that was coming from his lips. A great many Ohs! and Ahs! She caught some fragments certainly.

"You have asked him to stop with you—indefinitely?" said Lady Hammergallow with a Great Idea taking shape rapidly in her mind.

"I did—perhaps inadvertently—make such——"

"And you don't know where he comes from?"

"Not at all."

"Nor who his father is, I suppose?" said Lady Hammergallow mysteriously.

"No," said the Vicar.

"*Now!*" said Lady Hammergallow archly, and

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keeping her glasses to her eye, she suddenly dug at his ribs with her trumpet.

"My *dear* Lady Hammergallow!"

"I thought so. Don't think *I* would blame you, Mr. Hillyer." She gave a corrupt laugh that she delighted in. "The world is the world, and men are men. And the poor boy's a cripple, eh? A kind of judgment. In mourning, I noticed. It reminds me of the 'Scarlet Letter.' The mother's dead, I suppose. It's just as well. Really—I'm not a *narrow* woman—I *respect* you for having him. Really I do."

"But, *Lady* Hammergallow!"

"Don't spoil everything by denying it. It is so very, very plain, to a woman of the world. That Mrs. Mendham! She amuses me with her suspicions. Such odd ideas! In a Curate's wife. But I hope it didn't happen when you were in orders."

"Lady Hammergallow, I protest. Upon my word."

"Mr. Hillyer, I protest. I *know*. Not anything you can say will alter my opinion one jot. Don't try. I never suspected you were nearly such an interesting man."

"But this suspicion is unendurable!"

"We will help him together, Mr. Hillyer. You may rely upon me. It is most romantic." She beamed benevolence.

"But, Lady Hammergallow, I *must* speak!"

She gripped her ear-trumpet resolutely, and held it before her and shook her head.

"He has quite a genius for music, Vicar, so I hear?"

"I can assure you most solemnly——"

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"I thought so. And being a cripple——"

"You are under a most cruel——"

"I thought that if his gift is really what that Jehoram woman says——"

"An unjustifiable suspicion if ever a man——"

"I don't think much of her judgment, of course."

"Consider my position. Have I gained *no* character?"

"It might be possible to do something for him as a performer."

"Have I—(*Bother! It's no good!*)"

"And so, dear Vicar, I propose to give him an opportunity of showing us what he can do. I have been thinking it all over as I drove here. On Tuesday next, I will invite just a few people of taste, and he shall bring his violin. Eigh? And if that goes well, I will see if I can get some introductions and really *push* him."

"But *Lady*, Lady Hammergallow."

"Not another word!" said Lady Hammergallow, still resolutely holding her ear-trumpet before her and clutching her eyeglasses. "I really must not leave those horses. Cutler is so annoyed if I keep them too long. He finds waiting tedious, poor man, unless there is a public-house near." She made for the door.

"*Damn!*" said the Vicar, under his breath. He had never used the word since he had taken orders. It shows you how an Angel's visit may disorganise a man.

He stood under the verandah watching the carriage drive away. The world seemed coming to pieces about

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him. Had he lived a virtuous celibate life for thirty odd years in vain? The things of which these people thought him capable! He stood and stared at the green corn field opposite, and down at the straggling village. It seemed real enough. And yet for the first time in his life there was a queer doubt of its reality. He rubbed his chin, then turned and went slowly upstairs to his dressing-room, and sat for a long time staring at a garment of some yellow texture. "Know his father!" he said. "And he is immortal, and was fluttering about his heaven when my ancestors were marsupials. . . . I wish he was there now."

He got up and began to feel the robe.

"I wonder how they get such things," said the Vicar. Then he went and stared out of the window. "I suppose everything is wonderful, even the rising and setting of the sun. I suppose there is no adamantine ground for any belief. But one gets into a regular way of taking things. This disturbs it. I seem to be waking up to the Invisible. It is the strangest of uncertainties. I have not felt so stirred and unsettled since my adolescence."

§ 29

"THAT's all right," said Crump when the bandaging was replaced. "It's a trick of memory, no doubt, but these excrescences of yours don't seem nearly so large as they did yesterday. I suppose they struck me rather forcibly. Stop and have lunch with me now you're down here. Midday meal, you know.

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The youngsters will be swallowed up by school again in the afternoon.

"I never saw anything heal so well in my life," he said, as they walked into the dining-room. "Your blood and flesh must be as clean and free from bacteria as they make 'em. Whatever stuff there is in your head," he added *sotto voce*.

At lunch he watched the Angel narrowly, and talked to draw him out.

"Journey tire you yesterday?" he said suddenly.

"Journey!" said the Angel. "Oh! my wings felt a little stiff."

"Not to be had," said Crump to himself. "Suppose I must enter into it."

"So you flew all the way, eigh? No conveyance?"

"There wasn't any way," explained the Angel, taking mustard. "I was flying up a symphony with some Griffins and Fiery Cherubim, and suddenly everything went dark and I was in this world of yours."

"Dear me!" said Crump. "And that's why you haven't any luggage." He drew his serviette across his mouth, and a smile flickered in his eyes.

"I suppose you know this world of ours pretty well? Watching us over the adamantine walls and all that kind of thing. Eigh?"

"Not very well. We dream of it sometimes. In the moonlight, when the Nightmares have fanned us to sleep with their wings."

"Ah, yes—of course," said Crump. "Very poetical way of putting it. Won't you take some Burgundy? It's just beside you."

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"There's a persuasion in this world, you know, that Angels' Visits are by no means infrequent. Perhaps some of your—friends have travelled? They are supposed to come down to deserving persons in prisons, and do refined Nautches and that kind of thing. Faust business, you know."

"I've never heard of anything of the kind," said the Angel.

"Only the other day a lady whose baby was my patient for the time being—indigestion—assured me that certain facial contortions the little creature made indicated that it was Dreaming of Angels. In the novels of Mrs. Henry Wood that is spoken of as an infallible symptom of an early departure. I suppose you can't throw any light on that obscure pathological manifestation?"

"I don't understand it at all," said the Angel, puzzled, and not clearly apprehending the Doctor's drift.

("Getting huffy," said Crump to himself. "Sees I'm poking fun at him.") "There's one thing I'm curious about. Do the new arrivals complain much about their medical attendants? I've always fancied there must be a good deal of hydropathic talk just at first. I was looking at that picture in the Academy only this June. . . ."

"New Arrivals!" said the Angel. "I really don't follow you."

The Doctor stared. "Don't they come?"

"Come!" said the Angel. "Who?"

"The people who die here."

"After they've gone to pieces here?"

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"That's the general belief, you know."

"People like the woman who screamed out of the door, and the blackfaced man and his volutations and the horrible little things that threw husks!—certainly not. *I* never saw such creatures before I fell into this world."

"Oh! but come!" said the Doctor. "You'll tell me next your official robes are not white and that you can't play the harp."

"There's no such thing as white in the Angelic Land," said the Angel. "It's that queer blank colour you get by mixing up all the others."

"Why, my dear Sir!" said the Doctor, suddenly altering his tone, "you positively know nothing about the Land you come from. White's the very essence of it."

The Angel stared at him. Was the man jesting? He looked perfectly serious.

"Look here," said Crump, and getting up, he went to the sideboard on which a copy of the *Parish Magazine* was lying. He brought it round to the Angel and opened it at the coloured supplement. "Here's some *real* angels," he said. "You see it's not simply the wings make the Angel. White, you see, with a curly wisp of robe, sailing up into the sky with their wings furled. Those are angels on the best authority. Hydroxyl kind of hair. One has a bit of a harp, you see, and the other is helping this wingless lady—kind of larval Angel, you know—upward."

"Oh! but really!" said the Angel, "those are not angels at all."

"But they *are*," said Crump, putting the magazine

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back on the sideboard and resuming his seat with an air of intense satisfaction. "I can assure you I have the *best* authority. . . ."

"I can assure you. . . ."

Crump tucked in the corners of his mouth and shook his head from side to side even as he had done to the Vicar. "No good," he said, "can't alter our ideas just because an irresponsible visitor. . . ."

"If these are angels," said the Angel, "then I have never been in the Angelic Land."

"Precisely," said Crump, ineffably self-satisfied; "that was just what I was getting at."

The Angel stared at him for a minute round-eyed, and then was seized for the second time by the human disorder of laughter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" said Crump, joining in. "I *thought* you were not quite so mad as you seemed. Ha, ha, ha!"

And for the rest of the lunch they were both very merry, for entirely different reasons, and Crump insisted upon treating the Angel as a "dorg" of the highest degree.

§ 30

After the Angel had left Crump's house he went up the hill again towards the Vicarage. But—possibly moved by the desire to avoid Mrs. Gustick—he turned aside at the stile and made a detour by the Lark's Field and Bradley's Farm.

He came upon the Respectable Tramp slumbering peacefully among the wild flowers. He stopped to

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look, struck by the celestial tranquillity of that individual's face. And even as he did so the Respectable Tramp awoke with a start and sat up. He was a pallid creature, dressed in rusty black, with a broken-spirited crush hat cocked over one eye. "Good afternoon," he said affably. "How are you?"

"Very well, thank you," said the Angel, who had mastered the phrase.

The Respectable Tramp eyed the Angel critically. "Padding the Hoof, matey?" he said. "Like me."

The Angel was puzzled by him. "Why," asked the Angel, "do you sleep like this instead of sleeping up in the air on a Bed?"

"Well I'm blowed!" said the Respectable Tramp. "Why don't I sleep in a bed? Well, it's like this. Sandringham's got the painters in, there's the drains up in Windsor Castle, and I 'aven't no other 'ouse to go to. You 'aven't the price of a arf pint in your pocket, 'ave yer?"

"I have nothing in my pocket," said the Angel.

"Is this here village called Siddermorton?" said the Tramp, rising creakily to his feet and pointing to the clustering roofs down the hill.

"Yes," said the Angel, "they call it Siddermorton."

"I know it, I know it," said the Tramp. "And a very pretty little village it is too." He stretched and yawned, and stood regarding the place. "'Ouses," he said reflectively; "Projuce"—waving his hand at the corn fields and orchards. "Looks cosey, don't it?"

"It has a quaint beauty of its own," said the Angel.

"It *'as* a quaint beauty of its own—yes. . . .

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Lord! I'd like to sack the blooming place. . . . I was born there."

"Dear me," said the Angel.

"Yes, I was born there. Ever heard of a pithed frog?"

"Pithed frog?" said the Angel. "No!"

"It's a thing these here vivisectionists do. They takes a frog and they cuts out his brains and they shoves a bit of pith in the place of 'em. That's a pithed frog. Well—that there village is full of pithed human beings."

The Angel took it quite seriously. "Is that so?" he said.

"That's so—you take my word for it. Every one of them 'as 'ad their brains cut out and chunks of rotten touchwood put in the place of it. And you see that little red place there?"

"That's called the National School," said the Angel.

"Yes—that's where they piths 'em," said the Tramp, quite in love with his conceit.

"Really! That's very interesting."

"It stands to reason," said the Tramp. "If they 'ad brains they'd 'ave ideas, and if they 'ad ideas they'd think for themselves. And you can go through that village from end to end and never meet anybody doing as much. Pithed human beings they are. I know that village. I was born there, and I might be there now, a-toilin' for my betters, if I 'adn't struck against the pithin'."

"Is it a painful operation?" asked the Angel.

"In parts. Though it ain't the heads gets hurt.

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And it lasts a long time. They take 'em young into that school, and they says to them, 'come in 'ere and we'll improve your minds,' they says, and in the little kiddies go as good as gold. And they begins shovin' it into them. Bit by bit and 'ard and dry, shovin' out the nice juicy brains. Dates and lists and things. Out they comes, no brains in their 'eads, and wound up nice and tight, ready to touch their 'ats to any one who looks at them. Why! One touched 'is 'at to me yesterday. And they runs about spry and does all the dirty work, and feels thankful they're allowed to live. They take a positive pride in 'ard work for its own sake. Arter they bin pithed. See that chap ploughin'?"

"Yes," said the Angel; "is *he* pithed?"

"Rather. Else he'd be Paddin' the Hoof this pleasant weather—like me and the blessed Apostles."

"I begin to understand," said the Angel, rather dubiously.

"I knew you would," said the Respectable Tramp. "I thought you was the right sort. But speaking serious, ain't it ridiculous?—centuries and centuries of civilisation, and look at that poor swine there, sweatin' 'isself empty and trudging up that 'illside. 'E's English, 'e is. 'E belongs to the top race in creation, 'e does. 'E's one of the rulers of Indjer. It's enough to make a nigger laugh. The flag that's braved a thousand years the battle an' the breeze—that's *'is* flag. There never was a country was as great and glorious as this. Never. And that's wot it makes of us. I'll tell you a little story about them parts as you seems to be a bit of a stranger. There's a chap

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called Gotch, Sir John Gotch they calls 'im, and when 'e was a young gent from Oxford, I was a little chap of eight and my sister was a girl of seventeen. Their servant she was. But Lord! everybody's 'eard that story—it's common enough, of 'im or the likes of 'im."

"I haven't," said the Angel.

"All that's pretty and lively of the gals they chucks into the gutters, and all the men with a pennorth of spunk or adventure, all who won't drink what the Curate's wife sends 'em instead of beer, and touch their hats promiscous, and leave the rabbits and birds alone for their betters, gets drove out of the villages as rough characters. Patriotism! Talk about improvin' the race! Wot's left ain't fit to look a nigger in the face, a Chinaman 'ud be ashamed of 'em. . . ."

"But I don't understand," said the Angel. "I don't follow you."

At that the Respectable Tramp became more explicit, and told the Angel the simple story of Sir John Gotch and the kitchen-maid. It's scarcely necessary to repeat it. You may understand that it left the Angel puzzled. It was full of words he did not understand, for the only vehicle of emotion the Tramp possessed was blasphemy. Yet, though their tongues differed so, he could still convey to the Angel some of his own (probably unfounded) persuasion of the injustice and cruelty of life, and of the utter detestableness of Sir John Gotch.

The last the Angel saw of him was his dusty black back receding down the lane towards Iping Hanger.

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A pheasant appeared by the roadside, and the Respectable Tramp immediately caught up a stone and sent the bird clucking with a viciously accurate shot. Then he disappeared round the corner.

§ 31

"I HEARD some one playing the fiddle in the Vicarage as I came by," said Mrs. Jehoram, taking her cup of tea from Mrs. Mendham.

"The Vicar plays," said Mrs. Mendham. "I have spoken to George about it, but it's no good. I do not think a Vicar should be allowed to do such things. It's so foreign. But there, *he* . . ."

"I know, dear," said Mrs. Jehoram. "But I heard the Vicar once at the schoolroom. I don't think this *was* the Vicar. It was quite clever, some of it, quite smart, you know. And new. I was telling dear Lady Hammergallow this morning. I fancy——"

"The lunatic! Very likely. These half-witted people. . . . My dear, I don't think I shall ever forget that dreadful encounter. Yesterday."

"Nor I."

"My poor girls! They are too shocked to say a word about it. I was telling dear Lady Ham——"

"Quite proper of them. It was *dreadful*, dear. For them."

"And now, dear, I want you to tell me frankly—Do you really believe that creature was a man?"

"You should have heard the violin."

"I still more than half suspect, Jessie—" Mrs. Mendham leaned forward as if to whisper.

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Mrs. Jehoram helped herself to cake. "I'm sure no woman could play the violin quite like I heard it played this morning."

"Of course, if you say so that settles the matter," said Mrs. Mendham. Mrs. Jehoram was the autocratic authority in Siddermorton upon all questions of art, music, and belles-lettres. Her late husband had been a minor poet. Then Mrs. Mendham added a judicial "Still——"

"Do you know," said Mrs. Jehoram, "I'm half inclined to believe the dear Vicar's story."

"How *good* of you, Jessie," said Mrs. Mendham.

"But really, I don't think he *could* have had any one in the Vicarage before that afternoon. I feel sure we should have heard of it. I don't see how a strange cat could come within four miles of Siddermorton without the report coming round to us. The people here gossip so. . . ."

"I always distrust the Vicar," said Mrs. Mendham. "I know him."

"Yes. But the story is plausible. If this Mr. Angel were some one very clever and eccentric——"

"He would have to be *very* eccentric to dress as he did. There are degrees and limits, dear."

"But kilts," said Mrs. Jehoram.

"Are all very well in the Highlands. . . ."

Mrs. Jehoram's eyes had rested upon a black speck creeping slowly across a patch of yellowish green up the hill.

"There he goes," said Mrs. Jehoram, rising, "across the corn field. I'm sure that's him. I can see the hump. Unless it's a man with a sack. Bless me,

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Minnie! here's an opera-glass. How convenient for peeping at the Vicarage! . . . Yes, it's the man. He is a man. With *such* a sweet face."

Very unselfishly she allowed her hostess to share the opera-glass. For a minute there was a rustling silence.

"His dress," said Mrs. Mendham, "is *quite* respectable now."

"Quite," said Mrs. Jehoram.

Pause.

"He looks cross!"

"And his coat is dusty."

"He walks steadily enough," said Mrs. Mendham, "or one might think. . . . This hot weather . . ."

Another pause.

"You see, dear," said Mrs. Jehoram, putting down the opera-glass. "What I was going to say was, that possibly he might be a genius in disguise."

"If you can call next door to nothing a disguise."

"No doubt it was eccentric. But I've seen children in little blouses, not at all unlike him. So many clever people *are* peculiar in their dress and manners. A genius may steal a horse where a bank-clerk may not look over the hedge. Very possibly he's quite well known and laughing at our Arcadian simplicity. And really it wasn't so improper as some of these New Women bicycling costumes. I saw one in one of the Illustrated Papers only a few days ago—the *New Budget*, I think—quite tights, you know, dear. No—I cling to the genius theory. Especially after the playing. I'm sure the creature is original. Perhaps

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very amusing. In fact, I intend to ask the Vicar to introduce me."

"My dear!" cried Mrs. Mendham.

"I'm resolute," said Mrs. Jehoram.

"I'm afraid you're rash," said Mrs. Mendham. "Geniuses and people of that kind are all very well in London. But here—at the Vicarage."

"We are going to educate the folks. I love originality. At any rate I mean to see him."

"Take care you don't see too much of him," said Mrs. Mendham. "I've heard the fashion is quite changing. I understand that some of the very best people have decided that genius is not to be encouraged any more. These recent scandals. . . ."

"Only in literature, I can assure you, dear. In music . . ."

"Nothing you can say, my dear," said Mrs. Mendham, going off at a tangent, "will convince me that that person's costume was not extremely suggestive and improper."

§ 32

THE Angel came thoughtfully by the hedge across the field towards the Vicarage. The rays of the setting sun shone on his shoulders, and touched the Vicarage with gold, and blazed like fire in all the windows. By the gate, bathed in the sunlight, stood little Delia, the waiting-maid. She stood watching him under her hand. It suddenly came into the Angel's mind that she at least was beautiful, and not only beautiful but alive and warm.

She opened the gate for him and stood aside. She

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was sorry for him, for her elder sister was a cripple. He bowed to her, as he would have done to any woman, and for just one moment looked into her face. She looked back at him and something leaped within her.

The Angel made an irresolute movement. "Your eyes are very beautiful," he said quietly, with a remote wonder in his voice.

"Oh, sir!" she said, starting back. The Angel's expression changed to perplexity. He went on up the pathway between the Vicar's flower-beds, and she stood with the gate held open in her hand, staring after him. Just under the rose-twined verandah he turned and looked at her.

She still stared at him for a moment, and then with a queer gesture turned round with her back to him, shutting the gate as she did so, and seemed to be looking down the valley towards the church tower.

§ 33

At the dinner table the Angel told the Vicar the more striking of his day's adventures.

"The strange thing," said the Angel, "is the readiness of you Human Beings—the zest, with which you inflict pain. Those boys pelting me this morning——"

"Seemed to enjoy it," said the Vicar. "I know."

"Yet they don't like pain," said the Angel.

"No," said the Vicar; "*they* don't like it."

"Then," said the Angel, "I saw some beautiful plants rising with a spike of leaves, two this way and

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two that, and when I caressed one it caused the most uncomfortable——"

"Stinging nettle!" said the Vicar.

"At any rate a new sort of pain. And another plant with a head like a coronet, and richly decorated leaves, spiked and jagged——"

"A thistle, possibly."

"And in your garden, the beautiful, sweet-smelling plant——"

"The sweet brier," said the Vicar. "I remember."

"And that pink flower that sprang out of the box——"

"Out of the box?" said the Vicar.

"Last night," said the Angel, "that went climbing up the curtains— Flame!"

"Oh!—the matches and the candles! Yes," said the Vicar.

"Then the animals. A dog to-day behaved most disagreeably— And these boys, and the way in which people speak— Every one seems anxious—willing at any rate—to give this Pain. Every one seems busy giving pain——"

"Or avoiding it," said the Vicar, pushing his dinner away before him. "Yes—of course. It's fighting everywhere. The whole living world is a battle-field—the whole world. We are driven by Pain. Here. How it lies on the surface! This Angel sees it in a day!"

"But why does every one—everything—want to give pain?" asked the Angel.

"It is not so in the Angelic Land?" said the Vicar.

"No," said the Angel. "Why is it so here?"

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The Vicar wiped his lips with his napkin slowly. "It *is* so," he said. "Pain," said he still more slowly, "is the warp and the woof of this life. Do you know," he said, after a pause, "it is almost impossible for me to imagine . . . a world without pain. . . . And yet, as you played this morning——

"But this world is different. It is the very reverse of an Angelic world. Indeed, a number of people—excellent religious people—have been so impressed by the universality of pain that they think, after death, things will be even worse for a great many of us. It seems to me an excessive view. But it's a deep question. Almost beyond one's power of discussion——"

And incontinently the Vicar plumped into an impromptu dissertation upon "Necessity," how things were so because they were so, how one *had* to do this and that. "Even our food," said the Vicar. "What?" said the Angel. "Is not obtained without inflicting pain," said the Vicar.

The Angel's face went so white that the Vicar checked himself suddenly. Or he was just on the very verge of a concise explanation of the antecedents of a leg of lamb. There was a pause.

"By the bye," said the Angel suddenly, "have you been pithed? Like the common people."

§ 34

When Lady Hammergallow made up her mind, things happened as she resolved. And though the Vicar made a spasmodic protest, she carried out her

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purpose and got audience, Angel, and violin together at Siddermorton House before the week was out. "A genius the Vicar has discovered," she said; so with eminent foresight putting any possibility of blame for a failure on the Vicar's shoulders. "The dear Vicar tells me," she would say, and proceed to marvellous anecdotes of the Angel's cleverness with his instrument. But she was quite in love with her idea —she had always had a secret desire to play the patroness to obscure talent. Hitherto it had not turned out to be talent when it came to the test.

"It would be such a good thing for him," she said. "His hair is long already, and with that high colour he would be beautiful, simply beautiful on a platform. The Vicar's clothes fitting him so badly makes him look quite like a fashionable pianist already. And the scandal of his birth—not told, of course, but whispered—would be—quite an Inducement—when he gets to London, that is."

The Vicar had the most horrible sensations as the day approached. He spent hours trying to explain the situation to the Angel, other hours trying to imagine what people would think, still worse hours trying to anticipate the Angel's behaviour. Hitherto the Angel had always played for his own satisfaction. The Vicar would startle him every now and then by rushing upon him with some new point of etiquette that had just occurred to him. As for instance: "It's very important where you put your hat, you know. Don't put it on a chair, whatever you do. Hold it until you get your tea, you know, and then—let me see—then put it down somewhere, you know." The

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journey to Siddermorton House was accomplished without misadventure, but at the moment of introduction the Vicar had a spasm of horrible misgivings. He had forgotten to explain introductions. The Angel's naïve amusement was evident, but nothing very terrible happened.

"Rummy looking greaser," said Mr. Rathbone Slater, who devoted considerable attention to costume. "Wants grooming. No manners. Grinned when he saw me shaking hands. Did it *chic* enough, I thought."

One trivial misadventure occurred. When Lady Hammergallow welcomed the Angel she looked at him through her glasses. The apparent size of her eyes startled him. His surprise and his quick attempt to peer over the brims was only too evident. But the Vicar had warned him of the ear-trumpet.

The Angel's incapacity to sit on anything but a music-stool appeared to excite some interest among the ladies, but led to no remarks. They regarded it perhaps as the affectation of a budding professional. He was remiss with the teacups and scattered the crumbs of his cake abroad. (You must remember he was quite an amateur at eating.) He crossed his legs. He fumbled over the hat business after vainly trying to catch the Vicar's eye. The eldest Miss Papaver tried to talk to him about continental watering places and cigarettes, and formed a low opinion of his intelligence.

The Angel was surprised by the production of an easel and several books of music, and a little unnerved at first by the sight of Lady Hammergallow sitting

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with her head on one side, watching him with those magnified eyes through her gilt glasses.

Mrs. Jehoram came up to him before he began to play and asked him the Name of the Charming Piece he was playing the other afternoon. The Angel said it had no name, and Mrs. Jehoram thought music ought never to have any names and wanted to know who it was by, and when the Angel told her he played it out of his head, she said he must be Quite a Genius and looked open (and indisputably fascinating) admiration at him. The Curate from Iping Hanger (who was professionally a Kelt and who played the piano and talked colour and music with an air of racial superiority) watched him jealously.

The Vicar, who was presently captured and set down next to Lady Hammergallow, kept an anxious eye ever Angelward while she told him particulars of the incomes made by violinists—particulars which, for the most part, she invented as she went along. She had been a little ruffled by the incident of the glasses, but had decided that it came within the limits of permissible originality.

So figure to yourself the Green Saloon at Siddermorton House; an Angel thinly disguised in clerical vestments and with a violin in his hands, standing by the grand piano, and a respectable gathering of quiet, nice people, nicely dressed, grouped about the room. Anticipatory gabble—one hears scattered fragments of conversation.

"He is *incog.*," said the very eldest Miss Papaver to Mrs. Pirbright. "Isn't it quaint and delicious. Jessica Jehoram says she saw him at Vienna, but she

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can't remember the name. The Vicar knows all about him, but he is so close——"

"How hot and uncomfortable the dear Vicar is looking," said Mrs. Pirbright. "I've noticed it before when he sits next to Lady Hammergallow. She simply will *not* respect his cloth. She goes on——"

"His tie is all askew," said the very eldest Miss Papaver, "and his hair! It really hardly looks as though he had brushed it all day."

"Seems a foreign sort of chap. Affected. All very well in a drawing-room," said George Harringay, sitting apart with the younger Miss Pirbright. "But for my part, give me a masculine man and a feminine woman. What do you think?"

"Oh!—I think so too," said the younger Miss Pirbright.

"Guineas and guineas," said Lady Hammergallow. "I've heard that some of them keep quite stylish establishments. You would scarcely credit it——"

"I love music, Mr. Angel, I adore it. It stirs something in me. I can scarcely describe it," said Mrs. Jehoram. "Who is it says that delicious antithesis: 'Life without music is brutality; music without life is'— Dear me! perhaps you remember? 'Music without life'—it's Ruskin I think?"

"I'm sorry that I do not," said the Angel. "I have read very few books."

"How charming of you!" said Mrs. Jehoram. "I wish I didn't. I sympathise with you profoundly. I would do the same, only we poor women—I suppose it's originality we lack— And down here one is driven to the most desperate proceedings——"

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"He's certainly very *pretty*. But the ultimate test of a man is his strength," said George Harringay. "What do you think?"

"Oh!—I think so too," said the younger Miss Pirbright.

"It's the effeminate man who makes the masculine woman. When the glory of a man is his hair, what's a woman to do? And when men go running about with beautiful hectic dabs——"

"Oh, George! You are so dreadfully satirical today," said the younger Miss Pirbright. "I'm *sure* it isn't paint."

"I'm really not his guardian, my dear Lady Hammergallow. Of course it's very kind indeed of you to take such an interest——"

"Are you really going to improvise?" said Mrs. Jehoram in a state of cooing delight.

"*SSsh!*" said the Curate from Iping Hanger.

Then the Angel began to play, looking straight before him as he did so, thinking of the wonderful things of the Angelic Land, and yet insensibly letting the sadness he was beginning to feel steal over the fantasia he was playing. When he forgot his company the music was strange and sweet; when the sense of his surroundings floated into his mind the music grew capricious and grotesque. But so great was the hold of the Angelic music upon the Vicar that his anxieties fell from him at once, so soon as the Angel began to play. Mrs. Jehoram sat and looked rapt and sympathetic as hard as she could (though the music was puzzling at times) and tried to catch the Angel's eye. He really had a wonderfully mobile face, and the

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tenderest shades of expression! And Mrs. Jehoram was a judge. George Harringay looked bored, until the younger Miss Pirbright, who adored him, put out her mousy little shoe to touch his manly boot, and then he turned his face to catch the feminine delicacy of her coquettish eye, and was comforted. The very eldest Miss Papaver and Mrs. Pirbright sat quite still and looked churchy for nearly four minutes.

Then said the eldest Miss Papaver in a whisper, "I always Enjoy violin music so much." And Mrs. Pirbright answered, "We get so little Nice music down here." And Miss Papaver said, "He plays Very nicely." And Mrs. Pirbright, "Such a Delicate Touch!" And Miss Papaver, "Does Willie keep up his lessons?" and so to a whispered conversation.

The Curate from Iping Hanger sat (he felt) in full view of the company. He had one hand curled round his ear, and his eyes hard and staring fixedly at the pedestal of the Hammergallow Sèvres vase. He supplied, by the movements of his mouth, a kind of critical guide to any of the company who were disposed to avail themselves of it. It was a generous way he had. His aspect was severely judicial, tempered by starts of evident disapproval and guarded appreciation. The Vicar leaned back in his chair and stared at the Angel's face, and was presently rapt away in a wonderful dream. Lady Hammergallow, with quick jerky movements of the head and a low but insistent rustling, surveyed and tried to judge of the effect of the Angelic playing. Mr. Rathbone Slater stared very solemnly into his hat and looked very miserable, and Mrs. Rathbone Slater made men-

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tal memoranda of Mrs. Jehoram's sleeves. And the air about them all was heavy with exquisite music—for all that had ears to hear.

"Scarcely affected enough," whispered Lady Hammergallow hoarsely, suddenly poking the Vicar in the ribs. The Vicar came out of dreamland suddenly. "Eigh?" shouted the Vicar, startled, coming up with a jump. "Sssh!" said the Curate from Iping Hanger, and every one looked shocked at the brutal insensibility of Hillyer. "So unusual of the Vicar," said the very eldest Miss Papaver, "to do things like that!" The Angel went on playing.

The Curate from Iping Hanger began making mesmeric movements with his index finger, and as the thing proceeded Mr. Rathbone Slater got amazingly limp. He solemnly turned his hat round and altered his view. The Vicar lapsed from an uneasy discomfort into dreamland again. Lady Hammergallow rustled a great deal, and presently found a way of making her chair creak. And at last the thing came to an end. Lady Hammergallow exclaimed, "De—licious!" though she had never heard a note, and began clapping her hands. At that every one clapped except Mr. Rathbone Slater, who rapped his hat brim instead. The Curate from Iping Hanger clapped with a judicial air.

"So I said (*clap, clap, clap*), if you cannot cook the food my way (*clap, clap, clap*) you must *go*," said Mrs. Pirbright, clapping vigorously. "This music is a delightful treat."

"It is. I always *revel* in music," said the very eldest Miss Papaver. "And did she improve after that?"

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"Not a bit of it," said Mrs. Pirbright.

The Vicar woke up again and stared round the saloon. Did other people see these visions, or were they confined to him alone? Surely they must all see . . . and have a wonderful command of their feelings. It was incredible that such music should not affect them. "He's a trifle *gauche*," said Lady Hammergallow, jumping upon the Vicar's attention. "He neither bows nor smiles. He must cultivate oddities like that. Every successful executant is more or less *gauche*."

"Did you really make that up yourself?" said Mrs. Jehoram, sparkling her eyes at him, "as you went along. Really, it is *wonderful!* Nothing less than wonderful."

"A little amateurish," said the Curate from Iping Hanger to Mr. Rathbone Slater. "A great gift, undoubtedly, but a certain lack of sustained training. There were one or two little things . . . I would like to talk to him."

"His trousers look like concertinas," said Mr. Rathbone Slater. "He ought to be told *that*. It's scarcely decent."

"Can you do Imitations, Mr. Angel?" said Lady Hammergallow.

"Oh, *do* do some Imitations!" said Mrs. Jehoram. "I adore Imitations."

"It was a fantastic thing," said the Curate of Iping Hanger, waving his long indisputably musical hands as he spoke; "a little involved, to my mind. I have heard it before somewhere—I forget where. He has genius undoubtedly, but occasionally he is—loose.

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There is a certain deadly precision wanting. There are years of discipline yet."

"I don't admire these complicated pieces of music," said George Harringay. "I have simple tastes, I'm afraid. There seems to me no *tune* in it. There's nothing I like so much as simple music. Tune, simplicity is the need of the age, in my opinion. We are so oversubtle. Everything is far-fetched. Home-grown thoughts and 'Home, Sweet Home' for me. What do you think?"

"Oh! I think so—*quite*," said the younger Miss Pirbright.

"Well, Amy, chattering to George as usual?" said Mrs. Pirbright, across the room.

"As usual, Ma!" said the younger Miss Pirbright, glancing round with a bright smile at Miss Papaver, and turning again so as not to lose the next utterance from George.

"I wonder if you and Mr. Angel could manage a duet?" said Lady Hammergallow to the Curate from Iping Hanger, who was looking preternaturally gloomy.

"I'm sure I should be delighted," said the Curate from Iping Hanger, brightening up.

"Duets!" said the Angel; "the two of us. Then he can play. I understood—the Vicar told me——"

"Mr. Wilmerdings is an accomplished pianist," interrupted the Vicar.

"But the Imitations?" said Mrs. Jehoram, who detested Wilmerdings.

"Imitations!" said the Angel.

"A pig squeaking, a cock crowing, you know,"

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said Mr. Rathbone Slater, and added lower, "Best fun you can get out of a fiddle—*my* opinion."

"I really don't understand," said the Angel. "A pig crowing!"

"You don't like Imitations," said Mrs. Jehoram. "Nor do I—really. I accept the snub. I think they degrade. . . ."

"Perhaps afterwards Mr. Angel will Relent," said Lady Hammergallow, when Mrs. Pirbright had explained the matter to her. She could scarcely credit her ear-trumpet. When she asked for Imitations she was accustomed to get Imitations.

Mr. Wilmerdings had seated himself at the piano, and had turned to a familiar pile of music in the recess. "What do you think of that Barcarole thing of Spohr's?" he said over his shoulder. "I suppose you know it?" The Angel looked bewildered.

He opened the folio before the Angel.

"What an odd kind of book!" said the Angel. "What do all those crazy dots mean?" (At that the Vicar's blood ran cold.)

"What dots?" said the Curate.

"There!" said the Angel with incriminating finger.

"Oh, *come!*" said the Curate.

There was one of those swift, short silences that mean so much in a social gathering.

Then the eldest Miss Papaver turned upon the Vicar. "Does not Mr. Angel play from ordinary . . . music—from the ordinary notation?"

"I have never heard," said the Vicar, getting red now after the first shock of horror. "I have really never seen. . . ."

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The Angel felt the situation was strained, though what was straining it he could not understand. He became aware of a doubtful, an unfriendly look upon the faces that regarded him. "Impossible!" he heard Mrs. Pirbright say; "after that *beautiful* music." The eldest Miss Papaver went to Lady Hammergallow at once, and began to explain into her ear-trumpet that Mr. Angel did not wish to play with Mr. Wilmerdings, and alleged an ignorance of written music.

"He cannot play from Notes!" said Lady Hammergallow in a voice of measured horror. "Non—sense!"

"Notes!" said the Angel perplexed. "Are these notes?"

"It's carrying the joke too far—simply because he doesn't want to play with Wilmerdings," said Mr. Rathbone Slater to George Harringay.

There was an expectant pause. The Angel perceived he had to be ashamed of himself. He was ashamed of himself.

"Then," said Lady Hammergallow, throwing her head back and speaking with deliberate indignation, as she rustled forward, "if you cannot play with Mr. Wilmerdings I am afraid I cannot ask you to play again." She made it sound like an ultimatum. Her glasses in her hand quivered violently with indignation. The Angel was now human enough to appreciate the fact that he was crushed.

"What is it?" said little Lucy Rustchuck in the further bay.

"He's refused to play with old Wilmerdings," said Tommy Rathbone Slater. "What a lark! The old

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girl's purple. She thinks heaps of that ass Wilmerdings."

"Perhaps, Mr. Wilmerdings, you will favour us with that delicious Polonaise of Chopin's," said Lady Hammergallow. Everybody else was hushed. The indignation of Lady Hammergallow inspired much the same silence as a coming earthquake or an eclipse. Mr. Wilmerdings perceived he would be doing a real social service to begin at once, and (be it entered to his credit now that his account draws near its settlement) he did.

"If a man pretend to practise an Art," said George Harringay, "he ought at least to have the conscience to study the elements of it. What do you . . ."

"Oh! I think so too," said the younger Miss Pirbright.

The Vicar felt that the heavens had fallen. He sat crumpled up in his chair, a shattered man. Lady Hammergallow sat down next to him without appearing to see him. She was breathing heavily, but her face was terribly calm. Every one sat down. Was the Angel grossly ignorant or only grossly impertinent? The Angel was vaguely aware of some frightful offence, aware that in some mysterious way he had ceased to be the centre of the gathering. He saw reproachful despair in the Vicar's eye. He drifted slowly towards the window in the recess and sat down on the little octagonal Moorish stool by the side of Mrs. Jehoram. And under the circumstances he appreciated at more than its proper value Mrs. Jehoram's kindly smile. He put down the violin in the window-seat.

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§ 35

Mrs. Jehoram and the Angel apart—Mr. Wilmerdings playing.

"I have so longed for a quiet word with you," said Mrs. Jehoram in a low tone. "To tell you how delightful I found your playing."

"I am glad it pleased you," said the Angel.

"Pleased is scarcely the word," said Mrs. Jehoram. "I was moved—profoundly. These others did not understand . . . I was glad you did not play with him."

The Angel looked at the mechanism called Wilmerdings, and felt glad too. (The Angelic conception of duets is a kind of conversation upon violins.) But he said nothing.

"I worship music," said Mrs. Jehoram. "I know nothing about it technically, but there is something in it—a longing, a wish. . . ."

The Angel stared at her face. She met his eyes.

"You understand," she said. "I see you understand." He was certainly a very nice boy, sentimentally precocious perhaps, and with deliciously liquid eyes.

There was an interval of Chopin (Op. 40) played with immense precision.

Mrs. Jehoram had a sweet face still, in shadow, with the light falling round her golden hair, and a curious theory flashed across the Angel's mind. The perceptible powder only supported his view of some-

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thing infinitely bright and lovable caught, tarnished, coarsened, coated over.

"Do you?" said the Angel in a low tone. "Are you . . . separated from . . . *your* world?"

"As you are?" whispered Mrs. Jehoram.

"This is so—cold," said the Angel. "So harsh!" He meant the whole world.

"I feel it too," said Mrs. Jehoram, referring to Siddermorton House.

"There are those who cannot live without sympathy," she said after a sympathetic pause. "And times when one feels alone in the world. Fighting a battle against it all. Laughing, flirting, hiding the pain of it. . . ."

"And hoping," said the Angel with a wonderful glance— "Yes."

Mrs. Jehoram (who was an epicure of flirtations) felt the Angel was more than redeeming the promise of his appearance. (Indisputably he worshipped her.) "Do *you* look for sympathy?" she said. "Or have you found it?"

"I think," said the Angel, very softly, leaning forward, "I think I have found it."

Interval of Chopin Op. 40. The very eldest Miss Papaver and Mrs. Pirbright whispering. Lady Hammergallow (glasses up) looking down the saloon with an unfriendly expression at the Angel. Mrs. Jehoram and the Angel exchanging deep and significant glances.

"Her name," said the Angel (Mrs. Jehoram made a movement) "is Delia. She is . . ."

"Delia!" said Mrs. Jehoram sharply, slowly realis-

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ing a terrible misunderstanding. "A fanciful name. . . . Why! . . . No! Not that little housemaid at the Vicarage? . . ."

The Polonaise terminated with a flourish. The Angel was quite surprised at the change in Mrs. Jehoram's expression.

"*I never* did!" said Mrs. Jehoram recovering. "To make me your confidante in an intrigue with a servant. Really, Mr. Angel, it's possible to be too original. . . ."

Then suddenly their colloquy was interrupted.

§ 36

THIS section is (so far as my memory goes) the shortest in the book.

But the enormity of the offence necessitates the separation of this section from all other sections.

The Vicar, you must understand, had done his best to inculcate the recognised differentiæ of a gentleman. "Never allow a lady to carry anything," said the Vicar. "Say, 'permit me' and relieve her." "Always stand until every lady is seated." "Always rise and open a door for a lady . . ." and so forth. (All men who have elder sisters know that code.)

And the Angel (who had failed to relieve Lady Hammergallow of her teacup) danced forward with astonishing dexterity (leaving Mrs. Jehoram in the window-seat) and with an elegant "permit me" rescued the tea-tray from Lady Hammergallow's pretty parlour-maid and vanished officiously in front

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of her. The Vicar rose to his feet with an inarticulate cry.

§ 37

"He's drunk!" said Mr. Rathbone Slater, breaking a terrific silence. "That's the matter with *him*."

Mrs. Jehoram laughed hysterically.

The Vicar stood up, motionless, staring. "Oh! I *forgot* to explain servants to him!" said the Vicar to himself in a swift outbreak of remorse. "I thought he *did* understand servants."

"Really, Mr. Hillyer!" said Lady Hammergallow, evidently exercising enormous self-control and speaking in panting spasms. "Really, Mr. Hillyer! Your genius is *too* terrible. I must, I really *must*, ask you to take him home."

So to the dialogue in the corridor of alarmed maid-servant and well-meaning (but shockingly *gauche*) Angel—appears the Vicar, his botryoidal little face crimson, gaunt despair in his eyes, and his necktie under his left ear.

"Come," he said—struggling with emotion. "Come away. . . . I . . . I am disgraced for ever."

And the Angel stared for a second at him and obeyed meekly, perceiving himself in the presence of unknown but evidently terrible forces.

In the informal indignation meeting that followed, Lady Hammergallow took the (informal) chair. "I feel humiliated," she said. "The Vicar assured me he was an exquisite player. I never imagined . . ."

"He was drunk," said Mr. Rathbone Slater. "You could tell it from the way he fumbled with his tea."

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"Such a *fiasco!*" said Mrs. Mergle.

"The Vicar assured me," said Lady Hammergallow. "'The man I have staying with me is a musical genius,' he said. His very words."

"His ears must be burning anyhow," said Tommy Rathbone Slater.

"I was trying to keep him Quiet," said Mrs. Jehoram. "By humouring him. And do you know the things he said to me—there!"

"The thing he played," said Mr. Wilmerdings, "—I must confess I did not like to charge him to his face. But really! It was merely *drifting*."

"Just fooling with a fiddle, eigh?" said George Harringay. "Well I thought it was beyond me. So much of your fine music is——"

"Oh, *George!*" said the younger Miss Pirbright.

"The Vicar was a bit on, too—to judge by his tie," said Mr. Rathbone Slater. "It's a dashed rummy go. Did you notice how he fussed after the genius?"

"One has to be so very careful," said the very eldest Miss Papaver.

"He told me he is love with the Vicar's housemaid!" said Mrs. Jehoram. "I almost laughed in his face."

"The Vicar ought *never* to have brought him here," said Mrs. Rathbone Slater with decision.

§ 38

So, ingloriously, ended the Angel's first and last appearance in Society. Vicar and Angel returned to the Vicarage; crestfallen black figures in the bright

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sunlight, going dejectedly. The Angel, deeply pained that the Vicar was pained. The Vicar, dishevelled and desperate, intercalating spasmodic remorse and apprehension with broken explanations of the Theory of Etiquette. "They do *not* understand," said the Vicar over and over again. "They will all be so very much aggrieved. I do not know what to say to them. It is all so confused, so perplexing." And at the gate of the Vicarage, at the very spot where Delia had first seemed beautiful, stood Horrocks the village constable, awaiting them. He held coiled up about his hand certain short lengths of barbed wire.

"Good evening, Horrocks," said the Vicar as the constable held the gate open.

"Evenin', Sir," said Horrocks, and added in a kind of mysterious undertone: "*Could* I speak to you a minute, Sir?"

"Certainly," said the Vicar. The Angel walked on thoughtfully to the house, and meeting Delia in the hall stopped her and cross-examined her at length over differences between Servants and Ladies.

"You'll excuse my taking the liberty, Sir," said Horrocks, "but there's trouble brewin' for that crippled gent you got stayin' here."

"Bless me!" said the Vicar. "You don't say so!"

"Sir John Gotch, Sir. He's very angry indeed, Sir. His language, Sir— But I felt bound to tell you, Sir. He's certain set on taking out a summons on account of that there barbed wire. Certain set, Sir, he is."

"Sir John Gotch!" said the Vicar. "Wire! I don't understand."

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"He asked me to find out who did it. Course I've had to do my duty, Sir. Naturally a disagreeable one."

"Barbed wire! Duty! I don't understand you, Horrocks."

"I'm afraid, Sir, there's no denying the evidence. I've made careful inquiries, Sir." And forthwith the constable began telling the Vicar of a new and terrible outrage committed by the Angelic visitor.

But we need not follow that explanation in detail —or the subsequent confession. (For my own part I think there is nothing more tedious than dialogue.) It gave the Vicar a new view of the Angelic character, a vignette of the Angelic indignation. A shady lane, sun-mottled, sweet hedges full of honeysuckle and vetch on either side, and a little girl gathering flowers, forgetful of the barbed wire which, all along the Sidderford Road, fenced in the dignity of Sir John Gotch from "bounders" and the detested "million." Then suddenly a gashed hand, a bitter outcry, and the Angel sympathetic, comforting, inquisitive. Explanations sob-set, and then—altogether novel phenomenon in the Angelic career—*passion*. A furious onslaught upon the barbed wire of Sir John Gotch, barbed wire recklessly handled, slashed, bent and broken. Yet the Angel acted without personal malice—saw in the thing only an ugly and vicious plant that trailed insidiously among its fellows. Finally the Angel's explanations gave the Vicar a picture of the Angel alone amidst his destruction, trembling and amazed at the sudden force, not himself, that had sprung up within him and set him striking and

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cutting. Amazed, too, at the crimson blood that trickled down his fingers.

"It is still more horrible," said the Angel when the Vicar explained the artificial nature of the thing. "If I had seen the man who put this silly, cruel stuff there to hurt little children, I know I should have tried to inflict pain upon him. I have never felt like this before. I am indeed becoming tainted and coloured altogether by the wickedness of this world.

"To think, too, that you men should be so foolish as to uphold the laws that let a man do such spiteful things. Yes—I know; you will say it has to be so. For some remoter reason. That is a thing that only makes me angrier. Why cannot an act rest on its own merits? . . . As it does in the Angelic Land."

That was the incident the history of which the Vicar now gradually learned, getting the bare outline from Horrocks, the colour and emotion subsequently from the Angel. The thing had happened the day before the musical festival at Siddermorton House.

"Have you told Sir John who did it?" asked the Vicar. "And are you sure?"

"Quite sure, Sir. There can be no doubting it was your gentleman, Sir. I've not told Sir John yet, Sir. But I shall have to tell Sir John this evening. Meaning no offence to you, Sir, as I hopes you'll see. It's my duty, Sir. Besides which——"

"Of course," said the Vicar hastily. "Certainly it's your duty. And what will Sir John do?"

"He's dreadful set against the person who did it—destroying property like that—and sort of slapping his arrangements in the face."

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Pause. Horrocks made a movement. The Vicar, tie almost at the back of his neck now, a most unusual thing for him, stared blankly at his toes.

"I thought I'd tell you, Sir," said Horrocks.

"Yes," said the Vicar. "Thanks, Horrocks, thanks!" He scratched the back of his head. "You might perhaps . . . I think it's the best way. . . . Quite sure Mr. Angel did it?"

"Sherlock 'Omes, Sir, couldn't be cocksurer."

"Then I'd better give you a little note to the Squire."

§ 39

The Vicar's table-talk at dinner that night, after the Angel had stated his case, was full of grim explanations, prisons, madness.

"It's too late to tell the truth about you now," said the Vicar. "Besides, that's impossible. I really do not know what to say. We must face our circumstances, I suppose. I am so undecided—so torn. It's the two worlds. If your Angelic world were only a dream, or if *this* world were only a dream—or if I could believe either or both dreams, it would be all right with me. But here is a real Angel and a real summons—how to reconcile them I do not know. I must talk to Gotch. . . . But he won't understand. Nobody will understand. . . ."

"I am putting you to terrible inconvenience, I am afraid. My appalling unworldliness——"

"It's not you," said the Vicar. "It's not you. I perceive you have brought something strange and beautiful into my life. It's not you. It's myself.

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If I had more faith either way. If I could believe entirely in this world, and call you an Abnormal Phenomenon, as Crump does. But no. Terrestrial Angelic, Angelic Terrestrial. . . . Seesaw.

"Still, Gotch is certain to be disagreeable, *most* disagreeable. He always is. It puts me into his hands. He is a bad moral influence, I know. Drinking. Gambling. Worse. Still, one must render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. And he is against Disestablishment. . . ."

Then the Vicar would revert to the social collapse of the afternoon. "You are so very fundamental, you know," he said—several times.

The Angel went to his own room puzzled but very depressed. Every day the world had frowned darker upon him and his Angelic ways. He could see how the trouble affected the Vicar, yet he could not imagine how he could avert it. It was all so strange and unreasonable. Twice again, too, he had been pelted out of the village.

He found the violin lying on his bed where he had laid it before dinner. And taking it up he began to play to comfort himself. But now he played no delicious vision of the Angelic Land. The iron of the world was entering into his soul. For a week now he had known pain and rejection, suspicion and hatred; a strange new spirit of revolt was growing up in his heart. He played a melody, still sweet and tender as those of the Angelic Land, but charged with a new note, the note of human sorrow and effort, now swelling into something like defiance, dying now into a plaintive sadness. He played softly, playing to

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himself to comfort himself, but the Vicar heard, and all his finite bothers were swallowed up in a hazy melancholy, a melancholy that was quite remote from sorrow. And besides the Vicar, the Angel had another hearer of whom neither Angel nor Vicar was thinking.

§ 40

She was only four or five yards away from the Angel in the westward gable. The diamond-paned window of her little white room was open. She knelt on her box of japanned tin, and rested her chin on her hands, her elbows on the window-sill. The young moon hung over the pine-trees, and its light, cool and colourless, lay softly upon the silent, sleeping world. Its light fell upon her white face, and discovered new depths in her dreaming eyes. Her soft lips fell apart and showed the little white teeth.

Delia was thinking, vaguely, wonderfully, as girls will think. It was feeling rather than thinking; clouds of beautiful translucent emotion drove across the clear sky of her mind, taking shape that changed and vanished. She had all that wonderful emotional tenderness, that subtle exquisite desire for self-sacrifice, which exists so inexplicably in a girl's heart, exists it seems only to be presently trampled under foot by the grim and gross humours of daily life, to be ploughed in again roughly and remorselessly as the farmer ploughs in the clover that has sprung up in the soil. She had been looking out at the tranquillity of the moonlight long before the Angel began to play,—waiting; then suddenly the quiet, motion-

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less beauty of silver and shadow was suffused with tender music.

She did not move, but her lips closed and her eyes grew even softer. She had been thinking before of the strange glory that had suddenly flashed out about the stooping hunchback when he spoke to her in the sunset; of that and of a dozen other glances, chance turns, even once the touching of her hand. That afternoon he had spoken to her, asking strange questions. Now the music seemed to bring his very face before her, his look of half curious solicitude, peering into her face, into her eyes, into her and through her, deep down into her soul. He seemed now to be speaking directly to her, telling her of his solitude and trouble. Oh! that regret, that longing! For he was in trouble. And how could a servant-girl help him, this soft-spoken gentleman who carried himself so kindly, who played so sweetly. The music was so sweet and keen, it came so near to the thought of her heart, that presently one hand tightened on the other, and the tears came streaming down her face.

As Crump would tell you, people do not do that kind of thing unless there is something wrong with the nervous system. But then, from the scientific point of view, being in love is a pathological condition.

I AM painfully aware of the objectionable nature of my story here. I have even thought of wilfully perverting the truth to propitiate the Lady Reader. But I could not. The story has been too much for me. I do the thing with my eyes open. Delia must

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remain what she really was—a servant-girl. I know that to give a mere servant-girl, or at least an English servant-girl, the refined feelings of a human being, to present her as speaking with anything but an intolerable confusion of aspirates, places me outside the pale of respectable writers. Association with servants, even in thought, is dangerous in these days. I can only plead (pleading vainly, I know) that Delia was a very exceptional servant-girl. Possibly, if one inquired, it might be found that her parentage was upper middle-class—that she was made of the finer upper middle-class clay. And (this perhaps may avail me better) I will promise that in some future work I will redress the balance, and the patient reader shall have the recognised article, enormous feet and hands, systematic aspiration of vowels and elimination of aspirates, no figure (only middle-class girls have figures—the thing is beyond a servant-girl's means), a fringe (by agreement), and a cheerful readiness to dispose of her self-respect for half-a-crown. That is the accepted English servant, the typical Englishwoman (when stripped of money and accomplishments) as she appears in the works of contemporary writers. But Delia somehow was different. I can only regret the circumstance—it was altogether beyond my control.

§ 41

EARLY the next morning the Angel went down through the village, and, climbing the fence, waded through the waist-high reeds that fringe the Sidder.

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He was going to Bandram Bay to take a nearer view of the sea, which one could just see on a clear day from the higher parts of Siddermorton Park. And suddenly he came upon Crump sitting on a log and smoking. (Crump always smoked exactly two ounces per week—and he always smoked it in the open air.)

"Hullo!" said Crump, in his healthiest tone. "How's the wing?"

"Very well," said the Angel. "The pain's gone."

"I suppose you know you are trespassing?"

"Trespassing!" said the Angel.

"I suppose you don't know what that means," said Crump.

"I don't," said the Angel.

"I must congratulate you. I don't know how long you will last, but you are keeping it up remarkably well. I thought at first you were a mattoid, but you're so amazingly consistent. Your attitude of entire ignorance of the elementary facts of Life is really a very amusing pose. You make slips of course, but very few. But surely we two understand one another."

He smiled at the Angel. "You would beat Sherlock Holmes. I wonder who you really are."

The Angel smiled back, with eyebrows raised and hands extended. "It's impossible for you to know who I am. Your eyes are blind, your ears deaf, your soul dark, to all that is wonderful about me. It's no good my telling that I fell into your world."

The Doctor waved his pipe. "Not that, please. I don't want to pry if you have your reasons for

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keeping quiet. Only I would like you to think of Hillyer's mental health. He really believes this story."

The Angel shrugged his dwindling wings.

"You did not know him before this affair. He's changed tremendously. He used to be neat and comfortable. For the last fortnight he's been hazy, with a far-away look in his eyes. He preached last Sunday without his cuff links, and something wrong with his tie, and he took for his text, 'Eye hath not seen nor ear heard.' He really believes all this nonsense about the Angel-land. The man is verging on monomania!"

"You *will* see things from your own standpoint," said the Angel.

"Every one must. At any rate, I think it jolly regrettable to see this poor old fellow hypnotised, as you certainly have hypnotised him. I don't know where you come from nor who you are, but I warn you I'm not going to see the old boy made a fool of much longer."

"But he's not being made a fool of. He's simply beginning to dream of a world outside his knowledge——"

"It won't do," said Crump. "I'm not one of the dupe class. You are either of two things—a lunatic at large (which I don't believe), or a knave. Nothing else is possible. I think I know a little of this world, whatever I do of yours. Very well. If you don't leave Hillyer alone I shall communicate with the police, and either clap you into a prison, if you go back on your story, or into a madhouse if you don't.

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It's stretching a point, but I swear I'd certify you insane to-morrow to get you out of the village. It's not only the Vicar. As you know. I hope that's plain. Now what have you to say?"

With an affectation of great calm, the Doctor took out his penknife and began to dig the blade into his pipe bowl. His pipe had gone out during this last speech.

For a moment neither spoke. The Angel looked about him with a face that grew pale. The Doctor extracted a plug of tobacco from his pipe and flung it away, shut his penknife and put it in his waistcoat pocket. He had not meant to speak quite so emphatically, but speech always warmed him.

"Prison," said the Angel. "Madhouse! Let me see." Then he remembered the Vicar's explanation. "Not that!" he said. He approached Crump with eyes dilated and hands outstretched.

"I knew *you* would know what those things meant —at any rate. Sit down," said Crump, indicating the tree trunk beside him by a movement of the head.

The Angel, shivering, sat down on the tree trunk and stared at the Doctor.

Crump was getting out his pouch. "You are a strange man," said the Angel. "Your beliefs are like—a steel trap."

"They are," said Crump—flattered.

"But I tell you—I assure you the thing is so—I know nothing, or at least remember nothing of anything I knew of this world before I found myself in the darkness of night on the moorland above Sidderford."

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"Where did you learn the language then?"

"I don't know. Only I tell you— But I haven't an atom of the sort of proof that would convince you."

"And you really," said Crump, suddenly coming round upon him and looking into his eyes; "you really believe you were eternally in a kind of glorious heaven before then?"

"I do," said the Angel.

"Pshaw!" said Crump, and lit his pipe. He sat smoking, elbow on knee, for some time, and the Angel sat and watched him. Then his face grew less troubled.

"It is just possible," he said to himself rather than to the Angel, and began another piece of silence.

"You see," he said, when that was finished, "there is such a thing as double personality. . . . A man sometimes forgets who he is and thinks he is some one else. Leaves home, friends, and everything, and leads a double life. There was a case in *Nature* only a month or so ago. The man was sometimes English and right-handed, and sometimes Welsh and left-handed. When he was English he knew no Welsh, when he was Welsh he knew no English. . . . H'm."

He turned suddenly on the Angel and said "Home!" He fancied he might revive in the Angel some latent memory of his lost youth. He went on: "Dadda, Pappa, Daddy, Mammy, Pappy, Father, Dad, Governor, Old Boy, Mother, dear Mother, Ma, Mumsy. . . . No good. What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing," said the Angel. "You surprised me a

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little,—that is all. A week ago I should have been puzzled by that vocabulary."

For a minute Crump rebuked the Angel silently out of the corner of his eye.

"You have such an ingenuous face. You almost force me to believe you. You are certainly not an ordinary lunatic. Your mind—except for your isolation from the past—seems balanced enough. I wish Nordau or Lombroso or some of these Salpetrière men could have a look at you. Down here one gets no practice worth speaking about in mental cases. There's one idiot—and he's just a damned idiot of an idiot—all the rest thoroughly sane people."

"Possibly that accounts for their behaviour," said the Angel thoughtfully.

"But to consider your general position here," said Crump, ignoring his comment, "I really regard you as a bad influence here. These fancies are contagious. It is not simply the Vicar. There is a man named Shine has caught the fad, and he has been in the drink for a week, off and on, and offering to fight any one who says you are not an Angel. Then a man over at Sidderford is, I hear, affected with a kind of religious mania on the same tack. These things spread. There ought to be a quarantine in mischievous ideas. And I have heard another story. . . ."

"But what can I do?" said the Angel. "Suppose I am quite unintentionally doing mischief. . . ."

"You can leave the village," said Crump.

"Then I shall only go into another village."

"That's not my affair," said Crump. "Go where you like. Only go. Leave these three people, the

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Vicar, Shine, the little servant-girl, whose heads are all spinning with galaxies of Angels. . . ."

"But," said the Angel. "Face your world! I tell you I can't. And leave Delia! I don't understand. . . . I do not know how to set about getting Work and Food and Shelter. And I am growing afraid of human beings. . . ."

"Fancies, fancies," said Crump, watching him, "mania."

"It's no good my persisting in worrying you," he said suddenly, "but certainly the situation is impossible as it stands." He stood up with a jerk.

"Good morning, Mr.—Angel," he said, "the long and the short of it is—I say it as the medical adviser of this parish—you are an unhealthy influence. We can't have you. You must go."

He turned, and went striding through the grass towards the roadway, leaving the Angel sitting disconsolately on the tree trunk. "An unhealthy influence," said the Angel slowly, staring blankly in front of him, and trying to realise what it meant.

§ 42

Sir John Gotch was a little man with scrubby hair, a small, thin nose sticking out of a face crackled with wrinkles, tight brown gaiters, and a riding-whip. "I've come, you see," he said, as Mrs. Hinijer closed the door.

"Thank you," said the Vicar, "I'm obliged to you. I'm really obliged to you."

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"Glad to be of any service to you," said Sir John Gotch. (Angular attitude.)

"This business," said the Vicar, "this unfortunate business of the barbed wire—is really, you know, a most unfortunate business."

Sir John Gotch became decidedly more angular in his attitude. "It is," he said.

"This Mr. Angel being my guest——"

"No reason why he should cut my wire," said Sir John Gotch briefly.

"None whatever."

"May I ask *who* this Mr. Angel is?" asked Sir John Gotch with the abruptness of long premeditation.

The Vicar's fingers jumped to his chin. What *was* the good of talking to a man like Sir John Gotch about Angels?

"To tell you the exact truth," said the Vicar, "there is a little secret——"

"Lady Hammergallow told me as much."

The Vicar's face suddenly became bright red.

"Do you know," said Sir John, with scarcely a pause, "he's been going about this village preaching Socialism?"

"Good heavens!" said the Vicar, "*No!*"

"He has. He has been buttonholing every yokel he came across, and asking them why they had to work, while we—I and you, you know—did nothing. He has been saying we ought to educate every man up to your level and mine—out of the rates, I suppose, as usual. He has been suggesting that we—I and you, you know—keep these people down—pith 'em."

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"*Dear* me!" said the Vicar, "I had no idea."

"He has done this wire-cutting as a demonstration, I tell you, as a Socialistic demonstration. If we don't come down on him pretty sharply, I tell you, we shall have the palings down in Flinders Lane next, and the next thing will be ricks afire, and every damned (I beg your pardon, Vicar. I know I'm too fond of that word), every blessed pheasant's egg in the parish smashed. I know these——"

"A Socialist," said the Vicar, quite put out, "I had *no* idea."

"You see why I am inclined to push matters against our gentleman though he *is* your guest. It seems to me he has been taking advantage of your paternal——"

"Oh, *not* paternal!" said the Vicar. "Really——"

"I beg your pardon, Vicar—it was a slip. Of your kindness, to go mischief-making everywhere, setting class against class, and the poor man against his bread and butter."

The Vicar's fingers were at his chin again.

"So there's one of two things," said Sir John Gotch. "Either that Guest of yours leaves the parish, or—I take proceedings. That's final."

The Vicar's mouth was all askew.

"That's the position," said Sir John, jumping to his feet. "If it were not for you, I should take proceedings at once. As it is—am I to take proceedings or no?"

"You see," said the Vicar in horrible perplexity.

"Well?"

"Arrangements have to be made."

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"He's a mischief-making idler. . . . I know the breed. But I'll give you a week——"

"Thank you," said the Vicar. "I understand your position. I perceive the situation is getting intolerable. . . ."

"Sorry to give you this bother, of course," said Sir John.

"A week," said the Vicar.

"A week," said Sir John, leaving.

The Vicar returned, after accompanying Gotch out, and for a long time he remained sitting before the desk in his study, plunged in thought. "A week!" he said, after an immense silence. "Here is an Angel, a glorious Angel, who has quickened my soul to beauty and delight, who has opened my eyes to Wonderland, and something more than Wonderland, . . . and I have promised to get rid of him in a week! What are we men made of? . . . How *can* I tell him?"

He began to walk up and down the room, then he went into the dining-room and stood staring blankly out at the corn field. The table was already laid for lunch. Presently he turned, still dreaming, and almost mechanically helped himself to a glass of sherry.

§ 43

THE Angel lay upon the summit of the cliff above Bandram Bay, and stared out at the glittering sea. Sheer from under his elbows fell the cliff, five hundred and seven feet of it down to the datum line, and the

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sea-birds eddied and soared below him. The upper part of the cliff was a greenish chalky rock, the lower two-thirds a warm red, marbled with gypsum bands, and from half-a-dozen places spurted jets of water, to fall in long cascades down its face. The swell frothed white on the flinty beach, and the water beyond where the shadows of an outstanding rock lay, was green and purple in a thousand tints and marked with streaks and flakes of foam. The air was full of sunlight and the tinkling of the little waterfalls and the slow soughing of the seas below. Now and then a butterfly flickered over the face of the cliff, and a multitude of sea-birds perched and flew hither and thither.

The Angel lay with his crippled, shrivelled wings humped upon his back, watching the gulls and jackdaws and rooks circling in the sunlight, soaring, eddying, sweeping down to the water or upward into the dazzling blue of the sky. Long the Angel lay there and watched them going to and fro on outspread wings. He watched, and as he watched them he remembered with infinite longing the rivers of starlight and the sweetness of the land from which he came. A gull came gliding overhead, swiftly and easily, with its broad wings spreading white and fair against the blue. And suddenly a shadow came into the Angel's eyes, the sunlight left them, he thought of his own crippled pinions and put his face upon his arm and wept.

A woman who was walking along the footpath across the Cliff Field saw only a twisted hunchback dressed in the Vicar of Siddermorton's cast-off clothes,

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sprawling foolishly at the edge of the cliff and with his forehead on his arm. She looked at him and looked again. "The silly creature has gone to sleep," she said, and though she had a heavy basket to carry, came towards him with an idea of waking him up. But as she drew near she saw his shoulders heave and heard the sound of his sobbing.

She stood still a minute, and her features twitched into a kind of grin. Then treading softly she turned and went back towards the pathway. "'Tis so hard to think of anything to say," she said. "Poor afflicted soul!"

Presently the Angel ceased sobbing, and stared with a tear-stained face at the beach below him.

"This world," he said, "wraps me round and swallows me up. My wings grow shrivelled and useless. Soon I shall be nothing more than a crippled man, and I shall age, and bow myself to pain, and die. . . . I am miserable. And I am alone."

Then he rested his chin on his hands upon the edge of the cliff, and began to think of Delia's face with the light in her eyes. The Angel felt a curious desire to go to her and tell her of his withered wings. To place his arms about her and weep for the land he had lost. "Delia!" he said to himself very softly. And presently a cloud drove in front of the sun.

§ 44

MRS. HINIJER surprised the Vicar by tapping at his study door after tea. "Begging your pardon,

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Sir," said Mrs. Hinijer. "But might I make so bold as to speak to you for a moment?"

"Certainly, Mrs. Hinijer," said the Vicar, little dreaming of the blow that was coming. He held a letter in his hand, a very strange and disagreeable letter from his Bishop, a letter that irritated and distressed him, criticising in the strongest language the guests he chose to entertain in his own house. Only a popular bishop living in a democratic age, a bishop who was still half a pedagogue, could have written such a letter.

Mrs. Hinijer coughed behind her hand and struggled with some respiratory disorganisation. The Vicar felt apprehensive. Usually in their interviews he was the most disconcerted. Invariably so when the interview ended.

"Well?" he said.

"May I make so bold, Sir, as to arst when Mr. Angel is a-going?" (Cough.)

The Vicar started. "To ask when Mr. Angel is going?" he repeated slowly to gain time. "*Another!*"

"I'm sorry, Sir. But I've been used to waitin' on gentlefolks, Sir; and you'd hardly imagine how it feels quite to wait on such as 'im."

"Such as . . . *'im!* Do I understand you, Mrs. Hinijer, that you don't like Mr. Angel?"

"You see, Sir, before I came to you, Sir, I was at Lord Dundoller's seventeen years, and you, Sir—if you will excuse me—are a perfect gentleman yourself, Sir—though in the Church. And then. . . ."

"Dear, dear!" said the Vicar. "And don't you regard Mr. Angel as a gentleman?"

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"I'm sorry to 'ave to say it, Sir."

"But what . . .? Dear me! Surely!"

"I'm sorry to 'ave to say it, Sir. But when a party goes turning vegetarian suddenly and putting out all the cooking, and hasn't no proper luggage of his own, and borry's shirts and socks from his 'ost, and don't know no better than to try his knife at peas (as I seed my very self), and goes talking in odd corners to the housemaids, and folds up his napkin after meals, and eats with his fingers at minced veal, and plays the fiddle in the middle of the night keeping everybody awake, and stares and grins at his elders a-getting upstairs, and generally misconducts himself with things that I can scarcely tell you all, one can't help thinking, Sir. Thought is free, Sir, and one can't help coming to one's own conclusions. Besides which, there is talk all over the village about him—what with one thing and another. I know a gentleman when I sees a gentleman, and I know a gentleman when I don't see a gentleman, and me and Susan and George, we've talked it over, being the upper servants, so to speak and experienced, and leaving out that girl Delia who I only hope won't come to any harm through him, and depend upon it, Sir, that Mr. Angel ain't what you think he is, Sir, and the sooner he leaves this house the better."

Mrs. Hinijer ceased abruptly and stood panting but stern, and with her eyes grimly fixed on the Vicar's face.

"*Really*, Mrs. Hinijer!" said the Vicar, and then, "Oh, *Lord!*

"What *have* I done?" said the Vicar, suddenly

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starting up and appealing to the inexorable fates. "What HAVE I done?"

"There's no knowing," said Mrs. Hinijer. "Though a deal of talk in the village."

"*Bother!*" said the Vicar, going and staring out of the window. Then he turned. "Look here, Mrs. Hinijer! Mr. Angel will be leaving this house in the course of a week. Is that enough?"

"Quite," said Mrs. Hinijer. "And I feel sure, Sir. . . ."

The Vicar's eyes fell with unwonted eloquence upon the door.

§ 45

"THE fact is," said the Vicar, "this is no world for Angels."

The blinds had not been drawn, and the twilight outer world under an overcast sky seemed unspeakably grey and cold. The Angel sat at table in dejected silence. His inevitable departure had been proclaimed. Since his presence hurt people and made the Vicar wretched he acquiesced in the justice of the decision, but what would happen to him after his plunge he could not imagine. Something very disagreeable certainly.

"There is the violin," said the Vicar. "Only after our experience——

"I must get you clothes—a general outfit. Dear me! you don't understand railway travelling! And coinage! Taking lodgings! Eating-houses! I must come up at least and see you settled. Get work

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for you. But an Angel in London! Working for his living! That grey cold wilderness of people! What *will* become of you? If I had one friend in the world I could trust to believe me!

"I ought not to be sending you away——"

"Do not trouble overmuch for me, my friend," said the Angel. "At least this life of yours ends. And there are things in it. There is something in this life of yours— Your care for me! I thought there was nothing beautiful at all in life——"

"And I have betrayed you!" said the Vicar, with a sudden wave of remorse. "Why did I not face them all—say, 'This is the best of life'? What do these everyday things matter?"

He stopped suddenly. "What *do* they matter?" he said.

"I have only come into your life to trouble it," said the Angel.

"Don't say that," said the Vicar. "You have come into my life to awaken me. I have been dreaming—dreaming. Dreaming this was necessary and that. Dreaming that this narrow prison was the world. And the dream still hangs about me and troubles me. That is all. Even your departure—Am I not dreaming that you must go?"

When he was in bed that night the mystical aspect of the case came still more forcibly before the Vicar. He lay awake and had the most horrible visions of his sweet and delicate visitor drifting through this unsympathetic world and happening upon the cruellest misadventures. His guest *was* an Angel assuredly. He tried to go over the whole story of the past eight

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days again. He thought of the hot afternoon, the shot fired out of sheer surprise, the fluttering iridescent wings, the beautiful saffron-robed figure upon the ground. How wonderful that had seemed to him! Then his mind turned to the things he had heard of the other world, to the dreams the violin had conjured up, to the vague, fluctuating, wonderful cities of the Angelic Land. He tried to recall the forms of the buildings, the shapes of the fruits upon the trees, the aspect of the winged shapes that traversed its ways. They grew from a memory into a present reality, grew every moment just a little more vivid and his troubles a little less immediate; and so, softly and quietly, the Vicar slipped out of his troubles and perplexities into the Land of Dreams.

§ 46

DELIA sat with her window open, hoping to hear the Angel play. But that night there was to be no playing. The sky was overcast, yet not so thickly but that the moon was visible. High up a broken cloud-lace drove across the sky, and now the moon was a hazy patch of light, and now it was darkened, and now rode clear and bright and sharply outlined against the blue gulf of night. And presently she heard the door into the garden opening, and a figure came out under the drifting pallor of the moonlight.

It was the Angel. But he wore once more the saffron robe in the place of his formless overcoat. In the uncertain light this garment had only a colourless shimmer, and his wings behind him seemed a leaden

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grey. He began taking short runs, flapping his wings and leaping, going to and fro amidst the drifting patches of light and the shadows of the trees. Delia watched him in amazement. He gave a despondent cry, leaping higher. His shrivelled wings flashed and fell. A thicker patch in the cloud-film made everything obscure. He seemed to spring five or six feet from the ground and fall clumsily. She saw him in the dimness crouching on the ground and then she heard him sobbing.

"He's hurt!" said Delia, pressing her lips together hard and staring. "I ought to help him."

She hesitated, then stood up and flitted swiftly towards the door, went slipping quietly downstairs and out into the moonlight. The Angel still lay upon the lawn, and sobbed for utter wretchedness.

"Oh! what is the matter?" said Delia, stooping over him and touching his head timidly.

The Angel ceased sobbing, sat up abruptly, and stared at her. He saw her face, moonlit, and soft with pity. "What is the matter?" she whispered. "Are you hurt?"

The Angel stared about him, and his eyes came to rest on her face. "Delia!" he whispered.

"Are you hurt?" said Delia.

"My wings," said the Angel. "I cannot use my wings."

Delia did not understand, but she realised that it was something very dreadful. "It is dark, it is cold," whispered the Angel; "I cannot use my wings."

It hurt her unaccountably to see the tears on his face. She did not know what to do.

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"Pity me, Delia," said the Angel, suddenly extending his arms towards her; "pity me."

Impulsively she knelt down and took his face between her hands. "I do not know," she said; "but I am sorry. I am sorry for you, with all my heart."

The Angel said not a word. He was looking at her little face in the bright moonlight, with an expression of uncomprehending wonder in his eyes. "This strange world!" he said.

She suddenly withdrew her hands. A cloud drove over the moon. "What can I do to help you?" she whispered. "I would do anything to help you."

He still held her at arm's length, perplexity replacing misery in his face. "This strange world!" he repeated.

Both whispered, she kneeling, he sitting, in the fluctuating moonlight and darkness of the lawn.

"Delia!" said Mrs. Hinijer, suddenly projecting from her window; "Delia, is that you?"

They both looked up at her in consternation.

"Come in at once, Delia," said Mrs. Hinijer. "If that Mr. Angel was a gentleman, which he isn't, he'd feel ashamed of hisself. And you an orphan too!"

§ 47

On the morning of the next day the Angel, after he had breakfasted, went out towards the moor, and Mrs. Hinijer had an interview with the Vicar. What happened need not concern us now. The Vicar was visibly disconcerted. "He *must* go," he said; "cer-

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tainly he must go," and straightway he forgot the particular accusation in the general trouble. He spent the morning in hazy meditation, interspersed by a spasmodic study of Skiff and Waterlow's price list, and the catalogue of the Medical, Scholastic, and Clerical Stores. A schedule grew slowly on a sheet of paper that lay on the desk before him. He cut out a self-measurement form from the tailoring department of the Stores and pinned it to the study curtains. This was the kind of document he was making:

"1 *Black Melton Frock Coat. patts?* £3, 10*s*.

"? *Trousers. 2 pairs or one.*

"1 *Cheviot Tweed Suit* (*write for patterns. Self-meas.?*)"

The Vicar spent some time studying a pleasing array of model gentlemen. They were all very nice-looking, but he found it hard to imagine the Angel so transfigured. For, although six days had passed, the Angel remained without any suit of his own. The Vicar had vacillated between a project of driving the Angel into Portburdock and getting him measured for a suit, and his absolute horror of the insinuating manners of the tailor he employed. He knew that tailor would demand an exhaustive explanation. Besides which, one never knew when the Angel might leave. So the six days had passed, and the Angel had grown steadily in the wisdom of this world and shrouded his brightness still in the ample retirement of the Vicar's newest clothes.

"1 *Soft Felt Hat, No. G. 7* (*say*), 8*s* 6*d*.

"1 *Silk Hat*, 14*s* 6*d*. *Hatbox?*"

("I suppose he ought to have a silk hat," said the

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Vicar; "it's the correct thing up there. Shape No. 3 seems best suited to his style. But it's dreadful to think of him all alone in that great city. Every one will misunderstand him, and he will misunderstand everybody. However, I suppose it *must* be. Where was I?)"

"1 *Toothbrush.* 1 *Brush and Comb.* *Razor?*

"½ *doz. Shirts* (*? measure his neck*), 6*s ea.*

"*Socks? Pants?*

"2 *suits Pyjamas.* *Price?* *Say* 15*s.*

"1 *doz. Collars* (*'The Life Guardsman'*), 8*s.*

"*Braces.* *Oxon Patent Versatile,* 1*s* 11½*d.* But how will he get them on?" said the Vicar.

"1 *Rubber Stamp, T. Angel, and Marking Ink in box complete,* 9*d.*"

("Those washerwomen are certain to steal all his things.")

"1 *Single-bladed Penknife with Corkscrew, say* 1*s* 6*d.*

"*N.B.—Don't forget Cuff Links, Collar Stud, &c.*" (The Vicar loved "&c.," it gave things such a precise and businesslike air.)

"1 *Leather Portmanteau* (*had better see these*)."

And so forth—meanderingly. It kept the Vicar busy until lunch time, though his heart ached.

The Angel did not return to lunch. This was not so very remarkable—once before he had missed the midday meal. Yet, considering how short was the time they would have together now, he might perhaps have come back. Doubtless he had excellent reasons, though, for his absence. The Vicar made an indifferent lunch. In the afternoon he rested in his

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usual manner, and did a little more to the list of requirements. He did not begin to feel nervous about the Angel till tea time. He waited, perhaps, half an hour before he took tea. "Odd," said the Vicar, feeling still more lonely as he drank his tea.

As the time for dinner crept on and no Angel appeared the Vicar's imagination began to trouble him. "He will come in to dinner, surely," said the Vicar, caressing his chin, and beginning to fret about the house upon inconsiderable errands, as his habit was when anything occurred to break his routine. The sun set, a gorgeous spectacle, amidst tumbled masses of purple cloud. The gold and red faded into twilight; the evening star gathered her robe of light together from out the brightness of the sky in the West. Breaking the silence of evening that crept over the outer world, a corncrake began his whirring chant. The Vicar's face grew troubled; twice he went and stared at the darkening hillside, and then fretted back to the house again. Mrs. Hinijer served dinner. "Your dinner's ready," she announced for the second time, with a reproachful intonation. "Yes, yes," said the Vicar, fussing off upstairs.

He came down and went into his study and lit his reading-lamp, a patent affair with an incandescent wick, dropping the match into his waste-paper basket without stopping to see if it was extinguished. Then he fretted into the dining-room and began a desultory attack on the cooling dinner. . . .

(Dear Reader, the time is almost ripe to say farewell to this little Vicar of ours.)

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§ 48

SIR JOHN GOTCH, still smarting over the business of the barbed wire, was riding along one of the grassy ways through the preserves by the Sidder, when he saw, strolling slowly through the trees beyond the undergrowth, the one particular human being he did not want to see.

"I'm damned," said Sir John Gotch, with immense emphasis; "if this isn't altogether too much."

He raised himself in the stirrups. "Hi!" he shouted. "You there!"

The Angel turned smiling.

"Get out of this wood!" said Sir John Gotch.

"*Why?*" said the Angel.

"I'm—" said Sir John Gotch, meditating some cataclysmal expletive. But he could think of nothing more than "damned." "Get out of this wood," he said.

The Angel's smile vanished. "Why should I get out of this wood?" he said, and stood still.

Neither spoke for a full half minute perhaps, and then Sir John Gotch dropped out of his saddle and stood by the horse.

(Now you must remember—lest the Angelic Hosts be discredited hereby—that this Angel had been breathing the poisonous air of this Struggle for Existence of ours for more than a week. It was not only his wings and the brightness of his face that suffered. He had eaten and slept and learnt the lesson of pain—had travelled so far on the road to humanity. All

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the length of his Visit he had been meeting more and more of the harshness and conflict of this world, and losing touch with the glorious altitudes of his own.)

"You won't go, eigh!" said Gotch, and began to lead his horse through the bushes towards the Angel. The Angel stood, all his muscles tight and his nerves quivering, watching his antagonist approach.

"Get out of this wood," said Gotch, stopping three yards away, his face white with rage, his bridle in one hand and his riding-whip in the other.

Strange floods of emotion were running through the Angel. "Who are you," he said, in a low quivering voice; "who am I—that you should order me out of this place? What has the World done that men like you . . ."

"You're the fool who cut my barbed wire," said Gotch, threatening, "if you want to know!"

"*Your* barbed wire," said the Angel. "Was that your barbed wire? Are you the man who put down that barbed wire? What right have you . . ."

"Don't you go talking Socialist rot," said Gotch in short gasps. "This wood's mine, and I've a right to protect it how I can. I know your kind of muck. Talking rot and stirring up discontent. And if you don't get out of it jolly sharp . . ."

"*Well!*" said the Angel, a brimming reservoir of unaccountable energy.

"Get out of this damned wood!" said Gotch, flashing into the bully out of sheer alarm at the light in the Angel's face.

He made one step towards him, with the whip raised, and then something happened that neither he

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nor the Angel properly understood. The Angel seemed to leap into the air, a pair of grey wings flashed out at the Squire, he saw a face bearing down upon him, full of the wild beauty of passionate anger. His riding-whip was torn out of his hand. His horse reared behind him, pulled him over, gained his bridle, and fled.

The whip cut across his face as he fell back, stung across his face again as he sat on the ground. He saw the Angel, radiant with anger, in the act to strike again. Gotch flung up his hands, pitched himself forward to save his eyes, and rolled on the ground under the pitiless fury of the blows that rained down upon him.

"You brute," cried the Angel, striking wherever he saw flesh to feel. "You bestial thing of pride and lies! You who have overshadowed the souls of other men. You shallow fool with your horses and dogs! To lift your face against any living thing! Learn! Learn! Learn!"

Gotch began screaming for help. Twice he tried to clamber to his feet, got to his knees, and went headlong again under the ferocious anger of the Angel. Presently he made a strange noise in his throat, and ceased even to writhe under his punishment.

Then suddenly the Angel awakened from his wrath, and found himself standing, panting and trembling, one foot on a motionless figure, under the green stillness of the sunlit woods.

He stared about him, then down at his feet where, among the tangled dead leaves, the hair was matted

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with blood. The whip dropped from his hands, the hot colour fled from his face. "*Pain!*" he said. "Why does he lie so still?"

He took his foot off Gotch's shoulder, bent down towards the prostrate figure, stood listening, knelt—shook him. "Awake!" said the Angel. Then still more softly, "*Awake!*"

He remained listening some minutes or more, stood up sharply, and looked round him at the silent trees. A feeling of profound horror descended upon him, wrapped him round about. With an abrupt gesture he turned. "What has happened to me?" he said, in an awestricken whisper.

He started back from the motionless figure. "*Dead!*" he said suddenly, and, turning, panic-stricken, fled headlong through the wood.

§ 49

It was some minutes after the footsteps of the Angel had died away in the distance that Gotch raised himself on his hand. "By Jove!" he said. "Crump's right.

"Cut at the head, too!"

He put his hand to his face and felt the two weals running across it, hot and fat. "I'll think twice before I lift my hand against a lunatic again," said Sir John Gotch.

"He may be a person of weak intellect, but I'm damned if he hasn't a pretty strong arm. *Phew!* He's cut a bit clean off the top of my ear with that infernal lash.

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"That infernal horse will go galloping to the house in the approved dramatic style. Little Madam'll be scared out of her wits. And I . . . I shall have to explain how it all happened. While she vivisects me with questions.

"I'm a jolly good mind to have spring-guns and man-traps put in this preserve. Confound the Law!"

§ 50

But the Angel, thinking that Gotch was dead, went wandering off in a passion of remorse and fear through the brakes and copses along the Sidder. You can scarcely imagine how appalled he was at this last and overwhelming proof of his encroaching humanity. All the darkness, passion, and pain of life seemed closing in upon him, inexorably, becoming part of him, chaining him to all that a week ago he had found strange and pitiful in men.

"Truly, this is no world for an Angel!" said the Angel. "It is a World of War, a World of Pain, a World of Death. Anger comes upon one. . . . I who knew not pain and anger, stand here with blood stains on my hands. I have fallen. To come into this world is to fall. One must hunger and thirst and be tormented with a thousand desires. One must fight for foothold, be angry and strike——"

He lifted up his hands to Heaven, the ultimate bitterness of helpless remorse in his face, and then flung them down with a gesture of despair. The prison walls of this narrow, passionate life seemed creeping in upon him, certainly and steadily, to crush him

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presently altogether. He felt what all we poor mortals have to feel sooner or later—the pitiless force of the Things that Must Be, not only without us but (where the real trouble lies) within, all the inevitable thwarting of one's high resolves, those inevitable seasons when the better self is forgotten. But with us it is a gentle descent, made by imperceptible degrees over a long space of years; with him it was the horrible discovery of one short week. He felt he was being crippled, caked over, blinded, stupefied in the wrappings of this life, he felt as a man might feel who has taken some horrible poison and feels destruction spreading within him.

He took no account of hunger or fatigue or the flight of time. On and on he went, avoiding houses and roads, turning away from the sight and sound of a human being in a wordless desperate argument with Fate. His thoughts did not flow but stood banked back in inarticulate remonstrance against his degradation. Chance directed his footsteps homeward, and at last after nightfall he found himself, faint and weary and wretched, stumbling along over the moor at the back of Siddermorton. He heard the rats run and squeal in the heather, and once a noiseless big bird came out of the darkness, passed, and vanished again. And he saw without noticing it a dull red glow in the sky before him.

§ 51

But when he came over the brow of the moor, a vivid light sprang up before him and refused to be ignored. He came on down the hill and speedily

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saw more distinctly what the glare was. It came from darting and trembling tongues of fire, golden and red, that shot from the windows and a hole in the roof of the Vicarage. A cluster of black heads, all the village in fact, except the fire brigade who were down at Aylmer's Cottage trying to find the key of the machine house, came out in silhouette against the blaze. There was a roaring sound, and a humming of voices, and presently a furious outcry. There was a shouting of "No! No!"—"Come back!" and an inarticulate roar.

He began to run towards the burning house. He stumbled and almost fell, but he ran on. He found black figures running about him. The flaring fire blew gustily this way and that, and he smelled the smell of burning.

"She went in," said one voice, "she went in."

"The mad girl!" said another.

"Stand back! Stand back!" cried others.

He found himself thrusting through an excited, swaying crowd, all staring at the flames, and with the red reflection in their eyes.

"Stand back!" said a labourer, clutching him.

"What is it?" said the Angel. "What does this mean?"

"There's a girl in the house, and she can't get out!"

"Went in after a fiddle," said another.

"'Tas hopeless," he heard some one else say.

"I was standing near her. I heerd her. Says she: 'I *can* get his fiddle.' I heerd her— Just like that! 'I *can* get his fiddle.'"

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For a moment the Angel stood staring. Then in a flash he saw it all, saw this grim little world of battle and cruelty transfigured in a splendour that outshone the Angelic Land, suffused suddenly and insupportably glorious with the wonderful light of love and self-sacrifice. He gave a strange cry, and before any one could stop him, was running towards the burning building. There were cries of "The Hunchback! The Fowener!"

The Vicar, whose scalded hand was being tied up, turned his head, and he and Crump saw the Angel, a black outline against the intense, red glare of the doorway. It was the sensation of the tenth of a second, yet both men could not have remembered that transitory attitude more vividly had it been a picture they had studied for hours together. Then the Angel was hidden by something massive (no one knew what) that fell, incandescent, across the doorway.

§ 52

THERE was a cry of "Delia" and no more. But suddenly the flames spurted out in a blinding glare that shot upward to an immense height, a blinding brilliance broken by a thousand flickering gleams like the waving of swords. And a gust of sparks, flashing in a thousand colours, whirled up and vanished. Just then and for a moment, by some strange accident a rush of music, like the swell of an organ, wove into the roaring of the flames.

The whole village standing in black knots heard the sound, except Gaffer Siddons who is deaf—strange

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and beautiful it was, and then gone again. Lumpy Durgan, the idiot boy from Sidderford, said it began and ended like the opening and shutting of a door.

But little Hetty Penzance had a pretty fancy of two figures with wings, that flashed up and vanished among the flames.

(And after that it was she began to pine for the things she saw in her dreams, and was abstracted and strange. It grieved her mother sorely at the time. She grew fragile, as though she was fading out of the world, and her eyes had a strange, far-away look. She talked of angels and rainbow colours and golden wings, and was forever singing an unmeaning fragment of an air that nobody knew. Until Crump took her in hand and cured her with fattening dietary, syrup of hypophosphites, and cod-liver oil.)

The Epilogue

And there the story of the Wonderful Visit ends. The Epilogue is in the mouth of Mrs. Mendham. There stand two little white crosses in the Sidder-morton churchyard, near together, where the brambles come clambering over the stone wall. One is inscribed Thomas Angel and the other Delia Hardy, and the dates of the deaths are the same. Really there is nothing beneath them but the ashes of the Vicar's stuffed ostrich. (You will remember the Vicar had his ornithological side.) I noticed them when Mrs. Mendham was showing me the new De la Beche monument. (Mendham has been Vicar since Hillyer died.) "The granite came from some-

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where in Scotland," said Mrs. Mendham, "and cost ever so much—I forget how much—but a wonderful lot! It's quite the talk of the village."

"Mother," said Cissie Mendham, "you are stepping on a grave."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Mendham, "how heedless of me! And the cripple's grave too. But really you've no idea how much this monument cost them.

"These two people, by the bye," said Mrs. Mendham, "were killed when the old Vicarage was burned. It's rather a strange story. He was a curious person, a hunchbacked fiddler, who came from nobody knows where, and imposed upon the late Vicar to a frightful extent. He played in a pretentious way by ear, and we found out afterwards that he did not know a note of music—not a note. He was exposed before quite a lot of people. Among other things, he seems to have been 'carrying on,' as people say, with one of the servants, a sly little drab. . . . But Mendham had better tell you all about it. The man was half-witted and deformed. It's strange the fancies girls have."

She looked sharply at Cissie, and Cissie blushed to the eyes.

"She was left in the house and he rushed into the flames in an attempt to save her. Quite romantic—isn't it? He was rather clever with the fiddle in his uneducated way.

"All the poor Vicar's stuffed skins were burned at the same time. It was almost all he cared for. He never really got over the blow. He came to stop with us—for there wasn't another house availa-

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ble in the village. But he never seemed happy. He seemed all shaken. I never saw a man so changed. I tried to stir him up, but it was no good—no good at all. He had the queerest delusions about angels and that kind of thing. It made him odd company at times. He would say he heard music, and stare quite stupidly at nothing for hours together. He got quite careless about his dress. . . . He died within a twelvemonth of the fire."

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OTHER EARLY FANTASTIC STORIES

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THE JILTING OF JANE

As I sit writing in my study, I can hear our Jane bumping her way downstairs with a brush and dustpan. She used in the old days to sing hymn tunes, or the British national song for the time being, to these instruments, but latterly she has been silent and even careful over her work. Time was when I prayed with fervour for such silence, and my wife with sighs for such care, but now they have come we are not so glad as we might have anticipated we should be. Indeed, I would rejoice secretly, though it may be unmanly weakness to admit it, even to hear Jane sing "Daisy," or, by the fracture of any plate but one of Euphemia's best green ones, to learn that the period of brooding has come to an end.

Yet how we longed to hear the last of Jane's young man before we heard the last of him! Jane was always very free with her conversation to my wife, and discoursed admirably in the kitchen on a variety of topics—so well, indeed, that I sometimes left my study door open—our house is a small one—to partake of it. But after William came, it was always William, nothing but William; William this and William that; and when we thought William was worked out and exhausted altogether, then William all over again. The engagement lasted altogether three years; yet how she got introduced to William, and so became thus saturated with him, was always a secret. For my part, I believe it was at the street corner

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where the Rev. Barnabas Baux used to hold an open-air service after evensong on Sundays. Young Cupids were wont to flit like moths round the paraffin flare of that centre of High Church hymn-singing. I fancy she stood singing hymns there, out of memory and her imagination, instead of coming home to get supper, and William came up beside her and said, "Hello!" "Hello yourself!" she said; and etiquette being satisfied, they proceeded to converse.

As Euphemia has a reprehensible way of letting her servants talk to her, she soon heard of him. "He is *such* a respectable young man, ma'am," said Jane, "you don't know." Ignoring the slur cast on her acquaintance, my wife inquired further about this William.

"He is second porter at Maynard's, the draper's," said Jane, "and gets eighteen shillings—nearly a pound—a week, m'm; and when the head porter leaves he will be head porter. His relatives are quite superior people, m'm. Not labouring people at all. His father was a greengrosher, m'm, and had a chumor, and he was bankrup' twice. And one of his sisters is in a Home for the Dying. It will be a very good match for me, m'm," said Jane, "me being an orphan girl."

"Then you are engaged to him?" asked my wife.

"Not engaged, ma'am; but he is saving money to buy a ring—hammyfist."

"Well, Jane, when you are properly engaged to him you may ask him round here on Sunday afternoons, and have tea with him in the kitchen"; for my Euphemia has a motherly conception of her duty to-

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wards her maid-servants. And presently the amethystine ring was being worn about the house, even with ostentation, and Jane developed a new way of bringing in the joint so that this gage was evident. The elder Miss Maitland was aggrieved by it, and told my wife that servants ought not to wear rings. But my wife looked it up in *Enquire Within* and *Mrs. Motherly's Book of Household Management*, and found no prohibition. So Jane remained with this happiness added to her love.

The treasure of Jane's heart appeared to me to be what respectable people call a very deserving young man. "William, ma'am," said Jane one day suddenly, with ill-concealed complacency, as she counted out the beer bottles, "William, ma'am, is a teetotaller. Yes, m'm; and he don't smoke. Smoking, ma'am," said Jane, as one who reads the heart, "*do* make such a dust about. Beside the waste of money. *And* the smell. However, I suppose they got to do it—some of them. . . ."

William was at first a rather shabby young man of the ready-made black coat school of costume. He had watery grey eyes, and a complexion appropriate to the brother of one in a Home for the Dying. Euphemia did not fancy him very much, even at the beginning. His eminent respectability was vouched for by an alpaca umbrella, from which he never allowed himself to be parted.

"He goes to chapel," said Jane. "His papa, ma'am——"

"His *what*, Jane?"

"His papa, ma'am, was Church; but Mr. Maynard

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is a Plymouth Brother, and William thinks it Policy, ma'am, to go there too. Mr. Maynard comes and talks to him quite friendly when they ain't busy, about using up all the ends of string, and about his soul. He takes a lot of notice, do Mr. Maynard, of William, and the way he saves his soul, ma'am."

. Presently we heard that the head porter at Maynard's had left, and that William was head porter at twenty-three shillings a week. "He is really kind of over the man who drives the van," said Jane, "and him married, with three children." And she promised in the pride of her heart to make interest for us with William to favour us so that we might get our parcels of drapery from Maynard's with exceptional promptitude.

After this promotion a rapidly increasing prosperity came upon Jane's young man. One day we learned that Mr. Maynard had given William a book. "'Smiles' 'Elp Yourself,' it's called," said Jane; "but it ain't comic. It tells you how to get on in the world, and some what William read to me was *lovely*, ma'am."

Euphemia told me of this, laughing, and then she became suddenly grave. "Do you know, dear," she said, "Jane said one thing I did not like. She had been quiet for a minute, and then she suddenly remarked, 'William is a lot above me, ma'am, ain't he?'"

"I don't see anything in that," I said, though later my eyes were to be opened.

One Sunday afternoon about that time I was sitting at my writing-desk—possibly I was reading a

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good book—when a something went by the window. I heard a startled exclamation behind me, and saw Euphemia with her hands clasped together and her eyes dilated. "George," she said in an awe-stricken whisper, "did you see?"

Then we both spoke to one another at the same moment, slowly and solemnly: "*A silk hat! Yellow gloves! A new umbrella!*"

"It may be my fancy, dear," said Euphemia; "but his tie was very like yours. I believe Jane keeps him in ties. She told me a little while ago, in a way that implied volumes about the rest of your costume, 'The master *do* wear pretty ties, ma'am.' And he echoes all your novelties."

The young couple passed our window again on their way to their customary walk. They were arm in arm. Jane looked exquisitely proud, happy, and uncomfortable, with new white cotton gloves, and William, in the silk hat, singularly genteel!

That was the culmination of Jane's happiness. When she returned, "Mr. Maynard has been talking to William, ma'am," she said, "and he is to serve customers, just like the young shop gentlemen, during the next sale. And if he gets on, he is to be made an assistant, ma'am, at the first opportunity. He has got to be as gentlemanly as he can, ma'am; and if he ain't, ma'am, he says it won't be for want of trying. Mr. Maynard has took a great fancy to him."

"He *is* getting on, Jane," said my wife.

"Yes, ma'am," said Jane thoughtfully; "he *is* getting on."

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And she sighed.

That next Sunday as I drank my tea I interrogated my wife. "How is this Sunday different from all other Sundays, little woman? What has happened? Have you altered the curtains, or rearranged the furniture, or where is the indefinable difference of it? Are you wearing your hair in a new way without warning me? I perceive a change clearly, and I cannot for the life of me say what it is."

Then my wife answered in her most tragic voice, "George," she said, "that William has not come near the place to-day! And Jane is crying her heart out upstairs."

There followed a period of silence. Jane, as I have said, stopped singing about the house, and began to care for our brittle possessions, which struck my wife as being a very sad sign indeed. The next Sunday, and the next, Jane asked to go out, "to walk with William," and my wife, who never attempts to extort confidences, gave her permission, and asked no questions. On each occasion Jane came back looking flushed and very determined. At last one day she became communicative.

"William is being led away," she remarked abruptly, with a catching of the breath, apropos of tablecloths. "Yes, m'm. She is a milliner, and she can play on the piano."

"I thought," said my wife, "that you went out with him on Sunday."

"Not out with him, m'm—after him. I walked along by the side of them, and told her he was engaged to me."

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"Dear me, Jane, did you? What did they do?"

"Took no more notice of me than if I was dirt. So I told her she should suffer for it."

"It could not have been a very agreeable walk, Jane."

"Not for no parties, ma'am."

"I wish," said Jane, "I could play the piano, ma'am. But anyhow, I don't mean to let *her* get him away from me. She's older than him, and her hair ain't gold to the roots, ma'am."

It was on the August Bank Holiday that the crisis came. We do not clearly know the details of the fray, but only such fragments as poor Jane let fall. She came home dusty, excited, and with her heart hot within her.

The milliner's mother, the milliner, and William had made a party to the Art Museum at South Kensington, I think. Anyhow, Jane had calmly but firmly accosted them somewhere in the streets, and asserted her right to what, in spite of the consensus of literature, she held to be her inalienable property. She did, I think, go so far as to lay hands on him. They dealt with her in a crushingly superior way. They "called a cab." There was a "scene," William being pulled away into the four-wheeler by his future wife and mother-in-law from the reluctant hands of our discarded Jane. There were threats of giving her "in charge."

"My poor Jane!" said my wife, mincing veal as though she was mincing William. "It's a shame of them. I would think no more of him. He is not worthy of you."

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"No, m'm," said Jane. "He *is* weak.

"But it's that woman has done it," said Jane. She was never known to bring herself to pronounce "that woman's" name or to admit her girlishness. "I can't think what minds some women must have—to try and get a girl's young man away from her. But there, it only hurts to talk about it," said Jane.

Thereafter our house rested from William. But there was something in the manner of Jane's scrubbing the front doorstep or sweeping out the rooms, a certain viciousness, that persuaded me that the story had not yet ended.

"Please, m'm, may I go and see a wedding tomorrow?" said Jane one day.

My wife knew by instinct whose wedding. "Do you think it is wise, Jane?" she said.

"I would like to see the last of him," said Jane.

"My dear," said my wife, fluttering into my room about twenty minutes after Jane had started, "Jane has been to the boot hole and taken all the left-off boots and shoes, and gone off to the wedding with them in a bag. Surely she cannot mean——"

"Jane," I said, "is developing character. Let us hope for the best."

Jane came back with a pale, hard face. All the boots seemed to be still in her bag, at which my wife heaved a premature sigh of relief. We heard her go upstairs and replace the boots with considerable emphasis.

"Quite a crowd at the wedding, ma'am," she said presently, in a purely conversational style, sitting in our little kitchen and scrubbing the potatoes; "and

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such a lovely day for them." She proceeded to numerous other details, clearly avoiding some cardinal incident.

"It was all extremely respectable and nice, ma'am; but *her* father didn't wear a black coat, and looked quite out of place, ma'am. Mr. Piddingquirk——"

"*Who?*"

"Mr. Piddingquirk—William that was, ma'am—had white gloves, and a coat like a clergyman, and a lovely chrysanthemum. He looked so nice, ma'am. And there was red carpet down, just like for gentlefolks. And they say he gave the clerk four shillings, ma'am. It was a real kerridge they had—not a fly. When they came out of church there was rice-throwing, and her two little sisters dropping dead flowers. And some one threw a slipper, and then I threw a boot——"

"Threw a *boot*, Jane!"

"Yes, ma'am. Aimed at her. But it hit *him*. Yes, ma'am, hard. Gev him a black eye, I should think. I only threw that one. I hadn't the heart to try again. All the little boys cheered when it hit him."

After an interval—"I am sorry the boot hit *him*."

Another pause. The potatoes were being scrubbed violently. "He always *was* a bit above me, you know, ma'am. And he was led away."

The potatoes were more than finished. Jane rose sharply with a sigh, and rapped the basin down on the table.

"I don't care," she said. "I don't care a rap. He will find out his mistake yet. It serves me right. I

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was stuck up about him. I ought not to have looked so high. And I am glad things are as things are."

My wife was in the kitchen, seeing to the cookery. After the confession of the boot-throwing, she must have watched poor Jane fuming with a certain dismay in those brown eyes of hers. But I imagine they softened again very quickly, and then Jane's must have met them.

"Oh, ma'am," said Jane, with an astonishing change of note, "think of all that *might* have been! Oh, ma'am, I *could* have been so happy! I ought to have known, but I didn't know. . . . You're very kind to let me talk to you, ma'am . . . for it's hard on me, ma'am . . . it's har-r-r-d——"

And I gather that Euphemia so far forgot herself as to let Jane sob out some of the fulness of her heart on a sympathetic shoulder. My Euphemia, thank Heaven, has never properly grasped the importance of "keeping up her position." And since that fit of weeping, much of the accent of bitterness has gone out of Jane's scrubbing and brush-work.

Indeed, something passed the other day with the butcher boy—but that scarcely belongs to this story. However, Jane is young still, and time and change are at work with her. We all have our sorrows, but I do not believe very much in the existence of sorrows that never heal.

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THE CONE

THE night was hot and overcast, the sky red-rimmed with the lingering sunset of midsummer. They sat at the open window, trying to fancy the air was fresher there. The trees and shrubs of the garden stood stiff and dark; beyond in the roadway a gas-lamp burned, bright orange against the hazy blue of the evening. Farther were the three lights of the railway signal against the lowering sky. The man and woman spoke to one another in low tones.

"He does not suspect?" said the man, a little nervously.

"Not he," she said peevishly, as though that too irritated her. "He thinks of nothing but the works and the prices of fuel. He has no imagination, no poetry."

"None of these men of iron have," he said sententiously. "They have no hearts."

"*He* has not," she said. She turned her discontented face towards the window. The distant sound of a roaring and rushing drew nearer and grew in volume; the house quivered; one heard the metallic rattle of the tender. As the train passed, there was a glare of light above the cutting and a driving tumult of smoke; one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight black oblongs—eight trucks—passed across the dim grey of the embankment, and were suddenly extinguished one by one in the throat of the tunnel,

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which, with the last, seemed to swallow down train, smoke, and sound in one abrupt gulp.

"This country was all fresh and beautiful once," he said; "and now—it is Gehenna. Down that way—nothing but pot-banks and chimneys belching fire and dust into the face of heaven. . . . But what does it matter? An end comes, an end to all this cruelty. . . . *To-morrow*." He spoke the last word in a whisper.

"*To-morrow*," she said, speaking in a whisper too, and still staring out of the window.

"Dear!" he said, putting his hand on hers.

She turned with a start, and their eyes searched one another's. Hers softened to his gaze. "My dear one!" she said, and then: "It seems so strange—that you should have come into my life like this—to open—" She paused.

"To open?" he said.

"All this wonderful world"—she hesitated, and spoke still more softly—"this world of *love* to me."

Then suddenly the door clicked and closed. They turned their heads, and he started violently back. In the shadow of the room stood a great shadowy figure—silent. They saw the face dimly in the half-light, with unexpressive dark patches under the penthouse brows. Every muscle in Raut's body suddenly became tense. When could the door have opened? What had he heard? Had he heard all? What had he seen? A tumult of questions.

The newcomer's voice came at last, after a pause that seemed interminable. "Well?" he said.

"I was afraid I had missed you, Horrocks," said

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the man at the window, gripping the window-ledge with his hand. His voice was unsteady.

The clumsy figure of Horrocks came forward out of the shadow. He made no answer to Raut's remark. For a moment he stood above them.

The woman's heart was cold within her. "I told Mr. Raut it was just possible you might come back," she said in a voice that never quivered.

Horrocks, still silent, sat down abruptly in the chair by her little work-table. His big hands were clenched; one saw now the fire of his eyes under the shadow of his brows. He was trying to get his breath. His eyes went from the woman he had trusted to the friend he had trusted, and then back to the woman.

By this time and for the moment all three half understood one another. Yet none dared say a word to ease the pent-up things that choked them.

It was the husband's voice that broke the silence at last.

"You wanted to see me?" he said to Raut.

Raut started as he spoke. "I came to see you," he said, resolved to lie to the last.

"Yes," said Horrocks.

"You promised," said Raut, "to show me some fine effects of moonlight and smoke."

"I promised to show you some fine effects of moonlight and smoke," repeated Horrocks in a colourless voice.

"And I thought I might catch you to-night before you went down to the works," proceeded Raut, "and come with you."

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There was another pause. Did the man mean to take the thing coolly? Did he, after all, know? How long had he been in the room? Yet even at the moment when they heard the door, their attitudes . . . Horrocks glanced at the profile of the woman, shadowy pallid in the half-light. Then he glanced at Raut, and seemed to recover himself suddenly. "Of course," he said, "I promised to show you the works under their proper dramatic conditions. It's odd how I could have forgotten."

"If I am troubling you—" began Raut.

Horrocks started again. A new light had suddenly come into the sultry gloom of his eyes. "Not in the least," he said.

"Have you been telling Mr. Raut of all these contrasts of flame and shadow you think so splendid?" said the woman, turning now to her husband for the first time, her confidence creeping back again, her voice just one half-note too high—"that dreadful theory of yours that machinery is beautiful, and everything else in the world ugly. I thought he would not spare you, Mr. Raut. It's his great theory, his one discovery in art."

"I am slow to make discoveries," said Horrocks grimly, damping her suddenly. "But what I discover . . ." He stopped.

"Well?" she said.

"Nothing"; and suddenly he rose to his feet.

"I promised to show you the works," he said to Raut, and put his big, clumsy hand on his friend's shoulder. "And you are ready to go?"

"Quite," said Raut, and stood up also.

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There was another pause. Each of them peered through the indistinctness of the dusk at the other two. Horrocks's hand still rested on Raut's shoulder. Raut half fancied still that the incident was trivial after all. But Mrs. Horrocks knew her husband better, knew that grim quiet in his voice, and the confusion in her mind took a vague shape of physical evil. "Very well," said Horrocks, and, dropping his hand, turned towards the door.

"My hat?" Raut looked round in the half-light.

"That's my work-basket," said Mrs. Horrocks with a gust of hysterical laughter. Their hands came together on the back of the chair. "Here it is!" he said. She had an impulse to warn him in an undertone, but she could not frame a word. "Don't go!" and "Beware of him!" struggled in her mind, and the swift moment passed.

"Got it?" said Horrocks, standing with the door half open.

Raut stepped towards him. "Better say good-bye to Mrs. Horrocks," said the ironmaster, even more grimly quiet in his tone than before.

Raut started and turned. "Good evening, Mrs. Horrocks," he said, and their hands touched.

Horrocks held the door open with a ceremonial politeness unusual in him towards men. Raut went out, and then, after a wordless look at her, her husband followed. She stood motionless while Raut's light footfall and her husband's heavy tread, like bass and treble, passed down the passage together. The front door slammed heavily. She went to the window, moving slowly, and stood watching, leaning

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forward. The two men appeared for a moment at the gateway in the road, passed under the street-lamp, and were hidden by the black masses of the shrubbery. The lamplight fell for a moment on their faces, showing only unmeaning pale patches, telling nothing of what she still feared, and doubted, and craved vainly to know. Then she sank down into a crouching attitude in the big armchair, her eyes wide open and staring out at the red lights from the furnaces that flickered in the sky. An hour after she was still there, her attitude scarcely changed.

The oppressive stillness of the evening weighed heavily upon Raut. They went side by side down the road in silence, and in silence turned into the cinder-made byway that presently opened out the prospect of the valley.

A blue haze, half dust, half mist, touched the long valley with mystery. Beyond were Hanley and Etruria, grey and dark masses, outlined thinly by the rare golden dots of the street-lamps, and here and there a gas-lit window, or the yellow glare of some late-working factory or crowded public-house. Out of the masses, clear and slender against the evening sky, rose a multitude of tall chimneys, many of them reeking, a few smokeless during a season of "play." Here and there a pallid patch and ghostly stunted beehive shapes showed the position of a pot-bank, or a wheel, black and sharp against the hot lower sky, marked some colliery where they raise the iridescent coal of the place. Nearer at hand was the broad stretch of railway, and half-invisible trains shunted—a steady puffing and rumbling, with every now and

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then a ringing concussion and a series of impacts, and a passage of intermittent puffs of white steam across the further view. And to the left, between the railway and the dark mass of the low hill beyond, dominating the whole view, colossal, inky-black, and crowned with smoke and fitful flames, stood the great cylinders of the Jeddah Company Blast Furnaces, the central edifices of the big ironworks of which Horrocks was the manager. They stood heavy and threatening, full of an incessant turmoil of flames and seething molten iron, and about the feet of them rattled the rolling-mills, and the steam-hammer beat heavily and splashed the white iron sparks hither and thither. Even as they looked, a truckful of fuel was shot into one of the giants, and the red flames gleamed out, and a confusion of smoke and black dust came boiling upward towards the sky.

"Certainly you get some colour with your furnaces," said Raut, breaking a silence that had become apprehensive.

Horrocks grunted. He stood with his hands in his pockets, frowning down at the dim steaming railway and the busy ironworks beyond, frowning as if he were thinking out some knotty problem.

Raut glanced at him and away again. "At present your moonlight effect is hardly ripe," he continued, looking upward; "the moon is still smothered by the vestiges of daylight."

Horrocks stared at him with the expression of a man who has suddenly awakened. "Vestiges of daylight? . . . Of course, of course." He too looked up at the moon, pale still in the midsummer

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sky. "Come along," he said suddenly, and gripping Raut's arm in his hand, made a move towards the path that dropped from them to the railway.

Raut hung back. Their eyes met and saw a thousand things in a moment that their lips came near to say. Horrocks's hand tightened and then relaxed. He let go, and before Raut was aware of it, they were arm in arm, and walking, one unwillingly enough, down the path.

"You see the fine effect of the railway signals towards Burslem," said Horrocks, suddenly breaking into loquacity, striding fast and tightening the grip of his elbow the while—"little green lights and red and white lights, all against the haze. You have an eye for effect, Raut. It's fine. And look at those furnaces of mine, how they rise upon us as we come down the hill. That to the right is my pet—seventy feet of him. I packed him myself, and he's boiled away cheerfully with iron in his guts for five long years. I've a particular fancy for *him*. That line of red there—a lovely bit of warm orange you'd call it, Raut—that's the puddlers' furnaces, and there, in the hot light, three black figures—did you see the white splash of the steam-hammer then?—that's the rolling-mills. Come along! Clang, clatter, how it goes rattling across the floor! Sheet tin, Raut—amazing stuff. Glass mirrors are not in it when that stuff comes from the mill. And, squelch! there goes the hammer again. Come along!"

He had to stop talking to catch at his breath. His arm twisted into Raut's with benumbing tightness. He had come striding down the black path towards

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the railway as though he was possessed. Raut had not spoken a word, had simply hung back against Horrocks's pull with all his strength.

"I say," he said now, laughing nervously, but with an undertone of snarl in his voice, "why on earth are you nipping my arm off, Horrocks, and dragging me along like this?"

At length Horrocks released him. His manner changed again. "Nipping your arm off?" he said. "Sorry. But it's you taught me the trick of walking in that friendly way."

"You haven't learned the refinements of it yet then," said Raut, laughing artificially again. "By Jove! I'm black and blue." Horrocks offered no apology. They stood now near the bottom of the hill, close to the fence that bordered the railway. The ironworks had grown larger and spread out with their approach. They looked up to the blast-furnaces now instead of down; the further view of Etruria and Hanley had dropped out of sight with their descent. Before them, by the stile, rose a notice-board, bearing, still dimly visible, the words, "BEWARE OF THE TRAINS," half hidden by splashes of coaly mud.

"Fine effects," said Horrocks, waving his arm. "Here comes a train. The puffs of smoke, the orange glare, the round eye of light in front of it, the melodious rattle. Fine effects! But these furnaces of mine used to be finer, before we shoved cones in their throats, and saved the gas."

"How?" said Raut. "Cones?"

"Cones, my man, cones. I'll show you one nearer.

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The flames used to flare out of the open throats, great —what is it?—pillars of cloud by day, red and black smoke, and pillars of fire by night. Now we run it off in pipes, and burn it to heat the blast, and the top is shut by a cone. You'll be interested in that cone."

"But every now and then," said Raut, "you get a burst of fire and smoke up there."

"The cone's not fixed, it's hung by a chain from a lever, and balanced by an equipoise. You shall see it nearer. Else, of course, there'd be no way of getting fuel into the thing. Every now and then the cone dips, and out comes the flare."

"I see," said Raut. He looked over his shoulder. "The moon gets brighter," he said.

"Come along," said Horrocks abruptly, gripping his shoulder again, and moving him suddenly towards the railway crossing. And then came one of those swift incidents, vivid, but so rapid that they leave one doubtful and reeling. Half-way across, Horrocks's hand suddenly clinched upon him like a vice, and swung him backward and through a half-turn, so that he looked up the line. And there a chain of lamp-lit carriage windows telescoped swiftly as it came towards them, and the red and yellow lights of an engine grew larger and larger, rushing down upon them. As he grasped what this meant, he turned his face to Horrocks, and pushed with all his strength against the arm that held him back between the rails. The struggle did not last a moment. Just as certain as it was that Horrocks held him there, so certain was it that he had been violently lugged out of danger.

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"Out of the way," said Horrocks with a gasp, as the train came rattling by, and they stood panting by the gate into the ironworks.

"I did not see it coming," said Raut, still, even in spite of his own apprehensions, trying to keep up an appearance of ordinary intercourse.

Horrocks answered with a grunt. "The cone," he said, and then, as one who recovers himself, "I thought you did not hear."

"I didn't," said Raut.

"I wouldn't have had you run over then for the world," said Horrocks.

"For a moment I lost my nerve," said Raut.

Horrocks stood for half a minute, then turned abruptly towards the ironworks again. "See how fine these great mounds of mine, these clinker-heaps, look in the night! That truck yonder, up above there! Up it goes, and out-tilts the slag. See the palpitating red stuff go sliding down the slope. As we get nearer, the heap rises up and cuts the blast-furnaces. See the quiver up above the big one. Not that way! This way, between the heaps. That goes to the puddling-furnaces, but I want to show you the canal first." He came and took Raut by the elbow, and so they went along side by side. Raut answered Horrocks vaguely. What, he asked himself, had really happened on the line? Was he deluding himself with his own fancies, or had Horrocks actually held him back in the way of the train? Had he just been within an ace of being murdered?

Suppose this slouching, scowling monster *did* know anything? For a minute or two then Raut was really

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afraid for his life, but the mood passed as he reasoned with himself. After all, Horrocks might have heard nothing. At any rate, he had pulled him out of the way in time. His odd manner might be due to the mere vague jealousy he had shown once before. He was talking now of the ash-heaps and the canal.

"Eigh?" said Horrocks.

"What?" said Raut. "Rather! The haze in the moonlight. Fine!"

"Our canal," said Horrocks, stopping suddenly. "Our canal by moonlight and firelight is immense. You've never seen it? Fancy that! You've spent too many of your evenings philandering up in Newcastle there. I tell you, for real florid quality— But you shall see. Boiling water . . ."

As they came out of the labyrinth of clinker-heaps and mounds of coal and ore, the noises of the rolling-mill sprang upon them suddenly, loud, near, and distinct. Three shadowy workmen went by and touched their caps to Horrocks. Their faces were vague in the darkness. Raut felt a futile impulse to address them, and before he could frame his words they passed into the shadows. Horrocks pointed to the canal close before them now: a weird-looking place it seemed, in the blood-red reflections of the furnaces. The hot water that cooled the tuyères came into it, some fifty yards up—a tumultuous, almost boiling affluent, and the steam rose up from the water in silent white wisps and streaks, wrapping damply about them, an incessant succession of ghosts coming up from the black and red eddies, a white uprising that made the head swim. The shining black tower of the larger

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blast-furnace rose overhead out of the mist, and its tumultuous riot filled their ears. Raut kept away from the edge of the water, and watched Horrocks.

"Here it is red," said Horrocks, "blood-red vapour as red and hot as sin; but yonder there, where the moonlight falls on it, and it drives across the clinker-heaps, it is as white as death."

Raut turned his head for a moment, and then came back hastily to his watch on Horrocks. "Come along to the rolling-mills," said Horrocks. The threatening hold was not so evident that time, and Raut felt a little reassured. But all the same, what on earth did Horrocks mean about "white as death" and "red as sin"? Coincidence, perhaps?

They went and stood behind the puddlers for a little while, and then through the rolling-mills, where amidst an incessant din the deliberate steam-hammer beat the juice out of the succulent iron, and black, half-naked Titans rushed the plastic bars, like hot sealing-wax, between the wheels. "Come on," said Horrocks in Raut's ear; and they went and peeped through the little glass hole behind the tuyères, and saw the tumbled fire writhing in the pit of the blast-furnace. It left one eye blinded for a while. Then, with green and blue patches dancing across the dark, they went to the lift by which the trucks of ore and fuel and lime were raised to the top of the big cylinder.

And out upon the narrow rail that overhung the furnace Raut's doubts came upon him again. Was it wise to be here? If Horrocks did know—every-

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thing! Do what he would, he could not resist a violent trembling. Right under foot was a sheer depth of seventy feet. It was a dangerous place. They pushed by a truck of fuel to get to the railing that crowned the thing. The reek of the furnace, a sulphurous vapour streaked with pungent bitterness, seemed to make the distant hillside of Hanley quiver. The moon was riding out now from among a drift of clouds, half-way up the sky above the undulating wooded outlines of Newcastle. The steaming canal ran away from below them under an indistinct bridge, and vanished into the dim haze of the flat fields towards Burslem.

"That's the cone I've been telling you of," shouted Horrocks; "and, below that, sixty feet of fire and molten metal, with the air of the blast frothing through it like gas in soda-water."

Raut gripped the hand-rail tightly, and stared down at the cone. The heat was intense. The boiling of the iron and the tumult of the blast made a thunderous accompaniment to Horrocks's voice. But the thing had to be gone through now. Perhaps, after all. . . .

"In the middle," bawled Horrocks, "temperature near a thousand degrees. If *you* were dropped into it . . . flash into flame like a pinch of gunpowder in a candle. Put your hand out and feel the heat of his breath. Why, even up here I've seen the rain-water boiling off the trucks. And that cone there. It's a damned sight too hot for roasting cakes. The top side of it's three hundred degrees."

"Three hundred degrees!" said Raut.

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"Three hundred centigrade, mind!" said Horrocks. "It will boil the blood out of you in no time."

"Eigh?" said Raut, and turned.

"Boil the blood out of you in . . . No, you don't!"

"Let me go!" screamed Raut. "Let go my arm!"

With one hand he clutched at the hand-rail, then with both. For a moment the two men stood swaying. Then suddenly, with a violent jerk, Horrocks had twisted him from his hold. He clutched at Horrocks and missed, his foot went back into empty air; in mid-air he twisted himself, and then cheek and shoulder and knee struck the hot cone together.

He clutched the chain by which the cone hung, and the thing sank an infinitesimal amount as he struck it. A circle of glowing red appeared about him, and a tongue of flame, released from the chaos within, flickered up towards him. An intense pain assailed him at the knees, and he could smell the singeing of his hands. He raised himself to his feet, and tried to climb up the chain, and then something struck his head. Black and shining with the moonlight, the throat of the furnace rose about him.

Horrocks, he saw, stood above him by one of the trucks of fuel on the rail. The gesticulating figure was bright and white in the moonlight, and shouting: "Fizzle, you fool! Fizzle, you hunter of women! You hot-blooded hound! Boil! boil! boil!"

Suddenly he caught up a handful of coal out of the truck, and flung it deliberately, lump after lump, at Raut.

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"Horrocks!" cried Raut. "Horrocks!"

He clung, crying, to the chain, pulling himself up from the burning of the cone. Each missile Horrocks flung hit him. His clothes charred and glowed, and as he struggled the cone dropped, and a rush of hot, suffocating gas whooped out and burned round him in a swift breath of flame.

His human likeness departed from him. When the momentary red had passed, Horrocks saw a charred, blackened figure, its head streaked with blood, still clutching and fumbling with the chain, and writhing in agony—a cindery animal, an inhuman, monstrous creature that began a sobbing, intermittent shriek.

Abruptly at the sight the ironmaster's anger passed. A deadly sickness came upon him. The heavy odour of burning flesh came drifting up to his nostrils. His sanity returned to him.

"God have mercy upon me!" he cried. "O God! what have I done?"

He knew the thing below him, save that it still moved and felt, was already a dead man—that the blood of the poor wretch must be boiling in his veins. An intense realisation of that agony came to his mind, and overcame every other feeling. For a moment he stood irresolute, and then, turning to the truck, he hastily tilted its contents upon the struggling thing that had once been a man. The mass fell with a thud, and went radiating over the cone. With the thud the shriek ended, and a boiling confusion of smoke, dust, and flame came rushing up towards him. As it passed, he saw the cone clear again.

Then he staggered back, and stood trembling, cling-

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ing to the rail with both hands. His lips moved, but no words came to them.

Down below was the sound of voices and running steps. The clangour of rolling in the shed ceased abruptly.

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THE FLOWERING OF THE STRANGE ORCHID

THE buying of orchids always has in it a certain speculative flavour. You have before you the brown shrivelled lump of tissue, and for the rest you must trust your judgment, or the auctioneer, or your good luck, as your taste may incline. The plant may be moribund or dead, or it may be just a respectable purchase, fair value for your money, or perhaps—for the thing has happened again and again—there slowly unfolds before the delighted eyes of the happy purchaser, day after day, some new variety, some novel richness, a strange twist of the labellum, or some subtler colouration or unexpected mimicry. Pride, beauty, and profit blossom together on one delicate green spike, and, it may be, even immortality. For the new miracle of Nature may stand in need of a new specific name, and what so convenient as that of its discoverer? "Johnsmithia"! There have been worse names.

It was perhaps the hope of some such happy discovery that made Winter-Wedderburn such a frequent attendant at these sales—that hope, and also, maybe, the fact that he had nothing else of the slightest interest to do in the world. He was a shy, lonely, rather ineffectual man, provided with just enough income to keep off the spur of necessity, and not enough nervous energy to make him seek

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any exacting employment. He might have collected stamps or coins, or translated Horace, or bound books, or invented new species of diatoms. But, as it happened, he grew orchids, and had one ambitious little hothouse.

"I have a fancy," he said over his coffee, "that something is going to happen to me to-day." He spoke—as he moved and thought—slowly.

"Oh, don't say *that!*" said his housekeeper—who was also his remote cousin. For "something happening" was a euphemism that meant only one thing to her.

"You misunderstand me. I mean nothing unpleasant . . . though what I do mean I scarcely know.

"To-day," he continued, after a pause, "Peters' are going to sell a batch of plants from the Andamans and the Indies. I shall go up and see what they have. It may be I shall buy something good unawares. That may be it."

He passed his cup for his second cupful of coffee.

"Are those the things collected by that poor young fellow you told me of the other day?" asked his cousin, as she filled his cup.

"Yes," he said, and became meditative over a piece of toast.

"Nothing ever does happen to me," he remarked presently, beginning to think aloud. "I wonder why? Things enough happen to other people. There is Harvey. Only the other week—on Monday he picked up sixpence, on Wednesday his chicks all had the staggers, on Friday his cousin came home from

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Australia, and on Saturday he broke his ankle. What a whirl of excitement!—compared to me."

"I think I would rather be without so much excitement," said his housekeeper. "It can't be good for you."

"I suppose it's troublesome. Still . . . you see, nothing ever happens to me. When I was a little boy I never had accidents. I never fell in love as I grew up. Never married. . . . I wonder how it feels to have something happen to you, something really remarkable.

"That orchid collector was only thirty-six—twenty years younger than myself—when he died. And he had been married twice and divorced once; he had had malarial fever four times, and once he broke his thigh. He killed a Malay once, and once he was wounded by a poisoned dart. And in the end he was killed by jungle-leeches. It must have all been very troublesome, but then it must have been very interesting, you know—except, perhaps, the leeches."

"I am sure it was not good for him," said the lady with conviction.

"Perhaps not." And then Wedderburn looked at his watch. "Twenty-three minutes past eight. I am going up by the quarter-to-twelve train, so that there is plenty of time. I think I shall wear my alpaca jacket—it is quite warm enough—and my grey felt hat and brown shoes. I suppose——"

He glanced out of the window at the serene sky and sunlit garden, and then nervously at his cousin's face.

"I think you had better take an umbrella if you

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are going to London," she said in a voice that admitted of no denial. "There's all between here and the station coming back."

When he returned he was in a state of mild excitement. He had made a purchase. It was rare that he could make up his mind quickly enough to buy, but this time he had done so.

"There are Vandas," he said, "and a Dendrobe and some Palæonophis." He surveyed his purchases lovingly as he consumed his soup. They were laid out on the spotless tablecloth before him, and he was telling his cousin all about them as he slowly meandered through his dinner. It was his custom to live all his visits to London over again in the evening for her and his own entertainment.

"I knew something would happen to-day. And I have bought all these. Some of them—some of them —I feel sure, do you know, that some of them will be remarkable. I don't know how it is, but I feel just as sure as if some one had told me that some of these will turn out remarkable.

"That one"—he pointed to a shrivelled rhizome—"was not identified. It may be a Palæonophis—or it may not. It may be a new species, or even a new genus. And it was the last that poor Batten ever collected."

"I don't like the look of it," said his housekeeper. "It's such an ugly shape."

"To me it scarcely seems to have a shape."

"I don't like those things that stick out," said his housekeeper.

"It shall be put away in a pot to-morrow."

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"It looks," said the housekeeper, "like a spider shamming dead."

Wedderburn smiled and surveyed the root with his head on one side. "It is certainly not a pretty lump of stuff. But you can never judge of these things from their dry appearance. It may turn out to be a very beautiful orchid indeed. How busy I shall be to-morrow! I must see to-night just exactly what to do with these things, and to-morrow I shall set to work.

"They found poor Batten lying dead, or dying, in a mangrove swamp—I forget which," he began again presently, "with one of these very orchids crushed up under his body. He had been unwell for some days with some kind of native fever, and I suppose he fainted. These mangrove swamps are very unwholesome. Every drop of blood, they say, was taken out of him by the jungle-leeches. It may be that very plant that cost him his life to obtain."

"I think none the better of it for that."

"Men must work though women may weep," said Wedderburn with profound gravity.

"Fancy dying away from every comfort in a nasty swamp! Fancy being ill of fever with nothing to take but chlorodyne and quinine—if men were left to themselves they would live on chlorodyne and quinine—and no one round you but horrible natives! They say the Andaman islanders are most disgusting wretches—and, anyhow, they can scarcely make good nurses, not having the necessary training. And just for people in England to have orchids!"

"I don't suppose it was comfortable, but some men

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seem to enjoy that kind of thing," said Wedderburn. "Anyhow, the natives of his party were sufficiently civilised to take care of all his collection until his colleague, who was an ornithologist, came back again from the interior; though they could not tell the species of the orchid, and had let it wither. And it makes these things more interesting."

"It makes them disgusting. I should be afraid of some of the malaria clinging to them. And just think, there has been a dead body lying across that ugly thing! I never thought of that before. There! I declare I cannot eat another mouthful of dinner."

"I will take them off the table if you like, and put them in the window-seat. I can see them just as well there."

The next few days he was indeed singularly busy in his steamy little hothouse, fussing about with charcoal, lumps of teak, moss, and all the other mysteries of the orchid cultivator. He considered he was having a wonderfully eventful time. In the evening he would talk about these new orchids to his friends, and over and over again he reverted to his expectation of something strange.

Several of the Vandas and the Dendrobium died under his care, but presently the strange orchid began to show signs of life. He was delighted, and took his housekeeper right away from jam-making to see it at once, directly he made the discovery.

"That is a bud," he said, "and presently there will be a lot of leaves there, and those little things coming out here are aerial rootlets."

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"They look to me like little white fingers poking out of the brown," said his housekeeper. "I don't like them."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. They look like fingers trying to get at you. I can't help my likes and dislikes."

"I don't know for certain, but I don't *think* there are any orchids I know that have aerial rootlets quite like that. It may be my fancy, of course. You see they are a little flattened at the ends."

"I don't like 'em," said his housekeeper, suddenly shivering and turning away. "I know it's very silly of me—and I'm very sorry, particularly as you like the thing so much. But I can't help thinking of that corpse."

"But it may not be that particular plant. That was merely a guess of mine."

His housekeeper shrugged her shoulders. "Anyhow, I don't like it," she said.

Wedderburn felt a little hurt at her dislike to the plant. But that did not prevent his talking to her about orchids generally, and this orchid in particular, whenever he felt inclined.

"There are such queer things about orchids," he said one day; "such possibilities of surprises. You know, Darwin studied their fertilisation, and showed that the whole structure of an ordinary orchid flower was contrived in order that moths might carry the pollen from plant to plant. Well, it seems that there are lots of orchids known the flower of which cannot possibly be used for fertilisation in that way. Some of the Cypripediums, for instance; there are no in-

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sects known that can possibly fertilise them, and some of them have never been found with seed."

"But how do they form new plants?"

"By runners and tubers, and that kind of outgrowth. That is easily explained. The puzzle is, what are the flowers for?

"Very likely," he added, "*my* orchid may be something extraordinary in that way. If so I shall study it. I have often thought of making researches as Darwin did. But hitherto I have not found the time, or something else has happened to prevent it. The leaves are beginning to unfold now. I do wish you would come and see them!"

But she said that the orchid house was so hot it gave her the headache. She had seen the plant once again, and the aerial rootlets, which were now some of them more than a foot long, had unfortunately reminded her of tentacles reaching out after something; and they got into her dreams, growing after her with incredible rapidity. So that she had settled to her entire satisfaction that she would not see that plant again, and Wedderburn had to admire its leaves alone. They were of the ordinary broad form, and a deep glossy green, with splashes and dots of deep red towards the base. He knew of no other leaves quite like them. The plant was placed on a low bench near the thermometer, and close by was a simple arrangement by which a tap dripped on the hot-water pipes and kept the air steamy. And he spent his afternoons now with some regularity meditating on the approaching flowering of this strange plant.

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And at last the great thing happened. Directly he entered the little glass house he knew that the spike had burst out, although his great *Palæonophis Lowii* hid the corner where his new darling stood. There was a new odour in the air, a rich, intensely sweet scent, that overpowered every other in that crowded, steaming little greenhouse.

Directly he noticed this he hurried down to the strange orchid. And, behold! the trailing green spikes bore now three great splashes of blossom, from which this overpowering sweetness proceeded. He stopped before them in an ecstasy of admiration.

The flowers were white, with streaks of golden orange upon the petals; the heavy labellum was coiled into an intricate projection, and a wonderful bluish purple mingled there with the gold. He could see at once that the genus was altogether a new one. And the insufferable scent! How hot the place was! The blossoms swam before his eyes.

He would see if the temperature was right. He made a step towards the thermometer. Suddenly everything appeared unsteady. The bricks on the floor were dancing up and down. Then the white blossoms, the green leaves behind them, the whole greenhouse, seemed to sweep sideways, and then in a curve upward.

. . . . . .

At half past four his cousin made the tea, according to their invariable custom. But Wedderburn did not come in for his tea.

"He is worshipping that horrid orchid," she told

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herself, and waited ten minutes. "His watch must have stopped. I will go and call him."

She went straight to the hothouse, and, opening the door, called his name. There was no reply. She noticed that the air was very close, and loaded with an intense perfume. Then she saw something lying on the bricks between the hot-water pipes.

For a minute, perhaps, she stood motionless.

He was lying, face upward, at the foot of the strange orchid. The tentacle-like aerial rootlets no longer swayed freely in the air, but were crowded together, a tangle of grey ropes, and stretched tight, with their ends closely applied to his chin and neck and hands.

She did not understand. Then she saw from under one of the exultant tentacles upon his cheek there trickled a little thread of blood.

With an inarticulate cry she ran towards him, and tried to pull him away from the leech-like suckers. She snapped two of these tentacles, and their sap dripped red.

Then the overpowering scent of the blossom began to make her head reel. How they clung to him! She tore at the tough ropes, and he and the white inflorescence swam about her. She felt she was fainting, knew she must not. She left him and hastily opened the nearest door, and, after she had panted for a moment in the fresh air, she had a brilliant inspiration. She caught up a flower-pot and smashed in the windows at the end of the greenhouse. Then she re-entered. She tugged now with renewed strength at Wedderburn's motionless body, and brought the

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strange orchid crashing to the floor. It still clung with the grimmest tenacity to its victim. In a frenzy, she lugged it and him into the open air.

Then she thought of tearing through the sucker rootlets one by one, and in another minute she had released him and was dragging him away from the horror.

He was white and bleeding from a dozen circular patches.

The odd-job man was coming up the garden, amazed at the smashing of glass, and saw her emerge, hauling the inanimate body with red-stained hands. For a moment he thought impossible things.

"Bring some water!" she cried, and her voice dispelled his fancies. When, with unnatural alacrity, he returned with the water, he found her weeping with excitement, and with Wedderburn's head upon her knee, wiping the blood from his face.

"What's the matter?" said Wedderburn, opening his eyes feebly, and closing them again at once.

"Go and tell Annie to come out here to me, and then go for Dr. Haddon at once," she said to the odd-job man so soon as he brought the water; and added, seeing he hesitated, "I will tell you all about it when you come back."

Presently Wedderburn opened his eyes again, and, seeing that he was troubled by the puzzle of his position, she explained to him: "You fainted in the hothouse."

"And the orchid?"

"I will see to that," she said.

Wedderburn had lost a good deal of blood, but be-

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yond that he had suffered no very great injury. They gave him brandy mixed with some pink extract of meat, and carried him upstairs to bed. His housekeeper told her incredible story in fragments to Dr. Haddon. "Come to the orchid house and see," she said.

The cold outer air was blowing in through the open door, and the sickly perfume was almost dispelled. Most of the torn aerial rootlets lay already withered amidst a number of dark stains upon the bricks. The stem of the inflorescence was broken by the fall of the plant, and the flowers were growing limp and brown at the edges of the petals. The doctor stooped towards it, then saw that one of the aerial rootlets still stirred feebly, and hesitated.

The next morning the strange orchid still lay there, black now and putrescent. The door banged intermittently in the morning breeze, and all the array of Wedderburn's orchids was shrivelled and prostrate. But Wedderburn himself was bright and garrulous upstairs in the glory of his strange adventure.

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ÆPYORNIS ISLAND

THE man with the scarred face leant over the table and looked at my bundle.

"Orchids?" he asked.

"A few," I said.

"Cypripediums," he said.

"Chiefly," said I.

"Anything new? I thought not. *I* did these islands twenty-five—twenty-seven years ago. If you find anything new here—well, it's brand-new. I didn't leave much."

"I'm not a collector," said I.

"I was young then," he went on. "Lord! how I used to fly round." He seemed to take my measure. "I was in the East Indies two years and in Brazil seven. Then I went to Madagascar."

"I know a few explorers by name," I said, anticipating a yarn. "Whom did you collect for?"

"Dawson's. I wonder if you've heard the name of Butcher ever?"

"Butcher—Butcher?" The name seemed vaguely present in my memory; then I recalled *Butcher* v. *Dawson*. "Why!" said I, "you are the man who sued them for four years' salary—got cast away on a desert island . . ."

"Your servant," said the man with the scar, bowing. "Funny case, wasn't it? Here was me, making a little fortune on that island, doing nothing for it neither, and them quite unable to give me notice.

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It often used to amuse me thinking over it while I was there. I did calculations of it—big—all over the blessed atoll in ornamental figuring."

"How did it happen?" said I. "I don't rightly remember the case."

"Well. . . . You've heard of the Æpyornis?"

"Rather. Andrews was telling me of a new species he was working on only a month or so ago. Just before I sailed. They've got a thigh-bone, it seems, nearly a yard long. Monster the thing must have been!"

"I believe you," said the man with the scar. "It *was* a monster. Sindbad's rock was just a legend of 'em. But when did they find these bones?"

"Three or four years ago—'91, I fancy. Why?"

"Why? Because *I* found them—Lord!—it's nearly twenty years ago. If Dawson's hadn't been silly about that salary they might have made a perfect ring in 'em. . . . *I* couldn't help the infernal boat going adrift."

He paused. "I suppose it's the same place. A kind of swamp about ninety miles north of Antananarivo. Do you happen to know? You have to go to it along the coast by boats. You don't happen to remember, perhaps?"

"I don't. I fancy Andrews said something about a swamp."

"It must be the same. It's on the east coast. And somehow there's something in the water that keeps things from decaying. Like creosote it smells. It reminded me of Trinidad. Did they get any more eggs? Some of the eggs I found were a foot and a

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half long. The swamp goes circling round, you know, and cuts off this bit. It's mostly salt, too. Well.... What a time I had of it! I found the things quite by accident. We went for eggs, me and two native chaps, in one of those rum canoes all tied together, and found the bones at the same time. We had a tent and provisions for four days, and we pitched on one of the firmer places. To think of it brings that odd tarry smell back even now. It's funny work. You go probing into the mud with iron rods, you know. Usually the egg gets smashed. I wonder how long it is since these Æpyornises really lived. The missionaries say the natives have legends about when they were alive, but I never heard any such stories myself.* But certainly those eggs we got were as fresh as if they had been new laid. Fresh! Carrying them down to the boat one of my nigger chaps dropped one on a rock and it smashed. How I lammed into the beggar! But sweet it was, as if it was new laid, not even smelly, and its mother dead these four hundred years, perhaps. Said a centipede had bit him. However, I'm getting off the straight with the story. It had taken us all day to dig into the slush and get these eggs out unbroken, and we were all covered with beastly black mud, and naturally I was cross. So far as I knew they were the only eggs that have ever been got out not even cracked. I went afterwards to see the ones they have at the Natural History Museum in London; all of them were cracked and just stuck together like a mosaic, and

* No European is known to have seen a live Æpyornis, with the doubtful exception of Macer, who visited Madagascar in 1745.—H. G. W.

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bits missing. Mine were perfect, and I meant to blow them when I got back. Naturally I was annoyed at the silly duffer dropping three hours' work just on account of a centipede. I hit him about rather."

The man with the scar took out a clay pipe. I placed my pouch before him. He filled up absent-mindedly.

"How about the others? Did you get those home? I don't remember——"

"That's the queer part of the story. I had three others. Perfectly fresh eggs. Well, we put 'em in the boat, and then I went up to the tent to make some coffee, leaving my two heathens down by the beach—the one fooling about with his sting and the other helping him. It never occurred to me that the beggars would take advantage of the peculiar position I was in to pick a quarrel. But I suppose the centipede poison and the kicking I had given him had upset the one—he was always a cantankerous sort—and he persuaded the other.

"I remember I was sitting and smoking and boiling up the water over a spirit-lamp business I used to take on these expeditions. Incidentally I was admiring the swamp under the sunset. All black and blood-red it was, in streaks—a beautiful sight. And up beyond the land rose grey and hazy to the hills, and the sky behind them red, like a furnace mouth. And fifty yards behind the back of me was these blessed heathen—quite regardless of the tranquil air of things—plotting to cut off with the boat and leave me all alone with three days' provisions and a canvas

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tent, and nothing to drink whatsoever beyond a little keg of water. I heard a kind of yelp behind me, and there they were in this canoe affair—it wasn't properly a boat—and, perhaps, twenty yards from land. I realised what was up in a moment. My gun was in the tent, and, besides, I had no bullets—only duck shot. They knew that. But I had a little revolver in my pocket, and I pulled that out as I ran down to the beach.

"'Come back!' says I, flourishing it.

"They jabbered something at me, and the man that broke the egg jeered. I aimed at the other—because he was unwounded and had the paddle, and I missed. They laughed. However, I wasn't beat. I knew I had to keep cool, and I tried him again and made him jump with the whang of it. He didn't laugh that time. The third time I got his head, and over he went, and the paddle with him. It was a precious lucky shot for a revolver. I reckon it was fifty yards. He went right under. I don't know if he was shot, or simply stunned and drowned. Then I began to shout to the other chap to come back, but he huddled up in the canoe and refused to answer. So I fired out my revolver at him and never got near him.

"I felt a precious fool, I can tell you. There I was on this rotten black beach, flat swamp all behind me, and the flat sea, cold after the sun set, and just this black canoe drifting steadily out to sea. I tell you I damned Dawson's and Jamrach's and Museums and all the rest of it just to rights. I bawled to this nigger to come back, until my voice went up into a scream.

"There was nothing for it but to swim after him

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and take my luck with the sharks. So I opened my clasp-knife and put it in my mouth, and took off my clothes and waded in. As soon as I was in the water I lost sight of the canoe, but I aimed, as I judged, to head it off. I hoped the man in it was too bad to navigate it, and that it would keep on drifting in the same direction. Presently it came up over the horizon again to the south-westward about. The afterglow of sunset was well over now and the dim of night creeping up. The stars were coming through the blue. I swum like a champion, though my legs and arms were soon aching.

"However, I came up to him by the time the stars were fairly out. As it got darker I began to see all manner of glowing things in the water—phosphorescence, you know. At times it made me giddy. I hardly knew which was stars and which was phosphorescence, and whether I was swimming on my head or my heels. The canoe was as black as sin, and the ripple under the bows like liquid fire. I was naturally chary of clambering up into it. I was anxious to see what he was up to first. He seemed to be lying cuddled up in a lump in the bows, and the stern was all out of water. The thing kept turning round slowly as it drifted—kind of waltzing, don't you know. I went to the stern and pulled it down, expecting him to wake up. Then I began to clamber in with my knife in my hand, and ready for a rush. But he never stirred. So there I sat in the stern of the little canoe, drifting away over the calm phosphorescent sea and with all the host of the stars above me, waiting for something to happen.

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"After a long time I called him by name, but he never answered. I was too tired to take any risks by going along to him. So we sat there. I fancy I dozed once or twice. When the dawn came I saw he was as dead as a door-nail and all puffed up and purple. My three eggs and the bones were lying in the middle of the canoe, and the keg of water and some coffee and biscuits wrapped in a Cape *Argus* by his feet, and a tin of methylated spirit underneath him. There was no paddle, nor, in fact, anything except the spirit tin that I could use as one, so I settled to drift until I was picked up. I held an inquest on him, brought in a verdict against some snake, scorpion, or centipede unknown, and sent him overboard.

"After that I had a drink of water and a few biscuits, and took a look round. I suppose a man low down as I was don't see very far; leastways, Madagascar was clean out of sight, and any trace of land at all. I saw a sail going south-westward—looked like a schooner but her hull never came up. Presently the sun got high in the sky and began to beat down upon me. Lord! it pretty near made my brains boil. I tried dipping my head in the sea, but after a while my eye fell on the Cape *Argus*, and I lay down flat in the canoe and spread this over me. Wonderful things these newspapers! I never read one through thoroughly before, but it's odd what you get up to when you're alone, as I was. I suppose I read that blessed old Cape *Argus* twenty times. The pitch in the canoe simply reeked with the heat and rose up into big blisters.

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"I drifted ten days," said the man with the scar. "It's a little thing in the telling, isn't it? Every day was like the last. Except in the morning and the evening I never kept a lookout even—the blaze was so infernal. I didn't see a sail after the first three days, and those I saw took no notice of me. About the sixth night a ship went by scarcely half a mile away from me, with all its lights ablaze and its ports open, looking like a big firefly. There was music aboard. I stood up and shouted and screamed at it. The second day I broached one of the Æpyornis eggs, scraped the shell away at the end bit by bit, and tried it, and I was glad to find it was good enough to eat. A bit flavoury—not bad, I mean—but with something of the taste of a duck's egg. There was a kind of circular patch, about six inches across, on one side of the yolk, and with streaks of blood and a white mark like a ladder in it that I thought queer, but I did not understand what this meant at the time, and I wasn't inclined to be particular. The egg lasted me three days, with biscuits and a drink of water. I chewed coffee-berries too—invigorating stuff. The second egg I opened about the eighth day, and it scared me."

The man with the scar paused. "Yes," he said, "developing."

"I dare say you find it hard to believe. I did, with the thing before me. There the egg had been, sunk in that cold black mud, perhaps three hundred years. But there was no mistaking it. There was the—what is it?—embryo, with its big head and curved back, and its heart beating under its throat, and the yolk shrivelled up and great membranes spreading inside

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of the shell and all over the yolk. Here was I hatching out the eggs of the biggest of all extinct birds, in a little canoe in the midst of the Indian Ocean. If old Dawson had known that! It was worth four years' salary. What do *you* think?

"However, I had to eat that precious thing up, every bit of it, before I sighted the reef, and some of the mouthfuls were beastly unpleasant. I left the third one alone. I held it up to the light, but the shell was too thick for me to get any notion of what might be happening inside; and though I fancied I heard blood pulsing, it might have been the rustle in my own ears, like what you listen to in a sea-shell.

"Then came the atoll. Came out of the sunrise, as it were, suddenly, close up to me. I drifted straight towards it until I was about half a mile from shore, not more, and then the current took a turn, and I had to paddle as hard as I could with my hands and bits of the Æpyornis shell to make the place. However, I got there. It was just a common atoll about four miles round, with a few trees growing and a spring in one place, and the lagoon full of parrot-fish. I took the egg ashore and put it in a good place, well above the tide lines and in the sun, to give it all the chance I could, and pulled the canoe up safe, and loafed about prospecting. It's rum how dull an atoll is. As soon as I had found a spring all the interest seemed to vanish. When I was a kid I thought nothing could be finer or more adventurous than the Robinson Crusoe business, but that place was as monotonous as a book of sermons. I went round finding

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eatable things and generally thinking; but I tell you I was bored to death before the first day was out. It shows my luck—the very day I landed the weather changed. A thunderstorm went by to the north and flicked its wing over the island, and in the night there came a drencher and a howling wind slap over us. It wouldn't have taken much, you know, to upset that canoe.

"I was sleeping under the canoe, and the egg was luckily among the sand higher up the beach, and the first thing I remember was a sound like a hundred pebbles hitting the boat at once, and a rush of water over my body. I'd been dreaming of Antananarivo, and I sat up and halloed to Intoshi to ask her what the devil was up, and clawed out at the chair where the matches used to be. Then I remembered where I was. There were phosphorescent waves rolling up as if they meant to eat me, and all the rest of the night as black as pitch. The air was simply yelling. The clouds seemed down on your head almost, and the rain fell as if heaven was sinking and they were baling out the waters above the firmament. One great roller came writhing at me, like a fiery serpent, and I bolted. Then I thought of the canoe, and ran down to it as the water went hissing back again; but the thing had gone. I wondered about the egg, then, and felt my way to it. It was all right and well out of reach of the maddest waves, so I sat down beside it and cuddled it for company. Lord! what a night that was!

"The storm was over before the morning. There wasn't a rag of cloud left in the sky when the dawn

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came, and all along the beach there were bits of plank scattered—which was the disarticulated skeleton, so to speak, of my canoe. However, that gave me something to do, for, taking advantage of two of the trees being together, I rigged up a kind of storm-shelter with these vestiges. And that day the egg hatched.

"Hatched, Sir, when my head was pillowed on it and I was asleep. I heard a whack and felt a jar and sat up, and there was the end of the egg pecked out and a rum little brown head looking out at me. 'Lord!' I said, 'you're welcome'; and with a little difficulty he came out.

"He was a nice friendly little chap at first, about the size of a small hen—very much like most other young birds, only bigger. His plumage was a dirty brown to begin with, with a sort of grey scab that fell off it very soon, and scarcely feathers—a kind of downy hair. I can hardly express how pleased I was to see him. I tell you, Robinson Crusoe don't make near enough of his loneliness. But here was interesting company. He looked at me and winked his eye from the front backward, like a hen, and gave a chirp and began to peck about at once, as though being hatched three hundred years too late was just nothing. 'Glad to see you, Man Friday!' says I, for I had naturally settled he was to be called Man Friday if ever he was hatched, as soon as ever I found the egg in the canoe had developed. I was a bit anxious about his feed, so I gave him a lump of raw parrot-fish at once. He took it, and opened his beak for more. I was glad of that, for, under the circum-

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stances, if he'd been at all fanciful, I should have had to eat him after all.

"You'd be surprised what an interesting bird that Æpyornis chick was. He followed me about from the very beginning. He used to stand by me and watch while I fished in the lagoon, and go shares in anything I caught. And he was sensible, too. There were nasty green warty things, like pickled gherkins, used to lie about on the beach, and he tried one of these and it upset him. He never even looked at any of them again.

"And he grew. You could almost see him grow. And as I was never much of a society man, his quiet, friendly ways suited me to a T. For nearly two years we were as happy as we could be on that island. I had no business worries, for I knew my salary was mounting up at Dawsons'. We would see a sail now and then, but nothing ever came near us. I amused myself, too, by decorating the island with designs worked in sea-urchins and fancy shells of various kinds. I put ÆPYORNIS ISLAND all round the place very nearly, in big letters, like what you see done with coloured stones at railway stations in the old country, and mathematical calculations and drawings of various sorts. And I used to lie watching the blessed bird stalking round and growing, growing; and think how I could make a living out of him by showing him about if I ever got taken off. After his first moult he began to get handsome, with a crest and a blue wattle, and a lot of green feathers at the behind of him. And then I used to puzzle whether Dawsons' had any right to claim him or not. Stormy

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weather and in the rainy season we lay snug under the shelter I had made out of the old canoe, and I used to tell him lies about my friends at home. And after a storm we would go round the island together to see if there was any drift. It was a kind of idyll, you might say. If only I had had some tobacco it would have been simply just like heaven.

"It was about the end of the second year our little paradise went wrong. Friday was then about fourteen feet high to the bill of him, with a big, broad head like the end of a pickaxe, and two huge brown eyes with yellow rims, set together like a man's—not out of sight of each other like a hen's. His plumage was fine—none of the half-mourning style of your ostrich—more like a cassowary as far as colour and texture go. And then it was he began to cock his comb at me and give himself airs, and show signs of a nasty temper. . . .

"At last came a time when my fishing had been rather unlucky, and he began to hang about me in a queer, meditative way. I thought he might have been eating sea-cucumbers or something, but it was really just discontent on his part. I was hungry, too, and when at last I landed a fish I wanted it for myself. Tempers were short that morning on both sides. He pecked at it and grabbed it, and I gave him a whack on the head to make him leave go. And at that he went for me. Lord! . . .

"He gave me this in the face." The man indicated his scar. "Then he kicked me. It was like a cart-horse. I got up, and, seeing he hadn't finished, I started off full tilt with my arms doubled up over my

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face. But he ran on those gawky legs of his faster than a race-horse, and kept landing out at me with sledge-hammer kicks and bringing his pickaxe down on the back of my head. I made for the lagoon, and went in up to my neck. He stopped at the water, for he hated getting his feet wet, and began to make a shindy, something like a peacock's, only hoarser. He started strutting up and down the beach. I'll admit I felt small to see this blessed fossil lording it there. And my head and face were all bleeding, and —well, my body just one jelly of bruises.

"I decided to swim across the lagoon and leave him alone for a bit, until the affair blew over. I shinned up the tallest palm-tree, and sat there thinking of it all. I don't suppose I ever felt so hurt by anything before or since. It was the brutal ingratitude of the creature. I'd been more than a brother to him. I'd hatched him, educated him. A great gawky, out-of-date bird! And me a human being—heir of the ages and all that.

"I thought after a time he'd begin to see things in that light himself, and feel a little sorry for his behaviour. I thought if I was to catch some nice little bits of fish, perhaps, and go to him presently in a casual kind of way, and offer them to him, he might do the sensible thing. It took me some time to learn how unforgiving and cantankerous an extinct bird can be. Malice!

"I won't tell you all the little devices I tried to get that bird round again. I simply can't. It makes my cheek burn with shame even now to think of the snubs and buffets I had from this infernal curiosity.

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I tried violence. I chucked lumps of coral at him from a safe distance, but he only swallowed them. I shied my open knife at him and almost lost it, though it was too big for him to swallow. I tried starving him out and struck fishing, but he took to picking along the beach at low water after worms, and rubbed along on that. Half my time I spent up to my neck in the lagoon, and the rest up the palm-trees. One of them was scarcely high enough, and when he caught me up it he had a regular Bank Holiday with the calves of my legs. It got unbearable. I don't know if you have ever tried sleeping up a palm-tree. It gave me the most horrible nightmares. Think of the shame of it, too! Here was this extinct animal mooning about my island like a sulky duke, and me not allowed to rest the sole of my foot on the place. I used to cry with weariness and vexation. I told him straight that I didn't mean to be chased about a desert island by any damned anachronisms. I told him to go and peck a navigator of his own age. But he only snapped his beak at me. Great ugly bird, all legs and neck!

"I shouldn't like to say how long that went on altogether. I'd have killed him sooner if I'd known how. However, I hit on a way of settling him at last. It is a South American dodge. I joined all my fishing-lines together with stems of seaweed and things, and made a stoutish string, perhaps twelve yards in length or more, and I fastened two lumps of coral rock to the ends of this. It took me some time to do, because every now and then I had to go into the lagoon or up a tree as the fancy took me. This

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I whirled rapidly round my head, and then let it go at him. The first time I missed, but the next time the string caught his legs beautifully, and wrapped round them again and again. Over he went. I threw it standing waist-deep in the lagoon, and as soon as he went down I was out of the water and sawing at his neck with my knife . . .

"I don't like to think of that even now. I felt like a murderer while I did it, though my anger was hot against him. When I stood over him and saw him bleeding on the white sand, and his beautiful great legs and neck writhing in his last agony . . . Pah!

"With that tragedy loneliness came upon me like a curse. Good Lord! you can't imagine how I missed that bird. I sat by his corpse and sorrowed over him, and shivered as I looked round the desolate, silent reef. I thought of what a jolly little bird he had been when he was hatched, and of a thousand pleasant tricks he had played before he went wrong. I thought if I'd only wounded him I might have nursed him round into a better understanding. If I'd had any means of digging into the coral rock I'd have buried him. I felt exactly as if he was human. As it was, I couldn't think of eating him, so I put him in the lagoon, and the little fishes picked him clean. I didn't even save the feathers. Then one day a chap cruising about in a yacht had a fancy to see if my atoll still existed.

"He didn't come a moment too soon, for I was about sick enough of the desolation of it, and only hesitating whether I should walk out into the sea and

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finish up the business that way, or fall back on the green things. . . .

"I sold the bones to a man named Winslow—a dealer near the British Museum, and he says he sold them to old Havers. It seems Havers didn't understand they were extra large, and it was only after his death they attracted attention. They called 'em Æpyornis—what was it?"

"*Æpyornis vastus*," said I. "It's funny, the very thing was mentioned to me by a friend of mine. When they found an Æpyornis with a thigh a yard long, they thought they had reached the top of the scale, and called him *Æpyornis maximus*. Then some one turned up another thigh-bone four feet six or more, and that they called *Æpyornis titan*. Then your *vastus* was found after old Havers died, in his collection, and then a *vastissimus* turned up."

"Winslow was telling me as much," said the man with the scar. "If they get any more Æpyornises, he reckons some scientific swell will go and burst a blood-vessel. But it was a queer thing to happen to a man, wasn't it—altogether?"

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THE REMARKABLE CASE OF DAVIDSON'S EYES

THE transitory mental aberration of Sidney Davidson, remarkable enough in itself, is still more remarkable if Wade's explanation is to be credited. It sets one dreaming of the oddest possibilities of intercommunication in the future, of spending an intercalary five minutes on the other side of the world, or being watched in our most secret operations by unsuspected eyes. It happened that I was the immediate witness of Davidson's seizure, and so it falls naturally to me to put the story upon paper.

When I say that I was the immediate witness of his seizure, I mean that I was the first on the scene. The thing happened at the Harlow Technical College, just beyond the Highgate Archway. He was alone in the larger laboratory when the thing happened. I was in a smaller room, where the balances are, writing up some notes. The thunderstorm had completely upset my work, of course. It was just after one of the louder peals that I thought I heard some glass smash in the other room. I stopped writing, and turned round to listen. For a moment I heard nothing; the hail was playing the devil's tattoo on the corrugated zinc of the roof. Then came another sound, a smash—no doubt of it this time. Something heavy had been knocked off the bench. I jumped up at once and went and opened the door leading into the big laboratory.

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I was surprised to hear a queer sort of laugh, and saw Davidson standing unsteadily in the middle of the room, with a dazzled look on his face. My first impression was that he was drunk. He did not notice me. He was clawing out at something invisible a yard in front of his face. He put out his hand slowly, rather hesitatingly, and then clutched nothing. "What's come to it?" he said. He held up his hands to his face, fingers spread out. "Great Scott!" he said. The thing happened three or four years ago, when every one swore by that personage. Then he began raising his feet clumsily, as though he had expected to find them glued to the floor.

"Davidson!" cried I. "What's the matter with you?" He turned round in my direction and looked about for me. He looked over me and at me and on either side of me, without the slightest sign of seeing me. "Waves," he said; "and a remarkably neat schooner. I'd swear that was Bellow's voice. *Hullo!*" He shouted suddenly at the top of his voice.

I thought he was up to some foolery. Then I saw littered about his feet the shattered remains of the best of our electrometers. "What's up, man?" said I. "You've smashed the electrometer!"

"Bellows again!" said he. "Friends left, if my hands are gone. Something about electrometers. Which way *are* you, Bellows?" He suddenly came staggering towards me. "The damned stuff cuts like butter," he said. He walked straight into the bench and recoiled. "None so buttery that!" he said, and stood swaying.

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I felt scared. "Davidson," said I, "what on earth's come over you?"

He looked round him in every direction. "I could swear that was Bellows. Why don't you show yourself like a man, Bellows?"

It occurred to me that he must be suddenly struck blind. I walked round the table and laid my hand upon his arm. I never saw a man more startled in my life. He jumped away from me, and came round into an attitude of self-defence, his face fairly distorted with terror. "Good God!" he cried. "What was that?"

"It's I—Bellows. Confound it, Davidson!"

He jumped when I answered him and stared—how can I express it?—right through me. He began talking, not to me, but to himself. "Here in broad daylight on a clear beach. Not a place to hide in." He looked about him wildly. "Here! I'm *off*." He suddenly turned and ran headlong into the big electromagnet—so violently that, as we found afterwards, he bruised his shoulder and jawbone cruelly. At that he stepped back a pace, and cried out with almost a whimper: "What, in Heaven's name, has come over me?" He stood, blanched with terror and trembling violently, with his right arm clutching his left, where that had collided with the magnet.

By that time I was excited and fairly scared. "Davidson," said I, "don't be afraid."

He was startled at my voice, but not so excessively as before. I repeated my words in as clear and as firm a tone as I could assume. "Bellows," he said, "is that you?"

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"Can't you see it's me?"

He laughed. "I can't even see it's myself. Where the devil are we?"

"Here," said I, "in the laboratory."

"The laboratory!" he answered in a puzzled tone, and put his hand to his forehead. "I *was* in the laboratory—till that flash came, but I'm hanged if I'm there now. What ship is that?"

"There's no ship," said I. "Do be sensible, old chap."

"No ship!" he repeated, and seemed to forget my denial forthwith. "I suppose," said he slowly, "we're both dead. But the rummy part is I feel just as though I still had a body. Don't get used to it all at once, I suppose. The old shop was struck by lightning, I suppose. Jolly quick thing, Bellows—eigh?"

"Don't talk nonsense. You're very much alive. You are in the laboratory, blundering about. You've just smashed a new electrometer. I don't envy you when Boyce arrives."

He stared away from me towards the diagrams of cryohydrates. "I must be deaf," said he. "They've fired a gun, for there goes the puff of smoke, and I never heard a sound."

I put my hand on his arm again, and this time he was less alarmed. "We seem to have a sort of invisible bodies," said he. "By Jove! there's a boat coming round the headland. It's very much like the old life after all—in a different climate."

I shook his arm. "Davidson," I cried, "wake up!"

It was just then that Boyce came in. So soon as he

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spoke Davidson exclaimed: "Old Boyce! Dead too! What a lark!" I hastened to explain that Davidson was in a kind of somnambulistic trance. Boyce was interested at once. We both did all we could to rouse the fellow out of his extraordinary state. He answered our questions, and asked us some of his own, but his attention seemed distracted by his hallucination about a beach and a ship. He kept interpolating observations concerning some boat and the davits, and sails filling with the wind. It made one feel queer, in the dusky laboratory, to hear him saying such things.

He was blind and helpless. We had to walk him down the passage, one at each elbow, to Boyce's private room, and while Boyce talked to him there, and humoured him about this ship idea, I went along the corridor and asked old Wade to come and look at him. The voice of our Dean sobered him a little, but not very much. He asked where his hands were, and why he had to walk about up to his waist in the ground. Wade thought over him a long time—you know how he knits his brows—and then made him feel the couch, guiding his hands to it. "That's a couch," said Wade. "The couch in the private room of Prof. Boyce. Horsehair stuffing."

Davidson felt about, and puzzled over it, and answered presently that he could feel it all right, but he couldn't see it.

"What *do* you see?" asked Wade. Davidson said he could see nothing but a lot of sand and broken-up shells. Wade gave him some other things to feel, telling him what they were, and watching him keenly.

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"The ship is almost hull down," said Davidson presently, *apropos* of nothing.

"Never mind the ship," said Wade. "Listen to me, Davidson. Do you know what hallucination means?"

"Rather," said Davidson.

"Well, everything you see is hallucinatory."

"Bishop Berkeley," said Davidson.

"Don't mistake me," said Wade. "You are alive and in this room of Boyce's. But something has happened to your eyes. You cannot see; you can feel and hear, but not see. Do you follow me?"

"It seems to me that I see too much." Davidson rubbed his knuckles into his eyes. "Well?" he said.

"That's all. Don't let it perplex you. Bellows here and I will take you home in a cab."

"Wait a bit." Davidson thought. "Help me to sit down," said he presently; "and now—I'm sorry to trouble you—but will you tell me all that over again?"

Wade repeated it very patiently. Davidson shut his eyes, and pressed his hands upon his forehead. "Yes," said he. "It's quite right. Now my eyes are shut I know you're right. That's you, Bellows, sitting by me on the couch. I'm in England again. And we're in the dark."

Then he opened his eyes. "And there," said he, "is the sun just rising, and the yards of the ship, and a tumbled sea, and a couple of birds flying. I never saw anything so real. And I'm sitting up to my neck in a bank of sand."

He bent forward and covered his face with his

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hands. Then he opened his eyes again. "Dark sea and sunrise! And yet I'm sitting on a sofa in old Boyce's room! . . . God help me!"

That was the beginning. For three weeks this strange affection of Davidson's eyes continued unabated. It was far worse than being blind. He was absolutely helpless, and had to be fed like a newly hatched bird, and led about and undressed. If he attempted to move, he fell over things or struck himself against walls or doors. After a day or so he got used to hearing our voices without seeing us, and willingly admitted he was at home, and that Wade was right in what he told him. My sister, to whom he was engaged, insisted on coming to see him, and would sit for hours every day while he talked about this beach of his. Holding her hand seemed to comfort him immensely. He explained that when we left the College and drove home—he lived in Hampstead village—it appeared to him as if we drove right through a sandhill—it was perfectly black until he emerged again—and through rocks and trees and solid obstacles, and when he was taken to his own room it made him giddy and almost frantic with the fear of falling, because going upstairs seemed to lift him thirty or forty feet above the rocks of his imaginary island. He kept saying he should smash all the eggs. The end was that he had to be taken down into his father's consulting-room and laid upon a couch that stood there.

He described the island as being a bleak kind of place on the whole, with very little vegetation, except some peaty stuff, and a lot of bare rock. There were

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multitudes of penguins, and they made the rocks white and disagreeable to see. The sea was often rough, and once there was a thunderstorm, and he lay and shouted at the silent flashes. Once or twice seals pulled up on the beach, but only on the first two or three days. He said it was very funny the way in which the penguins used to waddle right through him, and how he seemed to lie among them without disturbing them.

I remember one odd thing, and that was when he wanted very badly to smoke. We put a pipe in his hands—he almost poked his eye out with it—and lit it. But he couldn't taste anything. I've since found it's the same with me—I don't know if it's the usual case—that I cannot enjoy tobacco at all unless I can see the smoke.

But the queerest part of his vision came when Wade sent him out in a Bath-chair to get fresh air. The Davidsons hired a chair, and got that deaf and obstinate dependant of theirs, Widgery, to attend to it. Widgery's ideas of healthy expeditions were peculiar. My sister, who had been to the Dogs' Home, met them in Camden Town, towards King's Cross, Widgery trotting along complacently, and Davidson, evidently most distressed, trying in his feeble, blind way to attract Widgery's attention.

He positively wept when my sister spoke to him. "Oh, get me out of this horrible darkness!" he said, feeling for her hand. "I must get out of it, or I shall die." He was quite incapable of explaining what was the matter, but my sister decided he must go home, and presently, as they went uphill towards Hamp-

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stead, the horror seemed to drop from him. He said it was good to see the stars again, though it was then about noon and a blazing day.

"It seemed," he told me afterwards, "as if I was being carried irresistibly towards the water. I was not very much alarmed at first. Of course it was night there—a lovely night."

"Of course?" I asked, for that struck me as odd.

"Of course," said he. "It's always night there when it is day here. . . . Well, we went right into the water, which was calm and shining under the moonlight—just a broad swell that seemed to grow broader and flatter as I came down into it. The surface glistened just like a skin—it might have been empty space underneath for all I could tell to the contrary. Very slowly, for I rode slanting into it, the water crept up to my eyes. Then I went under and the skin seemed to break and heal again about my eyes. The moon gave a jump up in the sky and grew green and dim, and fish, faintly glowing, came darting round me—and things that seemed made of luminous glass; and I passed through a tangle of seaweeds that shone with an oily lustre. And so I drove down into the sea, and the stars went out one by one, and the moon grew greener and darker, and the seaweed became a luminous purple-red. It was all very faint and mysterious, and everything seemed to quiver. And all the while I could hear the wheels of the Bath-chair creaking, and the footsteps of people going by, and a man in the distance selling the special *Pall Mall*.

"I kept sinking down deeper and deeper into the

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water. It became inky black about me, not a ray from above came down into that darkness, and the phosphorescent things grew brighter and brighter. The snaky branches of the deeper weeds flickered like the flames of spirit-lamps; but, after a time, there were no more weeds. The fishes came staring and gaping towards me, and into me and through me. I never imagined such fishes before. They had lines of fire along the sides of them as though they had been outlined with a luminous pencil. And there was a ghastly thing swimming backward with a lot of twining arms. And then I saw, coming very slowly towards me through the gloom, a hazy mass of light that resolved itself as it drew nearer into multitudes of fishes, struggling and darting round something that drifted. I drove on straight towards it, and presently I saw in the midst of the tumult, and by the light of the fish, a bit of splintered spar looming over me, and a dark hull tilting over, and some glowing phosphorescent forms that were shaken and writhed as the fish bit at them. Then it was I began to try to attract Widgery's attention. A horror came upon me. Ugh! I should have driven right into those half-eaten —— things. If your sister had not come! They had great holes in them, Bellows, and. . . . Never mind. But it was ghastly!"

For three weeks Davidson remained in this singular state, seeing what at the time we imagined was an altogether phantasmal world, and stone-blind to the world around him. Then, one Tuesday, when I called I met old Davidson in the passage. "He can see his thumb!" the old gentleman said, in a perfect trans-

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port. He was struggling into his overcoat. "He can see his thumb, Bellows!" he said, with the tears in his eyes. "The lad will be all right yet."

I rushed in to Davidson. He was holding up a little book before his face, and looking at it and laughing in a weak kind of way.

"It's amazing," said he. "There's a kind of patch come there." He pointed with his finger. "I'm on the rocks as usual, and the penguins are staggering and flapping about as usual, and there's been a whale showing every now and then, but it's got too dark now to make him out. But put something *there*, and I see it—I do see it. It's very dim and broken in places, but I see it all the same, like a faint spectre of itself. I found it out this morning while they were dressing me. It's like a hole in this infernal phantom world. Just put your hand by mine. No—not there. Ah! Yes! I see it. The base of your thumb and a bit of cuff! It looks like the ghost of a bit of your hand sticking out of the darkling sky. Just by it there's a group of stars like a cross coming out."

From that time Davidson began to mend. His account of the change, like his account of the vision, was oddly convincing. Over patches of his field of vision, the phantom world grew fainter, grew transparent, as it were, and through these translucent gaps he began to see dimly the real world about him. The patches grew in size and number, ran together and spread until only here and there were blind spots left upon his eyes. He was able to get up and steer himself about, feed himself once more, read, smoke, and behave like an ordinary citizen again. At first

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it was very confusing to him to have these two pictures overlapping each other like the changing views of a lantern, but in a little while he began to distinguish the real from the illusory.

At first he was unfeignedly glad, and seemed only too anxious to complete his cure by taking exercise and tonics. But as that odd island of his began to fade away from him, he became queerly interested in it. He wanted particularly to go down into the deep sea again, and would spend half his time wandering about the low-lying parts of London, trying to find the water-logged wreck he had seen drifting. The glare of real daylight very soon impressed him so vividly as to blot out everything of his shadowy world, but of a night time, in a darkened room, he could still see the white-splashed rocks of the island, and the clumsy penguins staggering to and fro. But even these grew fainter and fainter, and, at last, soon after he married my sister, he saw them for the last time.

And now to tell of the queerest thing of all. About two years after his cure I dined with the Davidsons, and after dinner a man named Atkins called in. He is a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and a pleasant, talkative man. He was on friendly terms with my brother-in-law, and was soon on friendly terms with me. It came out that he was engaged to Davidson's cousin, and incidentally he took out a kind of pocket photograph case to show us a new rendering of his *fiancée*. "And, by the bye," said he, "here's the old *Fulmar*."

Davidson looked at it casually. Then suddenly his

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face lit up. "Good heavens!" said he. "I could almost swear——"

"What?" said Atkins.

"That I had seen that ship before."

"Don't see how you can have. She hasn't been out of the South Seas for six years, and before then——"

"But," began Davidson, and then: "Yes—that's the ship I dreamt of; I'm sure that's the ship I dreamt of. She was standing off an island that swarmed with penguins, and she fired a gun."

"Good Lord!" said Atkins, who had now heard the particulars of the seizure. "How the deuce could you dream that?"

And then, bit by bit, it came out that on the very day Davidson was seized, H. M. S. *Fulmar* had actually been off a little rock to the south of Antipodes Island. A boat had landed overnight to get penguins' eggs, had been delayed, and a thunderstorm drifting up, the boat's crew had waited until the morning before rejoining the ship. Atkins had been one of them, and he corroborated, word for word, the descriptions Davidson had given of the island and the boat. There is not the slightest doubt in any of our minds that Davidson has really seen the place. In some unaccountable way, while he moved hither and thither in London, his sight moved hither and thither in a manner that corresponded, about this distant island. *How* is absolutely a mystery.

That completes the remarkable story of Davidson's eyes. It's perhaps the best authenticated case in existence of real vision at a distance. Explana-

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tion there is none forthcoming, except what Prof. Wade has thrown out. But his explanation involves the Fourth Dimension, and a dissertation on theoretical kinds of space. To talk of there being "a kink in space" seems mere nonsense to me; it may be because I am no mathematician. When I said that nothing would alter the fact that the place is eight thousand miles away, he answered that two points might be a yard away on a sheet of paper, and yet be brought together by bending the paper round. The reader may grasp his argument, but I certainly do not. His idea seems to be that Davidson, stooping between the poles of the big electromagnet, had some extraordinary twist given to his retinal elements through the sudden change in the field of force due to the lightning.

He thinks, as a consequence of this, that it may be possible to live visually in one part of the world, while one lives bodily in another. He has even made some experiments in support of his views; but, so far, he has simply succeeded in blinding a few dogs. I believe that is the net result of his work, though I have not seen him for some weeks. Latterly I have been so busy with my work in connection with the Saint Pancras installation that I have had little opportunity of calling to see him. But the whole of his theory seems fantastic to me. The facts concerning Davidson stand on an altogether different footing, and I can testify personally to the accuracy of every detail I have given.

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THE LORD OF THE DYNAMOS

THE chief attendant of the three dynamos that buzzed and rattled at Camberwell and kept the electric railway going, came out of Yorkshire, and his name was James Holroyd. He was a practical electrician but fond of whisky, a heavy, red-haired brute with irregular teeth. He doubted the existence of the Deity but accepted Carnot's cycle, and he had read Shakespeare and found him weak in chemistry. His helper came out of the mysterious East, and his name was Azuma-zi. But Holroyd called him Poohbah. Holroyd liked a nigger help because he would stand kicking—a habit with Holroyd—and did not pry into the machinery and try to learn the ways of it. Certain odd possibilities of the negro mind brought into abrupt contact with the crown of our civilisation Holroyd never fully realised, though just at the end he got some inkling of them.

To define Azuma-zi was beyond ethnology. He was, perhaps, more negroid than anything else, though his hair was curly rather than frizzy, and his nose had a bridge. Moreover, his skin was brown rather than black, and the whites of his eyes were yellow. His broad cheek-bones and narrow chin gave his face something of the viperine V. His head, too, was broad behind, and low and narrow at the forehead, as if his brain had been twisted round in the reverse way to a European's. He was short of stat-

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ure and still shorter of English. In conversation he made numerous odd noises of no known marketable value, and his infrequent words were carved and wrought into heraldic grotesqueness. Holroyd tried to elucidate his religious beliefs, and—especially after whisky—lectured to him against superstition and missionaries. Azuma-zi, however, shirked the discussion of his gods, even though he was kicked for it.

Azuma-zi had come, clad in white but insufficient raiment, out of the stoke-hole of the *Lord Clive*, from the Straits Settlements and beyond, into London. He had heard even in his youth of the greatness and riches of London, where all the women are white and fair and even the beggars in the streets are white; and he had arrived, with newly earned gold coins in his pocket, to worship at the shrine of civilisation. The day of his landing was a dismal one; the sky was dun, and a wind-worried drizzle filtered down to the greasy streets, but he plunged boldly into the delights of Shadwell, and was presently cast up, shattered in health, civilised in costume, penniless, and, except in matters of the direst necessity, practically a dumb animal, to toil for James Holroyd, and to be bullied by him in the dynamo shed at Camberwell. And to James Holroyd bullying was a labour of love.

There were three dynamos with their engines at Camberwell. The two that have been there since the beginning are small machines; the larger one was new. The smaller machines made a reasonable noise; their straps hummed over the drums, every now and then the brushes buzzed and fizzled, and the air churned steadily, whoo! whoo! whoo! between their poles.

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One was loose in its foundations and kept the shed vibrating. But the big dynamo drowned these little noises altogether with the sustained drone of its iron core, which somehow set part of the ironwork humming. The place made the visitor's head reel with the throb, throb, throb of the engines, the rotation of the big wheels, the spinning ball valves, the occasional spittings of the steam, and over all the deep, unceasing, surging note of the big dynamo. This last noise was from an engineering point of view a defect, but Azuma-zi accounted it unto the monster for mightiness and pride.

If it were possible we would have the noises of that shed always about the reader as he reads, we would tell all our story to such an accompaniment. It was a steady stream of din, from which the ear picked out first one thread and then another; there was the intermittent snorting, panting, and seething of the steam-engines, the suck and thud of their pistons, the dull beat on the air as the spokes of the great driving-wheels came round, a note the leather straps made as they ran tighter and looser, and a fretful tumult from the dynamos; and, over all, sometimes inaudible, as the ear tired of it, and then creeping back upon the senses again, was this trombone note of the big machine. The floor never felt steady and quiet beneath one's feet, but quivered and jarred. It was a confusing, unsteady place, and enough to send any one's thoughts jerking into odd zigzags. And for three months, while the big strike of the engineers was in progress, Holroyd who was a blackleg, and Azuma-zi who was a mere black, were never out of the stir and

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eddy of it, but slept and fed in the little wooden shanty between the shed and the gates.

Holroyd delivered a theological lecture on the text of his big machine soon after Azuma-zi came. He had to shout to be heard in the din. "Look at that," said Holroyd; "where's your 'eathen idol to match 'im?" And Azuma-zi looked. For a moment Holroyd was inaudible, and then Azuma-zi heard: "Kill a hundred men. Twelve per cent on the ordinary shares," said Holroyd, "and that's something like a Gord."

Holroyd was proud of his big dynamo, and expatiated upon its size and power to Azuma-zi until heaven knows what odd currents of thought that and the incessant whirling and shindy set up within the curly black cranium. He would explain in the most graphic manner the dozen or so ways in which a man might be killed by it, and once he gave Azuma-zi a shock as a sample of its quality. After that, in the breathing times of his labour—it was heavy labour, being not only his own, but most of Holroyd's—Azuma-zi would sit and watch the big machine. Now and then the brushes would sparkle and spit blue flashes, at which Holroyd would swear, but all the rest was as smooth and rhythmic as breathing. The band ran shouting over the shaft, and ever behind one as one watched was the complacent thud of the piston. So it lived all day in this big airy shed, with him and Holroyd to wait upon it; not prisoned up and slaving to drive a ship as the other engines he knew—mere captive devils of the British Solomon—had been, but a machine enthroned. Those

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two smaller dynamos Azuma-zi by force of contrast despised; the large one he privately christened the Lord of the Dynamos. They were fretful and irregular, but the big dynamo was steady. How great it was! How serene and easy in its working! Greater and calmer even than the Buddhas he had seen at Rangoon, and yet not motionless, but living! The great black coils spun, spun, spun, the rings ran round under the brushes, and the deep note of its coil steadied the whole. It affected Azuma-zi queerly.

Azuma-zi was not fond of labour. He would sit about and watch the Lord of the Dynamos while Holroyd went away to persuade the yard porter to get whisky, although his proper place was not in the dynamo shed but behind the engines, and, moreover, if Holroyd caught him skulking he got hit for it with a rod of stout copper wire. He would go and stand close to the colossus, and look up at the great leather band running overhead. There was a black patch on the band that came round, and it pleased him somehow among all the clatter to watch this return again and again. Odd thoughts spun with the whirl of it. Scientific people tell us that savages give souls to rocks and trees,—and a machine is a thousand times more alive than a rock or a tree. And Azuma-zi was practically a savage still; the veneer of civilisation lay no deeper than his slop suit, his bruises, and the coal grime on his face and hands. His father before him had worshipped a meteoric stone; kindred blood, it may be, had splashed the broad wheels of Juggernaut.

He took every opportunity Holroyd gave him of

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touching and handling the great dynamo that was fascinating him. He polished and cleaned it until the metal parts were blinding in the sun. He felt a mysterious sense of service in doing this. He would go up to it and touch its spinning coils gently. The gods he had worshipped were all far away. The people in London hid their gods.

At last his dim feelings grew more distinct and took shape in thoughts, and at last in acts. When he came into the roaring shed one morning he salaamed to the Lord of the Dynamos, and then, when Holroyd was away, he went and whispered to the thundering machine that he was its servant, and prayed it to have pity on him and save him from Holroyd. As he did so a rare gleam of light came in through the open archway of the throbbing machine-shed, and the Lord of the Dynamos, as he whirled and roared, was radiant with pale gold. Then Azuma-zi knew that his service was acceptable to his Lord. After that he did not feel so lonely as he had done, and he had indeed been very much alone in London. Even when his work-time was over, which was rare, he loitered about the shed.

The next time Holroyd maltreated him, Azuma-zi went presently to the Lord of the Dynamos and whispered, "Thou seest, O my Lord!" and the angry whirr of the machinery seemed to answer him. Thereafter it appeared to him that whenever Holroyd came into the shed a different note mingled with the sounds of the dynamo. "My Lord bides his time," said Azuma-zi to himself. "The iniquity of the fool is not yet ripe." And he waited and watched

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for the reckoning. One day there was evidence of short circuiting, and Holroyd, making an unwary examination—it was in the afternoon—got a rather severe shock. Azuma-zi from behind the engine saw him jump off and curse at the peccant coil.

"He is warned," said Azuma-zi to himself. "Surely my Lord is very patient."

Holroyd had at first initiated his "nigger" into such elementary conceptions of the dynamo's working as would enable him to take temporary charge of the shed in his absence. But when he noticed the manner in which Azuma-zi hung about the monster he became suspicious. He dimly perceived his assistant was "up to something," and connecting him with the anointing of the coils with oil that had rotted the varnish in one place, he issued an edict, shouted above the confusion of the machinery, "Don't 'ee go nigh that big dynamo any more, Pooh-bah, or a'll take thy skin off!" Besides, if it pleased Azuma-zi to be near the big machine, it was plain sense and decency to keep him away from it.

Azuma-zi obeyed at the time, but later he was caught bowing before the Lord of the Dynamos. At which Holroyd twisted his arm and kicked him as he turned to go away. As Azuma-zi presently stood behind the engine and glared at the back of the hated Holroyd, the noises of the machinery took a new rhythm and sounded like four words in his native tongue.

It is hard to say exactly what madness is. I fancy Azuma-zi was mad. The incessant din and whirl of the dynamo shed may have churned up his little

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store of knowledge and big store of superstitious fancy, at last, into something akin to frenzy. At any rate, when the idea of making Holroyd a sacrifice to the Dynamo Fetich was thus suggested to him, it filled him with a strange tumult of exultant emotion.

That night the two men and their black shadows were alone in the shed together. The shed was lit with one big arc-light that winked and flickered purple. The shadows lay black behind the dynamos, the ball governors of the engines whirled from light to darkness, and their pistons beat loud and steadily. The world outside seen through the open end of the shed seemed incredibly dim and remote. It seemed absolutely silent, too, since the riot of the machinery drowned every external sound. Far away was the black fence of the yard with grey shadowy houses behind, and above was the deep blue sky and the pale little stars. Azuma-zi suddenly walked across the centre of the shed above which the leather bands were running, and went into the shadow by the big dynamo. Holroyd heard a click, and the spin of the armature changed.

"What are you dewin' with that switch?" he bawled in surprise. "Han't I told you——"

Then he saw the set expression of Azuma-zi's eyes as the Asiatic came out of the shadow towards him.

In another moment the two men were grappling fiercely in front of the great dynamo.

"You coffee-headed fool!" gasped Holroyd, with a brown hand at his throat. "Keep off those contact rings." In another moment he was tripped and

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reeling back upon the Lord of the Dynamos. He instinctively loosened his grip upon his antagonist to save himself from the machine.

The messenger, sent in furious haste from the station to find out what had happened in the dynamo shed, met Azuma-zi at the porter's lodge by the gate. Azuma-zi tried to explain something, but the messenger could make nothing of the black's incoherent English, and hurried on to the shed. The machines were all noisily at work, and nothing seemed to be disarranged. There was, however, a queer smell of singed hair. Then he saw an odd-looking crumpled mass clinging to the front of the big dynamo and, approaching, recognised the distorted remains of Holroyd.

The man stared and hesitated a moment. Then he saw the face, and shut his eyes convulsively. He turned on his heel before he opened them, so that he should not see Holroyd again, and went out of the shed to get advice and help.

When Azuma-zi saw Holroyd die in the grip of the Great Dynamo he had been a little scared about the consequences of his act. Yet he felt strangely elated, and knew that the favour of the Lord Dynamo was upon him. His plan was already settled when he met the man coming from the station, and the scientific manager who speedily arrived on the scene jumped at the obvious conclusion of suicide. This expert scarcely noticed Azuma-zi, except to ask a few questions. Did he see Holroyd kill himself? Azuma-zi explained he had been out of sight at the engine

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furnace until he heard a difference in the noise from the dynamo. It was not a difficult examination, being untinctured by suspicion.

The distorted remains of Holroyd, which the electrician removed from the machine, were hastily covered by the porter with a coffee-stained tablecloth. Somebody, by a happy inspiration, fetched a medical man. The expert was chiefly anxious to get the machine at work again, for seven or eight trains had stopped midway in the stuffy tunnels of the electric railway. Azuma-zi, answering or misunderstanding the questions of the people who had by authority or impudence come into the shed, was presently sent back to the stoke-hole by the scientific manager. Of course a crowd collected outside the gates of the yard —a crowd, for no known reason, always hovers for a day or two near the scene of a sudden death in London—two or three reporters percolated somehow into the engine shed, and one even got to Azuma-zi; but the scientific expert cleared them out again, being himself an amateur journalist.

Presently the body was carried away, and public interest departed with it. Azuma-zi remained very quietly at his furnace, seeing over and over again in the coals a figure that wriggled violently and became still. An hour after the murder, to any one coming into the shed things would have looked exactly as if nothing remarkable had ever happened there. Peeping presently from his engine-room the black saw the Lord Dynamo spin and whirl beside his little brothers, and the driving-wheels were beating round and the steam in the pistons went thud, thud, exactly as it

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had been earlier in the evening. After all, from the mechanical point of view it had been a most insignificant incident—the mere temporary deflection of a current. But now the slender form and slender shadow of the scientific manager replaced the sturdy outline of Holroyd travelling up and down the lane of light upon the vibrating floor under the straps between the engines and the dynamos.

"Have I not served my Lord?" said Azuma-zi inaudibly from his shadow, and the note of the great dynamo rang out full and clear. As he looked at the big whirling mechanism the strange fascination of it that had been a little in abeyance since Holroyd's death resumed its sway.

Never had Azuma-zi seen a man killed so swiftly and pitilessly. The big humming machine had slain its victim without wavering for a second from its steady beating. It was indeed a mighty god

The unconscious scientific manager stood with his back to him, scribbling on a piece of paper. His shadow lay at the foot of the monster.

Was the Lord Dynamo still hungry? His servant was ready.

Azuma-zi made a stealthy step forward; then stopped. The scientific manager suddenly ceased his writing, walked down the shed to the endmost of the dynamos, and began to examine the brushes.

Azuma-zi hesitated, and then slipped across noiselessly into the shadow by the switch. There he waited. Presently the manager's footsteps could be heard returning. He stopped in his old position, unconscious of the stoker crouching ten feet away from

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him. Then the big dynamo suddenly fizzled, and in another moment Azuma-zi had sprung out of the darkness upon him.

The scientific manager was gripped round the body and swung towards the big dynamo. Kicking with his knee and forcing his antagonist's head down with his hands, he loosened the grip on his waist and swung round away from the machine. Then the black grasped him again, putting a curly head against his chest, and they swayed and panted as it seemed for an age or so. Then the scientific manager was impelled to catch a black ear in his teeth and bite furiously. The black yelled hideously

They rolled over on the floor, and the black, who had apparently slipped from the vice of the teeth or parted with some ear—the scientific manager wondered which at the time—tried to throttle him. The scientific manager was making some ineffectual efforts to claw something with his hands and to kick, when the welcome sound of quick footsteps sounded on the floor. The next moment Azuma-zi had left him and darted towards the big dynamo. There was a splutter amid the roar.

The officer of the company who had entered stood staring as Azuma-zi caught the naked terminals in his hands, gave one horrible convulsion, and then hung motionless from the machine, his face violently distorted.

"I'm jolly glad you came in when you did," said the scientific manager, still sitting on the floor.

He looked at the still quivering figure. "It is not a nice death to die, apparently—but it is quick"

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The official was still staring at the body. He was a man of slow apprehension.

There was a pause.

The scientific manager got up on his feet rather awkwardly. He ran his fingers along his collar thoughtfully, and moved his head to and fro several times.

"Poor Holroyd! I see now." Then almost mechanically he went towards the switch in the shadow and turned the current into the railway circuit again. As he did so the singed body loosened its grip upon the machine and fell forward on its face. The core of the dynamo roared out loud and clear, and the armature beat the air.

So ended prematurely the worship of the Dynamo Deity, perhaps the most short-lived of all religions. Yet withal it could at least boast a Martyrdom and a Human Sacrifice.

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THE MOTH

PROBABLY you have heard of Hapley—not W. T. Hapley, the son, but the celebrated Hapley, the Hapley of *Periplaneta hapliia*, Hapley the entomologist.

If so you know at least of the great feud between Hapley and Prof. Pawkins, though certain of its consequences may be new to you. For those who have not, a word or two of explanation is necessary, which the idle reader may go over with a glancing eye if his indolence so incline him.

It is amazing how very widely diffused is the ignorance of such really important matters as this Hapley-Pawkins feud. Those epoch-making controversies, again, that have convulsed the Geological Society are, I verily believe, almost entirely unknown outside the fellowship of that body. I have heard men of fair general education even refer to the great scenes at these meetings as vestry-meeting squabbles. Yet the great hate of the English and Scotch geologists has lasted now half a century, and has "left deep and abundant marks upon the body of the science." And this Hapley-Pawkins business, though perhaps a more personal affair, stirred passions as profound, if not profounder. Your common man has no conception of the zeal that animates a scientific investigator, the fury of contradiction you can arouse in him. It is the *odium theologicum* in a new form. There are men, for instance, who would gladly burn Sir Ray Lankester at Smithfield for his treatment of the

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Mollusca in the Encyclopædia. That fantastic extension of the Cephalopods to cover the Pteropods. . . . But I wander from Hapley and Pawkins.

It began years and years ago with a revision of the Microlepidoptera (whatever these may be) by Pawkins, in which he extinguished a new species created by Hapley. Hapley, who was always quarrelsome, replied by a stinging impeachment of the entire classification of Pawkins.* Pawkins in his "Rejoinder" † suggested that Hapley's microscope was as defective as his power of observation, and called him an "irresponsible meddler"—Hapley was not a professor at that time. Hapley in his retort,‡ spoke of "blundering collectors," and described, as if inadvertently, Pawkins's revision as a "miracle of ineptitude." It was war to the knife. However, it would scarcely interest the reader to detail how these two great men quarrelled, and how the split between them widened until from the Microlepidoptera they were at war upon every open question in entomology. There were memorable occasions. At times the Royal Entomological Society meetings resembled nothing so much as the Chamber of Deputies. On the whole, I fancy Pawkins was nearer the truth than Hapley. But Hapley was skilful with his rhetoric, had a turn for ridicule rare in a scientific man, was endowed with vast energy, and had a fine sense of injury in the matter of the extinguished species; while Pawkins was a man of dull presence, prosy of speech, in shape

* "Remarks on a Recent Revision of Microlepidoptera." *Quart. Journ. Entomological Soc.*, 1863.

† "Rejoinder to Certain Remarks," etc. *Ibid.* 1864.

‡ "Further Remarks," etc. *Ibid.*

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not unlike a water-barrel, over-conscientious with testimonials, and suspected of jobbing museum appointments. So the young men gathered round Hapley and applauded him. It was a long struggle, vicious from the beginning and growing at last to pitiless antagonism. The successive turns of fortune, now an advantage to one side and now to another—now Hapley tormented by some success of Pawkins, and now Pawkins outshone by Hapley, belong rather to the history of entomology than to this story.

But in 1891 Pawkins, whose health had been bad for some time, published some work upon the "mesoblast" of the Death's-Head Moth. What the mesoblast of the Death's-Head Moth may be does not matter a rap in this story. But the work was far below his usual standard, and gave Hapley an opening he had coveted for years. He must have worked night and day to make the most of his advantage.

In an elaborate critique he rent Pawkins to tatters —one can fancy the man's disordered black hair, and his queer dark eyes flashing as he went for his antagonist—and Pawkins made a reply, halting, ineffectual, with painful gaps of silence, and yet malignant. There was no mistaking his will to wound Hapley, nor his incapacity to do it. But few of those who heard him—I was absent from that meeting—realised how ill the man was.

Hapley got his opponent down, and meant to finish him. He followed with a brutal attack upon Pawkins, in the form of a paper upon the development of moths in general, a paper showing evidence of an extraordinary amount of labour, couched in a

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violently controversial tone. Violent as it was, an editorial note witnesses that it was modified. It must have covered Pawkins with shame and confusion of face. It left no loophole; it was murderous in argument, and utterly contemptuous in tone; an awful thing for the declining years of a man's career.

The world of entomologists waited breathlessly for the rejoinder from Pawkins. He would try one, for Pawkins had always been game. But when it came it surprised them. For the rejoinder of Pawkins was to catch influenza, proceed to pneumonia, and die.

It was perhaps as effectual a reply as he could make under the circumstances, and largely turned the current of feeling against Hapley. The very people who had most gleefully cheered on those gladiators became serious at the consequence. There could be no reasonable doubt the fret of the defeat had contributed to the death of Pawkins. There was a limit even to scientific controversy, said serious people. Another crushing attack was already in the press and appeared on the day before the funeral. I don't think Hapley exerted himself to stop it. People remembered how Hapley had hounded down his rival and forgot that rival's defects. Scathing satire reads ill over fresh mould. The thing provoked comment in the daily papers. It was that made me think you had probably heard of Hapley and this controversy. But, as I have already remarked, scientific workers live very much in a world of their own; half the people, I dare say, who go along Piccadilly to the Academy every year could not tell you where the learned societies abide. Many even think that re-

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search is a kind of happy-family cage in which all kinds of men lie down together in peace.

In his private thoughts Hapley could not forgive Pawkins for dying. In the first place, it was a mean dodge to escape the absolute pulverisation Hapley had in hand for him, and in the second, it left Hapley's mind with a queer gap in it. For twenty years he had worked hard, sometimes far into the night and seven days a week, with microscope, scalpel, collecting-net, and pen, and almost entirely with reference to Pawkins. The European reputation he had won had come as an incident in that great antipathy. He had gradually worked up to a climax in this last controversy. It had killed Pawkins, but it had also thrown Hapley out of gear, so to speak, and his doctor advised him to give up work for a time, and rest. So Hapley went down into a quiet village in Kent, and thought day and night of Pawkins and good things it was now impossible to say about him.

At last Hapley began to realise in what direction the preoccupation tended. He determined to make a fight for it, and started by trying to read novels. But he could not get his mind off Pawkins, white in the face and making his last speech—every sentence a beautiful opening for Hapley. He turned to fiction—and found it had no grip on him. He read the "Island Nights' Entertainments" until his "sense of causation" was shocked beyond endurance by the Bottle Imp. Then he went to Kipling, and found he "proved nothing" besides being irreverent and vulgar. These scientific people have their limitations. Then unhappily he tried Besant's "Inner House,"

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and the opening chapter set his mind upon learned societies and Pawkins at once.

So Hapley turned to chess, and found it a little more soothing. He soon mastered the moves and the chief gambits and commoner closing positions, and began to beat the Vicar. But then the cylindrical contours of the opposite king began to resemble Pawkins standing up and gasping ineffectually against checkmate, and Hapley decided to give up chess.

Perhaps the study of some new branch of science would after all be better diversion. The best rest is change of occupation. Hapley determined to plunge at diatoms, and had one of his smaller microscopes and Halibut's monograph sent down from London. He thought that perhaps if he could get up a vigorous quarrel with Halibut, he might be able to begin life afresh and forget Pawkins. And very soon he was hard at work in his habitual strenuous fashion, at these microscopic denizens of the wayside pool.

It was on the third day of the diatoms that Hapley became aware of a novel addition to the local fauna. He was working late at the microscope, and the only light in the room was the brilliant little lamp with the special form of green shade. Like all experienced microscopists, he kept both eyes open. It is the only way to avoid excessive fatigue. One eye was over the instrument, and bright and distinct before that was the circular field of the microscope, across which a brown diatom was slowly moving. With the other eye Hapley saw, as it were, without seeing. He was only dimly conscious of the brass side of the instrument, the illuminated part of the tablecloth, a sheet

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of note-paper, the foot of the lamp, and the darkened room beyond.

Suddenly his attention drifted from one eye to the other. The tablecloth was of the material called tapestry by shopmen, and rather brightly coloured. The pattern was in gold, with a small amount of crimson and pale blue upon a greyish ground. At one point the pattern seemed displaced, and there was a vibrating movement of the colours at this point.

Hapley suddenly moved his head back and looked with both eyes. His mouth fell open with astonishment.

It was a large moth or butterfly; its wings spread in butterfly fashion!

It was strange it should be in the room at all, for the windows were closed. Strange that it should not have attracted his attention when fluttering to its present position. Strange that it should match the tablecloth. Stranger far that to him, Hapley, the great entomologist, it was altogether unknown. There was no delusion. It was crawling slowly towards the foot of the lamp.

"New Genus, by heavens! And in England!" said Hapley, staring.

Then he suddenly thought of Pawkins. Nothing would have maddened Pawkins more. . . . And Pawkins was dead!

Something about the head and body of the insect became singularly suggestive of Pawkins, just as the chess king had been.

"Confound Pawkins!" said Hapley. "But I must catch this." And looking round him for some means of capturing the moth, he rose slowly out of his chair.

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Suddenly the insect rose, struck the edge of the lamp-shade—Hapley heard the "ping"—and vanished into the shadow.

In a moment Hapley had whipped off the shade, so that the whole room was illuminated. The thing had disappeared, but soon his practised eye detected it upon the wall-paper near the door. He went towards it poising the lamp-shade for capture. Before he was within striking distance, however, it had risen and was fluttering round the room. After the fashion of its kind, it flew with sudden starts and turns, seeming to vanish here and reappear there. Once Hapley struck, and missed; then again.

The third time he hit his microscope. The instrument swayed, struck and overturned the lamp, and fell noisily upon the floor. The lamp turned over on the table and, very luckily, went out. Hapley was left in the dark. With a start he felt the strange moth blunder into his face.

It was maddening. He had no lights. If he opened the door of the room the thing would get away. In the darkness he saw Pawkins quite distinctly laughing at him. Pawkins had ever an oily laugh. He swore furiously and stamped his foot on the floor.

There was a timid rapping at the door.

Then it opened, perhaps a foot, and very slowly. The alarmed face of the landlady appeared behind a pink candle flame; she wore a nightcap over her grey hair and had some purple garment over her shoulders. "What *was* that fearful smash?" she said. "Has anything——" The strange moth appeared fluttering

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about the chink of the door. "Shut that door!" said Hapley, and suddenly rushed at her.

The door slammed hastily. Hapley was left alone in the dark. Then in the pause he heard his landlady scuttle upstairs, lock her door, and drag something heavy across the room and put against it.

It became evident to Hapley that his conduct and appearance had been strange and alarming. Confound the moth! and Pawkins! However, it was a pity to lose the moth now. He felt his way into the hall and found the matches, after sending his hat down upon the floor with a noise like a drum. With the lighted candle he returned to the sitting-room. No moth was to be seen. Yet once for a moment it seemed that the thing was fluttering round his head. Hapley very suddenly decided to give up the moth and go to bed. But he was excited. All night long his sleep was broken by dreams of the moth, Pawkins, and his landlady. Twice in the night he turned out and soused his head in cold water.

One thing was very clear to him. His landlady could not possibly understand about the strange moth, especially as he had failed to catch it. No one but an entomologist would understand quite how he felt. She was probably frightened at his behaviour, and yet he failed to see how he could explain it. He decided to say nothing further about the events of last night. After breakfast he saw her in her garden, and decided to go out and talk to reassure her. He talked to her about beans and potatoes, bees, caterpillars, and the price of fruit. She replied in her usual manner, but she looked at him a little suspi-

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ciously, and kept walking as he walked, so that there was always a bed of flowers, or a row of beans, or something of the sort, between them. After a while he began to feel singularly irritated at this, and, to conceal his vexation, went indoors and presently went out for a walk.

The moth, or butterfly, trailing an odd flavour of Pawkins with it, kept coming into that walk though he did his best to keep his mind off it. Once he saw it quite distinctly, with its wings flattened out, upon the old stone wall that runs along the west edge of the park, but going up to it he found it was only two lumps of grey and yellow lichen. "This," said Hapley, "is the reverse of mimicry. Instead of a butterfly looking like a stone, here is a stone looking like a butterfly!" Once something hovered and fluttered round his head, but by an effort of will he drove that impression out of his mind again.

In the afternoon Hapley called upon the Vicar, and argued with him upon theological questions. They sat in the little arbour covered with brier, and smoked as they wrangled. "Look at that moth!" said Hapley suddenly, pointing to the edge of the wooden table.

"Where?" said the Vicar.

"You don't see a moth on the edge of the table there?" said Hapley.

"Certainly not," said the Vicar.

Hapley was thunderstruck. He gasped. The Vicar was staring at him. Clearly the man saw nothing. "The eye of faith is no better than the eye of science," said Hapley awkwardly.

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"I don't see your point," said the Vicar, thinking it was part of the argument.

That night Hapley found the moth crawling over his counterpane. He sat on the edge of the bed in his shirt-sleeves and reasoned with himself. Was it pure hallucination? He knew he was slipping, and he battled for his sanity with the same silent energy he had formerly displayed against Pawkins. So persistent is mental habit that he felt as if it were still a struggle with Pawkins. He was well versed in psychology. He knew that such visual illusions do come as a result of mental strain. But the point was, he did not only *see* the moth, he had heard it when it touched the edge of the lamp-shade and afterwards when it hit against the wall, and he had felt it strike his face in the dark.

He looked at it. It was not at all dream-like but perfectly clear and solid-looking in the candle-light. He saw the hairy body and the short feathery antennæ, the jointed legs, even a place where the down was rubbed from the wing. He suddenly felt angry with himself for being afraid of a little insect.

His landlady had got the servant to sleep with her that night, because she was afraid to be alone. In addition she had locked the door and put the chest of drawers against it. They listened and talked in whispers after they had gone to bed, but nothing occurred to alarm them. About eleven they had ventured to put the candle out and had both dozed off to sleep. They woke with a start, and sat up in bed, listening in the darkness.

Then they heard slippered feet going to and fro in

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Hapley's room. A chair was overturned and there was a violent dab at the wall. Then a china mantel ornament smashed upon the fender. Suddenly the door of the room opened, and they heard him upon the landing. They clung to one another, listening. He seemed to be dancing upon the staircase. Now he would go down three or four steps quickly, then up again, then hurry down into the hall. They heard the umbrella-stand go over, and the fanlight break. Then the bolt shot and the chain rattled. He was opening the door.

They hurried to the window. It was a dim grey night; an almost unbroken sheet of watery cloud was sweeping across the moon, and the hedge and trees in front of the house were black against the pale roadway. They saw Hapley, looking like a ghost in his shirt and white trousers, running to and fro in the road and beating the air. Now he would stop, now he would dart very rapidly at something invisible, now he would move upon it with stealthy strides. At last he went out of sight up the road towards the down. Then while they argued who should go down and lock the door, he returned. He was walking very fast, and he came straight into the house, closed the door carefully, and went quietly up to his bedroom. Then everything was silent.

"Mrs. Colville," said Hapley, calling down the staircase next morning, "I hope I did not alarm you last night."

"You may well ask that!" said Mrs. Colville.

"The fact is, I am a sleep-walker, and the last two nights I have been without my sleeping mixture.

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There is nothing to be alarmed about, really. I am sorry I made such an ass of myself. I will go over the down to Shoreham, and get some stuff to make me sleep soundly. I ought to have done that yesterday."

But half-way over the down, by the chalk pits, the moth came upon Hapley again. He went on, trying to keep his mind upon chess problems, but it was no good. The thing fluttered into his face, and he struck at it with his hat in self-defence. Then rage, the old rage—the rage he had so often felt against Pawkins—came upon him again. He went on, leaping and striking at the eddying insect. Suddenly he trod on nothing, and fell headlong.

There was a gap in his sensations, and Hapley found himself sitting on the heap of flints in front of the opening of the chalk-pits, with a leg twisted back under him. The strange moth was still fluttering round his head. He struck at it with his hand, and turning his head saw two men approaching him. One was the village doctor. It occurred to Hapley that this was lucky. Then it came into his mind with extraordinary vividness, that no one would ever be able to see the strange moth except himself, and that it behooved him to keep silent about it.

Late that night, however, after his broken leg was set, he was feverish and forgot his self-restraint. He was lying flat on his bed, and he began to run his eyes round the room to see if the moth was still about. He tried not to do this, but it was no good. He soon caught sight of the thing resting close to his hand, by the night-light, on the green tablecloth. The wings quivered. With a sudden wave of anger he smote at

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it with his fist, and the nurse woke up with a shriek. He had missed it.

"That moth!" he said; and then: "It was fancy. Nothing!"

All the time he could see quite clearly the insect going round the cornice and darting across the room, and he could also see that the nurse saw nothing of it and looked at him strangely. He must keep himself in hand. He knew he was a lost man if he did not keep himself in hand. But as the night waned the fever grew upon him, and the very dread he had of seeing the moth made him see it. About five, just as the dawn was grey, he tried to get out of bed and catch it, though his leg was afire with pain. The nurse had to struggle with him.

On account of this, they tied him down to the bed. At this the moth grew bolder, and once he felt it settle in his hair. Then, because he struck out violently with his arms, they tied these also. At this the moth came and crawled over his face, and Hapley wept, swore, screamed, prayed for them to take it off him, unavailingly.

The doctor was a blockhead, a just-qualified general practitioner, and quite ignorant of mental science. He simply said there was no moth. Had he possessed the wit, he might still perhaps have saved Hapley from his fate by entering into his delusion, and covering his face with gauze as he prayed might be done. But, as I say, the doctor was a blockhead; and until the leg was healed Hapley was kept tied to his bed, with the imaginary moth crawling over him. It never left him while he was awake and it grew to a mon-

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ster in his dreams. While he was awake he longed for sleep, and from sleep he awoke screaming.

So now Hapley is spending the remainder of his days in a padded room, worried by a moth that no one else can see. The asylum doctor calls it hallucination; but Hapley, when he is in his easier mood and can talk, says it is the ghost of Pawkins, and consequently a unique specimen and well worth the trouble of catching.

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THE STORY OF THE LATE MR. ELVESHAM

I SET this story down, not expecting it will be believed but, if possible, to prepare a way of escape for the next victim. He perhaps may profit by my misfortune. My own case, I know, is hopeless, and I am now in some measure prepared to meet my fate.

My name is Edward George Eden. I was born at Trentham, in Staffordshire, my father being employed in the gardens there. I lost my mother when I was three years old and my father when I was five, my uncle, George Eden, then adopting me as his own son. He was a single man, self-educated, and well known in Birmingham as an enterprising journalist; he educated me generously, fired my ambition to succeed in the world, and at his death, which happened four years ago, left me his entire fortune, a matter of about five hundred pounds after all outgoing charges were paid. I was then eighteen. He advised me in his will to expend the money in completing my education. I had already chosen the profession of medicine, and through his posthumous generosity and my good fortune in a scholarship competition, I became a medical student at University College, London. At the time of the beginning of my story I lodged at 11A University Street in a little upper room, very shabbily furnished and draughty, overlooking the back of Shoolbred's premises. I used this little room both to live in and sleep in, because I was anxious to eke out my means to the very last shillingsworth.

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I was taking a pair of shoes to be mended at a shop in the Tottenham Court Road when I first encountered the little old man with the yellow face, with whom my life has now become so inextricably entangled. He was standing on the kerb and staring at the number on the door in a doubtful way, as I opened it. His eyes—they were dull grey eyes, and reddish under the rims—fell to my face, and his countenance immediately assumed an expression of corrugated amiability.

"You come," he said, "apt to the moment. I had forgotten the number of your house. How do you do, Mr. Eden?"

I was a little astonished at his familiar address, for I had never set eyes on the man before. I was annoyed, too, at his catching me with my boots under my arm. He noticed my lack of cordiality.

"Wonder who the deuce I am, eh? A friend, let me assure you. I have seen you before, though you haven't seen me. Is there anywhere where I can talk to you?"

I hesitated. The shabbiness of my room upstairs was not a matter for every stranger. "Perhaps," said I, "we might walk down the street. I'm unfortunately prevented—" My gesture explained the sentence before I had spoken it.

"The very thing," he said, and faced this way and then that. "The street? Which way shall we go?" I slipped my boots down in the passage. "Look here!" he said abruptly; "this business of mine is a rigmarole. Come and lunch with me, Mr. Eden. I'm an old man, a very old man, and not good at

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explanations, and what with my piping voice and the clatter of the traffic——"

He laid a persuasive skinny hand that trembled a little upon my arm.

I was not so old that an old man might not treat me to a lunch. Yet at the same time I was not altogether pleased by this abrupt invitation. "I had rather—" I began. "But I had rather," he said, catching me up, "and a certain civility is surely due to my grey hairs."

And so I consented, and went with him.

He took me to Blavitiski's; I had to walk slowly to accommodate myself to his paces; and over such a lunch as I had never tasted before, he fended off my leading questions, and I took a better note of his appearance. His clean-shaven face was lean and wrinkled, his shrivelled lips fell over a set of false teeth, and his white hair was thin and rather long; he seemed small to me—though indeed, most people seemed small to me—and his shoulders were rounded and bent. And, watching him, I could not help but observe that he too was taking note of me, running his eyes, with a curious touch of greed in them, over me from my broad shoulders to my sun-tanned hands and up to my freckled face again. "And now," said he, as we lit our cigarettes, "I must tell you of the business in hand.

"I must tell you, then, that I am an old man, a very old man." He paused momentarily. "And it happens that I have money that I must presently be leaving, and never a child have I to leave it to." I thought of the confidence trick, and resolved I would be on

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the alert for the vestiges of my five hundred pounds. He proceeded to enlarge on his loneliness, and the trouble he had to find a proper disposition of his money. "I have weighed this plan and that plan, charities, institutions, and scholarships, and libraries, and I have come to this conclusion at last,"—he fixed his eyes on my face,—"that I will find some young fellow, ambitious, pure-minded, and poor, healthy in body and healthy in mind, and, in short, make him my heir, give him all that I have." He repeated, "Give him all that I have. So that he will suddenly be lifted out of all the trouble and struggle in which his sympathies have been educated, to freedom and influence."

I tried to seem disinterested. With a transparent hypocrisy I said, "And you want my help, my professional services maybe, to find that person."

He smiled and looked at me over his cigarette and I laughed at his quiet exposure of my modest pretence.

"What a career such a man might have!" he said. "It fills me with envy to think how I have accumulated that another man may spend——

"But there are conditions, of course, burdens to be imposed. He must, for instance, take my name. You cannot expect everything without some return. And I must go into all the circumstances of his life before I can accept him. He *must* be sound. I must know his heredity, how his parents and grandparents died, have the strictest inquiries made into his private morals."

This modified my secret congratulations a little.

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"And do I understand," said I, "that I——"

"Yes," he said, almost fiercely. "You. *You.*"

I answered never a word. My imagination was dancing wildly, my innate scepticism was useless to modify its transports. There was not a particle of gratitude in my mind—I did not know what to say nor how to say it.

"But why me in particular?" I said at last.

He had chanced to hear of me from Professor Haslar, he said, as a typically sound and sane young man, and he wished, as far as possible, to leave his money where health and integrity were assured.

That was my first meeting with the little old man. He was mysterious about himself; he would not give his name yet, he said, and after I had answered some questions of his, he left me at the Blavitiski portal. I noticed that he drew a handful of gold coins from his pocket when it came to paying for the lunch. His insistence upon bodily health was curious. In accordance with an arrangement we had made I applied that day for a life policy in the Loyal Insurance Company for a large sum, and I was exhaustively overhauled by the medical advisers of that company in the subsequent week. Even that did not satisfy him, and he insisted I must be re-examined by the great Dr. Henderson.

It was Friday in Whitsun week before he came to a decision. He called me down quite late in the evening,—nearly nine it was,—from cramming chemical equations for my Preliminary Scientific examination. He was standing in the passage under the feeble gas-lamp, and his face was a grotesque interplay of shad-

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ows. He seemed more bowed than when I had first seen him, and his cheeks had sunk in a little.

His voice shook with emotion. "Everything is satisfactory, Mr. Eden," he said. "Everything is quite, quite satisfactory. And this night of all nights, you must dine with me and celebrate your—accession." He was interrupted by a cough. "You won't have long to wait either," he said, wiping his handkerchief across his lips and gripping my hand with his long bony claw that was disengaged. "Certainly not very long to wait."

We went into the street and called a cab. I remember every incident of that drive vividly, the swift, easy motion, the contrast of gas and oil and electric light, the crowds of people in the streets, the place in Regent Street to which we went, and the sumptuous dinner we were served with there. I was disconcerted at first by the well-dressed waiter's glances at my rough clothes, bothered by the stones of the olives, but as the champagne warmed my blood, my confidence revived. At first the old man talked of himself. He had already told me his name in the cab; he was Egbert Elvesham, the great philosopher, whose name I had known since I was a lad at school. It seemed incredible to me that this man, whose intelligence had so early dominated mine, this great abstraction, should suddenly realise itself as this decrepit, familiar figure. I dare say every young fellow who has suddenly fallen among celebrities has felt something of my disappointment. He told me now of the future that the feeble streams of his life would presently leave dry for me, houses, copyrights, invest-

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ments; I had never suspected that philosophers were so rich. He watched me drink and eat with a touch of envy. "What a capacity for living you have!" he said; and then with a sigh, a sigh of relief I could have thought it, "it will not be long."

"Ay," said I, my head swimming now with champagne; "I have a future perhaps—of a fairly agreeable sort, thanks to you. I shall now have the honour of your name. But you have a past. Such a past as is worth all my future."

He shook his head and smiled, as I thought, with half-sad appreciation of my flattering admiration. "That future," he said; "would you in truth change it?" The waiter came with liqueurs. "You will not perhaps mind taking my name, taking my position, but would you indeed—willingly—take my years?"

"With your achievements," said I gallantly.

He smiled again. "Kümmel—both," he said to the waiter, and turned his attention to a little paper packet he had taken from his pocket. "This hour," said he, "this after-dinner hour is the hour of small things. Here is a scrap of my unpublished wisdom." He opened the packet with his shaking yellow fingers, and showed a little pinkish powder on the paper. "This," said he—"well, you must guess what it is. But Kümmel—put but a dash of this powder in it—is Himmel."

His large greyish eyes watched mine with an inscrutable expression.

It was a bit of a shock to me to find this great teacher gave his mind to the flavour of liqueurs.

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However, I feigned an interest in his weakness, for I was drunk enough for such small sycophancy.

He parted the powder between the little glasses, and rising suddenly with a strange unexpected dignity, held out his hand towards me. I imitated his action, and the glasses rang. "To a quick succession," said he, and raised his glass towards his lips.

"Not that," I said hastily. "Not that."

He paused with the liqueur at the level of his chin, and his eyes blazing into mine.

"To a long life," said I.

He hesitated. "To a long life," said he, with a sudden bark of laughter, and with eyes fixed on one another we tilted the little glasses. His eyes looked straight into mine, and as I drained the stuff off, I felt a curiously intense sensation. The first touch of it set my brain in a furious tumult; I seemed to feel an actual physical stirring in my skull and a seething humming filled my ears. I did not notice the flavour in my mouth, the aroma that filled my throat; I saw only the grey intensity of his gaze that burned into mine. The draught, the mental confusion, the noise and stirring in my head, seemed to last an interminable time. Curious vague impressions of half-forgotten things danced and vanished on the edge of my consciousness. At last he broke the spell. With a sudden explosive sigh he put down his glass.

"Well?" he said.

"It's glorious," said I, though I had not tasted the stuff.

My head was spinning. I sat down. My brain was chaos. Then my perception grew clear and mi-

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nute as though I saw things in a concave mirror. His manner seemed to have changed into something nervous and hasty. He pulled out his watch and grimaced at it. "Eleven-seven! And to-night I must— Seven-twenty-five. Waterloo! I must go at once." He called for the bill, and struggled with his coat. Officious waiters came to our assistance. In another moment I was wishing him good-bye, over the apron of a cab, and still with an absurd feeling of minute distinctness, as though—how can I express it?—I not only saw but *felt* through an inverted opera-glass.

"That stuff," he said. He put his hand to his forehead. "I ought not to have given it to you. It will make your head split to-morrow. Wait a minute. Here." He handed me out a little flat thing like a seidlitz-powder. "Take that in water as you are going to bed. The other thing was a drug. Not till you're ready to go to bed, mind. It will clear your head. That's all. One more shake—Futurus!"

I gripped his shrivelled claw. "Good-bye," he said, and by the droop of his eyelids I judged he too was a little under the influence of that brain-twisting cordial.

He recollected something else with a start, felt in his breast-pocket, and produced another packet, this time a cylinder the size and shape of a shaving-stick. "Here," said he. "I'd almost forgotten. Don't open this until I come to-morrow—but take it now."

It was so heavy that I well-nigh dropped it. "All ri'!" said I, and he grinned at me through the cab window as the cabman flicked his horse into wakeful-

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ness. It was a white packet he had given me, with red seals at either end and along its edge. "If this isn't money," said I, "it's platinum or lead."

I stuck it with elaborate care into my pocket, and with a whirling brain walked home through the Regent Street loiterers and the dark back streets beyond Portland Road. I remember the sensations of that walk very vividly, strange as they were. I was still so far myself that I could notice my strange mental state and wonder whether this stuff I had had was opium—a drug beyond my experience. It is hard now to describe the peculiarity of my mental strangeness—mental doubling vaguely expresses it. As I was walking up Regent Street I found in my mind a queer persuasion that it was Waterloo Station, and had an odd impulse to get into the Polytechnic as a man might get into a train. I put a knuckle in my eye, and it was Regent Street. How can I express it? You see a skilful actor looking quietly at you, he pulls a grimace, and lo!—another person. Is it too extravagant if I tell you that it seemed to me as if Regent Street had, for the moment, done that? Then, being persuaded it was Regent Street again, I was oddly muddled about some fantastic reminiscences that cropped up. "Thirty years ago," thought I, "it was here that I quarrelled with my brother." Then I burst out laughing, to the astonishment and encouragement of a group of night prowlers. Thirty years ago I did not exist, and never in my life had I boasted a brother. The stuff was surely liquid folly, for the poignant regret for that lost brother still clung to me. Along Portland Road the madness took an-

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other turn. I began to recall vanished shops, and to compare the street with what it used to be. Confused, troubled thinking was comprehensible enough after the drink I had taken, but what puzzled me were these curiously vivid phantasmal memories that had crept into my mind; and not only the memories that had crept in, but also the memories that had slipped out. I stopped opposite Stevens's, the natural history dealer's, and cudgelled my brains to think what he had to do with me. A 'bus went by, and sounded exactly like the rumbling of a train. I seemed to be dipping into some dark, remote pit for the recollection. "Of course," said I, at last, "he has promised me three frogs to-morrow. Odd I should have forgotten."

Do they still show children dissolving views? In those I remember one view would begin like a faint ghost, and grow and oust another. In just that way it seemed to me that a ghostly set of new sensations was struggling with those of my ordinary self.

I went on through Euston Road to Tottenham Court Road, puzzled and a little frightened, and scarcely noticed the unusual way I was taking, for commonly I used to cut through the intervening network of back streets. I turned into University Street, to discover that I had forgotten my number. Only by a strong effort did I recall 11A, and even then it seemed to me that it was a thing some forgotten person had told me. I tried to steady my mind by recalling the incidents of the dinner, and for the life of me I could conjure up no picture of my host's face; I saw him only as a shadowy outline, as one might see

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oneself reflected in a window through which one was looking. In his place, however, I had a curious exterior vision of myself sitting at a table, flushed, bright-eyed, and talkative.

"I must take this other powder," said I. "This is getting impossible."

I tried the wrong side of the hall for my candle and the matches, and had a doubt of which landing my room might be on. "I'm drunk," I said, "that's certain," and blundered needlessly on the staircase to sustain the proposition.

At the first glance my room seemed unfamiliar. "What rot!" I said, and stared about me. I seemed to bring myself back by the effort, and the odd phantasmal quality passed into the concrete familiar. There was the old looking-glass with my notes on the albumens stuck in the corner of the frame, my old everyday suit of clothes pitched about the floor. And yet it was not so real after all. I felt an idiotic persuasion trying to creep into my mind, as it were, that I was in a railway carriage in a train just stopping, that I was peering out of the window at some unknown station. I gripped the bed-rail firmly to reassure myself. "It's clairvoyance, perhaps," I said. "I must write to the Psychical Research Society."

I put the rouleau on my dressing-table, sat on my bed, and began to take off my boots. It was as if the picture of my present sensations was painted over some other picture that was trying to show through. "Curse it!" said I; "my wits are going, or am I in two places at once?" Half undressed, I tossed the powder into a glass and drank it off. It effervesced,

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and became a fluorescent amber colour. Before I was in bed my mind was already tranquillised. I felt the pillow at my cheek, and thereupon I must have fallen asleep.

I awoke abruptly out of a dream of strange beasts, and found myself lying on my back. Probably every one knows that dismal emotional dream from which one escapes, awake indeed but strangely cowed. There was a curious taste in my mouth, a tired feeling in my limbs, a sense of cutaneous discomfort. I lay with my head motionless on my pillow, expecting that my feeling of strangeness and terror would pass away, and that I should then doze off again to sleep. But instead of that, my uncanny sensations increased. At first I could perceive nothing wrong about me. There was a faint light in the room, so faint that it was the very next thing to darkness, and the furniture stood out in it as vague blots of absolute darkness. I stared with my eyes just over the bedclothes.

It came into my mind that some one had entered the room to rob me of my rouleau of money, but after lying for some moments, breathing regularly to simulate sleep, I realised this was mere fancy. Nevertheless, the uneasy assurance of something wrong kept fast hold of me. With an effort I raised my head from the pillow, and peered about me at the dark. What it was I could not conceive. I looked at the dim shapes around me, the greater and lesser darknesses that indicated curtains, table, fireplace, bookshelves, and so forth. Then I began to perceive something unfamiliar in the forms of the darkness. Had the bed turned round? Yonder should be the book-

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shelves, and something shrouded and pallid rose there, something that would not answer to the book-shelves, however I looked at it. It was far too big to be my shirt thrown on a chair.

Overcoming a childish terror, I threw back the bed-clothes and thrust my leg out of bed. Instead of coming out of my truckle-bed upon the floor, I found my foot scarcely reached the edge of the mattress. I made another step, as it were, and sat up on the edge of the bed. By the side of my bed should be the candle, and the matches upon the broken chair. I put out my hand and touched—nothing. I waved my hand in the darkness, and it came against some heavy hanging, soft and thick in texture, which gave a rustling noise at my touch. I grasped this and pulled it; it appeared to be a curtain suspended over the head of my bed.

I was now thoroughly awake and beginning to realise that I was in a strange room. I was puzzled. I tried to recall the overnight circumstances, and I found them now, curiously enough, vivid in my memory: the supper, my reception of the little packages, my wonder whether I was intoxicated, my slow undressing, the coolness to my flushed face of my pillow. I felt a sudden distrust. Was that last night, or the night before? At any rate, this room was strange to me, and I could not imagine how I had got into it. The dim, pallid outline was growing paler, and I perceived it was a window, with the dark shape of an oval toilet-glass against the weak intimation of the dawn that filtered through the blind. I stood up, and was surprised by a curious feeling of weak-

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ness and unsteadiness. With trembling hands outstretched, I walked slowly towards the window, getting, nevertheless, a bruise on the knee from a chair by the way. I fumbled round the glass, which was large, with handsome brass sconces, to find the blind-cord. I could not find any. By chance I took hold of the tassel, and with the click of a spring the blind ran up.

I found myself looking out upon a scene that was altogether strange to me. The night was overcast, and through the flocculent grey of the heaped clouds there filtered a faint half-light of dawn. Just at the edge of the sky the cloud-canopy had a blood-red rim. Below, everything was dark and indistinct, dim hills in the distance, a vague mass of buildings running up into pinnacles, trees like spilt ink, and below the window a tracery of black bushes and pale grey paths. It was so unfamiliar that for the moment I thought myself still dreaming. I felt the toilet-table; it appeared to be made of some polished wood, and was rather elaborately furnished—there were little cut-glass bottles and a brush upon it. There was also a queer little object, horseshoe shape it felt, with smooth, hard projections, lying in a saucer. I could find no matches nor candlestick.

I turned my eyes to the room again. Now the blind was up, faint spectres of its furnishing came out of the darkness. There was a huge curtained bed, and the fireplace at its foot had a large white mantel with something of the shimmer of marble.

I leaned against the toilet-table, shut my eyes and opened them again, and tried to think. The whole

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thing was far too real for dreaming. I was inclined to imagine there was still some hiatus in my memory as a consequence of my draught of that strange liqueur; that I had come into my inheritance perhaps, and suddenly lost my recollection of everything since my good fortune had been announced. Perhaps if I waited a little, things would be clearer to me again. Yet my dinner with old Elvesham was now singularly vivid and recent. The champagne, the observant waiters, the powder, and the liqueurs—I could have staked my soul it all happened a few hours ago.

And then occurred a thing so trivial and yet so terrible to me that I shiver now to think of that moment. I spoke aloud. I said: "How the devil did I get here?" . . . *And the voice was not my own.*

It was not my own, it was thin, the articulation was slurred, the resonance of my facial bones was different. Then to reassure myself I ran one hand over the other, and felt loose folds of skin, the bony laxity of age. "Surely," I said in that horrible voice that had somehow established itself in my throat, "surely this thing is a dream!" Almost as quickly as if I did it involuntarily, I thrust my fingers into my mouth. My teeth had gone. My finger-tips ran on the flaccid surface of an even row of shrivelled gums. I was sick with dismay and disgust.

I felt then a passionate desire to see myself, to realise at once in its full horror the ghastly change that had come upon me. I tottered to the mantel and felt along it for matches. As I did so, a barking cough sprang up in my throat, and I clutched the thick flannel nightdress I found about me. There

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were no matches there, and I suddenly realised that my extremities were cold. Sniffing and coughing, whimpering a little perhaps, I fumbled back to bed. "It is surely a dream," I whispered to myself as I clambered back, "surely a dream." It was a senile repetition. I pulled the bedclothes over my shoulders, over my ears, I thrust my withered hand under the pillow, and determined to compose myself to sleep. Of course it was a dream. In the morning the dream would be over and I should wake up strong and vigorous again to my youth and studies. I shut my eyes, breathed regularly, and, finding myself wakeful, began to count slowly through the powers of three.

But the thing I desired would not come. I could not get to sleep. And the persuasion of the inexorable reality of the change that had happened to me grew steadily. Presently I found myself with my eyes wide open, the powers of three forgotten, and my skinny fingers upon my shrivelled gums. I was indeed, suddenly and abruptly, an old man. I had in some unaccountable manner fallen through my life and come to old age, in some way I had been cheated of all the best of my life, of love, of struggle, of strength and hope. I grovelled into the pillow and tried to persuade myself that such hallucination was possible. Imperceptibly, steadily, the dawn grew clearer.

At last, despairing of further sleep, I sat up in bed and looked about me. A chill twilight rendered the whole chamber visible. It was spacious and well furnished, better furnished than any room I had ever slept in before. A candle and matches became dimly

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visible upon a little pedestal in a recess. I threw back the bedclothes and, shivering with the rawness of the early morning albeit it was summer time, I got out and lit the candle. Then, trembling horribly so that the extinguisher rattled on its spike, I tottered to the glass and saw—*Elvesham's face!* It was none the less horrible because I had already dimly feared as much. He had already seemed physically weak and pitiful to me, but seen now, dressed only in a coarse flannel nightdress that fell apart and showed the stringy neck, seen now as my own body, I cannot describe its desolate decrepitude. The hollow cheeks, the straggling tail of dirty grey hair, the rheumy bleared eyes, the quivering, shrivelled lips, the lower displaying a gleam of the pink interior lining, and those horrible dark gums showing. You who are mind and body together at your natural years, cannot imagine what this fiendish imprisonment meant to me. To be young and full of the desire and energy of youth, and to be caught, and presently to be crushed, in this tottering ruin of a body. . . .

But I wander from the course of my story. For some time I must have been stunned at this change that had come upon me. It was daylight when I did so far gather myself together as to think. In some inexplicable way I had been changed, though how, short of magic, the thing had been done, I could not say. And as I thought, the diabolical ingenuity of Elvesham came home to me. It seemed plain to me that as I found myself in his, so he must be in possession of *my* body, of my strength that is, and my future. But how to prove it? Then as I thought, the

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thing became so incredible even to me, that my mind reeled, and I had to pinch myself, to feel my toothless gums, to see myself in the glass, and touch the things about me before I could steady myself to face the facts again. Was all life hallucination? Was I indeed Elvesham, and he me? Had I been dreaming of Eden overnight? Was there any Eden? But if I was Elvesham, I should remember where I was on the previous morning, the name of the town in which I lived, what happened before the dream began. I struggled with my thoughts. I recalled the queer doubleness of my memories overnight. But now my mind was clear. Not the ghost of any memories but those proper to Eden could I raise.

"This way lies insanity!" I cried in my piping voice. I staggered to my feet, dragged my feeble, heavy limbs to the washhand-stand, and plunged my grey head into a basin of cold water. Then, towelling myself, I tried again. It was no good. I felt beyond all question that I was indeed Eden, not Elvesham. But Eden in Elvesham's body!

Had I been a man of any other age, I might have given myself up to my fate as one enchanted. But in these sceptical days miracles do not pass current. Here was some trick of psychology. What a drug and a steady stare could do, a drug and a steady stare, or some similar treatment, could surely undo. Men have lost their memories before. But to exchange memories as one does umbrellas! I laughed. Alas! not a healthy laugh, but a wheezing, senile titter. I could have fancied old Elvesham laughing at my plight, and a gust of petulant anger, unusual to me,

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swept across my feelings. I began dressing eagerly in the clothes I found lying about on the floor, and only realised when I was dressed that it was an evening suit I had assumed. I opened the wardrobe and found some more ordinary clothes, a pair of plaid trousers, and an old-fashioned dressing-gown. I put a venerable smoking-cap on my venerable head, and, coughing a little from my exertions, tottered out upon the landing.

It was then perhaps a quarter to six, and the blinds were closely drawn and the house quite silent. The landing was a spacious one, a broad, richly carpeted staircase went down into the darkness of the hall below, and before me a door ajar showed me a writing-desk, a revolving bookcase, the back of a study chair, and a fine array of bound books, shelf upon shelf.

"My study," I mumbled, and walked across the landing. Then at the sound of my voice a thought struck me, and I went back to the bedroom and put in the set of false teeth. They slipped in with the ease of old habit. "That's better," said I, gnashing them, and so returned to the study.

The drawers of the writing-desk were locked. Its revolving top was also locked. I could see no indications of the keys, and there were none in the pockets of my trousers. I shuffled back at once to the bedroom, and went through the dress suit, and afterwards the pockets of all the garments I could find. I was very eager; and one might have imagined that burglars had been at work, to see my room when I had done. Not only were there no keys to be found, but

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not a coin, nor a scrap of paper—save only the receipted bill of the overnight dinner.

A curious weariness asserted itself. I sat down and stared at the garments flung here and there, their pockets turned inside out. My first frenzy had already flickered out. Every moment I was beginning to realise the immense intelligence of the plans of my enemy, to see more and more clearly the hopelessness of my position. With an effort I rose and hurried into the study again. On the staircase was a housemaid pulling up the blinds. She stared, I think, at the expression of my face. I shut the door of the study behind me, and, seizing a poker, began an attack upon the desk. That is how they found me. The cover of the desk was split, the lock smashed, the letters torn out of the pigeonholes, and tossed about the room. In my senile rage I had flung about the pens and other such light stationery and overturned the ink. Moreover, a large vase upon the mantel had got broken—I do not know how. I could find no cheque-book, no money, no indications of the slightest use for the recovery of my body. I was battering madly at the drawers, when the butler, backed by two women servants, intruded upon me.

That simply is the story of my change. No one will believe my frantic assertions. I am treated as one demented, and even at this moment I am under restraint. But I am sane, absolutely sane, and to prove it I have sat down to write this story minutely as the thing happened to me. I appeal to the reader, whether there is any trace of insanity in the style or method of the story he has been reading. I am a

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young man locked away in an old man's body. But the clear fact is incredible to every one. Naturally I appear demented to those who will not believe this, naturally I do not know the names of my secretaries, of the doctors who come to see me, of my servants and neighbours, of this town (wherever it is) where I find myself. Naturally I lose myself in my own house, and suffer inconveniences of every sort. Naturally I ask the oddest questions. Naturally I weep and cry out, and have paroxysms of despair. I have no money and no cheque-book. The bank will not recognise my signature, for I suppose that, allowing for the feeble muscles I now have, my handwriting is still Eden's. These people about me will not let me go to the bank personally. It seems, indeed, that there is no bank in this town, and that I have an account in some part of London. It seems that Elvesham kept the name of his solicitor secret from all his household. I can ascertain nothing. Elvesham was, of course, a profound student of mental science, and all my declarations of the facts of the case merely confirm the theory that my insanity is the outcome of overmuch brooding upon psychology. Dreams of the personal identity indeed! Two days ago I was a healthy youngster, with all life before me; now I am a furious old man, unkempt and desperate and miserable, prowling about a great, luxurious, strange house, watched, feared, and avoided as a lunatic by every one about me. And in London is Elvesham beginning life again in a vigorous body, and with all the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of threescore and ten. He has stolen my life.

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What has happened I do not clearly know. In the study are volumes of manuscript notes referring chiefly to the psychology of memory, and parts of what may be either calculations or ciphers in symbols absolutely strange to me. In some passages there are indications that he was also occupied with the philosophy of mathematics. I take it he has transferred the whole of his memories, the accumulation that makes up his personality, from this old withered brain of his to mine, and, similarly, that he has transferred mine to his discarded tenement. Practically, that is, he has changed bodies. But how such a change may be possible is without the range of my philosophy. I have been a materialist for all my thinking life, but here, suddenly, is a clear case of man's detachability from matter.

One desperate experiment I am about to try. I sit writing here before putting the matter to issue. This morning, with the help of a table-knife that I had secreted at breakfast, I succeeded in breaking open a fairly obvious secret drawer in this wrecked writing-desk. I discovered nothing save a little green glass phial containing a white powder. Round the neck of the phial was a label, and thereon was written this one word, "*Release.*" This may be—is most probably—poison. I can understand Elvesham placing poison in my way, and I should be sure that it was his intention so to get rid of the only living witness against him, were it not for this careful concealment. The man has practically solved the problem of immortality. Save for the spite of chance, he will live in my body until it has aged, and then, again, throwing

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that aside, he will assume some other victim's youth and strength. When one remembers his heartlessness, it is terrible to think of the ever-growing experience that . . . How long has he been leaping from body to body? . . . But I tire of writing. The powder appears to be soluble in water. The taste is not unpleasant.

There the narrative found upon Mr. Elvesham's desk ends. His dead body lay between the desk and the chair. The latter had been pushed back, probably by his last convulsions. The story was written in pencil, and in a crazy hand quite unlike his usual minute characters. There remain only two curious facts to record. Indisputably there was some connection between Eden and Elvesham, since the whole of Elvesham's property was bequeathed to the young man. But he never inherited. When Elvesham committed suicide, Eden was, strangely enough, already dead. Twenty-four hours before, he had been knocked down by a cab and killed instantly, at the crowded crossing at the intersection of Gower Street and Euston Road. So that the only human being who could have thrown light upon this fantastic narrative is beyond the reach of questions.

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UNDER THE KNIFE

"WHAT if I die under it?" The thought recurred again and again as I walked home from Haddon's. It was a purely personal question. I was spared the deep anxieties of a married man, and I knew there were few of my intimate friends but would find my death troublesome chiefly on account of their duty of regret. I was surprised indeed and perhaps a little humiliated, as I turned the matter over, to think how few could possibly exceed the conventional requirement. Things came before me stripped of glamour, in a clear dry light, during that walk from Haddon's house over Primrose Hill. There were the friends of my youth: I perceived now that our affection was a tradition which we foregathered rather laboriously to maintain. There were the rivals and helpers of my later career: I suppose I had been cold-blooded or undemonstrative—one perhaps implies the other. It may be that even the capacity for friendship is a question of physique. There had been a time in my own life when I had grieved bitterly enough at the loss of a friend; but as I walked home that afternoon the emotional side of my imagination was dormant. I could not pity myself, nor feel sorry for my friends, nor conceive of them as grieving for me.

I was interested in this deadness of my emotional nature—no doubt a concomitant of my stagnating physiology; and my thoughts wandered off along the line it suggested. Once before, in my hot youth, I

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had suffered a sudden loss of blood and had been within an ace of death. I remembered now that my affections as well as my passions had drained out of me, leaving scarcely anything but a tranquil resignation, a dreg of self-pity. It had been weeks before the old ambitions and tendernesses and all the complex moral interplay of a man had reasserted themselves. Now again I was bloodless; I had been feeding down for a week or more. I was not even hungry. It occurred to me that the real meaning of this numbness might be a gradual slipping away from the pleasure-pain guidance of the animal man. It has been proven, I take it, as thoroughly as anything can be proven in this world, that the higher emotions, the moral feelings, even the subtle unselfishness of love, are evolved from the elemental desires and fears of the simple animal: they are the harness in which man's mental freedom goes. And it may be that as death overshadows us, as our possibility of acting diminishes, this complex growth of balanced impulse, propensity and aversion whose interplay inspires our acts, goes with it. Leaving what?

I was suddenly brought back to reality by an imminent collision with a butcher boy's tray. I found that I was crossing the bridge over the Regent's Park Canal which runs parallel with that in the Zoological Gardens. The boy in blue had been looking over his shoulder at a black barge advancing slowly, towed by a gaunt white horse. In the Gardens a nurse was leading three happy little children over the bridge. The trees were bright green; the spring hopefulness was still unstained by the dusts of summer; the sky

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in the water was bright and clear, but broken by long waves, by quivering bands of black, as the barge drove through. The breeze was stirring; but it did not stir me as the spring breeze used to do.

Was this dulness of feeling in itself an anticipation? It was curious that I could reason and follow out a network of suggestion as clearly as ever: so, at least, it seemed to me. It was calmness rather than dulness that was coming upon me. Was there any ground for the belief in the presentiment of death? Did a man near to death begin instinctively to withdraw himself from the meshes of matter and sense, even before the cold hand was laid upon his? I felt strangely isolated—isolated without regret—from the life of existence about me. The children playing in the sun and gathering strength and experience for the business of life, the park-keeper gossiping with a nursemaid, the nursing mother, the young couple intent upon each other as they passed me, the trees by the wayside spreading new pleading leaves to the sunlight, the stir in their branches—I had been part of it all, but I had nearly done with it now.

Some way down the Broad Walk I perceived that I was tired, and that my feet were heavy. It was hot that afternoon, and I turned aside and sat down on one of the green chairs that line the way. In a minute I had dozed into a dream, and the tide of my thoughts washed up a vision of the resurrection. I was still sitting in the chair, but I thought myself actually dead, withered, tattered, dried, one eye (I saw) pecked out by birds. "Awake!" cried a voice; and incontinently the dust of the path and the mould

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under the grass became insurgent. I had never before thought of Regent's Park as a cemetery, but now through the trees, stretching as far as eye could see, I beheld a flat plain of writhing graves and heeling tombstones. There seemed to be some trouble: the rising dead appeared to stifle as they struggled upward, they bled in their struggles, the red flesh was torn away from the white bones. "Awake!" cried a voice; but I determined I would not rise to such horrors. "Awake!" They would not let me alone! "Wike up!" said an angry voice. A cockney angel! The man who sells the tickets was shaking me, demanding my penny.

I paid my penny, pocketed my ticket, yawned, stretched my legs, and, feeling now rather less torpid, got up and walked on towards Langham Place. I speedily lost myself again in a shifting maze of thoughts about death. Going across Marylebone Road into that crescent at the end of Langham Place, I had the narrowest escape from the shaft of a cab, and went on my way with a palpitating heart and a bruised shoulder. It struck me that it would have been curious if my meditations on my death on the morrow had led to my death that day.

But I will not weary you with more of my experiences that day and the next. I knew more and more certainly that I should die under the operation; at times I think I was inclined to pose to myself. At home I found everything prepared; my room cleared of needless objects and hung with white sheets; a nurse installed and already at loggerheads with my housekeeper. They wanted me to go to bed early

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and after a little resistance I obeyed. I had not been eating very much for some days and of course the nurse had to see to it that I supped on slops.

In the morning I was very indolent and though I read my newspapers and the letters that came by the first post, I did not find them very interesting. There was a friendly note from Addison, my old school friend, calling my attention to two discrepancies and a printer's error in my new book, with one from Langridge venting some vexation over Minton. The rest were business communications. I had a cup of tea but nothing to eat. The glow of pain at my side seemed more massive. I knew it was pain, and yet, if you can understand, I did not find it very painful. I had been awake and hot and thirsty in the night, but in the morning bed felt comfortable. In the night-time I had lain thinking of things that were past; in the morning I dozed over the question of immortality. Haddon came, punctual to the minute, with a neat black bag; and Mowbray soon followed. Their arrival stirred me up a little. I began to take a more personal interest in the proceedings. Haddon moved the little octagonal table close to the bedside, and, with his broad back to me, began taking things out of his bag. I heard the light click of steel upon steel. My imagination, I found, was not altogether stagnant. "Will you hurt me much?" I said in an offhand tone.

"Not a bit," Haddon answered over his shoulder. "We shall chloroform you. Your heart's as sound as a bell." And as he spoke, I had a whiff of the pungent sweetness of the anæsthetic.

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They stretched me out, with a convenient exposure of my side, and, almost before I realised what was happening, the chloroform was being administered. It stings the nostrils, and there is a suffocating sensation at first. I knew I should die—that this was the end of consciousness for me. And suddenly I felt that I was not prepared for death: I had a vague sense of a duty overlooked—I knew not what. What was it I had not done? I could think of nothing more to do, nothing desirable left in life; and yet I had the strangest disinclination for death. And the physical sensation was painfully oppressive. Of course the doctors did not know they were going to kill me. Possibly I struggled. Then I fell motionless, and a great silence, a monstrous silence, and an impenetrable blackness came upon me.

There must have been an interval of absolute unconsciousness, seconds or minutes. Then with a chilly, unemotional clearness, I perceived that I was not yet dead. I was still in my body; but all the multitudinous sensations that come sweeping from it to make up the background of consciousness had gone, leaving me free of it all. No, not free of it all; for as yet something still held me to the poor stark flesh upon the bed—held me, yet not so closely that I did not feel myself external to it, independent of it, straining away from it. I do not think I saw, I do not think I heard; but I perceived all that was going on, and it was as if I both heard and saw. Haddon was bending over me, Mowbray behind me; the scalpel—it was a large scalpel—was cutting my flesh at the side under the flying ribs. It was interesting to see myself cut

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like cheese, without a pang, without even a qualm. The interest was much of a quality with that one might feel in a game of chess between strangers. Haddon's face was firm and his hand steady; but I was surprised to perceive (*how* I know not) that he was feeling the gravest doubt as to his own wisdom in the conduct of the operation.

Mowbray's thoughts, too, I could see. He was thinking that Haddon's manner showed too much of the specialist. New suggestions came up like bubbles through a stream of frothing meditation, and burst one after another in the little bright spot of his consciousness. He could not help noticing and admiring Haddon's swift dexterity in spite of his envious quality and his disposition to detract. I saw my liver exposed. I was puzzled at my own condition. I did not feel that I was dead, but I was different in some way from my living self. The grey depression that had weighed on me for a year or more and coloured all my thoughts, was gone. I perceived and thought without any emotional tint at all. I wondered if every one perceived things in this way under chloroform, and forgot it again when he came out of it. It would be inconvenient to look into some heads, and not forget.

Although I did not think that I was dead, I still perceived quite clearly that I was soon to die. This brought me back to the consideration of Haddon's proceedings. I looked into his mind, and saw that he was afraid of cutting a branch of the portal vein. My attention was distracted from details by the curious changes going on in his mind. His consciousness was

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like the quivering little spot of light which is thrown by the mirror of a galvanometer. His thoughts ran under it like a stream, some through the focus bright and distinct, some shadowy in the half-light of the edge. Just now the little glow was steady; but the least movement on Mowbray's part, the slightest sound from outside, even a faint difference in the slow movement of the living flesh he was cutting, set the light spot shivering and spinning. A new sense-impression came rushing up through the flow of thoughts, and lo! the light spot jerked away towards it, swifter than a frightened fish. It was wonderful to think that upon that unstable, fitful thing depended all the complex motions of the man; that for the next five minutes, therefore, my life hung upon its movements. And he was growing more and more nervous in his work. It was as if a little picture of a cut vein grew brighter, and struggled to oust from his brain another picture of a cut falling short of the mark. He was afraid: his dread of cutting too little was battling with his dread of cutting too far.

Then, suddenly, like an escape of water from under a lock-gate, a great uprush of horrible realisation set all his thoughts swirling, and simultaneously I perceived that the vein was cut. He started back with a hoarse exclamation, and I saw the brown-purple blood gather in a swift bead, and run trickling. He was horrified. He pitched the red-stained scalpel on to the octagonal table; and instantly both doctors flung themselves upon me, making hasty and ill-conceived efforts to remedy the disaster. "Ice!" said

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Mowbray, gasping. But I knew that I was killed, though my body still clung to me.

I will not describe their belated endeavours to save me, though I perceived every detail. My perceptions were sharper and swifter than they had ever been in life; my thoughts rushed through my mind with incredible swiftness, but with perfect definition. I can only compare their crowded clarity to the effects of a reasonable dose of opium. In a moment it would all be over, and I should be free. I knew I was immortal, but what would happen I did not know. Should I drift off presently, like a puff of smoke from a gun, in some kind of half-material body, an attenuated version of my material self? Should I find myself suddenly among the innumerable hosts of the dead, and know the world about me for the phantasmagoria it had always seemed? Should I drift to some spiritualistic *séance*, and there make foolish, incomprehensible attempts to affect a purblind medium? It was a state of unemotional curiosity, of colourless expectation. And then I realised a growing stress upon me, a feeling as though some huge human magnet was drawing me upward out of my body. The stress grew and grew. I seemed an atom for which monstrous forces were fighting. For one brief, terrible moment sensation came back to me. That feeling of falling headlong which comes in nightmares, that feeling a thousand times intensified, that and a black horror swept across my thoughts in a torrent. Then the two doctors, the naked body with its cut side, the little room, swept away from under me and vanished as a speck of foam vanishes down an eddy.

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I was in mid air. Far below was the West End of London, receding rapidly—for I seemed to be flying swiftly upward—and as it receded, passing westward like a panorama. I could see, through the faint haze of smoke, the innumerable roofs chimney-set, the narrow roadways stippled with people and conveyances, the little specks of squares, and the church steeples like thorns sticking out of the fabric. But it spun away as the earth rotated on its axis, and in a few seconds (as it seemed) I was over the scattered clumps of town about Ealing, the little Thames a thread of blue to the south, and the Chiltern Hills and the North Downs coming up like the rim of a basin, far away and faint with haze. Up I rushed. And at first I had not the faintest conception what this headlong rush upward could mean.

Every moment the circle of scenery beneath me grew wider and wider, and the details of town and field, of hill and valley, got more and more hazy and pale and indistinct, a luminous grey was mingled more and more with the blue of the hills and the green of the open meadows; and a little patch of cloud, low and far to the west, shone ever more dazzlingly white. Above, as the veil of atmosphere between myself and outer space grew thinner, the sky, which had been a fair springtime blue at first, grew deeper and richer in colour, passing steadily through the intervening shades until presently it was as dark as the blue sky of midnight, and presently as black as the blackness of a frosty starlight, and at last as black as no blackness I had ever beheld. And first one star and then many, and at last an innumerable host broke out upon

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the sky: more stars than any one has ever seen from the face of the earth. For the blueness of the sky is the light of the sun and stars sifted and spread abroad blindingly: there is diffused light even in the darkest skies of winter, and we do not see the stars by day only because of the dazzling irradiation of the sun. But now I saw things—I know not how; assuredly with no mortal eyes—and that defect of bedazzlement blinded me no longer. The sun was incredibly strange and wonderful. The body of it was a disc of blinding white light: not yellowish as it seems to those who live upon the earth, but livid white, all streaked with scarlet streaks and rimmed about with a fringe of writhing tongues of red fire. And shooting half-way across the heavens from either side of it and brighter than the Milky Way, were two pinions of silver-white, making it look more like those winged globes I have seen in Egyptian sculpture than anything else I can remember upon earth. These I knew for the solar corona, though I had never seen anything of it but a picture during the days of my earthly life.

When my attention came back to the earth again, I saw that it had fallen very far away from me. Field and town were long since indistinguishable, and all the varied hues of the country were merging into a uniform bright grey, broken only by the brilliant white of the clouds that lay scattered in flocculent masses over Ireland and the west of England. For now I could see the outlines of the north of France and Ireland, and all this Island of Britain save where Scotland passed over the horizon to the north, or where the coast was blurred or obliterated by cloud.

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The sea was a dull grey, and darker than the land; and the whole panorama was rotating slowly towards the east.

All this had happened so swiftly that until I was some thousand miles or so from the earth I had no thought for myself. But now I perceived I had neither hands nor feet, neither parts nor organs, and that I felt neither alarm nor pain. All about me I perceived that the vacancy (for I had already left the air behind) was cold beyond the imagination of man; but it troubled me not. The sun's rays shot through the void, powerless to light or heat until they should strike on matter in their course. I saw things with a serene self-forgetfulness, even as if I were God. And down below there, rushing away from me,—countless miles in a second,—where a little dark spot on the grey marked the position of London, two doctors were struggling to restore life to the poor hacked and outworn shell I had abandoned. I felt then such release, such serenity as I can compare to no mortal delight I have ever known.

It was only after I had perceived all these things that the meaning of that headlong rush of the earth grew into comprehension. Yet it was so simple, so obvious, that I was amazed at my never anticipating the thing that was happening to me. I had suddenly been cut adrift from matter: all that was material of me was there upon earth, whirling away through space, held to the earth by gravitation, partaking of the earth's inertia, moving in its wreath of epicycles round the sun, and with the sun and the planets on their vast march through space. But the immaterial

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has no inertia, feels nothing of the pull of matter for matter: where it parts from its garment of flesh, there it remains (so far as space concerns it any longer) immovable in space. *I* was not leaving the earth; the earth was leaving *me*, and not only the earth but the whole solar system was streaming past. And about me in space, invisible to me, scattered in the wake of the earth upon its journey, there must be an innumerable multitude of souls, stripped like myself of the material, stripped like myself of the passions of the individual and the generous emotions of the gregarious brute, naked intelligences, things of new-born wonder and thought, marvelling at the strange release that had suddenly come on them!

As I receded faster and faster from the strange white sun in the black heavens, and from the broad and shining earth upon which my being had begun, I seemed to grow in some incredible manner vast; vast as regards this world I had left, vast as regards the moments and periods of a human life. Very soon I saw the full circle of the earth, slightly gibbous, like the moon when she nears her full, but very large; and the silvery shape of America was now in the noonday blaze wherein (as it seemed) little England had been basking but a few minutes ago. At first the earth was large and shone in the heavens, filling a great part of them; but every moment she grew smaller and more distant. As she shrank, the broad moon in its third quarter crept into view over the rim of her disc. I looked for the constellations. Only that part of Aries directly behind the sun, and the Lion, which the earth covered, were hidden. I recognised the

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tortuous, tattered band of the Milky Way with Vega very bright between sun and earth; and Sirius and Orion shone splendid against the unfathomable blackness in the opposite quarter of the heavens. The Pole Star was overhead, and the Great Bear hung over the circle of the earth. And away beneath and beyond the shining corona of the sun were strange groupings of stars I had never seen in my life—notably a dagger-shaped group that I knew for the Southern Cross. All these were no larger than when they had shone on earth, but the little stars that one scarcely sees shone now against the setting of black vacancy as brightly as the first magnitudes had done, while the larger worlds were points of indescribable glory and colour. Aldebaran was a spot of blood-red fire, and Sirius condensed to one point the light of innumerable sapphires. And they shone steadily; they did not scintillate, they were calmly glorious. My impressions had an adamantine hardness and brightness; there was no blurring softness, no atmosphere, nothing but infinite darkness set with the myriads of these acute and brilliant points and specks of light. Presently, when I looked again, the little earth seemed no bigger than the sun, and it dwindled and turned as I looked until in a second's space (as it seemed to me) it was halved; and so it went on swiftly dwindling. Far away in the opposite direction, a little pinkish pin's head of light, shining steadily, was the planet Mars. I swam motionless in vacancy, and, without a trace of terror or astonishment, watched the speck of cosmic dust we call the world fall away from me.

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Presently it dawned upon me that my sense of duration had changed; that my mind was moving not faster but infinitely slower, that between each separate impression there was a period of many days. The moon spun once round the earth as I noted this; and I perceived clearly the motion of Mars in his orbit. Moreover, it appeared as if the time between thought and thought grew steadily greater, until at last a thousand years was but a moment in my perception.

At first the constellations had shone motionless against the black background of infinite space; but presently it seemed as though the group of stars about Hercules and the Scorpion was contracting, while Orion and Aldebaran and their neighbours were scattering apart. Flashing suddenly out of the darkness there came a flying multitude of particles of rock, glittering like dust specks in a sunbeam, and encompassed in a faintly luminous cloud. They swirled all about me, and vanished again in a twinkling far behind. And then I saw that a bright spot of light, that shone a little to one side of my path, was growing very rapidly larger, and perceived that it was the planet Saturn rushing towards me. Larger and larger it grew, swallowing up the heavens behind it, and hiding every moment a fresh multitude of stars. I perceived its flattened, whirling body, its disc-like belt, and seven of its little satellites. It grew and grew, till it towered enormous; and then I plunged amid a streaming multitude of clashing stones and dancing dust particles and gas eddies, and saw for a moment the mighty triple belt like three concentric arches of moonlight above me, its shadow black on the

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boiling tumult below. These things happened in one-tenth of the time it takes to tell them. The planet went by like a flash of lightning; for a few seconds it blotted out the sun, and there and then became a mere black, dwindling, winged patch against the light. The earth, the mother mote of my being, I could no longer see.

So with a stately swiftness, in the profoundest silence, the solar system fell from me as it had been a garment, until the sun was a mere star amid the multitude of stars, with its eddy of planet specks lost in the confused glittering of the remoter light. I was no longer a denizen of the solar system; I had come to the outer Universe, I seemed to grasp and comprehend the whole world of matter. Ever more swiftly the stars closed in about the spot where Antares and Vega had vanished in a phosphorescent haze, until that part of the sky had the semblance of a whirling mass of nebulæ, and ever before me yawned vaster gaps of vacant blackness and the stars shone fewer and fewer. It seemed as if I moved towards a point between Orion's belt and sword; and the void about that region opened vaster and vaster every second, an incredible gulf of nothingness into which I was falling. Faster and ever faster the universe rushed by, a hurry of whirling motes at last, speeding silently into the void. Stars glowing brighter and brighter, with their circling planets catching the light in a ghostly fashion as I neared them, shone out and vanished again into inexistence; faint comets, clusters of meteorites, winking specks of matter, eddying light-points, whizzed past, some perhaps a hundred mil-

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lions of miles or so from me at most, few nearer, travelling with unimaginable rapidity, shooting constellations, momentary darts of fire, through that black enormous night. More than anything else it was like a dusty draught, sunbeam-lit. Broader and wider and deeper grew the starless space, the vacant Beyond, into which I was being drawn. At last a quarter of the heavens was black and blank, and the whole headlong rush of stellar universe closed in behind me like a veil of light that is gathered together. It drove away from me like a monstrous jack-o'-lantern driven by the wind. I had come out into the wilderness of space. Ever the vacant blackness grew broader, until the hosts of the stars seemed only like a swarm of fiery specks hurrying away from me, inconceivably remote; and the darkness, the nothingness and emptiness, was about me on every side. Soon the little universe of matter, the cage of points in which I had begun to be, was dwindling, now to a whirling disc of luminous glittering, and now to one minute disc of hazy light. In a little while it would shrink to a point, and at last would vanish altogether.

Suddenly feeling came back to me—feeling in the shape of overwhelming terror; such a dread of those dark vastitudes as no words can describe, a passionate resurgence of sympathy and social desire. Were there other souls, invisible to me as I to them, about me in the blackness? or was I indeed, even as I felt, alone? Had I passed out of being into something that was neither being nor not-being? The covering of the body, the covering of matter, had been torn from me, and the hallucinations of companionship and

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security. Everything was black and silent. I had ceased to be. I was nothing. There was nothing, save only that infinitesimal dot of light that dwindled in the gulf. I strained myself to hear and see, and for a while there was naught but infinite silence, intolerable darkness, horror, and despair.

Then I saw that about the spot of light into which the whole world of matter had shrunk there was a faint glow. And in a band on either side of that the darkness was not absolute. I watched it for ages, as it seemed to me, and through the long waiting the haze grew imperceptibly more distinct. And then about the band appeared an irregular cloud of the faintest, palest brown. I felt a passionate impatience; but the things grew brighter so slowly that they scarcely seemed to change. What was unfolding itself? What was this strange reddish dawn in the interminable night of space?

The cloud's shape was grotesque. It seemed to be looped along its lower side into four projecting masses, and, above, it ended in a straight line. What phantom was it? I felt assured I had seen that figure before; but I could not think what, nor where, nor when it was. Then the realisation rushed upon me. *It was a clenched Hand.* I was alone in space, alone with this huge, shadowy Hand, upon which the whole Universe of Matter lay like an unconsidered speck of dust. It seemed as though I watched it through vast periods of time. On the forefinger glittered a ring; and the universe from which I had come was but a spot of light upon the ring's curvature. And the thing that the Hand gripped had the likeness of a black rod.

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Through a long eternity I watched this Hand, with the ring and the rod, marvelling and fearing and waiting helplessly on what might follow. It seemed as though nothing could follow: that I should watch forever, seeing only the Hand and the thing it held, and understanding nothing of its import. Was the whole universe but a refracting speck upon some greater Being? Were our worlds but the atoms of another universe, and those again of another, and so on through an endless progression? And what was I? Was I indeed immaterial? A vague persuasion of a body gathering about me came into my suspense. The abysmal darkness about the Hand filled with impalpable suggestions, with uncertain, fluctuating shapes.

Came a sound like the sound of a tolling bell: faint as if infinitely far, muffled as though heard through thick swathings of darkness; a deep, vibrating resonance, with vast gulfs of silence between each stroke. And the Hand appeared to tighten on the rod. And I saw far above the Hand, towards the apex of the darkness, a circle of dim phosphorescence, a ghostly sphere whence these sounds came throbbing; and at the last stroke the Hand vanished, for the hour had come, and I heard a noise of many waters. But the black rod remained as a great band across the sky. And then a voice, which seemed to run to the uttermost parts of space, spoke, saying: "There will be no more pain."

At that an almost intolerable gladness and radiance rushed in upon me, and I saw the circle shining white and bright, and the rod black and shining, and

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many things else distinct and clear. And the circle was the face of the clock, and the rod the rail of my bed. Haddon was standing at the foot, against the rail, with a small pair of scissors on his fingers; and the hands of my clock on the mantel over his shoulder were clasped together over the hour of twelve. Mowbray was washing something in a basin at the octagonal table, and at my side I felt a subdued feeling that could scarce be spoken as of pain.

The operation had not killed me. And I perceived, suddenly, that the dull melancholy of half a year was lifted from my mind.

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THE PLATTNER STORY

WHETHER the story of Gottfried Plattner is to be credited or not is a pretty question in the value of evidence. On the one hand, we have seven witnesses —to be perfectly exact, we have six and a half pairs of eyes, and one undeniable fact; and on the other we have—what is it?—prejudice, common sense, the inertia of opinion. Never were there seven more honest-seeming witnesses; never was there a more undeniable fact than the inversion of Gottfried Plattner's anatomical structure, and—never was there a more preposterous story than the one they have to tell! The most preposterous part of the story is the worthy Gottfried's contribution (for I count him as one of the seven). Heaven forbid that I should be led into giving countenance to superstition by a passion for impartiality, and so come to share the fate of Eusapia's patrons! Frankly, I believe there is something crooked about this business of Gottfried Plattner; but what that crooked factor is, I will admit as frankly, I do not know. I have been surprised at the credit accorded to the story in the most unexpected and authoritative quarters. The fairest way to the reader, however, will be for me to tell it without further comment.

Gottfried Plattner is, in spite of his name, a free-born Englishman. His father was an Alsatian who came to England in the 'sixties, married a respectable English girl of unexceptionable antecedents, and died,

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after a wholesome and uneventful life (devoted, I understand, chiefly to the laying of parquet flooring), in 1887. Gottfried's age is seven-and-twenty. He is, by virtue of his heritage of three languages, Modern Languages Master in a small private school in the south of England. To the casual observer he is singularly like any other Modern Languages Master in any other small private school. His costume is neither very costly nor very fashionable, but, on the other hand, it is not markedly cheap or shabby; his complexion, like his height and his bearing, is inconspicuous. You would notice perhaps that, like the majority of people, his face was not absolutely symmetrical, his right eye a little larger than the left, and his jaw a trifle heavier on the right side. If you, as an ordinary careless person, were to bare his chest and feel his heart beating, you would probably find it quite like the heart of any one else. But here you and the trained observer would part company. If you found his heart quite ordinary, the trained observer would find it quite otherwise. And once the thing was pointed out to you, you too would perceive the peculiarity easily enough. It is that Gottfried's heart beats on the right side of his body.

Now that is not the only singularity of Gottfried's structure, although it is the only one that would appeal to the untrained mind. Careful sounding of Gottfried's internal arrangements by a well-known surgeon seems to point to the fact that all the other unsymmetrical parts of his body are similarly misplaced. The right lobe of his liver is on the left side, the left on his right; while his lungs, too, are similarly

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contraposed. What is still more singular, unless Gottfried is a consummate actor, we must believe that his right hand has recently become his left. Since the occurrences we are about to consider (as impartially as possible), he has found the utmost difficulty in writing except from right to left across the paper with his left hand. He cannot throw with his right hand, he is perplexed at meal-times between knife and fork, and his ideas of the rule of the road—he is a cyclist—are still a dangerous confusion. And there is not a scrap of evidence to show that before these occurrences Gottfried was at all left-handed.

There is yet another wonderful fact in this preposterous business. Gottfried produces three photographs of himself. You have him at the age of five or six, thrusting fat legs at you from under a plaid frock, and scowling. In that photograph his left eye is a little larger than his right, and his jaw is a trifle heavier on the left side. This is the reverse of his present living condition. The photograph of Gottfried at fourteen seems to contradict these facts, but that is because it is one of those cheap "Gem" photographs that were then in vogue, taken direct upon metal, and therefore reversing things just as a looking-glass would. The third photograph represents him at one-and-twenty, and confirms the record of the others. There seems here evidence of the strongest confirmatory character that Gottfried has exchanged his left side for his right. Yet how a human being can be so changed, short of a fantastic and pointless miracle, it is exceedingly hard to suggest.

In one way, of course, these facts might be explica-

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ble on the supposition that Plattner has undertaken an elaborate mystification on the strength of his heart's displacement. Photographs may be faked, and left-handedness imitated. But the character of the man does not lend itself to any such theory. He is quiet, practical, unobtrusive, and thoroughly sane from the Nordau standpoint. He likes beer and smokes moderately, takes walking exercise daily, and has a healthily high estimate of the value of his teaching. He has a good but untrained tenor voice, and takes a pleasure in singing airs of a popular and cheerful character. He is fond, but not morbidly fond, of reading—chiefly fiction pervaded with a vaguely pious optimism—sleeps well, and rarely dreams. He is, in fact, the very last person to evolve a fantastic fable. Indeed, so far from forcing this story upon the world, he has been singularly reticent on the matter. He meets inquirers with a certain engaging—bashfulness is almost the word, that disarms the most suspicious. He seems genuinely ashamed that anything so unusual has occurred to him.

It is to be regretted that Plattner's aversion to the idea of post-mortem dissection may postpone, perhaps forever, the positive proof that his entire body has had its left and right sides transposed. Upon that fact mainly the credibility of his story hangs. There is no way of taking a man and moving him about in space as ordinary people understand space, that will result in our changing his sides. Whatever you do, his right is still his right, his left his left. You can do that with a perfectly thin and flat thing, of course. If you were to cut a figure out of paper, any

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figure with a right and left side, you could change its sides simply by lifting it up and turning it over. But with a solid it is different. Mathematical theorists tell us that the only way in which the right and left sides of a solid body can be changed is by taking that body clean out of space as we know it,—taking it out of ordinary existence, that is, and turning it somewhere outside space. This is a little abstruse, no doubt, but any one with a slight knowledge of mathematical theory will assure the reader of its truth. To put the thing in technical language, the curious inversion of Plattner's right and left sides is proof that he has moved out of our space into what is called the Fourth Dimension, and that he has returned again to our world. Unless we choose to consider ourselves the victims of an elaborate and motiveless fabrication, we are almost bound to believe that this has occurred.

So much for the tangible facts. We come now to the account of the phenomena that attended his temporary disappearance from the world. It appears that in the Sussexville Proprietary School, Plattner not only discharged the duties of Modern Languages Master, but also taught chemistry, commercial geography, bookkeeping, shorthand, drawing, and any other additional subject to which the changing fancies of the boys' parents might direct attention. He knew little or nothing of these various subjects, but in secondary as distinguished from Board or elementary schools, knowledge in the teacher is, very properly, by no means so necessary as high moral character and gentlemanly tone. In chemistry he was particularly deficient, knowing, he says, nothing

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beyond the Three Gases (whatever the three gases may be). As, however, his pupils began by knowing nothing, and derived all their information from him, this caused him (or any one) but little inconvenience for several terms. Then a little boy named Whibble joined the school, who had been educated it seems by some mischievous relative into an inquiring habit of mind. This little boy followed Plattner's lessons with marked and sustained interest, and in order to exhibit his zeal on the subject, brought at various times substances for Plattner to analyse. Plattner, flattered by this evidence of his power to awaken interest and trusting to the boy's ignorance, analysed these and even made general statements as to their composition. Indeed he was so far stimulated by his pupil as to obtain a work upon analytical chemistry, and study it during his supervision of the evening's preparation. He was surprised to find chemistry quite an interesting subject.

So far the story is absolutely commonplace. But now the greenish powder comes upon the scene. The source of that greenish powder seems, unfortunately, lost. Master Whibble tells a tortuous story of finding it done up in a packet in a disused limekiln near the Downs. It would have been an excellent thing for Plattner, and possibly for Master Whibble's family, if a match could have been applied to that powder there and then. The young gentleman certainly did not bring it to school in a packet, but in a common eight-ounce graduated medicine bottle, plugged with masticated newspaper. He gave it to Plattner at the end of the afternoon school. Four boys had been de-

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tained after school prayers in order to complete some neglected tasks, and Plattner was supervising these in the small classroom in which the chemical teaching was conducted. The appliances for the practical teaching of chemistry in the Sussexville Proprietary School, as in most private schools in this country, are characterised by a severe simplicity. They are kept in a cupboard standing in a recess and having about the same capacity as a common travelling trunk. Plattner, being bored with his passive superintendence, seems to have welcomed the intervention of Whibble with his green powder as an agreeable diversion, and, unlocking this cupboard, proceeded at once with his analytical experiments. Whibble sat, luckily for himself, at a safe distance, regarding him. The four malefactors, feigning a profound absorption in their work, watched him furtively with the keenest interest. For even within the limits of the Three Gases, Plattner's practical chemistry was, I understand, temerarious.

They are practically unanimous in their account of Plattner's proceedings. He poured a little of the green powder into a test-tube, and tried the substance with water, hydrochloric acid, nitric acid, and sulphuric acid in succession. Getting no result, he emptied out a little heap—nearly half the bottleful, in fact—upon a slate and tried a match. He held the medicine bottle in his left hand. The stuff began to smoke and melt, and then exploded with deafening violence and a blinding flash.

The five boys, seeing the flash and being prepared for catastrophes, ducked below their desks, and

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were none of them seriously hurt. The window was blown out into the playground, and the blackboard on its easel was upset. The slate was smashed to atoms. Some plaster fell from the ceiling. No other damage was done to the school edifice or appliances, and the boys at first, seeing nothing of Plattner, fancied he was knocked down and lying out of their sight below the desks. They jumped out of their places to go to his assistance, and were amazed to find the space empty. Being still confused by the sudden violence of the report, they hurried to the open door, under the impression that he must have been hurt, and have rushed out of the room. But Carson, the foremost, nearly collided in the doorway with the principal, Mr. Lidgett.

Mr. Lidgett is a corpulent, excitable man with one eye. The boys describe him as stumbling into the room mouthing some of those tempered expletives irritable schoolmasters accustom themselves to use—lest worse befall. "Wretched mumchancer!" he said. "Where's Mr. Plattner?" The boys are agreed on the very words. ("Wabbler," "snivelling puppy," and "mumchancer" are, it seems, among the ordinary small change of Mr. Lidgett's scholastic commerce.)

Where's Mr. Plattner? That was a question that was to be repeated many times in the next few days. It really seemed as though that frantic hyperbole, "blown to atoms," had for once realised itself. There was not a visible particle of Plattner to be seen; not a drop of blood nor a stitch of clothing to be found. Apparently he had been blown clean out of existence and left not a wrack behind. Not so much as would

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cover a sixpenny piece, to quote a proverbial expression! The evidence of his absolute disappearance as a consequence of that explosion is indubitable.

It is not necessary to enlarge here upon the commotion excited in the Sussexville Proprietary School, and in Sussexville and elsewhere, by this event. It is quite possible, indeed, that some of the readers of these pages may recall the hearing of some remote and dying version of that excitement during the last summer holidays. Lidgett, it would seem, did everything in his power to suppress and minimise the story. He instituted a penalty of twenty-five lines for any mention of Plattner's name among the boys, and stated in the schoolroom that he was clearly aware of his assistant's whereabouts. He was afraid, he explains, that the possibility of an explosion happening, in spite of the elaborate precautions taken to minimise the practical teaching of chemistry, might injure the reputation of the school; and so might any mysterious quality in Plattner's departure. Indeed, he did everything in his power to make the occurrence seem as ordinary as possible. In particular, he cross-examined the five eye-witnesses of the occurrence so searchingly that they began to doubt the plain evidence of their senses. But, in spite of these efforts, the tale, in a magnified and distorted state, made a nine days' wonder in the district, and several parents withdrew their sons on colourable pretexts. Not the least remarkable point in the matter is the fact that a large number of people in the neighbourhood dreamed singularly vivid dreams of Plattner during the period of excitement before his return, and that

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these dreams had a curious uniformity. In almost all of them Plattner was seen, sometimes singly, sometimes in company, wandering about through a coruscating iridescence. In all cases his face was pale and distressed, and in some he gesticulated towards the dreamer. One or two of the boys, evidently under the influence of nightmare, fancied that Plattner approached them with remarkable swiftness, and seemed to look closely into their very eyes. Others fled with Plattner from the pursuit of vague and extraordinary creatures of a globular shape. But all these fancies were forgotten in inquiries and speculations when, on the Wednesday next but one after the Monday of the explosion, Plattner returned.

The circumstances of his return were as singular as those of his departure. So far as Mr. Lidgett's somewhat choleric outline can be filled in from Plattner's hesitating statements, it would appear that on Wednesday evening, towards the hour of sunset, the former gentleman, having dismissed evening preparation, was engaged in his garden, picking and eating strawberries, a fruit of which he is inordinately fond. It is a large old-fashioned garden, secured from observation, fortunately, by a high and ivy-covered red-brick wall. Just as he was stooping over a particularly prolific plant, there was a flash in the air and a heavy thud, and before he could look round, some heavy body struck him violently from behind. He was pitched forward, crushing the strawberries he held in his hand, and with such force that his silk hat—Mr. Lidgett adheres to the older ideas of scholastic costume—was driven violently down upon his

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forehead, and almost over one eye. This heavy missile, which slid over him sideways and collapsed into a sitting posture among the strawberry plants, proved to be our long-lost Mr. Gottfried Plattner, in an extremely dishevelled condition. He was collarless and hatless, his linen was dirty, and there was blood upon his hands. Mr. Lidgett was so indignant and surprised that he remained on all fours, and with his hat jammed down on his eye, while he expostulated vehemently with Plattner for his disrespectful and unaccountable conduct.

This scarcely idyllic scene completes what I may call the exterior version of the Plattner story—its exoteric aspect. It is quite unnecessary to enter here into all the details of his dismissal by Mr. Lidgett. Such details, with the full names and dates and references, will be found in the larger report of these occurrences that was laid before the Society for the Investigation of Abnormal Phenomena. The singular transposition of Plattner's right and left sides was scarcely observed for the first day or so, and then first in connection with his disposition to write from right to left across the blackboard. He concealed rather than ostended this curious confirmatory circumstance, as he considered it would unfavourably affect his prospects in a new situation. The displacement of his heart was discovered some months after, when he was having a tooth extracted under anæsthetics. He then, very unwillingly, allowed a cursory surgical examination to be made of himself, with a view to a brief account in the *Journal of Anatomy*. That exhausts the statement of the material facts; and we

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may now go on to consider Plattner's account of the matter.

But first let us clearly differentiate between the preceding portion of this story and what is to follow. All I have told thus far is established by such evidence as even a criminal lawyer would approve. Every one of the witnesses is still alive; the reader, if he have the leisure, may hunt the lads out to-morrow, or even brave the terrors of the redoubtable Lidgett, and cross-examine and trap and test to his heart's content; Gottfried Plattner himself, and his twisted heart and his three photographs, are producible. It may be taken as proved that he did disappear for nine days as the consequence of an explosion; that he returned almost as violently, under circumstances in their nature annoying to Mr. Lidgett, whatever the details of those circumstances may be; and that he returned inverted, just as a reflection returns from a mirror. From the last fact, as I have already stated, it follows almost inevitably that Plattner, during those nine days, must have been in some state of existence altogether out of space. The evidence to these statements is, indeed, far stronger than that upon which most murderers are hanged. But for his own particular account of where he had been, with its confused explanations and well-nigh self-contradictory details, we have only Mr. Gottfried Plattner's word. I do not wish to discredit that, but I must point out—what so many writers upon obscure psychic phenomena fail to do—that we are passing here from the practically undeniable to that kind of matter which any reasonable man is entitled to believe or reject as he thinks proper.

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The previous statements render it plausible; its discordance with common experience tilts it towards the incredible. I would prefer not to sway the beam of the reader's judgment either way, but simply to tell the story as Plattner told it me.

He gave me his narrative, I may state, at my house at Chislehurst; and so soon as he had left me that evening, I went into my study and wrote down everything as I remembered it. Subsequently he was good enough to read over a typewritten copy, so that its substantial correctness is undeniable.

He states that at the moment of the explosion he distinctly thought he was killed. He felt lifted off his feet and driven forcibly backward. It is a curious fact for psychologists that he thought clearly during his backward flight, and wondered whether he should hit the chemistry cupboard or the blackboard easel. His heels struck ground, and he staggered and fell heavily into a sitting position on something soft and firm. For a moment the concussion stunned him. He became aware at once of a vivid scent of singed hair, and he seemed to hear the voice of Lidgett asking for him. You will understand that for a time his mind was greatly confused.

At first he was under the impression that he was still standing in the classroom. He perceived quite distinctly the surprise of the boys and the entry of Mr. Lidgett. He is quite positive upon that score. He did not hear their remarks, but that he ascribed to the deafening effect of the experiment. Things about him seemed curiously dark and faint, but his mind explained that on the obvious but mistaken idea

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that the explosion had engendered a huge volume of dark smoke. Through the dimness the figures of Lidgett and the boys moved, as faint and silent as ghosts. Plattner's face still tingled with the stinging heat of the flash. He was, he says, "all muddled." His first definite thoughts seem to have been of his personal safety. He thought he was perhaps blinded and deafened. He felt his limbs and face in a gingerly manner. Then his perceptions grew clearer, and he was astonished to miss the old familiar desks and other schoolroom furniture about him. Only dim, uncertain, grey shapes stood in the place of these. Then came a thing that made him shout aloud and awoke his stunned faculties to instant activity. *Two of the boys, gesticulating, walked one after the other clean through him!* Neither manifested the slightest consciousness of his presence. It is difficult to imagine the sensation he felt. They came against him, he says, with no more force than a wisp of mist.

Plattner's first thought after that was that he was dead. Having been brought up with thoroughly sound views in these matters, however, he was a little surprised to find his body still about him. His second conclusion was that he was not dead, but that the others were; that the explosion had destroyed the Sussexville Proprietary School and every soul in it except himself. But that, too, was scarcely satisfactory. He was thrown back upon astonished observation.

Everything about him was profoundly dark; at first it seemed to have an altogether ebony blackness. Overhead was a black firmament. The only touch

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of light in the scene was a faint greenish glow at the edge of the sky in one direction, which threw into prominence a horizon of undulating black hills. This, I say, was his impression at first. As his eye grew accustomed to the darkness, he began to distinguish a faint quality of differentiating greenish colour in the circumambient night. Against this background the furniture and occupants of the classroom, it seems, stood out like phosphorescent spectres, faint and impalpable. He extended his hand, and thrust it without an effort through the wall of the room by the fireplace.

He describes himself as making a strenuous effort to attract attention. He shouted to Lidgett, and tried to seize the boys as they went to and fro. He only desisted from these attempts when Mrs. Lidgett, whom he as an Assistant Master naturally disliked, entered the room. He says the sensation of being in the world, and yet not a part of it, was an extraordinarily disagreeable one. He compared his feelings not inaptly to those of a cat watching a mouse through a window. Whenever he made a motion to communicate with the dim, familiar world about him, he found an invisible, incomprehensible barrier preventing intercourse.

He then turned his attention to his solid environment. He found the medicine bottle still unbroken in his hand, with the remainder of the green powder therein. He put this in his pocket, and began to feel about him. Apparently he was sitting on a boulder of rock covered with a velvety moss. The dark country about him he was unable to see, the faint, misty

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picture of the schoolroom blotting it out, but he had a feeling (due perhaps to a cold wind) that he was near the crest of a hill, and that a steep valley fell away beneath his feet. The green glow along the edge of the sky seemed to be growing in extent and intensity. He stood up, rubbing his eyes.

It would seem that he made a few steps, going steeply downhill, and then stumbled, nearly fell, and sat down again upon a jagged mass of rock to watch the dawn. He became aware that the world about him was absolutely silent. It was as still as it was dark, and though there was a cold wind blowing up the hill-face, the rustle of grass, the soughing of the boughs that should have accompanied it were absent. He could hear, therefore, if he could not see, that the hillside upon which he stood was rocky and desolate. The green grew brighter every moment, and as it did so a faint, transparent blood-red mingled with, but did not mitigate, the blackness of the sky overhead and the rocky desolations about him. Having regard to what follows, I am inclined to think that that redness may have been an optical effect due to contrast. Something black fluttered momentarily against the livid yellow-green of the lower sky, and then the thin and penetrating voice of a bell rose out of the black gulf below him. An oppressive expectation grew with the growing light.

It is probable that an hour or more elapsed while he sat there, the strange green light growing brighter every moment, and spreading slowly, in flamboyant fingers, upward towards the zenith. As it grew, the spectral vision of *our* world became relatively or abso-

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lutely fainter. Probably both, for the time must have been about that of our earthly sunset. So far as his vision of our world went, Plattner by his few steps downhill had passed through the floor of the classroom and was now, it seemed, sitting in mid-air in the larger schoolroom downstairs. He saw the boarders distinctly, but much more faintly than he had seen Lidgett. They were preparing their evening tasks, and he noticed with interest that several were cheating with their Euclid riders by means of a crib, a compilation whose existence he had hitherto never suspected. As the time passed they faded steadily, as steadily as the light of the green dawn increased.

Looking down into the valley, he saw that the light had crept far down its rocky sides, and that the profound blackness of the abyss was now broken by a minute green glow, like the light of a glowworm. And almost immediately the limb of a huge heavenly body of blazing green rose over the basaltic undulations of the distant hills, and the monstrous hill-masses about him came out gaunt and desolate, in green light and deep, ruddy black shadows. He became aware of a vast number of ball-shaped objects drifting as thistle-down drifts over the high ground. There were none of these nearer to him than the opposite side of the gorge. The bell below twanged quicker and quicker with something like impatient insistence, and several lights moved hither and thither. The boys at work at their desks were now almost imperceptibly faint.

This extinction of our world, when the green sun of this other universe rose, is a curious point upon which

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Plattner insists. During the Other-World night it is difficult to move about, on account of the vividness with which the things of this world are visible. It becomes a riddle to explain why, if this is the case, we in this world catch no glimpse of the Other-World. It is due, perhaps, to the comparatively vivid illumination of this world of ours. Plattner describes the mid day of the Other-World, at its brightest, as not being nearly so bright as this world at full moon, while its night is profoundly black. Consequently, the amount of light, even in an ordinary dark room, is sufficient to render the things of the Other-World invisible, on the same principle that faint phosphorescence is only visible in the profoundest darkness. I have tried, since he told me his story, to see something of the Other-World by sitting for a long space in a photographer's dark room at night. I have certainly seen indistinctly the form of greenish slopes and rocks, but only, I must admit, very indistinctly indeed. The reader may possibly be more successful. Plattner tells me that since his return he has seen and recognised places in the Other-World in his dreams, but this is probably due to his memory of these scenes. It seems quite possible that people with unusually keen eyesight may occasionally catch a glimpse of this strange Other-World about us.

However, this is a digression. As the green sun rose, a long street of black buildings became perceptible, though only darkly and indistinctly, in the gorge, and after some hesitation, Plattner began to clamber down the precipitous descent towards them. The descent was long and exceedingly tedious, being so

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not only by the extraordinary steepness, but also by reason of the looseness of the boulders with which the whole face of the hill was strewn. The noise of his descent—now and then his heels struck fire from the rocks—seemed now the only sound in the universe, for the beating of the bell had ceased. As he drew nearer he perceived that the various edifices had a singular resemblance to tombs and mausoleums and monuments, saving only that they were all uniformly black instead of being white as most sepulchres are. And then he saw, crowding out of the largest building very much as people disperse from church, a number of pallid, rounded, pale-green figures. These scattered in several directions about the broad street of the place, some going through side alleys and reappearing upon the steepness of the hill, others entering some of the small black buildings which lined the way.

At the sight of these things drifting up towards him, Plattner stopped, staring. They were not walking, they were indeed limbless; and they had the appearance of human heads beneath which a tadpole-like body swung. He was too astonished at their strangeness, too full indeed of strangeness, to be seriously alarmed by them. They drove towards him, in front of the chill wind that was blowing uphill, much as soap-bubbles drive before a draught. And as he looked at the nearest of those approaching, he saw it was indeed a human head, albeit with singularly large eyes, and wearing such an expression of distress and anguish as he had never seen before upon mortal countenance. He was surprised to find that it did not turn to regard him, but seemed to be watching

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and following some unseen moving thing. For a moment he was puzzled, and then it occurred to him that this creature was watching with its enormous eyes something that was happening in the world he had just left. Nearer it came, and nearer, and he was too astonished to cry out. It made a very faint fretting sound as it came close to him. Then it struck his face with a gentle pat—its touch was very cold—and drove past him, and upward towards the crest of the hill.

An extraordinary conviction flashed across Plattner's mind that this head had a strong likeness to Lidgett. Then he turned his attention to the other heads that were now swarming thickly up the hillside. None made the slightest sign of recognition. One or two, indeed, came close to his head and almost followed the example of the first, but he dodged convulsively out of the way. Upon most of them he saw the same expression of unavailing regret he had seen upon the first, and heard the same faint sounds of wretchedness from them. One or two wept, and one rolling swiftly uphill wore an expression of diabolical rage. But others were cold, and several had a look of gratified interest in their eyes. One, at least, was almost in an ecstasy of happiness. Plattner does not remember that he recognised any more likenesses in those he saw at this time.

For several hours, perhaps, Plattner watched these strange things dispersing themselves over the hills, and not till long after they had ceased to issue from the clustering black buildings in the gorge did he resume his downward climb. The darkness about him

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increased so much that he had a difficulty in stepping true. Overhead the sky was now a bright pale green. He felt neither hunger nor thirst. Later, when he did, he found a chilly stream running down the centre of the gorge, and the rare moss upon the boulders, when he tried it at last in desperation, was good to eat.

He groped about among the tombs that ran down the gorge, seeking vaguely for some clue to these inexplicable things. After a long time he came to the entrance of the big mausoleum-like building from which the heads had issued. In this he found a group of green lights burning upon a kind of basaltic altar, and a bell-rope from a belfry overhead hanging down into the centre of the place. Round the wall ran a lettering of fire in a character unknown to him. While he was still wondering at the purport of these things, he heard the receding tramp of heavy feet echoing far down the street. He ran out into the darkness again, but he could see nothing. He had a mind to pull the bell-rope, and finally decided to follow the footsteps. But although he ran far, he never overtook them; and his shouting was of no avail. The gorge seemed to extend an interminable distance. It was as dark as earthly starlight throughout its length, while the ghastly green day lay along the upper edge of its precipices. There were none of the heads, now, below. They were all, it seemed, busily occupied along the upper slopes. Looking up, he saw them drifting hither and thither, some hovering stationary, some flying swiftly through the air. It reminded him, he said, of "big snowflakes"; only these were black and pale green.

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In pursuing the firm, undeviating footsteps that he never overtook, in groping into new regions of this endless devil's dyke, in clambering up and down the pitiless heights, in wandering about the summits, and in watching the drifting faces, Plattner states that he spent the better part of seven or eight days. He did not keep count, he says. Though once or twice he found eyes watching him, he had word with no living soul. He slept among the rocks on the hillside. In the gorge things earthly were invisible, because, from the earthly standpoint, it was far underground. On the altitudes, so soon as the earthly day began, the world became visible to him. He found himself sometimes stumbling over the dark-green rocks, or arresting himself on a precipitous brink, while all about him the green branches of the Sussexville lanes were swaying; or, again, he seemed to be walking through the Sussexville streets, or watching unseen the private business of some household. And then it was he discovered, that to almost every human being in our world there pertained some of these drifting heads; that every one in the world is watched intermittently by these helpless disembodiments.

What are they—these Watchers of the Living? Plattner never learned. But two that presently found and followed him, were like his childhood's memory of his father and mother. Now and then other faces turned their eyes upon him: eyes like those of dead people who had swayed him, or injured him, or helped him in his youth and manhood. Whenever they looked at him, Plattner was overcome with a strange sense of responsibility. To his mother he ven-

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tured to speak; but she made no answer. She looked sadly, steadfastly, and tenderly—a little reproachfully too, it seemed—into his eyes.

He simply tells this story; he does not endeavour to explain. We are left to surmise who these Watchers of the Living may be, or, if they are indeed the Dead, why they should so closely and passionately watch a world they have left forever. It may be—indeed to my mind it seems just—that, when our life has closed, when evil or good is no longer a choice for us, we may still have to witness the working out of the train of consequences we have laid. If human souls continue after death, then surely human interests continue after death. But that is merely my own guess at the meaning of the things seen. Plattner offers no interpretation, for none was given him. It is well the reader should understand this clearly. Day after day, with his head reeling, he wandered about this green-lit world outside the world, weary and, towards the end, weak and hungry. By day—by our earthly day, that is—the ghostly vision of the old familiar scenery of Sussexville, all about him, irked and worried him. He could not see where to put his feet, and ever and again with a chilly touch one of these Watching Souls would come against his face. And after dark the multitude of these Watchers about him, and their intent distress, confused his mind beyond describing. A great longing to return to the earthly life that was so near and yet so remote consumed him. The unearthliness of things about him produced a positively painful mental distress. He was worried beyond describing by his own particular

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followers. He would shout at them to desist from staring at him, scold at them, hurry away from them. They were always mute and intent. Run as he might over the uneven ground, they followed his destinies.

On the ninth day, towards evening, Plattner heard the invisible footsteps approaching, far away down the gorge. He was then wandering over the broad crest of the same hill upon which he had fallen in his entry into this strange Other-World of his. He turned to hurry down into the gorge, feeling his way hastily, and was arrested by the sight of the thing that was happening in a room in a back street near the school. Both of the people in the room he knew by sight. The windows were open, the blinds up, and the setting sun shone clearly into it, so that it came out quite brightly at first, a vivid oblong of room, lying like a magic-lantern picture upon the black landscape and the livid green dawn. In addition to the sunlight a candle had just been lit in the room.

On the bed lay a lank man, his ghastly white face terrible upon the tumbled pillow. His clenched hands were raised above his head. A little table beside the bed carried a few medicine bottles, some toast and water, and an empty glass. Every now and then the lank man's lips fell apart, to indicate a word he could not articulate. But the woman did not notice that he wanted anything, because she was busy turning out papers from an old-fashioned bureau in the opposite corner of the room. At first the picture was very vivid indeed, but as the green dawn behind it grew brighter and brighter, so it became fainter and more and more transparent.

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As the echoing footsteps paced nearer and nearer, those footsteps that sound so loud in that Other-World and come so silently in this, Plattner perceived about him a great multitude of dim faces gathering together out of the darkness and watching the two people in the room. Never before had he seen so many of the Watchers of the Living. A multitude had eyes only for the sufferer in the room, another multitude, in infinite anguish, watched the woman as she hunted with greedy eyes for something she could not find. They crowded about Plattner, they came across his sight and buffeted his face, the noise of their unavailing regrets was all about him. He saw clearly only now and then. At other times the picture quivered dimly, through the veil of green reflections upon their movements. In the room it must have been very still, and Plattner says the candle flame streamed up into a perfectly vertical line of smoke, but in his ears each footfall and its echoes beat like a clap of thunder. And the faces! Two more particularly, near the woman's: one a woman's also, white and clear-featured, a face which might have once been cold and hard but which was now softened by the touch of a wisdom strange to earth. The other might have been the woman's father. Both were evidently absorbed in the contemplation of some act of hateful meanness, so it seemed, which they could no longer guard against and prevent. Behind were others, teachers it may be who had taught ill, friends whose influence had failed. And over the man, too—a multitude, but none that seemed to be parents or teachers! Faces that might once have been coarse, now

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purged to strength by sorrow! And in the forefront one face, a girlish one, neither angry nor remorseful but merely patient and weary, and, as it seemed to Plattner, waiting for relief. His powers of description fail him at the memory of this multitude of ghastly countenances. They gathered on the stroke of the bell. He saw them all in the space of a second. It would seem that he was so worked upon by his excitement that quite involuntarily his restless fingers took the bottle of green powder out of his pocket and held it before him. But he does not remember that.

Abruptly the footsteps ceased. He waited for the next and there was silence, and then suddenly, cutting through the unexpected stillness like a keen, thin blade, came the first stroke of the bell. At that the multitudinous faces swayed to and fro, and a louder crying began all about him. The woman did not hear; she was burning something now in the candle flame. At the second stroke everything grew dim, and a breath of wind, icy cold, blew through the host of watchers. They swirled about him like an eddy of dead leaves in the spring, and at the third stroke something was extended through them to the bed. You have heard of a beam of light. This was like a beam of darkness, and looking again at it, Plattner saw that it was a shadowy arm and hand.

The green sun was now topping the black desolations of the horizon, and the vision of the room was very faint. Plattner could see that the white of the bed struggled, and was convulsed; and that the woman looked round over her shoulder at it, startled.

The cloud of watchers lifted high like a puff of green

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dust before the wind, and swept swiftly downward towards the temple in the gorge. Then suddenly Plattner understood the meaning of the shadowy black arm that stretched across his shoulder and clutched its prey. He did not dare turn his head to see the Shadow behind the arm. With a violent effort, and covering his eyes, he set himself to run, made perhaps twenty strides, then slipped on a boulder and fell. He fell forward on his hands; and the bottle smashed and exploded as he touched the ground.

In another moment he found himself, stunned and bleeding, sitting face to face with Lidgett in the old walled garden behind the school.

There the story of Plattner's experiences ends. I have resisted, I believe successfully, the natural disposition of a writer of fiction to dress up incidents of this sort. I have told the thing as far as possible in the order in which Plattner told it to me. I have carefully avoided any attempt at style, effect, or construction. It would have been easy, for instance, to have worked the scene of the death-bed into a kind of plot in which Plattner might have been involved. But quite apart from the objectionableness of falsifying a most extraordinary true story, any such trite devices would spoil, to my mind, the peculiar effect of this dark world, with its livid green illumination and its drifting Watchers of the Living which, unseen and unapproachable to us, is yet lying all about us.

It remains to add that a death did actually occur in Vincent Terrace, just beyond the school garden,

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and, so far as can be proved, at the moment of Plattner's return. Deceased was a rate-collector and insurance agent. His widow, who was much younger than himself, married last month a Mr. Whymper, a veterinary surgeon of Allbeeding. As the portion of this story given here has in various forms circulated orally in Sussexville, she has consented to my use of her name, on condition that I make it distinctly known that she emphatically contradicts every detail of Plattner's account of her husband's last moments. She burned no will, she says, although Plattner never accused her of doing so; her husband made but one will, and that just after their marriage. Certainly, from a man who had never seen it, Plattner's account of the furniture of the room was curiously accurate.

One other thing, even at the risk of an irksome repetition, I must insist upon lest I seem to favour the credulous, superstitious view. Plattner's absence from the world for nine days is, I think, proved. But that does not prove his story. It is quite conceivable that even outside space hallucinations may be possible. That, at least, the reader must bear distinctly in mind.

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THE PURPLE PILEUS

Mr. Coombes was sick of life. He walked away from his unhappy home, sick not only of his own existence but of everybody else's, turned aside down Gaswork Lane to avoid the town, crossed the wooden bridge that goes over the canal to Starling's Cottages, and was presently alone in the damp pine woods and out of sight and sound of human habitation. He would stand it no longer. He repeated aloud with blasphemies unusual to him that he would stand it no longer.

He was a pale-faced little man, with dark eyes and a fine and very black moustache. He had a very stiff, upright collar slightly frayed, that gave him an illusory double chin, and his overcoat (albeit shabby) was trimmed with astrachan. His gloves were a bright brown with black stripes over the knuckles, and split at the finger ends. His appearance, his wife had said once in the dear, dead days beyond recall—before he married her, that is—was military. But now she called him—it seems a dreadful thing to tell of between husband and wife, but she called him "a little grub." It wasn't the only thing she had called him, either.

The row had arisen about that beastly Jennie again. Jennie was his wife's friend, and by no invitation of Mr. Coombes, she came in every blessed Sunday to dinner and made a shindy all the afternoon. She

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was a big, noisy girl, with a taste for loud colours and a strident laugh; and this Sunday she had outdone all her previous intrusions by bringing in a fellow with her, a chap as showy as herself. And Mr. Coombes, in a starchy, clean collar and his Sunday frock-coat, had sat dumb and wrathful at his own table, while his wife and her guests talked foolishly and undesirably, and laughed aloud. Well, he stood that, and after dinner (which, "as usual," was late), what must Miss Jennie do but go to the piano and play banjo tunes, for all the world as if it were a week-day! Flesh and blood could not endure such goings on. They would hear next door, they would hear in the road, it was a public announcement of their disrepute. He had to speak.

He had felt himself go pale, and a kind of rigour had affected his respiration as he delivered himself. He had been sitting on one of the chairs by the window—the new guest had taken possession of the armchair. He turned his head. "Sun Day!" he said over the collar, in the voice of one who warns. "Sun Day!" What people call a "nasty" tone, it was.

Jennie had kept on playing, but his wife, who was looking through some music that was piled on the top of the piano, had stared at him. "What's wrong now?" she said; "can't people enjoy themselves?"

"I don't mind rational 'njoyment at all," said little Coombes, "but I ain't a-going to have week-day tunes playing on a Sunday in this house."

"What's wrong with my playing now?" said Jennie, stopping and twirling round on the music-stool with a monstrous rustle of flounces.

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Coombes saw it was going to be a row, and opened too vigorously, as is common with your timid, nervous men all the world over. "Steady on with that music-stool!" said he; "it ain't made for 'eavyweights."

"Never you mind about weights," said Jennie, incensed. "What was you saying behind my back about my playing?"

"Surely you don't 'old with not having a bit of music on a Sunday, Mr. Coombes?" said the new guest, leaning back in the armchair, blowing a cloud of cigarette smoke and smiling in a kind of pitying way. And simultaneously his wife said something to Jennie about "Never mind 'im. You go on, Jinny."

"I do," said Mr. Coombes, addressing the new guest.

"May I arst why?" said the new guest, evidently enjoying both his cigarette and the prospect of an argument. He was, by the bye, a lank young man, very stylishly dressed in bright drab, with a white cravat and a pearl and silver pin. It had been better taste to come in a black coat, Mr. Coombes thought.

"Because," began Mr. Coombes, "it don't suit me. I'm a business man. I 'ave to study my connection. Rational 'njoyment——"

"His connection!" said Mrs. Coombes scornfully. "That's what he's always a-saying. We got to do this, and we got to do that——"

"If you don't mean to study my connection," said Mr. Coombes, "what did you marry me for?"

"I wonder," said Jennie, and turned back to the piano.

"I never saw such a man as you," said Mrs.

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Coombes. "You've altered all round since we were married. Before——"

Then Jennie began at the tum, tum, tum again.

"Look here!" said Mr. Coombes, driven at last to revolt, standing up and raising his voice. "I tell you I won't have that." The frock-coat heaved with his indignation.

"No vi'lence, now," said the long young man in drab, sitting up.

"Who the juice are you?" said Mr. Coombes fiercely.

Whereupon they all began talking at once. The new guest said he was Jennie's "intended," and meant to protect her, and Mr. Coombes said he was welcome to do so anywhere but in his (Mr. Coombes's) house; and Mrs. Coombes said he ought to be ashamed of insulting his guests, and (as I have already mentioned) that he was getting a regular little grub; and the end was, that Mr. Coombes ordered his visitors out of the house, and they wouldn't go, and so he said he would go himself. With his face burning and tears of excitement in his eyes, he went into the passage, and as he struggled with his overcoat—his frock-coat sleeves got concertinaed up his arm—and gave a brush at his silk hat, Jennie began again at the piano, and strummed him insultingly out of the house. Tum, tum, tum. He slammed the shop door so that the house quivered. That, briefly, was the immediate making of his mood. You will perhaps begin to understand his disgust with existence.

As he walked along the muddy path under the firs, —it was late October, and the ditches and heaps of fir

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needles were gorgeous with clumps of fungi,—he recapitulated the melancholy history of his marriage. It was brief and commonplace enough. He now perceived with sufficient clearness that his wife had married him out of a natural curiosity and in order to escape from her worrying, laborious, and uncertain life in the workroom; and, like the majority of her class, she was far too stupid to realise that it was her duty to co-operate with him in his business. She was greedy of enjoyment, loquacious, and socially minded, and evidently disappointed to find the restraints of poverty still hanging about her. His worries exasperated her, and the slightest attempt to control her proceedings resulted in a charge of "grumbling." Why couldn't he be nice—as he used to be? And Coombes was such a harmless little man, too, nourished mentally on *Self-Help*, and with a meagre ambition of self-denial and competition that was to end in a "sufficiency." Then Jennie came in as a female Mephistopheles, a gabbling chronicle of "fellers," and was always wanting his wife to go to theatres and "all that." And in addition were aunts of his wife, and cousins (male and female) to eat up capital, insult him personally, upset business arrangements, annoy good customers, and generally blight his life. It was not the first occasion by many that Mr. Coombes had fled his home in wrath and indignation and something like fear, vowing furiously and even aloud that he wouldn't stand it, and so frothing away his energy along the line of least resistance. But never before had he been quite so sick of life as on this particular Sunday afternoon. The Sunday

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dinner may have had its share in his despair—and the greyness of the sky. Perhaps, too, he was beginning to realise his unendurable frustration as a business man as the consequence of his marriage. Presently bankruptcy, and after that— Perhaps she might have reason to repent when it was too late. And destiny, as I have already intimated, had planted the path through the wood with evil-smelling fungi, thickly and variously planted it, not only on the right side but on the left.

A small shopman is in such a melancholy position if his wife turns out a disloyal partner. His capital is all tied up in his business, and to leave her means to join the unemployed in some strange part of the earth. The luxuries of divorce are beyond him altogether. So that the good old tradition of marriage for better or worse holds inexorably for him, and things work up to tragic culminations. Bricklayers kick their wives to death, and dukes betray theirs; but it is among the small clerks and shopkeepers nowadays that it comes most often to a cutting of throats. Under the circumstances it is not so very remarkable—and you must take it as charitably as you can—that the mind of Mr. Coombes ran for a while on some such glorious close to his disappointed hopes, and that he thought of razors, pistols, bread-knives, and touching letters to the coroner denouncing his enemies by name, and praying piously for forgiveness. After a time his fierceness gave way to melancholia. He had been married in this very overcoat, in his first and only frock-coat that was buttoned up beneath it. He began to recall their courting along this very walk, his

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years of penurious saving to get capital, and the bright hopefulness of his marrying days. For it all to work out like this! Was there no sympathetic ruler anywhere in the world? He reverted to death as a topic.

He thought of the canal he had just crossed, and doubted whether he shouldn't stand with his head out, even in the middle, and it was while drowning was in his mind that the purple pileus caught his eye. He looked at it mechanically for a moment, and stopped and stooped towards it to pick it up under the impression that it was some such small leather object as a purse. Then he saw that it was the purple top of a fungus, a peculiarly poisonous-looking purple: slimy, shiny, and emitting a sour odour. He hesitated with his hand an inch or so from it, and the thought of poison crossed his mind. With that he picked the thing, and stood up again with it in his hand.

The odour was certainly strong—acrid, but by no means disgusting. He broke off a piece, and the fresh surface was a creamy white that changed like magic in the space of ten seconds to a yellowish-green colour. It was even an inviting-looking change. He broke off two other pieces to see it repeated. They were wonderful things these fungi, thought Mr. Coombes, and all of them the deadliest poisons, as his father had often told him. Deadly poisons!

There is no time like the present for a rash resolve. Why not here and now? thought Mr. Coombes. He tasted a little piece, a very little piece indeed—a mere crumb. It was so pungent that he almost spat it out

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again, then merely hot and full-flavoured: a kind of German mustard with a touch of horseradish and—well, mushroom. He swallowed it in the excitement of the moment. Did he like it or did he not? His mind was curiously careless. He would try another bit. It really wasn't bad—it was good. He forgot his troubles in the interest of the immediate moment. Playing with death it was. He took another bite, and then deliberately finished a mouthful. A curious, tingling sensation began in his finger-tips and toes. His pulse began to move faster. The blood in his ears sounded like a mill-race. "Try bi' more," said Mr. Coombes. He turned and looked about him, and found his feet unsteady. He saw, and struggled towards, a little patch of purple a dozen yards away. "Jol' goo' stuff," said Mr. Coombes. "E—lomore ye'." He pitched forward and fell on his face, his hands outstretched towards the cluster of pilei. But he did not eat any more of them. He forgot forthwith.

He rolled over and sat up with a look of astonishment on his face. His carefully brushed silk hat had rolled away towards the ditch. He pressed his hand to his brow. Something had happened, but he could not rightly determine what it was. Anyhow, he was no longer dull—he felt bright, cheerful. And his throat was afire. He laughed in the sudden gaiety of his heart. Had he been dull? He did not know; but at any rate he would be dull no longer. He got up and stood unsteadily, regarding the universe with an agreeable smile. He began to remember. He could not remember very well, because of a steam round-

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about that was beginning in his head. And he knew he had been disagreeable at home, just because they wanted to be happy. They were quite right; life should be as gay as possible. He would go home and make it up, and reassure them. And why not take some of this delightful toadstool with him, for them to eat? A hatful, no less. Some of those red ones with white spots as well, and a few yellow. He had been a dull dog, an enemy to merriment; he would make up for it. It would be gay to turn his coat-sleeves inside out, and stick some yellow gorse into his waistcoat pockets. Then home—singing—for a jolly evening.

After the departure of Mr. Coombes, Jennie discontinued playing, and turned round on the music-stool again. "What a fuss about nothing!" said Jennie.

"You see, Mr. Clarence, what I've got to put up with," said Mrs. Coombes.

"He is a bit hasty," said Mr. Clarence judicially.

"He ain't got the slightest sense of our position," said Mrs. Coombes; "that's what I complain of. He cares for nothing but his old shop; and if I have a bit of company, or buy anything to keep myself decent, or get any little thing I want out of the housekeeping money, there's disagreeables. 'Economy,' he says; 'struggle for life,' and all that. He lies awake of nights about it, worrying how he can screw me out of a shilling. He wanted us to eat Dorset butter once. If once I was to give in to him—there!"

"Of course," said Jennie.

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"If a man values a woman," said Mr. Clarence, lounging back in the armchair, "he must be prepared to make sacrifices for her. For my own part," said Mr. Clarence, with his eye on Jennie, "I shouldn't think of marrying till I was in a position to do the thing in style. It's downright selfishness. A man ought to go through the rough-and-tumble by himself, and not drag her——"

"I don't agree altogether with that," said Jennie. "I don't see why a man shouldn't have a woman's help, provided he doesn't treat her meanly, you know. It's meanness——"

"You wouldn't believe," said Mrs. Coombes. "But I was a fool to 'ave 'im. I might 'ave known. If it 'adn't been for my father, we shouldn't 'ave 'ad not a carriage to our wedding."

"Lord! he didn't stick out at that?" said Mr. Clarence, quite shocked.

"Said he wanted the money for his stock, or some such rubbish. Why, he wouldn't have a woman in to help me once a week if it wasn't for my standing out plucky. And the fusses he makes about money—comes to me, well, pretty near crying, with sheets of paper and figgers. 'If only we can tide over this year,' he says, 'the business is bound to go.' 'If only we can tide over this year,' I says; 'then it'll be, if only we can tide over next year. I know you,' I says. 'And you don't catch me screwing myself lean and ugly. Why didn't you marry a slavey?' I says, 'if you wanted one—instead of a respectable girl,' I says."

So Mrs. Coombes. But we will not follow this unedifying conversation further. Suffice it that Mr.

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Coombes was very satisfactorily disposed of, and they had a snug little time round the fire. Then Mrs. Coombes went to get the tea, and Jennie sat coquettishly on the arm of Mr. Clarence's chair until the tea-things clattered outside. "What was that I heard?" asked Mrs. Coombes playfully, as she entered, and there was badinage about kissing. They were just sitting down to the little circular table when the first intimation of Mr. Coombes's return was heard.

This was a fumbling at the latch of the front door.

"'Ere's my lord," said Mrs. Coombes. "Went out like a lion and comes back like a lamb, I'll lay."

Something fell over in the shop: a chair, it sounded like. Then there was a sound as of some complicated step exercise in the passage. Then the door opened and Coombes appeared. But it was Coombes transfigured. The immaculate collar had been torn carelessly from his throat. His carefully brushed silk hat, half-full of a crush of fungi, was under one arm; his coat was inside out, and his waistcoat adorned with bunches of yellow-blossomed furze. These little eccentricities of Sunday costume, however, were quite overshadowed by the change in his face; it was livid white, his eyes were unnaturally large and bright, and his pale-blue lips were drawn back in a cheerless grin. "Merry!" he said. He had stopped dancing to open the door. "Rational 'njoyment. Dance." He made three fantastic steps into the room, and stood bowing.

"Jim!" shrieked Mrs. Coombes, and Mr. Clarence sat petrified, with a dropping lower jaw.

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"Tea," said Mr. Coombes. "Jol' thing, tea. Tose-stools, too. Brosher."

"He's drunk," said Jennie in a weak voice. Never before had she seen this intense pallor in a drunken man, or such shining, dilated eyes.

Mr. Coombes held out a handful of scarlet agaric to Mr. Clarence. "Jo' stuff," said he; "ta' some."

At that moment he was genial. Then at the sight of their startled faces he changed, with the swift transition of insanity, into overbearing fury. And it seemed as if he had suddenly recalled the quarrel of his departure. In such a huge voice as Mrs. Coombes had never heard before, he shouted: "My house. I'm master 'ere. Eat what I give yer!" He bawled this, as it seemed, without an effort.. without a violent gesture, standing there as motionless as one who whispers, holding out a handful of fungus.

Clarence approved himself a coward. He could not meet the mad fury in Coombes's eyes; he rose to his feet, pushing back his chair, and turned, stooping. At that Coombes rushed at him. Jennie saw her opportunity, and with the ghost of a shriek made for the door. Mrs. Coombes followed her. Clarence tried to dodge. Over went the tea-table with a smash as Coombes clutched him by the collar and tried to thrust the fungus into his mouth. Clarence was content to leave his collar behind him, and shot out into the passage with red patches of fly agaric still adherent to his face. "Shut 'im in!" cried Mrs. Coombes, and would have closed the door, but her supports deserted her; Jennie saw the shop door open and vanished thereby, locking it behind her, while Clar-

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ence went on hastily into the kitchen. Mr. Coombes came heavily against the door, and Mrs. Coombes, finding the key was inside, fled upstairs and locked herself in the spare bedroom.

So the new convert to *joie de vivre* emerged upon the passage, his decorations a little scattered, but that respectable hatful of fungi still under his arm. He hesitated at the three ways, and decided on the kitchen. Whereupon Clarence, who was fumbling with the key, gave up the attempt to imprison his host and fled into the scullery, only to be captured before he could open the door into the yard. Mr. Clarence is singularly reticent of the details of what occurred. It seems that Mr. Coombes's transitory irritation had vanished again, and he was once more a genial playfellow. And as there were knives and meat-choppers about, Clarence very generously resolved to humour him and so avoid anything tragic. It is beyond dispute that Mr. Coombes played with Mr. Clarence to his heart's content; they could not have been more playful and familiar if they had known each other for years. He insisted gaily on Clarence trying the fungi, and, after a friendly tussle, was smitten with remorse at the mess he was making of his guest's face. It also appears that Clarence was dragged under the sink and his face scrubbed with the blacking brush—he being still resolved to humour the lunatic at any cost—and that finally, in a somewhat dishevelled, chipped, and discoloured condition, he was assisted to his coat and shown out by the back door, the shopway being barred by Jennie. Mr. Coombes's wandering thoughts then turned to Jennie.

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Jennie had been unable to unfasten the shop door, but she shot the bolts against Mr. Coombes's latch-key, and remained in possession of the shop for the rest of the evening.

It would appear that Mr. Coombes then returned to the kitchen, still in pursuit of gaiety, and, albeit a strict Good Templar, drank (or spilt down the front of the first and only frock-coat) no less than five bottles of the stout Mrs. Coombes insisted upon having for her health's sake. He made cheerful noises by breaking off the necks of the bottles with several of his wife's wedding-present dinner plates, and during the earlier part of this great drunk he sang divers merry ballads. He cut his finger rather badly with one of the bottles—the only bloodshed in this story—and what with that and the systematic convulsion of his inexperienced physiology by the liquorish brand of Mrs. Coombes's stout, it may be the evil of the fungus poison was somehow allayed. But we prefer to draw a veil over the concluding incidents of this Sunday afternoon. They ended in the coal cellar, in a deep and healing sleep.

An interval of five years elapsed. Again it was a Sunday afternoon in October, and again Mr. Coombes walked through the pine wood beyond the canal. He was still the same dark-eyed, black-moustached little man that he was at the outset of the story, but his double chin was now scarcely so illusory as it had been. His overcoat was new, with a velvet lapel, and a stylish collar with turn-down corners, free of any coarse starchiness, had replaced the original all-

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round article. His hat was glossy, his gloves newish —though one finger had split and been carefully mended. And a casual observer would have noticed about him a certain rectitude of bearing, a certain erectness of head that marks the man who thinks well of himself. He was a master now, with three assistants. Beside him walked a larger sunburned parody of himself, his brother Tom, just back from Australia. They were recapitulating their early struggles, and Mr. Coombes had just been making a financial statement.

"It's a very nice little business, Jim," said brother Tom. "In these days of competition you're jolly lucky to have worked it up so. And you're jolly lucky, too, to have a wife who's willing to help like yours does."

"Between ourselves," said Mr. Coombes, "it wasn't always so. It wasn't always like this. To begin with, the missus was a bit giddy. Girls are funny creatures."

"Dear me!"

"Yes. You'd hardly think it, but she was downright extravagant, and always having slaps at me. I was a bit too easy and loving and all that, and she thought the whole blessed show was run for her. Turned the 'ouse into a regular caravansery, always having her relations and girls from business in, and their chaps. Comic songs a' Sunday, it was getting to, and driving trade away. And she was making eyes at the chaps, too! I tell you, Tom, the place wasn't my own."

"Shouldn't 'a' thought it."

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"It was so. Well—I reasoned with her. I said: 'I ain't a duke, to keep a wife like a pet animal. I married you for 'elp and company.' I said: 'You got to 'elp and pull the business through.' She wouldn't 'ear of it. 'Very well,' I says; 'I'm a mild man till I'm roused,' I says, 'and it's getting to that.' But she wouldn't 'ear of no warnings."

"Well?"

"It's the way with women. She didn't think I 'ad it in me to be roused. Women of her sort (between ourselves, Tom) don't respect a man until they're a bit afraid of him. So I just broke out to show her. In comes a girl named Jennie, that used to work with her, and her chap. We 'ad a bit of a row, and I came out 'ere—it was just such another day as this—and I thought it all out. Then I went back and pitched into them."

"You did?"

"I did. I was mad, I can tell you. I wasn't going to 'it 'er, if I could 'elp it, so I went back and licked into this chap, just to show 'er what I could do. 'E was a big chap, too. Well, I chucked him, and smashed things about, and gave 'er a scaring, and she ran up and locked 'erself into the spare room."

"Well?"

"That's all. I says to 'er the next morning, 'Now you know,' I says, 'what I'm like when I'm roused.' And I didn't have to say anything more."

"And you've been happy ever after, eh?"

"So to speak. There's nothing like putting your foot down with them. If it 'adn't been for that afternoon I should 'a' been tramping the roads now, and

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she'd 'a' been grumbling at me, and all her family grumbling for bringing her to poverty—I know their little ways. But we're all right now. And it's a very decent little business, as you say."

They proceeded on their way meditatively. "Women are funny creatures," said brother Tom.

"They want a firm hand," said Coombes.

"What a lot of these funguses there are about here!" remarked brother Tom presently. "I can't see what use they are in the world."

Mr. Coombes looked. "I dessay they're sent for some wise purpose," says Mr. Coombes.

And that was as much thanks as the purple pileus ever got for maddening this absurd little man to the pitch of decisive action, and so altering the whole course of his life.

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