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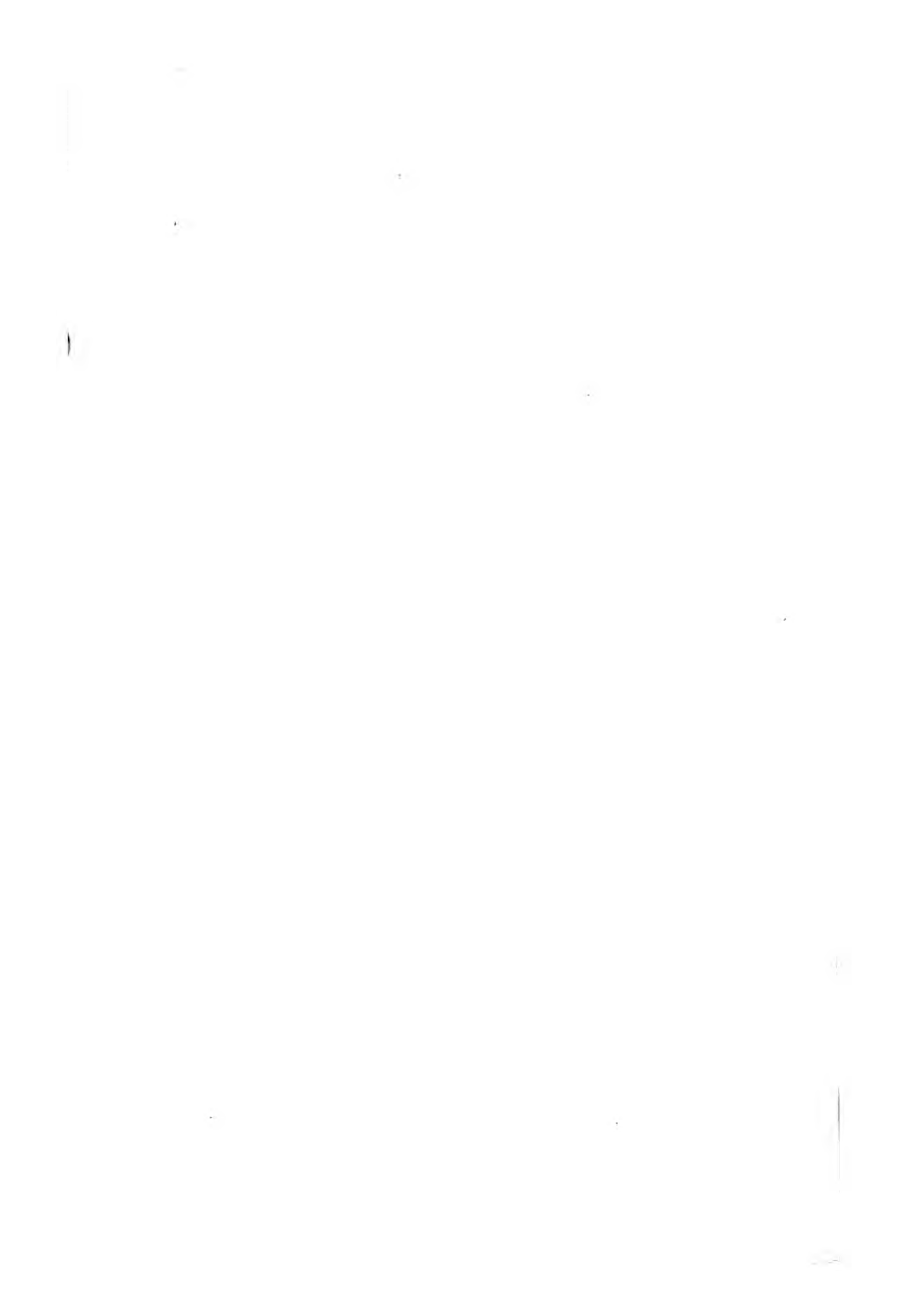


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THE COLLAPSE OF
HOMO SAPIENS

BY P. ANDERSON GRAHAM

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**THE COLLAPSE OF
HOMO SAPIENS**



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BY

P. ANDERSON GRAHAM

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
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Nous ne savons rien de la vie ; son développement dans le temps est une pure illusion. Et c'est par une infirmité de nos sens que nous ne voyons pas demain réalisé comme hier. On peut fort bien concevoir des êtres organisés de façon à percevoir simultanément des phénomènes qui nous apparaissent séparés les uns des autres par un intervalle de temps appréciable.

ANATOLE FRANCE.

NOTE BY THE EDITOR

I CANNOT tell the reader much about the author of this remarkable manuscript as I only saw him twice, once recently and once in early youth when we both ran to the same rock for shelter from a thunderstorm in the Caucasus. Falling into conversation I found him singularly intense and earnest, visionary and inclined to mysticism, but so obviously sincere that he impressed even my matter-of-fact mind with his confident prediction that England and Germany would go to war in 1914—so much so that in the succeeding years I gave much time to the study of international politics, and made many visits to Germany where I tried to fathom the intentions of the leading men, to one or two of whom I managed to obtain introductions.

Those who know me are aware that I became an unflinching believer that a struggle between Germany and Britain was inevitable. I spoke frequently to that effect, publicly as well as privately.

My nameless acquaintance, who would tell me neither who he was nor whence he came, sought me out in the June of 1920 and left me a bundle of papers, typewritten, evidently by himself. He was sad and tired-looking, bearing on his face the memory of some dreadful experience and the wistful melancholy of one who knows that he is coming very near the end of his earthly pilgrimage. Whether he

was mad or inspired, a dreaming visionary or one who had at dreadful cost got into contact with the supernatural, the reader will be able to judge as well as I can. The notes are given with little alteration. They were originally written in the form of a series of letters and are now roughly arranged in chapters. The reader should be prepared for the appearance of many hasty first impressions that were contradicted or modified by subsequent observation, and also for the various loose ends which the writer would probably not have left if he had wished to turn the correspondence into a finished story. I have interfered with these contradictions only when they were obvious slips of the pen. Whenever possible it seemed preferable to leave the impressions as they were committed to paper. In that way their sincerity is maintained and a picture drawn of the England of two centuries hence, as my nameless correspondent saw it.

One need not say that the impression is fragmentary. Two visits, both of brief duration, and one of them very brief, were not sufficient to obtain material for anything like an exhaustive survey. The writer has confined himself to a description of such occurrences as came under his own observation or could be copied from letters, diaries and other documents containing first-hand contemporaneous accounts of the events with which they deal.

THE COLLAPSE OF HOMO SAPIENS

I

THE AUTHOR TELLS HOW HE WAS PREPARED FOR HIS
EXPLOIT. WRITTEN IN KENT, JULY, 1920

I HAVE chosen you as my friend. We met but for an hour or two, but we did really meet, mind to mind and soul. You scoffed at my supernatural beliefs and experiences and tried to ridicule them. I did not much mind that at the time and far less now. You chopped logic with boyish earnestness and ingenuity, as though nothing could be true unless it could be put down like the multiplication table.

Watching you afterwards, when you little suspected it, I found that in spite of your resistance the seed had fallen on good soil! You winnowed what had been said and checked my prophecy by reason and research. I stayed in the same *Hof* from which you went to a very disappointing interview with Bernhardi. I found that although limited in outlook you were faithful, honest, discreet and courageous. Therefore, I confide this message to you with confidence that you will discern part of the truth at least, and on the whole I prefer that it should be first read by one who will ever be something of a Doubting Thomas.

You will forgive me for remaining nameless, and in return you shall hear all that it is useful to know about "The thing behind the pen." *Who* I am can at the most

be of interest only to the vulgar ; *what* I am is a legitimate inquiry by any and every sympathetic reader.

Let me start with my grandfather, to whose influence I have responded more than to any other. His personality was many sided. Unfortunately, I was very young when he died, and all I can remember of him is that of an ascetic and elongated patriarch with a face saint-like, except for the irony that veiled its goodness. He was wheeled along in a specially constructed chair by a crusty but aged manservant who must have been as old as himself. It was mostly from the conversation of survivors and references in contemporary biography that I found he was a prophet in his tabernacle, a wit in the House of Commons, and at home a thrifty and business-like landowner. He was a J.P. and rigorously strict with poachers, but many stories are extant of a whimsical good nature not easy to reconcile with the harder features of his character. "As a magistrate I was bound to reprimand and fine you," he is reported to have said to a hardened offender, "but as a man, I have brought you my forgiveness and a present out of which you can pay your fine."

It would have taken one older and more experienced than I to blend these features into a portrait. You may have come across Thomas Carlyle's description of him as "a kind of spiritual Don Quixote marshalling the Cherubim, Seraphim, and all the hosts of heaven to defeat the scientific materialism then making much headway. He might as well have built a nine-inch brick wall as a defence against modern ordnance, or replied to rifle-fire with a crossbow."

Looking back, it is easy to see now that my desire to penetrate the future was partly founded on a confused and thwarted mysticism. I came in at the tail of a religious movement that failed to interest the young. In explanation

I must recapitulate what I learned from the huge collection of my grandfather's correspondence that never got published. The best letters were those that passed between a small but intimate circle of men steeped in the same faith and hope. My first uncomfortable doubt arose from their habit of turning the history of the nineteenth century into a confirmation of their beliefs. My hero, Napoleon, was to them anti-Christ, and the victories of Trafalgar and Waterloo intimations that Jehovah had selected England as the nation worthy of the re-birth of primitive Christianity.

The mission of this Church, when translated out of their mystical language into homelier speech, was to prepare a Band of Saints to act as stewards on that day when Jehovah with His Son was to hold His great assize. They were to act as marshals when the dead: the good who had slept in His Eternal Peace, and the chapfallen rascals who had already felt a touch of the rod laid in pickle for them, were to come trooping from the tomb. It was from a prayer with which my grandfather used to conclude evening worship that I got this picture of the sheep and the goats. I was lonely and imaginative, and in my contemplative eye saw Jehovah on His great Mote Hill, just as I saw Christian going across the river, or Guinevere when she "let make herself a nun and wore white clothes and black." They were all stuff to make dreams out of—playthings of fancy. As my elders and betters declared that was how it would happen, I took it all on trust, as I did the "Pilgrim's Progress" and the "Morte d'Arthur."

Many interesting people, whose acquaintance my grandfather made when attending Parliament in London, would find their way to the Manor House, and I noticed that only a few, and they the more elderly, would seriously discuss

the approach of the Day of Judgment. Others would ask questions and listen with an interested deferential air covering their incredulity. Some carried names that I recognised, when I had passed into my teens, as famous in Art, Literature, Travel and Science.

By then, my grandfather's once rich and manly voice had grown very thin, like his body. He still was a pillar of the Church. The way he clung to his hope appealed to my fancy as resembling many a boyish chase of a moorland bird that seemed half tame, yet would not be caught. Off goes the plumeless biped in hard chase. The feathered biped sits and watches till the distance appears shortened. Then with a beat of her wings she has flown to a rocky pinnacle a hundred yards away. After her goes the pursuer, but with legs that grow wearier at every flight. So it was with my grandfather and the Hope he pursued. Night ended pursuit for the boy and the bird, and night eternal closed on the ancient.

Presently he was laid to sleep with his forefathers. My mother, who had long been an invalid, died in the same month. Grandfather left me a letter dictated a week or two before his death which will help to explain one or two things which might otherwise be obscure :

“My day is ending,” it said, “and before my understanding fails I wish to tell you of my compact with your father. I will make it clear as far as it relates to you, but if at the moment you do not understand, read it when you have gained more experience. It is, that you should never be sent to any school or college. Do not imagine that I mean to condemn these institutions or to convey such a false notion as that they tend to cramp genius. You know that many whose friendship has been very dear to me are justly grateful for what they received from public

school and university. Even the partiality of a grandfather is not equal to saluting you as a Tennyson or Gladstone of a new generation. Nevertheless, you have a gift that would inevitably be lost if you were drawn into the formal studies or organised games of young people, whose own clever talk, as well as the teaching of the preceptor, grinds the mind to a dead level, and too often destroys what is original if it is out of accord with average opinion. This is particularly true of you with your interest in the unseen. Since its earliest manifestation I have watched the winnowing process that goes on in your mind but I will not pursue the topic lest you be made self-conscious. You will continue to be taught by the curate who is not long out of college, young, a man of exceptional learning and ability, and not too much religious zeal. Before closing, which I must do speedily as my strength is waning, I wish to say (and I say it to you alone) that I feel less confidence at the end of the journey than I felt at the beginning. Therefore, think for yourself and entertain no opinion simply because it was mine. When you read this, the last valedictions will have been said, and I will be with my ancestors. So I refrain from expressing an affection you never doubted. Farewell."

My grandfather in the days of his youth had dreamed of reviving religion in its early purity when the worshipper implicitly believed in a living God and a living Gospel. From the vision of my father the Omnipotent Judge had faded, He and His angels and archangels. Charles Darwin probably never thought he was sapping religious belief when working at his theory of evolution. He was simply a disinterested student who seldom engaged in speculation with regard to ultimate effects. In his arrival at certain conclusions he saw nothing that kept him from attending

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church. Bishop Lightfoot in the same way appeared to have separate compartments in his brain for criticism of what had been regarded as sacred texts and religious belief. My father, though he specialised in history, had an infinite curiosity that led him to read very widely, and I imagine religious fervour cooled gradually. At any rate, it would not burn at the end of the nineteenth century as it had done at the beginning. Yet his temperament remained mystic, and if he cast aside as superstitions many things taught as solemn truths in his youth, it was only to take up a new view of the spiritual. It he alternately clasped to his bosom and rejected. He must often have been perplexed and he would not discuss the things of the spirit with me.

In riper years I have wondered whether my grandfather was mistaken about the curate, or, having looked deeply into his mind, deliberately chose as my teacher a young clergyman who was already questioning the faith he professed. The latter could be the case only on the assumption that in old age the flower of his own faith had withered, and he was assailed by doubt and mistrust.

My father succeeded to considerable wealth, and not caring for public life or theology, gave himself up to the study of history, particularly the rise and fall of nations and civilisations. In his day the number of the Chosen, as adherents of the new belief called themselves, had dwindled, and he, lukewarm from the first, finally drifted apart. He had inherited a leaning to mysticism, but it took a new form. "Look neither before nor after," he used to say, "life is only a spasm, a gleam. Take pleasure as it comes and do not worry about the beginning or the end. I hate the sight of your eternally sober face. It makes me imagine you are preparing for that consummation of human

hypocrisy, dying with a good conscience. Death-bed repentances, forsooth! The regrets that assail a man in the long and last are for the opportunities of pleasure he has thrown away, the songs unsung, the bottles still in his cellar, the pale primroses of women who have died unmarried. I'd rather see you dead than developed into a man with a purpose—by God I would!”

I thought such advice must be due to disappointment and never thought of taking it. “If this be the effect of studying history, my parent,” I said, “you must be henceforth classified as a warning and not an example. My whim is to travel and study the living and the future, not the past and the dead.”

“You can only guess at the future,” said my father, “and the only solid ground is to assume that in a universe which seems after all to be finite, what has happened before will happen again.”

“As to that,” I retorted, “you can only guess at the past. There is no guarantee that any occurrence has been fully and accurately recorded. How can you trace cause and effect with any certainty while there is an unknown factor?”

With the pertness of youth, I was repeating one of his own sayings, and it went home.

So we parted, but afterwards I sometimes thought, when contrasting that outburst with his earlier tenderness, that I might have done worse than stay at home and study my father. When I returned after my Balkan tour it was too late. His study of history had been merged into antiquarianism pure and simple. His mind was taken up with pedigree, charters, coats-of-arms, heraldry and old houses. When I went into his study he merely lifted his eyebrows and said: “Is that you again? Please occupy yourself

for an hour or so. I'll see you when I have finished with this fourteenth century manuscript."

And he forgot all about it. Yet some dim memory must have remained. He wrote shortly afterwards that on my twenty-first birthday my very liberal allowance had been changed into a still more liberal income.

"I will not do you the injustice to believe that you will be grateful for this as a token of affection from your dotting father. At any rate, you do not possess the money sense. Poverty is the only stimulant I carefully avoid. Were you to take it in excess, the result would be to throw you into a career, which to me would be an annoyance. I would hate to see you a self-made man. I do not mean a millionaire—you have not the texture for that—but your lack of reason and commonsense, your singularity of character, your present indifference to what are called the prizes of life, above all, your damnable tenacity of purpose and will might combine to make you a rotten celebrity in this rotten age. It occurred to me that the only means of keeping you out of the hurry-scurry was to bestow on you means far beyond your spending power, which is much below the average. With your material wants fully supplied the only danger to be feared is that you will turn baby and cry for the moon."

After reading this fond epistle it dawned on me that some disappointment in life had brought out in my father what used to be latent, viz. the irony and cynicism which winged my grandfather's speeches in Parliament and died away in his Tabernacle. No doubt he thought his prophecy had come true and that I really had become a baby crying for the moon when he came to know that I was beseeching the Infinite Power for the grant of a two thousand years' lease of life in order to gratify my curiosity regarding the

outcome of the great stirring in the Family of Man which took place in my generation.

Everybody, except the curate under whose tutelage I remained till my eighteenth birthday, laughed and scoffed at my ambition. So I learned to nurse it in secret. With the curate alone was there any free interchange of ideas. Of him and his intelligence a poor opinion was held by the dull materialistic country people. His want of prudence and good sense was made evident to them by his refusal of a living which contained only three hundred and twenty-six inhabitants including the babies, and the income was six hundred pounds a year with a fine old Rectory and garth, so that it appeared to have been created for a studious young clergyman like himself. Besides, he affronted his only rich relation by his refusal. His madness became still more apparent when he announced his intention of retiring from the priesthood on the whimsical ground that he could not preach doctrines in which he had ceased to believe. Some, perhaps the majority, did indeed refuse to endorse so harsh a judgment. They shook their heads and swore he was a sly dog. More said wittily "*Cherchez la femme.*" Others guessed that he had got mixed up with backing horses; a few that he had taken to secret drinking. So true is it that the surest way to deceive is to tell the truth!

He had indeed chosen a mistress, and her name was Knowledge; he had got hold of the wrong key to the universe and was determined to seek the right one. It was he who taught me, and as soon as I could command the means I followed him to India, implicitly believing that only in the shining Orient lay any chance of my desire being fulfilled.

II

HE ASKS FOR A LIFE OF 2,000 YEARS, BUT THAT BEING IMPOSSIBLE, HE IS TRANSPORTED INTO THE ENGLAND OF TWO CENTURIES HENCE. HIS FIRST VISIT. ITS HORROR MAKES HIM PRAY TO BE SENT BACK

IN three score and ten years, only a brief and passing glimpse of world history can be obtained. Centuries are required to show the results of even a minor political revolution. If man is to connect great events with their distant results he should be accorded a life of two thousand years at least.

During the German war, and still more after the signing of the Armistice in 1918, my desire for a great prolongation of life was intensified till it became almost a madness. Golden possibilities were disclosed on the path of progress, but yawning gulfs also. The uncertainty deepened my burning desire to pierce the veil of the future, were it at the price of eternal damnation.

I will not dwell on my methods of study and I would not wish, after my experience, that anyone should attempt to look beyond the clouds that mercifully hide the future. Success, if I am to judge by experience, brings but little gain and much sorrow. You, my friend, are temperamentally too cold and practical to be led into an adventure so wild and dangerous. Rather in the way of your race

would you go on from day to day accepting stoically and even cheerfully the good and evil, the storm or sunshine unfolded at every dawn, content that at the end of your little day joy and tribulation alike should be rounded with a sleep.

I belong to the unhappy who will knock at a closed door till hands be frayed and bones broken, always daring to hope to win the adventure that has baffled those who have gone before. Hence it would serve no useful purpose to give more than a hint of the studies to which I surrendered myself backed by the help of my unselfish and faithful friend, the curate, who, from his death-bed, wrote to me of the manner in which his conjecture could be verified or disproved.

Spiritualism was of no avail as interpreted. The dead are dead and hold no communication with the living. That is not to say that in the universe there is no race but that of man. There are planets in which intelligence begins where on earth it ends. In the message I want to leave I must not dwell on the years of fasting and study and loneliness in which I was worn to a shadow in a pursuit I dared not confess because it would only have caused doubts of my sanity. After wading through years of fruitless research and encountering failures enough to make the heart sick, I accidentally got into communication with an intelligence whose home was no single sphere but the universe, one to whom human time was nought, as were also human fears, joys, sorrows and emotions. The fortunes of mankind meant no more to him than those of a tribe of insects, one year swarming over the earth, the next swept out of existence.

He would not let me address him in the language of intercession. "I am like you," he said, "but of a different

sphere and a different power. I am not immortal; nothing is immortal. Neither the Earth, the Sun, nor the God who made them. Everything is passing away, or rather, dissolving, to be re-fashioned into other forms."

This only whetted the eagerness of my curiosity and made me pray more earnestly than ever for a two thousand years' extension of life, protesting that less would not enable one to judge where the currents of to-day were flowing. There was a strange stillness in the voice with which he replied with finality: "The race to which you belong is not assured of that span. You ask what I cannot give, but as you have penetrated so far, I will lift a corner of the great curtain so that you may at least gain an inkling of what you desire."

Then he bade me return to the little tower where my study is and await what would happen. This tower is part of an ancient house in Kent, and around it are the plantations, hop-fields, orchards and fruit-gardens of that rich and beautiful county, all of which my eye dwelt on with a new though pensive pleasure, for instinctively I felt myself on the edge of an adventure unparalleled in the history of mankind. Kine and fat beasts were in the fields—the month was June and the year 1919. Swallows chattered above the window, and two gamesome fillies romped with one another in a meadow rank with grass and clover. The simple, homely scene was cherished in my mind as an exile cherishes his last sight of home. I suppose it was impressed the more deeply because of the state of excitement in which I lived.

Notable events in my memory are nearly always connected with some colour, scent or sound, and the arrival of the message is closely associated with the smell of rosemary diffused in the dewy June atmosphere from a great

plant growing at the door. Rosemary, a slight silver girdle of a moon and a night-bird singing—I was thinking how often I had witnessed the same combination without getting tired of it when the summons came. The unforgettable voice sounded as natural to the starry night as the song of the nightingale.

“Man,” it said, “never had an Eden that he did not make a Hell. Why feel solicitous about his future? Other animals have had their day and have disappeared. So will Man. I will show you the stage and the actors as they will be two centuries hence, but I warn you that the effect is likely to be painful and unexpected. However, it is decreed that you shall make this journey and I am only a servant of the Will.”

How it was done I know not, but as he spoke I was rapt away from the Kentish surroundings. Daylight seemed to have returned and bits of England began to pass before my eyes like a landscape seen from a railway train. Only there were no railways. Where they had been were long narrow dells, the mounds on each side of which were overgrown with bracken, bushes, briars, thorns and other inhabitants of the wilderness. Where towns and villages had been, with their churches, halls, streets and stations, was only a wilder confusion of weed, scrub and mortar.

I looked more carefully at the vegetation and then saw that the products of human skill, the beautiful apples and pears, the cultivated berries and flowers had either reverted to the wild type or been smothered by vigorous weeds. Not a single patch of cultivated ground was visible. Mostly the country was covered with forest, tall in some places, mere scrub in others. Swamps one had read about but never seen had re-appeared and had attracted a population of waterfowl—mallards, moorhens, coots swimming with

their young, gulls of the inland breeding species faring to and fro, or rising in white clouds from the water.

On the edge, little shaggy ponies cropped the fresh grass. Occasionally small cattle showed their white coats. Deer wandered down the glades and the tiny horses and cattle looked as wild and shy as they. Among the trees one caught sight now and then of a furtive animal, gliding stealthily from thicket to thicket. "That is Man," said the guiding Voice.

It seemed to me incredible. Looked at more closely they were seen to be very stunted, lithe and active, but with heavy and brutish faces, jaw and mouth grown coarse and strong like those of the carnivora. Such scanty clothing as they wore consisted of skins of animals badly dressed.

"Why are they so timid; what do they fear?" I was going to ask, but the question was anticipated. "They go in fear of one another," said the Voice. "Hunger has turned them into cannibals. As they began their own ruin, so they are completing it."

I could not believe that the little figures were really men, and I tried to hail them, but they fled with strange horrible cries of fear and alarm. It was so bewildering that for a time I was like one in the throes of a nightmare. But no! The green country was overgrown with familiar trees and wild birds were trilling or chirping their ancient notes. It was England sure enough, but to what part had I been translated? I found myself walking till I came to the banks of a river, a broad, clear stream working its way through an expanse of mud stretching on each side to a border of flags and rushes. Many clear, clean brooks flowed into the parent stream. No bridges crossed it, no boats or other craft were on its broad waters. "Father Thames," I almost shouted, "strong without rage, without o'erflowing

full." The tide was up and there could be no mistake. How beautiful! was my first thought as I looked at the great water so smooth and almost still, with tree-shadows falling on its surface.

Admiration changed to despair when I looked round the landscape and began to realise that the mantle of green with its coloured embroidery covered ruin and desolation. Where were the houses? Where were the joyous, energetic workers? Gradually bits of walls, stumps of bridge pillars and other remains could be identified. St. Paul's was recognised in a heap of ruined masonry; the water was lapping over stumpy bits of building that had once held up Blackfriars Bridge. Foundation pillars of Westminster Bridge could be discerned when one got to close quarters, and a gaunt arch of the Abbey was left, but evidently the Houses of Parliament had been utterly destroyed. Not a stone reared its mouldering head above the greenery that had taken possession of the site.

Standing by the river bank I recalled the little figures I had seen. It was easy to do so, indeed, it would have been difficult to banish them. Every detail of their appearance was permanently registered in my mind, and fight as I would against the belief that they were human, there was not a feature which did not belong to the race. They were small men and women. I had to admit to my own questioning that their limbs were not unsymmetrical, mouths, eyes, chins, noses were indisputably human. The animal look in their faces was not more pronounced than might have been seen in the London slums when British civilisation was at its highest. There was no change which could not have been produced by starvation and other forms of hardship including ignorance, the greatest hardship of all. From that point my mind wandered away into

conjecture as to what could have been the terrible catastrophe that had in this rude way arrested the progress of the greatest race of man the world had possessed.

Lost in reverie, I must have remained a long time in front of the river, as the tide had receded. My power of apprehension is sure but not quick, and bewilderment for a time prevented consecutive thought. The sun had moved considerably to the West before I had even begun to realise the transformation. There was nothing outwardly dramatic or dreadful in the plain, simple picture before me. Many of the essentials had undergone no alteration during the centuries, such as the stretch of mud left by the receding tide, the sun shining less brilliantly as it got to the west, the trees and herbage and wild flowers, the breeze sighing among them as it had sighed on millions of summer days. It was no dream, but the memory ever grew more dreamlike that here once stood the greatest city in the world, a city that darkened the beautiful sky with its smoke and drowned the noise of the wind in its unceasing roar.

Dusk had already come, and the feeble silvery new moon was discernible in the sky when my thinking was interrupted. This did not happen in any sudden or sensational way. At first it was only a sound. Had I not lived so much in wild solitary places where eye and ear become keen to note signs of life, the sound might have passed unnoticed. It was no more than a rustling of dead leaves under the dense foliage of a group of beeches, but it told that some animal was afoot. The very thought made me realise what else had passed unnoticed—that the land hitherto seemed bereft of its small animal life. “These are rats,” I thought, “and they are stealing out from their hiding holes to see what the tide has left.”

But it was a much larger animal than a rat which slowly and stealthily emerged from the undergrowth near a willow some thirty or forty yards from me. At first it crawled, then rose on its hind legs, cocked its ears and looked round suspiciously, half withdrew, came out for a second, bolted back and was lost till it appeared again far out groping and nosing on the mud like a dog searching for a bone.

How it happened one could not see, but several creatures soon became visible, engaged in the same occupation. They were evidently addicted to quarrelling over their food, for each kept to his own territory and snarled at any intruder. "If they were men, I would classify them as individualists," was my inward comment. "And they are men!" I said aloud in my astonishment a moment later when one started in chase of another smaller than himself. They did not move on all fours, but on their two feet. *Homo*, like the goddess, was disclosed by his gait. It did not last long, a hundred yards' race towards the wooded shore, a furious encounter at the edge of the coppice into which the victor disappeared carrying his victim, and it was over, leaving me sick with unhappiness.

Hurriedly I prayed that my gaze might be withdrawn. To contemplate the human race as a reversion to the beast seemed too evil a thing even in a nightmare.

I was taken at my word. Mud flats and forests and pigmy men all began to fade from my sight as living images die away in sleep, and I remember no more till I awoke in my Kentish bedroom depressed and worn out with my experience.

I confess that I was ashamed of myself for two reasons. A sickly sentimentalism had come between me and the knowledge for which I had been ready to risk extinction. Also, there was a feeling that maybe I had lacked faith.

The suggestion of cannibalism might have been put forward as a test of my fitness to be shown a full picture of the future. Relapses to cannibalism occurred during the Great War. They have in the past been associated frequently with starvation and famine. These were after-thoughts that I set down as they occurred. The immediate effect was sheer horror which was gradually superseded by a return of my old curiosity.

III

THE DESIRE TO KNOW REVIVES, AND AFTER MUCH PLEADING HE IS ALLOWED TO REVISIT THE FUTURE. HE FINDS THERE IS A CIVILISED REMNANT STILL FLYING THE UNION JACK AND TRYING TO RESCUE THOSE WHO HAVE REVERTED

MY longing for a life of two thousand years was damped by this brief glimpse into the future. It dashed the hope on which my wish was based. I had been proud of Man and his pilgrimage through time. It lay like a river-course in a map. Life emerged as a mere trickle, emerged from the warm primeval mud and through unknown æons kept on increasing and gathering tributaries till the human form took gracious shape and mind that had its origin in a far distant consciousness, grew till it flowered into such lords of intellect as Plato and Homer, Shakespeare and Newton. The stream of its growth had looked hopelessly dammed more than once, but its strength prospered by opposition, and each successive obstacle overcome, it flowed on till the Holy Spirit of Man seemed to flower in every remote corner of the earth, and poets dreamed of a world ever at peace and pressing on to greater intellectual conquests. Ambition did not stop even at the achievement of immortality. "O Death, where is thy sting, O Grave, where is thy victory?"

The only doubt I had arose from the chance that the

great globe, which, after all, is but a small planet at the mercy of a thousand hazards, might possibly not endure long enough to enable Man to fulfil this lofty destiny. A catastrophic ending would be dignified and dramatic. It was hateful to contemplate even the possibility of an end as ignominious as that now forcing itself on my understanding.

Earth was as fresh and fair and fertile as she ever had been, teeming with offspring engendered by her ruddy husband, the Sun. The only failure was Man. He had lost control where he thought himself King.

In the heyday of his prosperity he had decided which birds, beasts and trees should live and which should perish. By skill and knowledge he had even added to their number. He was master of the Earth and made her produce exactly what he needed. Elements that he had feared, worshipped, during the childhood of the race, he now dominated and harnessed to his chariot. He made servants of wind, water and steam. He chained the lightning and navigated the depths of the ocean and the air. What had been thought insoluble mysteries of Nature he had penetrated and laid bare. By what access of madness had he in the height of his glory flung away his rich endowments and returned to grovel among the beasts ?

I tried to conjure away my recent experience as a dream or nightmare. It crossed my mind that the wide plains of space might be peopled with malignant spirits and that one of them had imposed on my credulity. These and other reflections only strengthened my resolution to probe this strange experience to the bottom.

It had been the passion of my life to search and know what others had deemed inscrutable. Under this lay a hope, which I fain would have made a belief, that all could not have fallen equally low.

From the old tower in Kent, where I found myself after the first vision dissolved, I looked out on the busy tribes of men gathering and storing against the approaching winter, and ploughing and sowing in quiet faith that spring would return at its appointed time. They were doing as their ancestors had done for thousands of years. "All's well!" the eternal watchman seemed to shout as he told the hours. To my solitude came rumours of human endeavour on a large scale, new commercial enterprises, new progress in science, new inventions, new discoveries, more enlightened politics, greater comfort for the poor, incomparably better education. Who could believe in the fall of a race so industrious and provident? Only there were dim premonitions of coming trouble. It was like a brilliant day with genial sun and cloudless skies when only the weather-wise take out an umbrella. Something in the air, a wisp of cloud, the rumbling of distant thunder had warned them.

In this tranquil and prosperous autumn, signs of bad weather were not lacking. Industrial unrest was a sea that knew no calm. To an eye made jealous and apprehensive as mine had been, there was no evidence of new unity among the nations or of mutual understanding between the classes. Capital bestrode the high horse; Labour waited ominously, a giant eyeing his club. Birds of ill-omen, agents of destruction, flew hither and thither dropping their poison. But distant thunder is not always a precursor of storm, and the history of humanity is but a recurrence of incidents essentially the same. What inspired hope was a memory of the brave, strong, gallant men, who, with gay countenances and resolute hearts, had marched to the war. At no epoch of the past could their superiors have been produced.

Autumn had passed into winter before I mustered courage to get into communication with the Being to whom I had previously had recourse.

“Let me see the future again,” was the essence of my hourly prayer, and it was granted.

* * * * *

The same strange world was spread out. “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth.” The phrase came to my lips and kept recurring as I noted the change from summer to winter. Green herbage was replaced by shrunken brown witherings and thousands of heaps of stones that had been concealed by the vigorous growth of flower and weed had now become visible.

My eye searched the bare landscape till it rested on a spot where a number of monkey-like figures were gesticulating. What interested me most was that they were gathered awaiting some event. Quarrelling and fighting went on, but their gaze was never lifted for any length of time from what appeared to me only a larger heap of stones. At the least movement occurring near it every hand grew still and every eye was turned that way. Though a cutting north-easterly wind blew at the time, they reminded me of bees hanging round the opening of a hive at swarming time, and, as the languor of the insects is changed into buzzing activity when the young queen emerges, so a sudden excitement among the little men warned me that something was going to happen. The something proved to be a tall, lean, upright man attired as I had previously seen Crusaders represented on their tombs. He looked as Don Quixote would have done had he worn a real helmet of Mambrino, for his iron headpiece must have been old in the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth. His body and legs were protected by a coat of mail, yet his intentions were

evidently not warlike since he was followed by a number of acolytes bearing wicker baskets filled with loaves of bread and other foodstuffs, which he proceeded to distribute in the most orderly manner. The hungry crowd was evidently under control of a kind, for they seated themselves in a circle on bits of stone and looked up greedily like animals waiting to be fed. I could hear the armour clank as the giver of the feast paced round to see that no one failed to receive his portion. That he carried a gun seemed to indicate some doubt in regard to the good faith of his stunted and hungry guests.

A nimbler wit than mine would have read the situation at a glance, but if you put yourself in my place you will see it was not so easy. It was all so strange and new; each little person munched and munched as busily as the "rump-fed ralion" in *Macbeth*, and I felt sure that the eyes gleamed with charity through the iron bars of the helmet. "He is a philanthropist," I concluded. Obviously a people without agriculture and apparently incapable of combination must, in the ordinary course of things, have died like flies in winter unless a Superior Being came to the rescue.

The Superior Being hypothesis did not carry me much further, as from a place of concealment I watched the proceedings and tried to answer the questions they suggested. Why did he get himself up as a Paladin who might have fought under Charlemagne, save and except for the firearms? Where did they come from? How did he get the food so liberally distributed? Were those acolytes voluntary servants or slaves? So I questioned and speculated. It took a long time to realise the significance of it all.

When they were nearly done eating, my Superior Being apparently signalled them to form a half-circle where they were all facing him, and this they did gnawing the while

at bones and pieces of bread in their hands. Evidently some sort of exhortation was to follow the meal, and thinking I might gain information, I left my hiding-place and tried to get within earshot. The speaker had his back to me, but the quick eyes of the audience were instantly turned my way. Their obvious surprise passed quickly into fear and alarm, and they raised a yell as if they recognised some terrible enemy. They moved away, but soon recovered from their fright, and had recourse to the most primitive of weapons, and the air became thick with flying stones. I was not hit, but with more promptitude than dignity, dropped behind what might have been a pre-historic tombstone. The flight of big stones made me wish I had possessed the old gentleman's coat of mail, and incidentally explained why he wore it. With a shout of warning, he raised his gun, but seemed reluctant to fire at the turbulent but impotent mannikins.

The majority stopped at once, but a few persisted, and stones whizzed past any part of me that could not be hidden by the time-worn tombstone. One or two missiles rattled against the philanthropist's armour. He wasted no time in verbal protest. A shot rang out, and in the very act of heaving, one of the assailants dropped his arms, his knees gave way and he sank on the ground. There was no need for another shot. The stone-throwers fell into a panic, separated and fled. I noticed the quickness and skill with which they got a piece of ruin or a tree-stem in a line between them and the man with the gun.

All this happened more rapidly than I can describe it. "Come out of your hiding-place," cried the man in English, though the accent was strange. "Who are you, a visitor from another world, or what?"

There was a touch of the ironic in his voice and well in

keeping with the lean white face disclosed when he took off his helmet.

“Not from another world, but from another century,” I replied.

For a moment he was bewildered, and then said quietly: “This is not a very safe place for explanation or argument. Come inside. I’ll get these things off in a moment or two, and then we can talk at our ease.”

He signalled to his small followers, and they passed by an arch to another portion of the great cave or ruin. During the few minutes it took him to change, my eyes wandered round the room in which he left me. To my surprise it did not seem wholly strange. From the fact that there were no windows I judged that originally it had been surrounded by other buildings. All the light available came from a blazing wood fire, but there was enough to show that the walls were unusually thick. Could it have been the dungeon of an ancient castle? No! Before entering, I had caught a glimpse of the river and knew at least that this had never been a part of the Tower of London. It dawned on me next that the thick walls might have been built for coolness. No, and suddenly I remembered it as the famous vault which enclosed a remnant of the Roman wall round London.

A few years (or was it ages?) ago I had actually been in this room with my father and below it was another of similar structure. As had been already hinted, he was something of a gourmet, and had called on his wine merchant about replenishing some portion of his cellar, and the latter had asked if he would care to look at the famous vaults which he said were the oldest in London. We went together, and I now remembered that great bins of sherry and port stood where now emptiness reigned. But evidently

the thick and strong Roman walls had escaped the destruction which had laid the higher buildings low. I had just made the discovery when my host appeared. He was a striking figure in the flickering light, clothed in a loose cloak of what in other circumstances I would have called a rather coarse home-made tweed. It and the white hair surmounting a noble forehead imparted a distinguished and rather mystic air, as of some great chieftain or antique prophet.

"I hope a hearty welcome will make up for the lack of comfort," he said, and his voice was so unaffectedly kind that, hating to accept hospitality without explaining my singular position, I began to blurt out something about it, but he stopped me.

Scanning my face with wise, kind eyes, he said: "If you insist on telling your story, let it be at another time, or if it relieves you to repeat it, there is here one of the river men who has forsaken his people to take up his abode with us. He is affectionate, if not very wise or clever. It may be a relief to rehearse your story, and who knows but that it may stimulate his wit, especially if you have exciting adventures to relate. Once before we had a visitor like you, and he came to take great pleasure in a listener who never contradicted and never asked questions. My own attention is so concentrated on what I have to do that my mind strays and I become a nuisance and an irritation. That is the worst of belonging to such a small community, one's sympathy is narrowed."

He spoke more to the same effect with such unaffected sincerity, that I failed for the time to divine what impression I had made. Indeed, I forgot all about it when I found that my host was frank and communicative about his own concerns and those of his companions.

It did not enter into my mind that William Cecil as he called himself had judged me subject to delusions, yet it was so. As I learned afterwards, temporary or even permanent insanity of this kind had become a common malady after the terror, so much so that he would not have been surprised had I claimed to have come from the mountains of the moon. His method was to ignore everything abnormal either in mind or appearance, and to try in his conversation to stir old memories of the colony and kindle a new interest in it. He did it so well that at the moment I had not the slightest idea of his intention.

Up the river he told me there was a little Settlement containing all that was left of the civilisation of the British Empire. After the great war of extermination it appeared for a time as though the race were all but extinguished. The nucleus of the Settlement was a small band, who, when the enemy left as suddenly as he had come, either because he thought the work of annihilation complete, or that rebellion and revolution broke out in his own ranks, resolved to keep the flag of England flying in hope that the human race would eventually recover from the terrible blow inflicted upon it.

Telling him of my horrible experience at the river mouth, I asked if the degenerates of the mud-flats were descended from the ancient inhabitants of this country or from their invaders.

"I do not like you to call them names," he replied in a tone that conveyed more remonstrance than his words. "They are our kinsmen, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. When I see what a number of 'naturals' are still among them I think of the fathers who begot and the mothers who bore them, or rather, their ancestors. They had been taught that mercy is divine, 'it droppeth like

the gentle dew,' but their foes despised pity as a weakness of the west. In the later stages of the war they put to death with indescribable cruelty those who surrendered. They gassed such as made a stand and they hunted to the death those who ran away. Such children as escaped fled in mad terror to the waste and the woodland, where they lost the last tatters of civilisation, existing rather than living on the garbage that they could pick up. They became as the beasts of the field with no one to tell them anything about the gracious thoughts and wonderful inventions accumulated by their forefathers. In winter they died as the flies do because they had not the wit left to store against its rigours. Is it at all extraordinary that those who managed to preserve only a flicker of life should have become stunted in body and mind ? ”

“ And you help them,” I said in a low voice, “ because your ancestors and their ancestors were comrades in arms.”

“ It's the least we can do,” he replied, “ at the Settlement each man is now able to grow more food than he wants even in a long and hard winter. We all grow as much as we can in spring and summer, and everyone gives what he can spare in the way of potatoes, meat, eggs and other food. Among us are a few who do this with a bad grace and it is hard to blame them. Some of the little men are ferocious, and if they fall upon a strong man un-awares, they have been known to overcome him. They fling stones with great dexterity. They fight with sticks, feet and teeth, especially in winter when maddened with hunger. Those who have had brothers or sons stoned to death hate the murderers, and can scarcely be restrained from hunting and slaying them.”

“ Have you always had them near you ? ” I asked.

“Always in my time,” he answered, “and as far back as our records go.”

“Your records?” I inquired, “who keeps them?”

“At the present moment, Doctor Turnbull,” he replied. “I did so till I got engrossed in this feeding station. The task is usually performed by the head of the state. I still hold that position, but the doctor was willing to do it and has better qualifications, for he is ever seeking what will throw light on our annals. I was well pleased to be relieved.”

“For a state that has had a very short life the history must be extraordinary?”

“It might have been,” he said mournfully, “if the chronicle had been kept from the beginning. That could not be. At first, there was but a small company of survivors and fear hung over them. Besides, when they felt assured that the cause of that fear had been removed, they had a struggle for existence almost as dreadful as that of the wild people. Land had gone back to wilderness, tools and implements had to be sought for where they had been thrown down in panic. So we only know of the early days from stories handed down by word of mouth. When men, women and children were dying of hunger, no one found time or inclination to keep a diary. Fortunately for us they retained their reason and the resolution to teach their children in some rough way what they knew themselves. No chronicle was attempted till they had brought patches of ground back to cultivation and built huts in which to sleep and store food against the cold and hungry winter.

“Meantime, their numbers were increased by individuals, families and small groups who had managed to keep alive and maintain some of the ancient civilisation. Thousands must have perished because means of communication were

destroyed, but rumour, which is fabled to be carried by the wind, reached a few, and others were brought in by the young men of the settlement, who, when they realised that there were men and women to be saved, faced the dark and difficult perils of exploration on the chance of finding them. All did not return. They did not then know that part of the population had relapsed into an unbelievable heathendom, and were like packs of wolves roaming in search of what they could devour."

"What a fall for humanity!" I exclaimed. "Do you really think it possible to reclaim them?"

"We live by hope," he replied. "I feel sure that the first step is to provide them with better nourishment and save them from the horror of famine which every now and then reduces all to mere skeletons and causes many to perish. I think there is no harm at the same time in attempting a little education."

"And are they apt scholars?" I asked.

"Far from it," he answered. "They don't seem to have as much memory as ducks and hens. Every day I have to begin again at the beginning; yet one goes on partly because those who went before us never ceased trying to restore what you call civilisation, partly because here and there one shows a sort of dog-like attachment which may be cupboard love, but one lives in hope that human characteristics will return. At present they listen only because they associate my conversation with food. After being fed they will sit quiet, but I doubt if they really listen even to the simplest chat, and winter after winter they die in hundreds because they have not the sense to make a little hoard for the bad season. A very, very few hide nuts, honey and other wild-growing food, but I notice that they often forget where the little hoard is.

I have noticed the same thing happen to a squirrel with his nuts and to a dog with his bone."

"How has it all come about?" I asked, and the feeble words seemed only to mock the passionate desire behind them.

"There is nothing I would like more to talk to you about," he replied, "only I must caution you not to expect too much from me. I am ignorant of everything except the annals of my people, and had I possessed all the learning of the Egyptians it would have availed little, for my mind is too simple and limited. I must go now as the boys are waiting for me, but I will cut the lesson short and return as soon as I can."

He went away, but left me thinking. A personal interest in him was added to my intense curiosity. I thought I would like to see him at home in his primitive Settlement. Then I began to devise a plan of exploration. With a mind full of this idea I mechanically approached the chink whence daylight came, and looked out. The scene was strange and yet it felt familiar. The sun of a winter afternoon was shining on a forest glade. In the middle of it were two great oak trees, one of which had been cleft by lightning. Standing or lying about were many stones and heaps of stones, mossed and venerable, suggesting at a first glance an upheaved churchyard, though more likely the ruins were those of ancient dwellings.

Some of the pigmy inhabitants could be easily seen, most of them with the plethoric demeanour which follows a good meal. I learned afterwards that they were in the habit of hanging round all the time like all loafers who eat the bread of idleness. When they realised that here free food was distributed during the cold season, those who discovered it speedily laid claim to a monopoly and drove away or killed intruders, just as if they had been civilised.

I was more interested in the pranks of a few children than in their elders. They were racing, chasing, wrestling with one another and tumbling about generally. I thought arms and legs were long in proportion to the small bodies, the ears a little prominent, the chin small and the mouth strong and large with prominent teeth gleaming white. Such children they were as one used to meet with in a Gipsy caravan. A race in which they were evidently taking a wild delight was a four-legged one in which the long, muscular limbs were very noticeable. They had a trick that civilised man inherited from his remote ancestors of standing on their hands and waving their feet in the air while they grinned at one another from between their arms. In doing this they exhibited their strong white teeth, unspoiled by sweet-stuffs.

When they approached the two trees on hands and feet one would suddenly spring upright, roll the others over and dart up the gnarled oak-bole with the ease and agility of a squirrel. The others would follow pell-mell, and there ensued a racing and chasing up and down the great limbs and through the branches with many leaps and acrobatic feats, such as swinging from a bough till another bough was clasped by the toes which seemed as flexible as fingers. All the time the pursued and the pursuing emitted sounds that I interpreted as laughter.

It would have been a pretty sight, but for the association it called up. The pleasure was destroyed by the reflection that as the dog had gone back to the wolf, the garden rose to the brier, the thoroughbred to the forest pony, so man too was visibly reverting to his neolithic progenitors. Time like a tide that had been at the full and now had begun to ebb, was going backward discovering again as it receded the shore which had been covered by its advance. The

tree that has taken centuries to grow can be cut down in an hour. Civilisation, which Huxley in his day described as a wall that would quickly crumble if a single breach were made, had proved a failure. The truth of his conjecture was being demonstrated before my eyes.

When Cecil returned, I got him to answer a few questions, and I have summarised his replies as follows :

There had been a succession of bloody, ruthless, annihilating wars, but he did not consider these a first, but only a contributory cause. Some who wrote in the chronicles believed that the whole world had been desolated when England fell. They were reduced to guessing because ships had disappeared from the waters. No communication arrived from any other part of the world, and hence it was believed that mankind had ceased to exist in the far-off countries. If, for example, there were still living people in America, the Atlantic separated them from England as completely as death divides the living from the dead. The coloured races by some mysterious accident had mastered the secrets of the west—the mechanical and chemical devices by which the western sphere had for so long maintained its superiority. They had even discovered a deadlier gas than ours, and explosives of such power that two or three moderate-sized bombs aimed from a moderate height had been enough to wipe London out of existence.

It had been handed down in tradition that there was no real coherence in the coloured races, and that the alliance had been followed by a devastating internecine war. At any rate, no more messages came from the sea. The great waters that beat upon the shores of England had ceased to carry vessels bearing men on its surface and wrapped the island in a silent mystery.

IV

A MAN-SICK EARTH IS CAPTAIN HART'S THEORY WHICH HE UPHOLDS IN ARGUMENT WITH WILLIAM CECIL

AT this point our conversation was interrupted by a loud knocking at the outer door, accompanied by an impatient voice calling for Cecil. The latter, explaining it was Captain Hart with the food supply, immediately admitted him and briefly presented me. I was attracted to the newcomer from the very first. Like his friend, he was well on in years, lean and grey-haired, with an eye as bright as that of a young heron, and limbs the years had not stiffened. Withal, a something beyond soldiering in his look made it no surprise to find that he had tastes akin to those of the collector and antiquary of our own day. Only you could not imagine him buying to sell again, and his air of distinction was on the whole more suggestive of action than of learning. I was to see a great deal of him, as it was he who enabled me to visit the little community which, in a world relapsing into ignorance and savagery, kept the flag of civilisation flying and maintained a faith in the restoration of England to her ancient place of honour. His physiognomy was not without lines that betokened a choleric temper, and in that way offered a contrast to the meek and placid features of his friend. Evidently the two were hardened disputants, and their conversation gave me

a first inkling of the opposite views of policy in the Settlement with regard to dealing with those men without the Pale.

Cecil it appeared was the optimist, Hart the pessimist, in their frequent encounters.

The new arrival had a meal during and after which he heartily cursed the wild tribes declaring with many expletives that their wickedness was incurable and that although in deference to the wishes of his friend, who was also his commander, he brought down from the Settlement boat-loads of food for them they should be wiped out from the face of the earth.

As we gathered round the fire, Cecil in mild and kindly tones addressed his answer to me.

“My son,” said he, and the affectionateness of the phrase was so natural as to cause no surprise, “you must not take a dark or an unhopeful view of their malady. Old age is the only incurable disease. There is always a chance that youth will get over the worst ailment, at any rate, the case must indeed be desperate that produces despair. As these must have had good and bad ancestors, there will also be good and bad in their progeny. I do not believe in utter depravity either of body or of mind. Just as the darkest room is less dark if you can bring the shine of a glow-worm into it, so patient work carried on with hope will soon or late light the black cave of ignorance.”

“I know something of Cecil’s ancestors,” interjected Hart with a saturnine smile. “They were men of piety and great supporters of religion. They carried their message to races whose religion was older than their own. Cecil has inherited their spirit, a kind and saintly spirit, but one that cannot get down to reality. It is not practical sense to talk of nursing humanity back to mental and

physical health when the malady is not in the race, but in the earth itself. The earth has grown man-sick and will tolerate such creatures no longer."

On my observing that the idea of a man-sick earth was new to me and I would like to hear more about the malady and its symptoms, he promptly replied in a tone and with an air that left no doubt of his conviction. "You know that soil will get tired of a crop, even of an animal. It may become bean-sick, clover-sick, cattle-sick, sheep-sick and so on. In a way resembling this it has become man-sick. Human life is going out because the earth can no longer put up with human antics and excesses. The race in its dotage is afflicted with diseases for which there is no medicine. They come from an earth sick of man and of his interference with Nature."

Cecil smiled with the indulgence of a father listening to the uninstructed opinions of his boy.

"Now Billy Hart," he said, "you have mounted your hobby and argument will not make you dismount. But railing as you do, and talking of diseases attacking mankind and of earth being sick of him, could you mention a single case in which reversion cannot be explained by common-sense?"

"Can't you see with your own eyes?" was the rejoinder of Hart. "At a rough guess I should say that nine-tenths of the inhabitants of this island have relapsed into helpless and hopeless savagery. You know I have helped you in every way I could to raise them a bit, and the results are nil. You know also that the animals man had in his keeping are going back in the same way. Our forefathers, as you can learn from tradition confirmed by many old pictures and documents in my collection, had many noble breeds of horses, great heavy cart horses for ploughing and hauling,

thoroughbreds for racing, graceful carriage horses in many breeds, and all have passed away and given place to our rough forest ponies. It is the same with cattle, sheep and other domestic animals. Every living thing belonging to man grows smaller and smaller and promises to share his fate when the race is extinguished. Plants are following suit ; the grains of wheat grow tinier, the potatoes diminish in size, even the garden flowers are suffering from the same plague. The garden rose has gone back to the brier ; other flowers have either gone wild or disappeared, but it is only those useful to man that have suffered. Wild plants and vermin have grown like the very deuce. In spring you might think half the countryside was ablaze. It is only the colour produced by acres of gorse and broom. Foxes, otters and badgers have multiplied till they are so many plagues. A pair or two of wolves and some bears escaped from the menageries, and they have bred till they are a terror. Many varieties of the domestic fowl have vanished, but did you ever dream of such quantities of wild duck and waterfowl as have appeared during the last ten or twenty years ? Nature asserting herself is apparently determined to clear out the works of man and re-establish her own progeny. She resents his interference. That is what I mean by saying that the earth is man-sick. Every day of my life I come upon new facts to confirm the opinion."

Cecil, with the bewildered air of one sure of his case but unable to find terms that an uninformed opponent would understand, looked at me and asked if I had read much about evolution.

"Only general stuff," I answered. "Such reading as I have done lies in a different field."

"My own case," he said. "One has had little

opportunity. Still, you will understand. Take the simplest case, that of the rose reverting to the brier. It is the custom to graft various varieties of garden roses on the wild rose. If you allow the latter to send up shoots from the root, they will grow with such vigour as to overwhelm the less robust graft, which is bound to perish unless renewed. During the years in which we had to shift from place to place to escape the foe, there was no gardening and so the brier had its way. That was not a case of earth-sickness. Now take the horse; he was of little use in the days when we were hunted with aeroplanes and at our wits' end to escape an explosive that left nothing alive in the field where it fell. The horses were allowed to run wild and bred promiscuously—the thoroughbred with the shire, the hackney with the forest pony, so that the foals soon began to revert to the original type. That was bound to occur. It was different with wild birds. Their great enemy had been civilised man, who killed as many as he could for food, and those with fine plumes for the adornment of his womenkind. He had weapons for doing so that were improving almost every hour. He controlled wild life and that became so much the easier because as the race grew in numbers the waste places where they could alone breed in peace became occupied. Then our forefathers were animated with a love of sport, which seems barbarous enough to us, that led them to interfere still more with wild life. They wanted pheasants and partridges in large numbers and killed off birds of prey, hawks, owls and even jays, lest they should fly at the game or steal their eggs. They preserved the fox for hunting, but the otter and badger were greatly reduced in numbers. You have spoken about the waterfowl, but their increase is very easily explained. Long ago when Man was at his highest state of civilisation, the marshes

and lakes were drained, and the waterfowl deprived of places in which to breed. During the long afflictions and disturbances that we had to suffer, the drainage was neglected and choked, and the birds came back. Surely that is not any sign of man-sickness on the part of the earth?"

But Hart's obstinacy was proof against this kind of reasoning.

"Why," he exclaimed, "the argument is all on my side. Nature's efforts according to your own story have been directed to get rid of Man and all the living things most closely associated with him. I have read enough to know the results of his interference. For every plant or animal that he brought into existence, Nature invented a disease or plague so that he was no better off than before. If this was not resentment on the part of the earth, I don't know the meaning of the word. Besides, you have not explained the most terrible of all the phenomena, and that is, the deterioration of Man himself. Those outside our boundaries are travelling a path which we may have to follow one day. Just consider," and Hart's tone became more intense, "the way in which Nature is showing her sickness of Man is to be studied in the children. If you wanted to exterminate the rats on a farm, what is the best way to do it? Kill the females and encourage the males, who will soon end the race by fighting with one another. You know that not one of us understands the significance of what is happening among us. Nobody is killing now, but according to Dr. Turnbull's investigations, there are three males born for every female, and a larger proportion of males than females is a sign that the race is doomed, whether it be a race of men or a race of birds."

Cecil, transparent and frank as a child, made no attempt to conceal his perturbation over the fact that male births

had come to exceed those of females to an extraordinary extent. Yet he instinctively recoiled from the inference drawn.

“You jump too readily to a conclusion, Hart,” he said. “You have not the learning any more than I to explain how this will work out, I cannot understand it, but the consequence is plain, especially as the preponderance of males is accompanied by a serious decrease in the number of births. If this excess on one side and decrease on the other should continue, the end of our little community is inevitable. But is there no ground for hope in some of the other examples that you adduce? When we say that the earth is clover-sick, we really mean that the soil is exhausted of the food needed by that plant. The husbandman does not say, ‘It is the will of God; the earth is angry with Man.’ No! he ploughs up the clover-sick land, manures it, grows one or two other crops and then sows his clover again and it comes up as strongly as it did at first, showing that the refreshed earth is no longer clover-sick. So it may be with Man. My inclination is always to search first for the simple reason and to doubt any explanation that involves a miracle, or such an assumption as that the dead earth has human likes and dislikes. Who could believe that an inanimate clod, which brings forth thorns and thistles as indifferently as it does corn and poppies, has a will and a soul of its own? To me it seems that the explanation must lie in the smallness of our numbers and the impossibility of bringing new blood into it.”

Captain Hart was evidently far from being impressed by the sweet reasonableness of his friend and opponent. Turning to me with a subdued but pugnacious light in his eye he asked: “Have you read much in the old newspapers published in the twentieth century? Cecil tries to copy

their style. It was an era when lawyers, politicians and journalists contended with one another in the art of explaining things away. As it has been a habit of mine to collect old journals I know what I am speaking about. Every year there was a repetition of omens and warnings that pointed to evil days coming to England. They went unheeded as the plagues of Egypt were unheeded by Pharaoh. It is the way of the world. As far as my little knowledge of history goes, there never was a nation, race or individual that heeded the warning voice telling of wrath to come. Wise-looking as they are in their pictures, the Egyptians had not the sense to listen to Moses. The lords and commons of England paid as little attention to their most popular general. Nobody felt disturbed when Roberts, stricken in years and grieving the loss of his only and most gallant son, gave the last of his days to preach the coming of a German war. So it was to be again and again till the day of utter ruin arrived. The only moral drawn from that great conflict was the self-flattery that whatever happened, England was bound to win. It was all in vain to point out how narrow had been the victory. Those who affected to be religious made the unanswerable reply that the Lord God of Battles had decided. It would have been irreverent to ask why He allowed it to be such a near thing.

“To the signs of the moment people always have been blind. How could it have been otherwise when their attention was concentrated on the two soul-killing pursuits—money-making and pleasure? Every knee was bent to the almighty dollar. No other god had such ‘fishy’ devotees, but their ‘fishiness’ was no bar to their occupancy of the highest offices of the State. If a man had money, no matter how it was made, he was eligible for any post. The sort of brain required for money-making has no

corresponding value in statesmanship. At any rate, the rich of those days were the pagans, ignorant pagans for the most part, with a cultured one here and there who was worse than the others. Nor was the middle class any better. Constant striving to rise in the world, ceaseless fear lest they should fall, so engrossed them that they developed cunning, industry and parsimony at the expense of their higher faculties and became rank materialists. Nothing of the spirit remained. The only hope of regeneration lay in Labour, but its ancient ability to fend for itself was sapped by the system of doles and trade subsidies invented by vote-hunting politicians and by the spirit of Trades Unionism which banned everything like a full exertion of energy and paralysed the will to excel.

“It is not easy at this day to frame an exact picture of the England of that time or even one that would be credited. The newspapers are full of apparently contradictory features. So many pages are filled with descriptions of games and competitions that you wonder if there could have been even a minute portion of the people not engrossed in mere amusement. Each season had its distractions. Spectators assembled in huge crowds on the racecourse, at the cricket match, on the golf links, on the tennis courts, and at the boxing matches. Dramatic trash at the theatres, elegant skulduddery at the music-halls, coarse vulgarity at the cinema, had an equally potent attraction. To turn to other portions of the journal is to find equal cause for apprehension. To my mind it seems as though the Earth’s spirit had deliberately set about getting rid of the race by depriving them of the power or inclination to look a single day ahead.”

As he paused, I ventured to ask for an account of the more important events in that tragic chapter of history

that threatened to include the ruin, perhaps the complete extermination of the Human Race.

“It is too late to-night,” he replied wearily, “and the recital is too melancholy. I would much rather you returned with me to the Settlement where my books and papers are kept. But where have you been that you do not know it all yourself?”

“If you care to listen, I will tell you my almost incredible story,” I replied, for the conviction was growing on me that his single-mindedness deserved to be met with candour. Besides, I was a little nettled at Cecil’s lack of interest in a story which might have been expected to appeal to his visionary turn of mind. In my grandfather’s circle every spiritual experience received rapt attention and the more extraordinary it seemed, the more readily it was believed. Cecil had in very kind and polite terms, it is true, but still plain terms, advised me to tell the story to an ignorant and childish member of the household. The memory rankled a little, hurt my vanity, my egoism, and I thought Hart might be more impressed. At the same time I felt he was narrower in mind and more of the plain soldier, with little of his friend’s width of sympathy and understanding, not at all the sort of man who readily absorbs ideas from without. Yet I made up my mind to tell him and he received the proposal heartily. “We shall have plenty of time on the journey,” he said, “and I’ll have an opportunity of jotting down the principal heads and particulars.”

V

A VOYAGE UP THE REVERTED THAMES

PHYSICALLY and mentally I touched the utmost extreme of discomfort on the journey up-stream. The morning was raw and wintry with a nipping wind and a moon staggering from one patch of cloud to another, so that the journey was not exactly a picnic. That was the least of it. Hart had insisted on my being protected from head to foot with pieces of ancient armour which obviously had never formed parts of the same suit. It seemed as though every inch of skin was being frayed at the same time. Hart was too much of a soldier to be sympathetic.

“You’ll soon get used to them,” was all his comment when I winced or complained.

Then he was much taken up with managing the sail. It was a recent invention, “an important step backward,” was his way of describing progress. You will easily imagine that all this did not conduce to a very sociable atmosphere.

When the wind went down at dawn and the cold moon yielded place to a red, feeble sun, two rowers seized their oars and Captain Hart sat down at the tiller.

“Now for your story,” he said. “There are several miles to row and plenty of time to tell it.”

At another moment I would have lacked courage to tell

what must appear so monstrous ; indeed, I had spent some time in trying to invent a method of conveying the facts so as not to startle him. I also wished to avoid being jeered at as a fool or shut up as a madman, but irritation made an end of prudence.

It annoyed me to see Hart under so different an aspect ; the thinker and patriot was transformed into a commonplace petty commander. He wore his old armour with comfort if not with grace. He had none of my aches and sores, and he was evidently proud to stick up a square piece of cloth on his boat and call it a sail.

I answered his invitation by complaining that it was not possible for me to do justice to my strange tale while I was shivering with cold and galled at a thousand points by the joints of the armour. Besides, he was as much taken up with the sail as a child with a new toy and I felt sure he could not listen patiently and intelligently.

“In my time, those who traversed the River of Pleasure used to vie with one another as to which could get the smartest and swiftest electric launch,” I said rather petulantly. It amazed me to find that our primitive craft was the only one on the water.

Hart stared in a way to show that he had missed the purport, but he began explaining that he and his companions had been so glad at finding a protection from the stones that they never thought of the inconvenience of helmets and shirts of mail, and as they got accustomed to wearing them, they got into the knack of it.

“But tell me,” he asked, “where is that other river, the River of Pleasure, did you call it ? on which you have seen much traffic. On the Thames we meet nothing afloat.”

“This was called the River of Pleasure two hundred

years ago, and it was then that I saw it astir with yellow-sailed barges going up and down past the patient Cockney fisherman watching his float. Bank and stream, during the lazy days of summer resounded with the noise of merry girls which came from every conceivable form of boat, from the stationary houseboat to the dashing motor-launch."

"You have read books and are dreaming," he interjected, and my protesting was useless. "All that was long ago and they are all dead. The infants at the breast then are dead now. No oldest man among us remembers. You may have heard the tale and recall the horror of it and the misery so vividly that you may perhaps have brooded over them till your mind has lost its balance——"

As he hesitated, "You shall have my full story if you like," I said, "and I will tell you of the England I lived in two hundred years ago."

He would not listen. "Not now," he said hastily and giving me a curious look, "it would only vex me; no help can come from the past. I was hoping for news from some far distant land. It isn't believable that in the wide world there is no civilisation left except what you see here. I thought that you might have drifted from some other settlement. Just recently many of us have turned our thoughts in that direction. Earlier there was no time to attend to such a matter. During our youth it was all we could do to keep on living. Death from starvation was an everyday occurrence in the winter-time. My father used to say that he was thankful that it was no worse. He was brave, but he never denied that he nearly went out of his mind as many had done. Nobody dared work in the open fields. After the terror disappeared it was a hard job to get food-crops again on the neglected ground. We had to work like slaves, and famine, roving and raging

like a wild beast, drove all else out of our heads. We did not realise what the great silence meant. Our young men are divided into two schools of thought in regard to this subject. One dreams of building ships and sailing to the places shown on ancient maps to search out surviving races, if there are any. Scepticism is the note of the other school. They doubt the existence of places with such beautiful names as America, Australia, India and Africa, and conjecture that they exist only in fables. The more intelligent do not deny that there may have been some truth in the maps and geographies of which one or two copies have been preserved among our records, but suggest that by some cataclysm of Nature they may have been wiped out, else why do we not hear from them? We seem to be separated from them as completely as we are separated from the dead?"

"And what is your opinion?" I asked, falling in with his mood and not ill-pleased to escape the need of telling my story to one plainly incapable of understanding it.

"Long before my day," he replied, "one or two things happened that encouraged a belief that it was only one civilisation that had been destroyed. When we get home I will show you copies and messages that seem to have been despatched by fugitives making a last desperate effort to get home. Probably there were more of them than have been discovered. One was found not long ago. It was a piece of paper enclosed in a bottle with an air-tight glass stopper. When cleansed of an encrustation formed on its surface, the glass showed itself to be transparent and inside one could just see in old-fashioned script a word which looked like 'submarine' and a date which we took to be November, 2085. More we never learned. A rash lad, finding it difficult to undo the stopper, smashed it

against a stone and shook out the paper, but it fell in dust, probably having been made partly of clay, as I find was not unusual. The messages taken up in early days could be read easily and several copies of each were made as a precaution against the loss or decay of the original. As we have to thread our way now between mud-islands which continually change in size and form, I must give my attention to steering, but you shall see those messages when we get home. They gave me an idea that elsewhere in the world communities such as ours may be holding out. I felt sure you had come from one of them."

You will easily understand that no extensive view is possible from a rather flat-bottomed boat as it is laboriously rowed up a slow-flowing river. On each shore there was a fringe or belt of withered sedges interspersed with drooping rushes; behind, were willows and alders. It may have been pretty in spring and summer, but at this time the withered herbage had been knocked about by storm and flood, and in parts was half buried in mud. Behind, were bare forest trees, ash, oak and beech mostly. For the greater part of the journey there were no signs of human life. Hart had told me that although the wood-dwellers up stream were hardier than those who frequented the river lower down, they suffered much in winter and kept near the Settlement, picking up what morsels of food came their way. Birds were in plenty, especially wild swans and mallards. On the land rabbits skipped about and a few deer grazed fearlessly. Yet we were not a quiet party, as the boatman chanted some doggerel verses, river chanties you might call them, keeping time with their oars. One of them recited each crude and simple verse, and then it was sung in chorus. Some of the words I afterwards jotted down as well as I could from memory.

Pull away ! Pull away ! Pull away !
Strong is the stream and stormy the weather,
But rowing is light if you pull all together,
Pull away ! Pull away ! Pull away !

Pull away ! Pull away ! Pull away !
If you remember that home you are going,
Arms will not tire with the hardest of rowing.
Pull away ! Pull away ! Pull away !

The leader seemed to be a bit of a wag, as, after taking a minute or two longer between the verses, he extemporised the following reference to the stranger in their midst :

Pull away ! Pull away ! Pull away !
There's one here that swears when this journey is ended,
He will not come again till his irons are mended.
Pull away ! Pull away ! Pull away !

During the journey this kind of singing had gone on by fits and starts. I had not paid much attention to the frequent interruptions, being indeed much occupied with my own discomfort and general irritation. When it stopped this time I could not help wondering why, especially as there came an exclamation and what I had not heard before, an emphatic oath from Hart. "Even the damned river," he said, "is like the rest of creation, sick of man !"

Previous to the war, I had a slight acquaintance with the river through occasionally visiting a relation who used to live most of the summer in a house situated not far from Medmenham Abbey. We used often to go out rowing or punting, and once made a journey in a rowing boat

as far up as Oxford. But it was only now that I realised what a very artificial water it used to be. Lovers of Nature have often spoken lyrically of its beauty and its exquisite surroundings. London's river deserved the best that could be said about its broad waters, rustic banks, green country, sedges, rushes and wild flowers. Now that Nature had it all her own way she produced these things as lavishly as ever, but also played a thousand tricks. Here she had planted an island right in the middle of the stream.

"Made by silt," Hart exclaimed gruffly, "and the cursed willow trees," he added, "just look at that!"

It needed but a glance to understand the cause of his vexation. The narrower of the two channels into which this island divided the river was also the deeper. It alone was navigable. Apparently the stream had been eroding the land near it, while at the same time it was depositing silt in its companion channel to such an extent that the willows which had rooted themselves in the island had invaded the river bed where there was least stream, causing it to rise higher and higher. The willows on the land had grown and spread out till they met those from the island and formed a vast withy-bed. In fact, Thames, during the neglect of two centuries, had been slowly changing his course by filling up a channel at one place and deepening and widening one in another. The immediate trouble was that a huge tree with a stem well over a hundred feet in length and of corresponding thickness lay straight across the channel up which the boat should go.

Hart lost his politeness and showed no sympathy with my disinterested curiosity when I inquired how the tree could possibly have got into the position in which we found it, and he only muttered about a fool being able to ask questions that a wise man could not answer.

VI

A ROWER TELLS WHY IT WAS ALWAYS GROWING HARDER TO NAVIGATE THE THAMES, AND THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER HAS A NARROW ESCAPE FROM THE WOODLANDERS

ONE of the rowers, whose job was to steady the boat while the others worked at the willow tree, the same man who had put a verse about me into the river ditty, was more communicative. He explained that the willow had been aground for more than a year a mile or so farther up. How it had got loose and floated down to its present awkward position he did not know. "Some of the water devils may have meddled with it."

"But how could such a large tree get into the water?" I asked in bewilderment.

"Oh, that's easy explained," he replied. "Further up the stream is eating into forest land. Many big forest trees grow on the bank and when the river comes to one it begins washing at the earth round its roots getting ready for the flood which never fails to come. It sends a swirl of water into the pit already hollowed out and carries the earth away by tons at a time. After this happens again and again the big roots are laid bare. Then comes the wind, blowing and swishing and rocking the tree and loosening the soil till there is needed only a long spell of wet weather, a higher flood and a strong gale; down falls the tree! Good luck

and firewood to us if it lies on the bank, but if it drops into the water the flood rolls it away like a plaything till the willows catch it in their long arms. After that it may get shifted about by wind and water, or, if a little bit of it touches the bottom it is held there and the river gradually buries it in silt and nothing is left except a snag or two to play old Harry with the fisherman's line."

"But the river is changing in many other ways, is it not?"

"Oh, yes," he replied. "I am not an old man, only six and thirty last May, but I've travelled up and down it for five and twenty years and it is harder work every time. It's the bottom that worries us more than the logs. You can shift a log or go round it, but the floods come worse and worse and after a big one you never know what to expect. Sometimes it is a new mud-island; the one we are coming to is not ten years old. I mind seeing it the first time. One of these soft trees used to overhang there and under it the mud collected and things grew, and there you are. Such an island has often been made by one flood and cleared away by another."

Here he was called for a moment from my side. Those who had left him in charge of the boat while they worked with oars and other wooden levers, in order to move the tree-trunk round far enough to let the boat pass, now urgently needed his help.

The man had a clever, original face, and I was glad to renew our talk when the chance occurred.

"They always put me in charge of the boat at times like these," he said, "and to speak the truth, there are worse jobs if you've been handling the oar for twenty miles or so. It is a bad wind that blows good to nobody, though the Captain might not like to hear me say it. He always gets into a stew because of the lass."

“Do you often get such a big one?” I asked, indicating the huge trunk floating athwart the channel.

“When she’s in flood this is nothing to her,” he replied. “I’ve seen her float away a cow, a cottage and a milkmaid all in a heap as you might say, and she rolls stones as big as men along the bottom when her blood’s up. They drop into the deep holes, and you can see them in summer when the water is low and clear.”

He stopped in answer to a command to bring the stern round to the obstacle.

Then he went on: “I’ve known her in all hours and in all tempers off and on all my life. The Captain says Father Thames, but I say Mother, and why not? In my young days when an empty belly was commoner than it is now, you could get a fish, and if it were only an eel or one o’ them thick-skinned perches, it was cooked and eaten before you could say knife. Many’s the duck and swan I’ve snared in her. The Captain often in rough winter afternoons reads to us bits from the old books and papers he collects and shows us pictures and tells how clean and neat she used to be kept in the days when kings and queens lived on her banks at a place called Windsor, but in my opinion she’s cleaner now than she was then. She may float down dead, sometimes rotten, bodies of cats and dogs, cows and pigs, but she makes away with them in the end. If they drop into a hole she brings soil to cover them; if they get stranded on the mud the queer-looking, devil-like wild folk down there eat them as fishes eat them when carried out to sea. But she likes best to bury them, and if you could drain away the water and lift the mud, many a curious thing you might come across.

“My grandfather used to swear to the truth of a story repeated by many of the old folk; it was that the people of

this country, all but a few, once went totally mad. They were driven to it by years of fighting and hunger and wounds and misery, for they had begun to quarrel among themselves and kill one another before the armies came over the sea to make a finish. Well, they went mad and bands of them swore to end war by destroying everything used for killing. They burnt what would take flame, but all kinds of iron and metal gear they flung into the Thames. It's no wonder we talk of the river as if a thing with human life, for it was fly enough to hide the guns, knives, pistols and machinery tossed to it, and then after many years it began to show them again. You never know when the swirling water is going to heap mud into a new island, or when it is going to scrape out a new hole, but at this moment I could take you to a place where it has changed its course and left dry a great heap of tanks, the Captain calls them, rushed into it by those mad peace-makers of the long ago."

He was one of the talkative sort and would have continued indefinitely, but the obstacle to the boat's progress had been levered into a position that let the boat slip past it, the oarsmen had come back to their rowlocks, and Captain Hart sat down at the helm, stiff, straight-backed, vigilant—a grim steersman. It was no wonder that the men rowed silently. They knew better than I did at the time what good cause he had for hatred and anxiety. Yet even in that moment he did not lose his habitual courtesy.

"I spoke to you roughly a while ago," he said, "I am sorry. You did not deserve it. My daughter—a trap——"

He stopped and said no more, but I never saw a motion so full of menace as that with which he drew a loaded rifle across his knees.

It was a tense moment even to an onlooker who could

only make a guess at the facts. Hart had a daughter, that was plain enough, and it needed no telling that he was fond of her. Imagination filled in the details. The men were tired with a long stiff row, and I was hungry enough to know that they must be more so.

Food could not be plentiful. What was given came from a little store. It was not the bestowal of an overplus, but such a division as might have been made in a beleaguered city where the provident had very little more than was necessary, but willingly underwent some privation to save some at least of the improvident from utter starvation. This diagnosis was confirmed when, as I was relieving at the oar an oldish man, who was near the point of exhaustion, a chance occurred of putting a question to my previous informant.

“ I suppose Captain Hart’s daughter often comes to meet her father ? ”

He only nodded an affirmative with a glance at Hart, whose keen eye searched the bank and the stream, while his hands held the gun in readiness.

The spell was broken in a way that surprised everybody. We were approaching a point where the current was again divided in two by one of those mud-islands which were always occurring. It formed a picturesque feature. On the right, the water flowed in a vigorous stream clear of wreck and obstacle. On the left, it had formed a huge pool as smooth as a mill-pond. Thames at the point had built up a natural dam. Two or three huge trees brought down in a flood stretched like a mill dam from the island to the mainland. In their journey the great boughs with their innumerable twigs had caught thousands of the branches, stakes, turf, witherings, herbage and agricultural implements picked up from a wide inundation.

A great jam had occurred, and it was strengthened and consolidated by the mud and refuse that continued to be carried down when the waters were abating. Thus such navigation as there was had to go by the narrower channel as the other was completely blocked. The bank was covered with bushes and seedling trees at various stages of growth, so that the general effect was something like that of the wilderness which was used to form part of the grounds of an English country house. But this was absolutely wild, whereas the other was Nature made to look wild. In summer it must have afforded perfect concealment, and even in winter self-sown groups of holly and other evergreens and the broom and gorse made respectable cover. As we turned a bend in the stream we could see shapes of men slipping into the dense thickets, as if they did not like the boat, a conspicuous object indeed advancing upstream.

Hart's gun was instantaneously levelled, but he did not fire. "They are waiting; they have not found her," he said, with a natural voice, but a rather shame-faced air of apology. "I could have ticked them off like rabbits, but she would not like it, for though the baggage is hardier than any of the men, she has a soft heart and cries like a baby every time I wipe out a river-man. But I wonder what's happened. An iron chain would not hold her back from meeting us with breakfast when she knows that we are coming home."

Then, at a signal, three of the six oarsmen laid aside their oars and took up guns. I moved into one of the empty seats so that there were four rowers and, including Hart, four armed guards as we drew to the entrance of the narrow passage. Apparently the river-folk had a wholesome respect for firearms. With wonderful speed

and dexterity they glided from one covering of bush to another, thus rapidly increasing the distance between us.

We were pulling hard, but making slow progress against the stream, yet the toil did not prevent my attention being caught by the dismal croak of a raven sounding close at hand. Hart started with what appeared to me very unnecessary surprise as I had noticed several of these birds hunting for garbage along the muddy edges of the stream, and had been thinking that the bird had thriven in the absence of human enemies. The effect on Hart was to make him raise his gun in the direction of the flying men, saying something to the effect that it would make them scurry off the quicker. But the raven continued to croak.

"That's her, but where can she be?" said Hart, and he told the boatmen to stop rowing and let the boat drift down stream. They turned it and rowed with the stream.

It was not until the nose of the boat passed the extreme point of the island, which indeed was little more than a long, irregularly-shaped wall of mud on which willows and herbage had taken root, that the raven's cry changed into an outburst of the jolliest young laughter. It came from the throat of a young woman just out of girlhood who was floating on the slow water riding astride a great tree-trunk that she had managed to push away from its bearings. Her witless water-horse seemed to possess only one volition, and this was a desire to roll over and over. If the rider for a moment had remembered her dignity, she would have been ridiculous, but her sense of fun intensified by a feeling of relief made her explode in peals of laughter as, like a great unwieldy animal, the shapeless trunk would dip and roll all the more as she made attempts to prevent it. Her clothing was scanty, and her only ornament her

long hair, coloured like the first tint that autumn gives to beech leaves.

“Don’t trouble about me, daddy, I’ll swim,” she said, suiting the action to the word and striking out with a farewell kick to her improvised canoe.

“You must go round by the way you were going and get my little boat,” she said, and hurriedly told how she had eyed the would-be robbers before they saw her. For concealment she had chosen the half-choked channel through which she had made her way by stepping on the more solid *débris* and alternately climbing and swimming. Only her little boat had been left behind.

All hands now turned to the oars. Hart steered, and it was insisted that I had done my share and was entitled to rest.

Cheered by the prospect of food, they sent the boat along briskly. Although brought up where food was almost too plentiful, I sympathised with their feeling. It was a revelation that the supply of food was so little beyond the demands of necessity that the simplest meal was enjoyed as a feast. Well it might be! In this case every member of the company had eaten very sparsely at starting so as not to decrease unduly the store at Cecil’s disposal, and they had worked long and hard in the cold morning air. I who had done least was hungry enough to sympathise with them.

VII

A MEAL ON A RIVER ISLAND, AFTER WHICH THERE IS SINGING AND CAPTAIN HART TELLS AS A PIECE OF FAR-OFF HISTORY HOW THE BRITISH FLEET WAS LOST

OF all the forms of reversion I had yet observed, the return to simplicity of eating was the most acceptable. It is pleasant even now to recall the repast which Bessie had ready for us on a little island only a short row from the channel. Thanks to an early start, a light breakfast, a nipping air on the river and the happy ending of an exciting adventure, I, like the others, was thoroughly ready for it. And the girl was one of those who bring exhilaration into any company. It was evident that there were no artificial distinctions when she was present. She spoke to the men calling them Tom, Willie, Harry, Nick; telling each of the small occurrences when they were away. Her news was mostly about animals: Boxer and Rattler, her horses; Nigger, a dog for certain; Mabel, from her context was most certainly a cow, and Archibald a goat. At any rate, there was a smile and a word for each. In reply they called her Bessie, as children use Christian names to their schoolfellows.

Though a stranger, I was not left out. Probably she never thought of my being a stranger, for as you know from the books of chivalry, a man in old armour is not easily

identified. She only expressed a friendly hope that I was not very tired after the cold journey and long fast. Her voice was very sweet and clear, though the pronunciation like that of the other inhabitants, was to my ear strange and quaint. Mine doubtless sounded equally foreign to her, especially as I felt it had a hollow and sepulchral quality due to the novelty of having to speak into an iron pot. She gave me a little puzzled and surprised look, as if she had not been able to make out my words, though all I said was that the interest of the voyage more than repaid me for any discomfort.

Her father offered the apparently simple but really misleading explanation that I was a stranger who had come from a great distance. She smiled a cordial welcome and never thought of asking whether the distance was one of time or space.

All was changed when we landed on the island. The others seemed as glad as I was to get rid of the jingling old armour, and we entered a little sheltered dell where the food was waiting. A glance of wonder flitted over her speaking face when she beheld me stripped of my accoutrement, but it went as quickly as it came, and she became instantly busy opening the baskets of wickerwork and giving each what she knew he preferred.

“You like cold meat and barley brew,” she said to one, handing them as she spoke; “and you cold bacon, and you rabbit pie, and this is for you, daddy.” Finally she came to me. “I’ve done this so often, I know what most of them prefer,” she said, “but what would you like? A slice of ham, a pasty with meat and vegetables in it, or a rabbit pie?”

I chose the last-mentioned and chose well, for the pie excellently cooked with tender pork and eggs and vege-

tables, would have tempted any appetite. It was served with slices of bread from a large, thick, crusted loaf made of whole meal.

Owing to being so much engrossed in my one paramount task, I have come less into contact with women than is customary with men of my age, but one thing I had noticed, that a good, motherly woman, whatever her age, is particularly happy when serving to men of keen appetite food of her own cooking. Bessie was evidently in her glory when she was administering to the wants of each and encouraging them to eat.

“We have little choice of drink to offer you,” she said, “only mead or ale; which do you prefer?”

The frothing home-made beer was as good as it was tempting, so I concluded that all the arts of civilisation had not been lost. The party became merry after the hunger was appeased. Pipes were lit and the air was perfumed with the smoke of tobacco grown on English soil.

“Now they will break into song,” said Hart. “It is a diversion first taken up to help pass away the long winter evenings, but no occasion is missed for it now. The kind of song they like best is one with plenty of questions and answers, and bits where everybody joins in. Listen, they are starting on an old favourite.”

As he spoke, the boatmen were talking to one another so that each should know when to take up his part. The result was effective in a childlike, primitive way. The words ran like this, and the lilt or chant might have been suggested by the old-fashioned children’s game: How many miles to Babylon?

FIRST SINGER:

When the onset came from the coloured men,
Who was the King of England then?

SECOND SINGER :

There were two Kings of England when
The onset came from the coloured men.

THIRD SINGER :

Who were these Kings of England when
The onset came from the coloured men ?

ALL :

One was the King by long descent,
He opened and closed the Parliament,
Presided at every royal feast,
And pinned the ribbon on the hero's breast.
A ruler, he himself was ruled,
A figure that moved when the string was pulled.

CHORUS :

Not fit for war and too good for trade !
Of what sort of stuff was the other one made ?

SECOND SINGER :

The other had made his own renown,
As winner of votes in country and town ;
None could resist the enchanting spell
Which had power alike over heaven and hell.
He could melt them to tears o'er a dead man's urn
Or make public butter in his silver churn.
Nothing he owed to sire or dame
But toughly pushed his way to fame,
Not his to wield the gun or sword
He trusted all to the power of the Word.
Oft as he needed he turned his coat
As the devious way to success he sought.
He could make words flatter, deceive, enthrall,
Till his hearers forgot he had changed at all.
He slyly smiled as they made the air ring
With cheers, for the Master of Words as King.

CHORUS :

The dark men swimming under the sea,
Laughed at such kings with savage glee.

“ And which of you made this excellent song ? ” I asked Hart.

“ There’s a wonderful story attached to that,” he replied. “ Four brothers, who were among the original founders of our Settlement and lived to patriarchal age in it—they are buried on the Hillock of the Dead which you will see as you enter our town—were brave and daring aviators in their youth. They had a narrow escape. After being forced to the ground, they used their last bomb to destroy their aeroplane. Most likely it was assumed by their pursuers that they were killed, but it was not so. They hid in some caves which they knew of in Scotland, far north, on a rocky part of the east coast. No inhabitant seemed to be left in that part of the country, but they found stores of potatoes which they collected at night. Many an hour that otherwise would have hung heavy was passed in making and singing songs of which the ballad you heard was one. You might almost guess that by the reference to submarines. The young people of to-day think it is a sign of dotage to talk of ancestors who could fly through the air or swim under the sea. You do not know, or you have forgotten our history ? ”

Here he gave me a look in which inquiry was blended with a pity I did not understand till later. I assured him of my complete ignorance.

“ Well,” he replied, “ while they are singing another song or two let us take a turn round this small island and I will tell you a story that has been handed down for several generations. Things had come to a sad pass in England before the final calamity. Discipline had been undermined

by the introduction of Trade Union methods into all the fighting services. Cynics said it did not matter since the continental countries and America too were in the same plight. Indeed, the last war with Germany had been ignominiously ended by the armies refusing to continue fighting. The whole civilised world was shaken and alarmed. No avenue was open to the establishment of enduring peace. Yet they say no ordinary observer would have guessed it in England.

“The country was greatly impoverished, but in war there are always some who find an easy way to riches. Attention was diverted from national affairs to the most trivial sporting rivalries. Crowds for racing, crowds for cricket and football matches, crowds on the golf-course and the tennis lawn, showed how the energy of Great Britain was dissipated in games when it was so sorely needed to save the country from ruin. The time continued to be one of wars and rumours of wars. Among those supposed to know it was whispered that a colossal alliance was being made of yellow men, brown men and black men, who aimed at nothing less than ousting the white races from the superior position assumed by them since the invention of gunpowder. It would take long to enumerate the signs that ought to have caused the people of this country to take the matter more seriously. The body corporate resembled an old man afflicted with many diseases. One gets accustomed to see him going about limping and wheezing, groaning and grumbling, but as he manages to survive from day to day his complaints seem to belong to his personality like the colour of his eyes or the length of his nose, and nobody realises that owing to the accumulation of all these diseases the inevitable end is daily coming nearer.

“The few who saw grounds for anxiety were reassured

by a great Admiral of the time. His name was Hood, and though not a direct descendant, he was related to the family of that name celebrated in naval annals. His admirers worshipped him as a worthy successor to the great seamen of the past, Drake, Frobisher, Nelson and Collingwood, Fisher and Beatty. Of these he most resembled Fisher, and just before the great catastrophe he quoted with approval a speech made by his illustrious predecessor, in which he bade his countrymen sleep soundly in their beds. In the teeth of enormous difficulties, of which the most formidable was a growing antipathy to military and naval preparations on the part of the population, he had managed to maintain the Navy both as regards men and ships. Hood followed the traditions of the Fisher school to which he belonged and was credited with the qualities that were then thought the essentials of a great sea-commander. He was bloody, bold and resolute, fierce and cunning, regardless of usage and precedent when they did not fall in with his plans and unscrupulous in the means he adopted for discovering hostile movements and intentions.

“Those who looked up for a moment from their racing and their cricket, or from the still more arduous pursuit of money, smiled with confidence, thanked God we had a Navy and dived back to their favourite pursuits in which they were soon so immersed as to forget all about national danger. On the very morning in which it was known that Hood had assembled the Navy in Scapa Flow the paper had leaders on what I understand had been the subject of long controversy—‘Can a Professional Player be a Gentleman?’ It is almost unbelievable, yet true, that this was typical of the folly with which the country gave itself up to the discussion of such puerilities when the terrible hour drew nearer and nearer.

“No alarm was felt during the next four and twenty hours; it was given out by a Government addicted to deception that Hood was only experimenting in rapid mobilisation. That did not allay or mitigate the uneasiness caused by the absence of any foreign news in the papers. It grew with the announcement that there had been a breakdown in the wireless, a breakdown that before the day was over was learned to be universal. Still it was no more than uneasiness. Through a semi-official channel it was intimated that the Government had taken possession of all means of communication with foreign countries. No one was permitted to telegraph to Paris or any other place on the continent. Still confidence was not greatly shaken. ‘Cunning old dog, the Prime Minister!’ ‘As wily as they make them!’ ‘Getting a surprise packet ready!’ were some of the exclamations made till it rapidly got about that all our wireless installations had been destroyed. Then came the news that bands of workmen had destroyed the telegraph and telephone lines.

“Someone said perhaps it was a well-planned Bolshevik rising, and this explanation flew round, gathering definition and detail as it passed from mouth to mouth. Not till every ear was arrested by a noise of firing in the North Sea did some dawning of the truth appear through the official concealment. Those of military experience who heard the firing said that they had never listened to such explosions before; others asserted that they shook cathedrals and set the bells ringing miles away. But the hitherto inert population now turned the other way, and accounts written when imagination was inflamed by terror are not to be trusted.

“I have been a diligent collector of letters and other documents, but have scarcely anything that bears on this

tragedy. Most of them are from fugitives to other fugitives hurriedly written near scenes of rapine. The most authentic information is contained in a letter to the King from an officer in Admiral Hood's flagship. It had been carried across the Pentland Firth by a sailor who happened to be an Orcadian. When the officer's boat was attacked and those on board it foully murdered, he escaped by jumping overboard. Others jumped overboard too when they saw their friends killed with pitiless ferocity, they being unarmed. They were drowned, but the young man was a good swimmer, made a long dive and escaped to his native Stromness. He saw the town in flames, and without landing, got aboard a small fishing boat which he found tied by its painter to a rock in a cave occasionally made use of by fishermen. It luckily had a sail, and the wind favouring he managed to cross the Pentland in safety, landing near the small town of Thurso.

"There seemed to have been a separate landing in the north, and the barbarians were carrying fire and sword through the country in the madness produced by a first taste of blood. The young man was clever and determined. He survived to be one of the founders of this Settlement. After surmounting danger that would have stopped anybody else he got through. Dr. Turnbull has the original letter and a transcription made before the paper began to moulder, and will show it to you.

"All I have to say just now is that the Admiral, like the sea-dog he was, stuck to the ship and went down with it. Nobody could accuse him of cowardice. He died, mechanically repeating the words that had been on his lips from the beginning of the action: 'The nigger has gone one better.' Some think his last words unworthy of his fame, but I do not agree. He appears to have planned a surprise, but had

been anticipated. The coloured men made their voyage in submarines which carried their aircraft and the new explosive which they either stole or discovered. Some people found an unnecessary contempt in the use of the word 'nigger,' but Admiral Hood was only doing what all the Englishmen of his time did. He applied the word to all except the white races. It was exactly like our reckless countrymen to catch up the phrase and say: 'The nigger has gone one better.' whenever they fell into a trap or got the worst of a fray. The commonplace phrase caught men's imagination so that they turned it into a kind of adage, and when they are worsted at anything exclaim: 'The nigger has gone one better.' It has remained in use till this day."

"But where was Admiral Hood's secret service? Such a gigantic surprise is incredible!" I exclaimed.

"Affairs took their usual course," he replied; "first stage: public meetings, hot air, terrible threats, more boasting—this is for propaganda and is accounted bluster; second stage: dead calm, enemy has got his forces, spends years organising them, all the time gets soothing news into the papers. Wiseacres say: 'I told you so,' and people go on with their games and politics, their silly betting and their racing; third stage: the bolt falls and the fools and triflers are struck dumb with surprise!"

I fain would have asked Captain Hart for more particulars and explanations, but all of a sudden he stopped, bit his lip and became taciturn, as if more moved than he cared to show over the description of what must have been to him a far-off tragedy. During the narrative he had tried to assume the detached indifferent tone of a spectator or historian, but he could not altogether suppress the fire of excitement and grief. When he spoke again, it was to give

directions to the men. His daughter, who knew his moods, gave me a look of reproach even at the very moment when she skilfully drew the conversation in her own direction as if fearful that I should try to lead him back to a theme that after all the years remained distressing.

She was relieved when I reassured her by starting an altogether new topic. The mention of Dr. Turnbull's name had made me curious.

"So you have a school of medicine?" I said, presuming that he had a medical degree. But she answered with a laugh that they had not got so far as that. They just called him doctor because he was a man learned in the use of herbs and simples, in a way self-taught, though he was not only keeper of the books but one who diligently read them. He was almost a hereditary doctor, as the first of his name in the Settlement had been a doctor, and there was always one of his descendants ready to step into the shoes of him who had gone before. Upon my venturing to say that there could not be much need for doctors in a community where the members lived a simple patriarchal life she shook her head in denial. On the contrary, there was always somebody ill she said, and on my asking what was the most prevalent form of illness she at once said: "Insanity," to my very great astonishment.

"It is our heritage from war and suffering beyond human endurance," she exclaimed. "I do not like to talk of such horrors, but Dr. Turnbull will explain to you how minds were shaken when bravery was of no use and human beings were like minnows in the river when a great pike rushes upon a shoal and you may see them in their panic rising half out of the water and scudding blindly they know not whither. Some went mad with fear, some grew demented with the terrific concussions, some wandering

hungry and terror-stricken, lost their senses. There were heroes in England then, but my Uncle Turnbull, who knows the archives, will tell you that the nerves of the stoutest were broken at last and their children and children's children went about with fear in their hearts like furtive, trembling animals. Can it be wondered at that their descendants should be liable to loss of reason, the most awful of human calamities ? ”

Bessie, I felt sure, was naturally of a gay and cheerful disposition, but nothing is more contagious than earnestness. How often has one seen it happen when a crowd of elegant triflers have been exchanging quips and witticisms over a grave subject that when one who has thought out the question and recognises its gravity intervenes with ever so quiet a voice, he produces an immediate change of atmosphere ? Those who were playing on the surface, or at least, many of them, at once begin to look into the depths. In suchwise, Bessie's sympathetic nature had swept her into her father's mood. Yet when I asked what form mental disease usually assumed, she said that comparatively few became raging maniacs. A disease popularly called the “shuddering sickness” was the most common. It was intermittent in character, and was in the nature of a delusion. Many believed its cause to be indigestion, but her uncle was not convinced that the physical and mental symptoms were in the relation of cause and effect. The patient was terrified because he imagined himself threatened by Shapes, vague figures that he would not describe during the attack and could not after it had passed away. He would weep, shudder, pray for mercy and behave generally like one in great fear. Sometimes he would climb into a dark hayloft, or dive down into a cellar, as if to escape, but he invariably returned in terror, wailing

that they followed him. There were less hideous delusions. A common case was for a man to think himself a man from a book.

“I help my uncle,” she said, “and in the winter nights we get up entertainments, reading, reciting and singing. Every now and then a man or woman of weak mind will take to believing that he or she is a character in the story and often that delusion lasts for a long time.”

She kept talking about one thing or another till we came in sight of a rudely made jetty. It was of rough timber, but just above it was an equally rough breakwater made of a pile of stones and boulders to protect the jetty when the water was in flood. Everybody in the boat at once grew as busy as passengers on a great Atlantic liner when the Mersey is entered, and I alone was idle. I was glad to be so as the scene was interesting. Many friends, male and female, had come to meet the boat, and the air was soon thick with greetings and exclamations of thankful relief such as the average Englishman would consider more than were necessary had he just arrived from a journey round the world. But so greatly do values change with circumstances, that a row to the mouth of a river was of more importance, mainly because it was more dangerous with them than a voyage to Japan with us.

VIII

AN EXPLORATION OF THE SETTLEMENT THEY CALL NEW LONDON : A PIONEER AND HIS EPITAPH

WHILE the memory of it is fresh, I am setting down the story of my first day's experience of life among the ordinary inhabitants of the Settlement, which they called New London. I will not detain you with any account of the hospitality extended to me by Captain Hart. He was one of those who make their guests welcome to whatever they have, neither apologising for what is lacking nor boasting of what is on the table. After a breakfast that began with oatmeal porridge and goat's milk, and ended with a slice of home-made bread washed down with a cup of mead, he and his daughter on two small but stout shaggy ponies rode away on their own business, and I was left by myself.

I began the day by a roam round the neighbourhood. First I climbed what appeared to be the highest point of the Downs that lay near, thinking it possible in that way to catch sight of some prominent object that would give me a key to my whereabouts. The project ended in disappointment. The course of the Thames could be followed up and down for miles, but only as a gleam of water through a screen of leafless trees. As far as I could see, every house, church and landmark had disappeared from its banks. No

boats were on its surface and the low-lying ground through which it flowed was covered with water. Looking across country the prospect was that of a wilderness of scrub and woodland. As far as vision went, it had engulfed such new houses as had been built. To one who never had been a frequent visitor, far less a native of the district, the contour of the country or the windings of the river were not sufficient to give a clue.

My interest baulked in one direction was gratified in another. While still hesitating as to whether I should go back by the way I had come or make a circular tour of it, my ear caught a sound of axes, telling that woodmen were at hand, and I bent my steps in the direction of the sound. Presently it was located as coming from a huge growth of hawthorn trees which had taken possession of a space of land sloping to the south. Towards it I made my way.

It was easy to guess that the settlers were extending their bounds. Up to a point there was a comparatively hard path, but it stopped abruptly as it would have done at the barrier and its continuation was a rough track made by recent traffic. The stubs of undergrowth were still white where it had been cut to widen the passage. The track began at one of the highest points and descended gradually to a beautiful piece of woodland sloping to the south.

From it came a sound of hacking and hewing, of chopping and felling, and presently there came into view a gang of workers the most industrious and I must add the dourest it has ever been my lot to see. They were not felling forest trees but hawthorns, thousands of which seemed to have taken possession of what might once have been a forty-acre field. It was bordered on its four sides with ash, beech and oak trees, such as might once have been found in the hedgerows. These were of all sizes, the smaller were

irregularly distributed seedlings, but a few towered high above the thorns and showed the line of the hedge.

At the moment, it was the thorn which was being systematically attacked. First men with great axes smote them close to the root; youths followed with choppers to cut off the branches, the trunks lying rough and bare till men with axes hewed them into logs. Boys then came along driving farm-carts into which they tossed the logs as the farm-labourer tosses the nutritious swede. Finally came a band of children who gathered the sizeable boughs and laid them aside, heaping the twigs together and lighting innumerable fires that suggested the camp-fires of an army before modern weapons were invented. Old and young toiled with extraordinary energy and used few words that did not relate to their work.

There was nothing of the "ca' canny" here; none of the fiddling about and time-wasting that characterised English labour after the war. Yet I could take no pleasure in the sight. It was more like grim fighting than work, a dull and desperate chapter in the fight against famine. A political economist would have regarded it with admiration, and so would an ambitious autocrat with a lively sense of his need for cannon fodder. With me it went against a belief formed under very different conditions that he only is to be envied who does with all his might the work he likes to do.

From an idle-looking fellow, with whom I got into conversation, came a not very welcome endorsement of this view. He sat at the door of a little shed smoking tobacco. He told me that they had allotted him the job of looking after the tools and other belongings of the workmen. The surrounding forest was infested with thieves who went about like wild beasts seeking what they could

steal or devour. Nothing was to be seen of them just then. They kept out of the way except at dinner-time and night. Their chance came when the workers had gone home. It was then that they needed watching. They crawled about under cover, and if anything caught their eye, it didn't matter much whether it was an axe or a loaf of bread, one would spring out and be off with it.

In answer to my question he said that he liked a job of this kind. He was a hunter by trade, a man of guns and snares and traps who would have been a poacher in a country with game laws. When acting as night-watchman he often got a chance of hares, rabbits and sometimes a little deer, by which he meant a roe-deer. These were easily disposed of. At one time he chopped or bartered his game for things he needed, but it was common now to sell them for money. For that too he claimed credit. While mouching around the stones and ruins he often found the place where money had been hidden and others had been keen to follow his example, so that they had plenty to buy and sell with now.

Before we had gone farther than this I began to know that I had fallen in with a character whose point of view would be worth recording. He was shrewd in his way though he admitted—nay rejoiced—that he could neither read nor write. “When a man is always book booking, it's a sure sign that there's something wanting in him,” was his explanation.

He lacked nothing in hospitality, however, and when I hinted at being tired, “Come into the shack and rest you,” he said at once. “You are more than worth it to the like of me. It's not once in six weeks that I meet a soul worth talking to. Most are like them,” pointing backward and making a gesture with his thumb that looked a very suitable

mode of banning the devil, "hard at it day and night, always fearing a famine's coming the week after the next. What I say is: Let them perish of hunger that cannot fend for themselves. As long as there's fish in the water and food in the air and beasties in the wood, I'd not starve anyway."

"Yet surely you would like to see old England restored?" I remarked to draw him out.

"Old England!" he exclaimed laughing. "When you hear what some of the very old men say, you begin to think it a God-knows-what kind of a place where the people your grandmother told you about lived, Bluebeard, Old Mother Hubbard, and all that lot. Once I heard a man give a lecture about the great days of old, and when done he offered to answer questions, so I ups and says: 'You tell us that men in it could travel for days under the sea, let me see you half-an-hour under the Thames and I'll believe you. As to flying thousands of feet up in the air, could you fly over a five-barred gate? Then what babbles and nonsense you talk about lightning—do you think you are yarning to kids?' Such a ruffing there was, he could not reply, but pretending to laugh he took his hat and left."

He paused, looked grave, and then added that it was not fair to make fun of men like that either. This was a fearful country for the number of men and women who go more or less out of their mind. If a man who is mad or very old is extravagant in talk it's best to take no notice. Life was given us only once and it was a fool's trick not to take what pleasure we could as long as we had the chance.

On leaving the watcher's shelter, I, following his direction, found a little street where the village artizans lived and worked. Incidentally it disclosed the state to which building had advanced. Most of the dwellings still remained primitive, but yet there were convincing proofs of progress

having been made. I was told that just before my arrival three new houses, two of stone and one of brick, had been finished. The material had been found in ruined churches and manor houses, so that they did not look so very strange to my eye. From the general conversation, I gathered that it had taken years to cart the stones and bricks, re-discover the means and method for making mortar and lay hands on the tools essential to the masons.

Numerous examples of the earliest type of dwelling remained standing and a few were inhabited, though the majority had been turned into outhouses. It was disputed which had the priority in age, wood or straw huts. Many thought the latter, and I was assured that one pointed out was the earliest. The shape of this cottage was rectangular. It was wholly, even to the walls, made of thatch. Stout young tree stems had been driven in to form pillars; these pillars were united by wattles on to which the thatch was fastened. Evidently its disadvantages and dangers as a place for cooking in had been experienced, as a fire of logs was burning outside in the centre of a place sheltered from wind, partly by the living forest trees and partly by stacks of firewood composed of the large stumps, branches and loppings. The old man and his wife who occupied it declared that heart could not desire anything more comfortable. They had recently celebrated their golden wedding, and they came to it when they were married. When they spoke of convenience, you might have thought from their tone that they were describing the most up-to-date labour-saving cottages. They practised the wholesome and health-giving habit of eating outside, and it saved all the bother of cleaning. Openings were large and many, but they showed bolsters of thatch and wattle made to fit the holes.

No specimen was left of the other oldest-of-all cottage.

It seems to have been shaped and formed by binding together the tops of two rows of trees standing eight to ten feet apart. The rows of trees could easily be obtained by cutting away all that were not needed in a self-sown grove of young beeches or any other suitable tree. It was perhaps too obvious to need pointing out that the adjective "old" could only be applied to the site and form of any of the dwellings. Thatch is a frail roofing material that needs continual mending and renewal, and wood, even when utilised as a living tree, will not last as long as the Pyramids. According to tradition, the first rude shelters were formed of bracken and the branches of trees.

Of exceeding interest were the shops—as indicating what callings were deemed essential by a people civilised but suddenly deprived of that mechanical transport system by which they were enabled to enjoy the fruits of the earth, even those produced thousands of miles away without handling the most insignificant of the many tools by which they were produced. Never did I realise the mightiness of the change so vividly as when standing in front of those simplicities which might have been with Man at the beginning of his days. War had only given a hint of the truth that life and comfort are dependent on work done on the soil.

People whose food and clothing flowed into England from all the points of the compass and from every conceivable distance were suddenly planked down without any of the machinery by which their food and clothing had been produced. Those who had either read to some purpose or used their brain to realise how they stood, saw very well that the race would end if they did not dig and plant. Never out of their minds was the terrible legend that before the British Empire met its downfall food in many great spaces of the earth had been so ill to get that thousands

died of starvation, and most of those who survived had done so by eating human flesh.

Nothing in my strange experience was more impressive than the attitude of these people to work. Many hated it and few could have derived pleasure from toiling in the fields from dawn to dusk, but they could not escape. With them the doom of Adam could not be evaded, "By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." Theoretically I suppose it is the same with all people who on earth do dwell, but in practice it is otherwise. His thousands of years of experience has taught civilised man that there are ways of dodging the ancient curse. Some of these dodges are nearly as old as the race. It would be printing a musty sermon to go into the matter fully, especially as books like *Debrett* and *Burke* contain the names of whole families who claim to be exempt from a curse which apparently is not enforced on those who inherit wealth. A more characteristic feature of the age in which we live is the art, which has many able exponents, of annexing a fraction or the whole of the bread for which another brow has sweated.

There did not exist a single loophole in this remnant of a people suddenly thrown back to primitive conditions. Nature was Queen, and Work the precept in the heart if not in the tablets of the law. Famine, Pestilence, and things more horrible than either, were the persuaders she employed. Every citizen had to work and work at things useful and necessary. Otherwise no escape from Nature's punishment. The fate may seem a hard one, but it was accepted in humility and gratitude by those who had a legendary belief that they lived in sufferance, the Earth having become weary of Man and gladdening at his disaster.

With a thought like this taking forcible possession of

my mind, you will not wonder that I peered at the men and women and asked questions that were inspired by something more than a feeling of curiosity. In their wretched and poverty-stricken position the number of occupations had touched the minimum.

There were no fine ladies, no fine gentlemen, if you accept the rough description of them as a servant-keeping class. No statement seemed to them so impossible of belief as that I had known a married couple without children who paid forty people to do such housework as cooking, serving and cleaning, and as many more to work in the garden.

Many other classes were unrepresented. It was a land without king or crown, without bishop, priest or deacon, without ministers of religion, without church or tabernacle. There was neither army nor navy, nor any civil army of distributors or middlemen.

What there was I learned from an old woman of whom I inquired who inhabited the various houses. There was George the Tanner, who made boots for men and harness for horses, in addition to turning skins into leather; John the Smith, and Ned the Joiner, Harry the Publican and Brewer, and Willie a one-legged Schoolmaster. At first they were paid in kind, but the tendency was now to pay money, the convenience of which had been re-discovered.

The old lady gave her information very freely, but I noticed that she fidgeted like one who answers questions but is at the same time eager to supply more than is asked, such as entering fully into the importance of wattle-making, and the expertness at it of a certain nephew of hers. I asked if it had come down in the family as seemed to be the case with all other occupations.

"No," she replied, "I am an Ogilvy—it was a forebear of mine who started all the building. It is all written in a

paper that you can read if you like, though I could not let you take it away."

Joyfully the offer was accepted. I read it there and then, but am sorry to have to depend on my memory for the following summary of what was written at considerable length on paper so old it could scarcely be kept together. It began with a description of the despair of the first arrivals at the Settlement. They had lived in pits and caves for the war years and had no idea of building even a temporary shelter.

At last, an impatient young man had burst out with the remark that he, at any rate, had tools, and it would be strange if he could not find material. "Here are my two foremen and their ten servants," he had said, holding up his hands and twiddling his fingers.

By the promptitude of his action he showed that while the others had been talking and talking, his mind had been at work.

"Dash it," he said, as the men pressed round him eager to assist in the job. "Have you never made a hiding place for shooting wood-pigeons? No? Well, divide yourselves into parties that can work together and sleep together. Then we'll be all lodged before nightfall. Too many cooks spoil the broth. I could not get on with more helpers than I needed."

Recognising the sense of it and feeling that the occasion had discovered a born organiser, they did as they were bid.

"Look at the gorse," he said, "see how thick it grows, with little islands in the sea of bushes. I got my eye on one before I spoke. Then consider the beech forest; how it has cleared the ground with the thickness of its summer leaves. They are withered now and the wind has gathered them into hollow places ready for use. You

have only to collect wood from the fallen trees, and as many as you like of these red leaves. Bring them along."

Their glance followed his and took in the bewildering array of clean stems, the red leaves huddled in the depressions, the accumulation of fallen limbs and branches, the ruined trees lightning-struck or wind-thrown that there had been no forester to remove. The forest glade and its gorse and bracken completed a picture which said much to at least one man.

In a very short time they had separated into groups each of which followed his example and began to collect fallen wood, dead leaves and bracken, carefully imitating his methods as he rapidly built out of the material; each group put up a shelter whose roof would stop any ordinary rain or wind. His last touch was to cover the floor with a thick coating of beech leaves.

"Easy work," he said at last very contentedly, "when you have no need to make the place shell-proof."

This was the first practical demonstration that a housing scheme could be carried out without bricks and mortar. In the morning they said to one another that they had not had such a comfortable sleep for years, but the new leader would not permit them to take their ease.

"You could not let these shanties on a three months' agreement, let alone a lease," he reminded them.

A great argument began as to the suitability of the place for a permanent settlement, but the young man took no part in it. He started by himself to look for a better. He had quickness of apprehension as well as energy, and before they began talking he had decided that there must be a site more suitable. He climbed first one tall tree then another, till his eye was arrested by a heap of stones in an open space. Hastening to it he was at first horrified then

almost pleased to find it a charnel house. The walls had been destroyed by an explosion. Fragments of masonry lay far from the place where a country house once had stood. Human bones and skulls told but too plainly that there had been a massacre of the inhabitants, after which the buildings had been blown to pieces. Already familiarised with every kind of horror, his eye scanned the ground for something else and lightened with interest when he caught sight of a good spade. He gave a wild hurrah which was repeated when he discovered what had evidently been a tool house, as it contained a collection of ordinary but useful farm and garden implements tossed from their places by the concussion, but under cover and not corroded.

It had taken much longer to make the discovery than might appear from this brief account, so he hastened back to tell his companions, the dullest of whom had begun to realise how very difficult it would be to grow food without implements.

His name was John Ogilvy, and the favourable start made by the Settlement was largely due to his courage and perseverance. The legend about him is that when far advanced in years he for long defied the ravages of time, going about his work with the activity and determination of a much younger man. Yet time conquered in the end, but I was touched in a way not difficult to explain when the old lady showed a huge stone on which was roughly chiselled a very few names. They were of those who had worked exceptionally hard for the commonwealth.

Each man had an epitaph, and his read :

“With two hands as foremen, and ten fingers as servants, John Ogilvy worked fifty-four years at building New London.”

IX

A WATTLE-MAKER TELLS HOW THE SETTLEMENT WAS NEARLY DESTROYED BY A FLOOD FOLLOWED BY A FAMINE

IT may be imagined that the sight of a nation, for it indeed was a nation, though only a little remnant of an empire, so glued to earth, so bound in the chains of labour, caused many reflections. Was this hard cradle the right instrument for keeping the fires of civilisation alight and spreading its flames? What could be the effect centuries hence? As the hand of the industrious maketh rich, wealth would accumulate, but would it not in the end pass as before into the hands of the few and bring about a re-birth of greed, unfaith, ostentation and all the vicious dishonesties that have led to downfall?

Meditating thus, I was slowly walking down the street, when I became conscious of being scrutinised by a pair of curious eyes. They belonged to an elderly man making wattles out of a heap of hazel rods and willow wands. He was in a shelter resembling those put up by shepherds to protect ewes at lambing time. The place was open to the South and West, but wattle and thatch protected him from the north wind and the east. Gorse and bracken jammed together and kept in position by logs of wood served for roof. Although one-legged, he was whistling and singing merrily at his craft, but from the look of his eyes I judged

that he would not be averse to enter into conversation, so I asked him what he was making.

“Odd save us!” he replied, “did ye never keep hens; everybody here keeps hens.”

It was by pure accident that I came to learn from him that there had been a flood in the valley. While he was showing me among other things a number of bird cages that he had made, and all the time whistling or talking to the inmates, a sturdy bare-footed, flaxen-haired girl of ten or eleven pushed her way into the hut and, not immediately seeing him in the dusky bird corner, cried: “Are you in, Noah?” Then catching sight of him she held up a basket and said: “Mammy wants this mended.”

“Who said Noah?” he asked in a tone that told of hurt dignity. “Doesn’t a little brat like you know my right name is John Hardy? Take the basket back to your mother and say I’ll do her errands when she gives me my right name.”

He spoke loudly and in a way that frightened his little visitor, who retreated the more hastily because she saw his eye dwelling on a supple piece of willow.

“It’s one thing,” he said as she went out, “to take a nickname from the old doctor dead this five-and-twenty year, and to take a nickname from things hardly done sucking. Especially,” he went on, “when you are getting on in years. The day cannot be far off for me to take my mittimus, and at the end it would never do to let my right name, John Hardy, be mixed up with Noah, which was only a joke of the old doctor’s. In the time of the big flood he was always near the river measuring the rise or fall of the water and helping to save any big stuff that was being washed away. I was at the same time cruising about the meadows, then under from two to six feet of water, killing a rat or two and catching rabbits and hares that got left

on bits of rising ground that grew less and less as the water rose. I often picked up sheep and goats as well. The old Doc would laugh like fun when he saw me, and one day especially when I was cruising about with a cargo of dead rabbits and hares and lots of living farmyard animals, geese, turkeys and several small pigs, he burst out laughing and said that I was like Noah. That's how folk came to call me Noah. It began in fun, but it did not stop when I was nearly killed through the boat being carried into mid-stream and a big tree and its branches came smashing along and broke my leg. It's a wonder my life was spared. The water had risen a good six inches on that day, and the stream in the middle was like a small race whirling animals and big forest trees. It was in trying to avoid these trees that I injured my leg, so that in the end it had to be cut off, and but for Dr. Turnbull I would have been a goner for a cert."

I imagine that the shock had further damaged a mind never quite stable, so it was very difficult to get exact particulars from him. He remembered, and in his own way described with vividness the immense number of water rats that were drowned out of their holes and forced to take to the shore. He also had a vivid memory of a silly old woman floating down in a large box in which she used to keep her meal, and with a humour that would have been sinister in any person of gravity, he laughed at the way in which she had bobbed up and down till the very cats that were with her sprang wildly out into the stream.

Of these things he seemed able to talk endlessly, but it was very difficult from what he said to form a definite idea of this miniature repetition of Noah's flood. He said that he was a boy of about sixteen at the time, and he lived in a cottage very little above the river level, so his father and

mother were among the first who had to move to higher ground. He told again and again about the old boat and how he and two companions went out in it every day. He told of the many risks they ran because the river ran down the middle in a flood that nothing could withstand, and they had to confine their boating to the water that had overflowed the meadows and was, therefore, comparatively still and shallow. At first they had been tempted out by the little colonies of rabbits and occasional hares that stuck fast to any small mound that the water had not reached, but as the flood kept increasing, they were obliged in the end to take to the water, and very often they preferred to risk drowning rather than be killed by the sticks. The boys looked upon all this as the greatest sport and fun in the world.

This was the first stage of the flood, and it did not create alarm. Young and old thought that a wonderful supply of food had come to them, and it was in circumstances that appealed to their hunting instinct. The cruelty did not occur to them, because a man had to struggle in those times for life and food as desperately as any animal, and the kindlier impulses disappeared. Weeks passed before anybody became seriously alarmed at the floods. They had started in October, a month when the rain was expected to fall in quantities, and it was tacitly assumed that this particular flood would be like many others before it. After a month had passed, however, and the rain still persisted to such an extent that the waters did not go down, there came a feeling of uneasiness. Those who had built their houses in the lower and sheltered part of the valley, began to shift upwards. The prudent did so in good time, but a few families were within an ace of being drowned before they decided to beat a retreat.

My informant had been one of the latter and had a

lively remembrance of the discomfort of the new shelter which had been hurriedly constructed. Everything was dripping wet and it took a long time to make the roof watertight, so that the inmates spent their days and nights shivering with cold and dampness. Not only so, but a certain number attacked with cold and apparently some kind of fever died. Still the rain continued to fall. The only difference that my informant remembered was that during some days it would not come down so heavily as in others. Several times they thought that the end of the flood was come because the water sank a few inches, but this hope was disappointed. Fortunately, the winter was not a very hard one or the conditions very soon would have become unbearable. The weather was described as soft and muggy. For two or three days every week the rain would come pouring down. Then it would fall in finer showers that seemed almost like mists. At no time did the water rise suddenly or come down in a torrential flood; only the river kept rising and rising. First of all the low-lying green spaces were turned into lakes; then the water advanced on the slightly higher ground which was covered with timber, and rose till the trunks of the forest trees were to the extent of several feet submerged.

It is difficult even for one who saw the country in all its wildness to draw a picture of the countryside as it must have then appeared. The labourer could give very few particulars to help one in doing that. His eye had only taken in the details as they were brought to his notice by personal adventure. For example, a subject from which it was very difficult to get him away was that his father's hen-coops had been floated down the river. He would repeat in true rustic fashion that they were all secure one night just before they had to leave their first dwelling, and

that in the morning his mother and sister found that in the little garth where they stood nothing was to be seen of them, and how eventually someone caught sight of them beside the top of a tree which projected out of the water. They thought how to save them, but before the plan could be put into operation, the water had gradually moved the coops from branch to branch till they were free of the tree altogether and flowed down mid-stream. He would always go back to say that a cockerel in one of the coops would every now and then crow vigorously as if he were quite happy, and the hens did not show any sign of fear, but they were never again heard of.

That was the sort of incident that my informant would describe and re-describe as though it were of the utmost importance. It would, of course, have been unreasonable to expect that an uneducated boy would have seized the outline of the wild desolate scene that now began to be spread out. It must have resembled that which met the gaze of Noah when his ark floated on the face of waters that were submerging the world, first climbing above the little downs, then mounting up to the great peaks. Things did not go to that extreme in the Thames Valley, but they went far enough to fill the mind of the people with terror. Human nature under this test developed some of its ugliest aspects.

As hunger began to pass into famine, old superstitions that belonged to the twilight of the human race began to emerge again. It came to be believed that an old woman who lived by herself in a rude shelter made of straw and wattle was responsible in some manner for the curse that seemed to have fallen on the community. It got spread abroad that she was a witch and that the water-spirit would not be appeased till she was sacrificed to it. The Dr.

Turnbull of that time tried in vain to implant more reasonable ideas in their heads. He told them from his knowledge of history of the great deluge that had occurred in the past and particularly of a year in the seventeenth century when it was believed that the whole of England would be drowned in water. He tried to kindle some sort of faith in their minds that the evil, like every other evil, would eventually pass away, and that the best that they could do was to live on the smallest ration that would support life, in order that they might not be left altogether without seed, corn and stock animals. He found them in a state of mind which could not be moved by logic or commonsense. As foul weeds take possession of land withdrawn from the plough so in the human mind afflicted for generations and bereft of its ancient faith and hope, foul and monstrous weeds of superstition whose seed had lain dormant for centuries, began to reappear.

The Doctor for the first time in his life found himself impotent. If he tried to laugh at the flood as a thing that would pass away, nobody paid attention. If he brought logic and commonsense to bear, they did not believe him. In fact, the majority were becoming desperate and mad. In a panic they one night seized a reputed witch and carried her to the water side. The Doctor was indignant, but powerless. The mob became unruly. The old woman was shoved into the water at the end of a rope, and whether the mob intended it to be or not made no difference; she was drowned. When that dreadful event occurred, the Doctor had sense enough to say nothing. What was done could not be recalled, and so he turned his attention to making what preparation was possible against the years of famine that he knew must follow. He collected all the seed he could lay hands on and concealed it in high and

dry holes which he plugged up afterwards; and he also turned out pigs, goats and sheep, trusting that their instinct would lead to their preservation, and that they would be a stock to breed from when the danger had been passed.

After nearly six months of continuous rain the flood at length subsided. Its effects were almost annihilating. It was found that the survivors did not amount to fifty per cent. of the pre-flood population, the greater part had died either from drowning, starvation or disease. The loss in wealth was dreadful, because it consisted of the necessary adjuncts of life; cottages swept away, livestock drowned or lost, much land made untillable for the year. None of the help was forthcoming that in other circumstances might have come from public funds, private subscriptions or foreign sympathy. The community existed in complete isolation, and for all its members knew were the only living representatives of their race. Of the survivors not one was in a position to help another.

A dreary future unlighted by hope spread before them. Circumstances like these, however, made even the smallest slice of luck inspiring. Everybody took it for granted that the wild people had stolen and killed the domestic animals that had been turned out to fend for themselves, but as events turned out the savage people had migrated from the neighbourhood and probably found their simple wants supplied by the water. Most of the animals were found on the higher ground and had thriven on the herbage due to the prevalence of wet, muggy weather. The carefully stored seeds were untouched and ready for sowing. Best of all the weather grew fine and myriads of birds attracted by the re-appearance of mire and bog, started to nest and yield a supply of eggs. Thus a way of recovery was opened even out of this desperate situation.

X

HOW ADAM GREY UNCONSCIOUSLY STARTED A REVIVAL OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH WHICH HAD BEEN ALMOST DESTROYED BY FAMINE AND SUFFERING

THOSE who survived the Famine and the Flood emerged from that peril weak in body and broken in spirit. Depression hung over them like a thick fog, and they were never heard laughing. A spell lay on them for years. He who broke this spell was a young man who during summer-time lived on the Downs where by arrangement with the others, he took charge of the sheep possessed by members of the Settlement. The combined flock was not very large and would not have involved any vast labour if he had not agreed also to milk the ewes and carry the milk down in a goat-cart made for the purpose and give it to the owners so that they should consume what they needed and convert the remainder into cheese.

(No one could have desired a better authority on material things than the basket-maker. He seemed to know every horse, cow, goat and sheep in the settlement and it scarcely needs saying he was a born gossip who had an even more minute knowledge of the human inhabitants. But all outside this category were to him mere "ongoings." I had to go to others for the boy's story.)

Early one morning this lad, whose name was Adam Grey, was milking in the fold, letting each ewe out to crop the fresh green herbage as soon as he had finished with her. It was a June morning. Beads of dew glittered on the blades of grass as they were caught by the rays of an ascending sun. The song of larks fell like water from a fountain, as, with quivering note they soared higher and higher. Nightingales sang from the edge of a brake where wild roses grew in thickets, and lambs raced and played. The young man too felt happy and gave voice to his happiness. It was his manner of doing so that indirectly started the religious movement. This is what happened. During many of those hours in which there was little to do he had occupied himself with reading in one of a little parcel of printed books. It was the Book of Common Prayer, which he read over and over again from the first page to the last. Most of all did he read certain favourite sentences that he loved because nature had endowed him with an instinctive liking for the pure rhythmical English. Religion he had not thought about, but that conduced still more to the wonder when he entered the end of the village walking in front of the two goats that drew his milk cart, and reciting with loud, uncouth sweetness some of his favourite sentences, such as : "When the wicked man turneth away . . ." "I will arise, and go to my Father . . ." "Let your light so shine before men . . ." "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth."

He loved the last of these sentences best of all. He was so wrapped up in his attempt to give vocal value to certain mysterious suggestions of awe and wonder that came to him as he pored over and repeated the printed word that he became unconscious of everything except his effort to realise the music and meaning of the phrase, and the

atmosphere they create of mankind treading the hard and difficult way appointed them by the Giver of Life: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." His voice attuned itself naturally to the rhythm of the text.

On this morning of leafy June the melodious recital had an effect beyond that of any singing bird, and speedily drew listeners from every house. Maidens rising drowsy from their beds of chaff and fern peeped through tiny windows with looks subdued and attentive. Those elders who had risen as usual to work in house or field began to peep and listen; even the youths and young men, heaviest of sleepers, rubbed their eyes as the young voice with restrained ardour prolonging the syllables dwelt on the phrases: "Where the rust and moth doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal."

Some of the women trembled and wept with the thrill of ancient strains and memories. To them the shepherd-boy paid no heed. He walked away in front of his goats and their cart repeating his favourite passage, as a bird is content to repeat its one snatch of song: "Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth; where the rust and moth doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." It was unthinkable to country wit that he should do this, without the slightest religious motive or understanding.

No one could hear him recite it without seeing in imagination what he saw, the moth or the rust corrupting and the thief breaking through to steal. His young sympathetic voice had something of that melancholy that is heard in the

brook's song and in the sorry wind, that belongs in fact to the very essence of Nature. His voice rose to a majesty of comfort and light as he reached the words, "Crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, Make His path straight."

When the boy had gone, several of the women as they started to prepare breakfast recalled verses from old hymns and crooned them as they went about their household duties. One voice louder than the rest chanted or sang as though it were folk-song :

On the other side of Jordan,
In the green fields of Eden,
Where the Tree of Life is blooming,
There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for you.

It was taken up by the good wife who was arranging breakfast in the next garden, and tossed like a ball from one cottage to another till the whole colony was singing. They first looked from doors or windows, and then stepped out and sang together as if they had been birds. It caused many to think of what they used to hear from the lips of grandfathers and grandmothers when a girl's voice started :

There is a happy land,
Far, far away,
Where saints in glory stand,
Bright, bright as day.
O, how they sweetly sing,
Worthy is our Saviour King,
Loud let His praises ring,
Praise, praise for aye.

Come to this happy land,
 Come, come away,
 Why will ye doubting stand ?
 Why still delay ?
 O, we shall happy be
 When from sin and sorrow free,
 Lord, we shall live with Thee,
 Blest, blest for aye.

Bright in that happy land
 Beams every eye,
 Kept by a Father's hand,
 Love cannot die.
 On, then, to glory run,
 Be a crown and kingdom won,
 And bright above the sun
 Reign, reign for aye.

Thus was resumed the singing of hymns in company. It could not be prolonged in the morning because men who started at daylight would soon be clamouring for breakfast and this was a land of no servants. The women broke off in order to light their fires and get the porridge-pot on, but each carried to her household duties a little glow of pleasure, and as they stirred the bubbling porridge half smiled at times and now and then lilted as if it were a lullaby :

Why will ye doubting stand ?
 Why still delay ?

They could not have been happier had they discovered a gold mine, and indeed, to them a new comfort that was

also a pleasure was of more value than any gold mine. For a long time afterwards the incident provided a topic of conversation. The elder women remembered that when they were children their mothers would croon such verses to their babes, but would cease doing so if their fathers entered. Fathers of that period did not like hymns, and sons followed their example. In the masculine mind there was a strong feeling that God had forsaken them in the day of their need and they would not acknowledge Him, but the feminine mind is more governed by impulse and emotion than by any dispassionate regard for justice. According to the immemorial usage of the sex, they adored what they were told to hate. Many stories came out to show that the women of an elder generation had done forbidden things in secret, chanted forbidden songs for example, and even addressed prayers to the unknown God. That was in the day of a far-back generation. The girls had lost the piety of their mothers. The boys never shared it, and the girls liked to think the same as the boys. Thus would they talk in house and field, wherever two or three were gathered together. And because the memory of terrible hardships still hung over them they found it easy and comforting to believe that when the last great river was passed they would reach a country where there was no more hunger, no pain, no sorrow. "One more river to cross," was sung with a rapture never attained even by the Salvation Army.

The wise elders viewed all this at first with tolerance. It was a fixed principle with them to encourage any movement that diverted thought from dwelling on the cruel fate that had dogged this small human family. Yet the mass felt the disapproval of the elders. The new converts held their tongues in the presence of those who were

deemed wiser, but probably they were not quite unconscious of the stern glance with which they heard or saw expression of this new joy.

Life for the leaders had no other object than that of regaining a lost heritage. Dimly but certainly they saw stern battling in prospect and above all else it was necessary to keep the race and the individual hard and fit in body and in spirit. With men so inspired, Christianity was bound to clash as soon as it began to affect any considerable number of people. They, with all their wisdom, failed to divine the rapidity with which the creed was spreading. Yet nothing was done in the spirit of secrecy. It was only that the worshippers were conscious of cold disapproval on the part of those whom they regarded as their superiors in wisdom, and were shy of displeasing those who had so long been looked up to with veneration. Hence they did not draw attention to their meetings lest they should displease those whom they had been taught to respect.

What brought the matter fully to the front was the result of an accident. A man in the prime of life met with a terrible mishap when working on a haystack. He was at the very top rounding it off for thatching when stretching too far from the ladder on which he stood, it gave way and brought the man to the ground with half a ton of hay on top of him. The man was so badly mutilated that little hope of life remained. On such an occasion the Doctor was comforter as well as physician. It became his duty to inform the victim that he had only a short time to live and asked if there was anything he would like done, any burden from which he wished to be relieved.

Now the man was suffering from no lack of intelligence, his injuries were purely physical. He had never lost

consciousness; his wits were all about him, yet what to most would have been a sombre message brought to his lips and still more to his eyes such a smile of happiness as neither the Doctor nor any other had seen him wear before as he replied: "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

You probably do not understand the reason of the extraordinary disappointment this caused to his physician and adviser. To do so you would need to live a life of devotion to one cause, and fear still more and more as the last of your days slipped away, that before victory could be achieved, you would have returned to the dead mould whence you came. That was the sentiment that had to permeate every individual in the Settlement if the past were to be redeemed. It was difficult for a leader in whose mind a high purpose transcended every other consideration to retain fully the sense of brotherhood by which he had won and retained affection. Had not a great compassion for one cut off in his prime welled up and brought to the surface the warm kindness of his nature, the Doctor might have said something that would have disturbed the spirit about to leave its earthly tenement. He controlled himself and: "You have always played a man's part," he said in tones of manly comfort, "your name shall not be forgotten. I myself will see that it is inscribed in the hall of remembrance and it shall be known to those who come first into our great new kingdom."

The dying man probably did not follow his thought. "Oh, Doctor," he said. "Tell them I die in the faith. Parting is a sore thing at best, and it's only religion can make it bearable. If you would but accept the truth and teach it yourself, man! Tell them it's the will of God that I am to cross over, but it's happy to be going. There is no everlasting work in heaven, nor empty bellies, nor shivering

cold, and say when they follow, I'll be waiting." He was stopped by a regurgitation of blood in his throat, and after jerking out a repetition of the word "waiting," he passed into an unconsciousness from which he never returned.



XI

THE OLD MEN AND CHRISTIANITY

AFTER his funeral the old men held a council. It had been made apparent to them that the re-establishment of the British Empire would indeed become a far-off event if Christianity were allowed to make headway. They did not waste time in discussing its historic truth, its merits or de-merits. They had considered these long, or rather, they had adopted the conclusions arrived at before their time that Christianity at its best was a religion based on love, austerity and self-sacrifice, noble virtues in a state content to be poor and unambitious, but opposed to a people of Imperial ambition. Few made even an attempt to preach, and none to practise its altruistic tenets. What they actually realised most was the strength of its melancholy appeal. "Man that is born of woman hath but a short time to live and is full of misery. He cometh up and is cut down like a flower, he fleeth as it were a shadow and never continueth in one stay." True in general, this was particularly true of them. Life had been brief and miserable to many. They remembered as an eager child pulsating with life the man who had just been buried, "cut down like a flower."

Eternal rest appealed to those worn-out with labour as in itself Heaven, but if added to this cessation of toil were all the joys of Elysium what attraction had further effort for them ?

No, what the elders needed was a religion centred in race, one that would make the individual content to have done his little share in a work that would confer happiness on generations who would be active long after he had mouldered into dust.

The elders exchanged a few words on topics such as this, but very soon they got back to the immediate and practical question—how were they going to arrest the spread of Christianity in the community. At the start they were met by an obstacle difficult just because it was so slight and intangible—Adam Grey, the herd lad to whom the beginning of the movement was traced.

Nobody had much to say about Adam, either for or against. It was agreed that he had a good way with animals and always had them in good fettle. His memory was nothing to boast about, as he had been known to take back nearly half of his milk having forgotten to whom it should have been delivered. He had never been seen at any revival or any other religious meeting, and did not seem to understand what religion was about. Many thought him weak-minded, but found it difficult to say why. It appeared strange to them that he cared very little for company. He had practically taught himself to read, and was often found in a sunny, sheltered corner poring over a book, not reading on page after page, but puzzling out a few lines which he would read over and over to himself and then repeat aloud. When he did that, every passer-by stopped to listen, for he brought such beautiful meanings out of the words, and he had a voice like a musical instrument that could turn your mind in any direction he wanted.

It was resolved that the elders should visit him. The old men were very wise and steeped in an experience from which they extracted every ounce of profit, but they con-

fessed to one another as their ponies climbed upward by the track that they could make nothing of the stories they heard of Adam Grey. They might be blind themselves, but they would not be led by the blind. They would see the boy and learn if he had any worth or was a mere imposter.

Unconscious of having attracted anybody's attention, Adam was occupied in a way very common with him. At the shady side of a small spinney he was engaged in trying to decipher and understand portions of a book of poetic extracts. Instinct told him that he had hit upon a nugget of gold, but he mistrusted his own first impressions, and was slow to add to his small but growing treasury of comfortable words. The prize he had stumbled on was "Kubla Khan." It was, like all but a few pieces of prose and verse, entirely new to him, and being new was difficult. Its wizardry laid him under a spell, but the meaning baffled him. His attempt to understand it was not helped by the attentions of six sturdy lambs that divided their time between racing along the hill-top and butting at their young keeper. Though he met their onset with a punch from his hand or foot, whichever came in the handier, the animals were not dismayed.

"If it were me or you," said one old man to another, "the lambs would be off fast enough, but they take a whack from the lad as if they liked him the better for it."

They had come near as he spoke. "Improving the mind as well as resting the body?" he said to Adam. "It is a thing I always like to see in young men. Lay in a store of information just now and soon or late it will come in useful. You may take my word for it."

The lad answered with a smile that might have come from a baby. "I doubt I am no hand at gathering useful information. It's only that I pass the time puzzling out a piece

of English poetry to see if the meaning is as good as the sound, and to-day I have come upon a hard one. Maybe you can tell me what it means."

"No," replied the old man, with a smile as engaging as that of his hearer, "my education has been neglected on that side, and what we have come to talk to you about is the Christian religion. You have set the young men and women singing hymns and preaching and praying. As this religious revival started with you, we wish you to be very frank and tell us what has gone on at the meetings of which we understand a large number has been held."

"I never was at a meeting and I do not know what the the word 'religion' means," he replied in a tone that left no doubt of his sincerity.

"Can you say that with a Prayer Book beside you?" he was asked.

"The book was given to me by Nichol when his son died, him that played the fiddle. I learned to read on it when his son was fiddling, and when he died Nichol was always wanting me to say it to him. He said that was as good as hearing the fiddle. 'Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth, where the rust and moth doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal.' I like saying it to myself just as I like :

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages ;
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages :
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

I often say things like that over to myself loud because it takes away the lonesomeness. Nobody used to heed it, and I can never get the meaning of such things till I hear them."

Somehow the elders were not getting on as well as they expected with Adam Grey. The young herd lad by his innocent and child-like frankness was beginning to make them look ridiculous, but it was left to a very different person to complete their overthrow. Nichol Tod had always been regarded by the intelligent as an oddity, but by those who did not lay claim to stand on the same level, he was looked up to as an oracle. At that time he had reached an age at which the majority are past work, but he kept on and every morning could be seen wheeling his barrow out to his bit of land. In addition to his tools, a spade, a shovel, a cutting axe and a pickaxe, the load included his victuals for the day and his tinder-box for making a fire within his little wooden shed.

"In these days I travel no more than I can help," he would explain, and there were many who knew that he no longer had living kith or kin, nobody but Adam Grey, with whom he shared his cottage and who also remained all day in the fields. Nichol's figure was bent with years, and his hair was thin and grey, but his blue eyes were as shrewd and blithe as ever.

His voice interrupted the colloquy. "Hi, Adam," he shouted from half a field's distance, "half a dozen yows have broken fence and got out on the North Waste. Haste lad and shoo them back before the she-wolf gets at them."

Adam was off before the words were finished, and the veteran advanced to the elders.

"The old she wolf's going to litter in the old den," he said to them. "If you don't get up a hunt and kill or

frighten her away she'll play havoc with cows and sheep when the cubs come, but maybe that's what brought you up the hill? You might want us to stop her in so the dogs can get a worry."

The first elder, a shrewd, peaceable man who prided himself on getting things through by tact and sagacity deemed this a fine opportunity to exert his skill at management.

"What you say is very right, Nichol, and shall be attended to at once. Our young men must take that work in hand and not be content till the North Waste is cleared of every harmful animal. In return, you must give us a help in another matter. We came up to talk to Adam Grey who is causing trouble in the Settlement. Not that we are casting all the blame on him or that we find any ill in him. The lad I judge to be without guile. He has taken to reading books, and that's no fault either. Only he goes about with his milk all the time repeating passages he has got by heart, and there are those who take it up. He is a winning lad with a voice that carries folk away. When he repeats the bit: 'Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal,' they listen as though he were a preacher and become what used to be called 'converted.' They hold meetings and pray and preach and cry as though they were demented. We are afraid that it will end in a revival of the Christian religion. Now that's a very soft religion, Nichol. We do not think that it is good for our community, and I would like to have your own commonsense opinion about it. Just look at the thing in the light of your own experience. What are our treasures on the earth? Bring it down to hard facts and the answer is, corn and potatoes. Suppose you do not

have any potatoes in the pit or corn in the barn, what happens when a hard winter comes? Starvation! If you have had a good store there will be some left even if the rats and mice and disease have taken their share. Now what do you think, Nichol?"

The old man had a puzzled look on his face. "What you say sounds commonsense," he replied. "I never looked at it that way before, and I often repeat the words myself. My son when he was on his deathbed gave Adam the three books he has. One was a dictionary and one was a book of songs and rhymes, and the third was a Prayer Book. My son had no religion that I know of, although this is not the first revival we've had by long chalks. He liked many of the same bits that Adam likes, and he could say them by heart. Before Adam could read I've watched him listening to my son. It helped to pass many a winter night when one could do nothing, seeing that there was no light but what came from the fire. Other whiles he played the fiddle and there are times now when I am listening to Adam repeating verses like: 'Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth,' which set me dreaming that my lad is back again and playing the fiddle just as he used to, first the fiddle and then the favourite verses from the Prayer Book. When he came to 'Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal,' sorrow did not pass away, but it sank as a flame sinks into a glow, and in a year or two it came to me that the treasure in heaven was a quiet mind, which, if you get right lets you live without grieving. It's like a little room into which you can run when storms come. The rain falls, the wind blows, lightnings flash, but they are all outside. It is only the inside that matters. You feel that even were the

lightning to strike it would not greatly matter. The quiet mind has come to know that to be stilled for ever is no bad ending."

The three elders did not fully understand. The old rustic did not do so fully himself. He could not analyse; he had no great gift of expression, only felt that he had obtained some inward light that as long as he could keep it shining would enable him to see clearly and in true proportion whatever might befall. So after talking to him very sympathetically they went their way.

Later, when a council was held on the subject of Christianity, it was found that the elders had changed their point of view.

At meetings of that kind it was strictly ordained that appeals to passion or prejudice should disqualify the speaker from being further heard, suspicion of oratory having been handed down from the later Georgian age when it was an irresistible temptation for professional lawyers to prefer the telling to the truthful argument. I only mention the circumstance; it would take a long time and much patience to examine the possibility of producing truth and candour by Act of Parliament. One can easily imagine that a Mark Antony compelled to argue under such rules could use the style of an honest, blunt man "who is no orator as Brutus is" to conceal a subtler advocacy and a more impassioned argument.

The harsh, narrow-minded martialist who brought forward a plan for dealing humanely with Christian zealots was not a Mark Antony, but he could adopt the language of reason and commonsense. He studiously avoided the inflammatory and vindictive, and almost succeeded in spreading a garment of benignity over his proposal. He began by pointing out that the founders of the state had

asserted as a principle that there should be no interference with the freedom of the individual to think and advocate what he pleased. With this sentiment the speaker expressed a full agreement.

“I pass no judgment,” he said, “on those persons who believe that death is a passing into a heaven and changing an existence full of pain and trouble for one of everlasting joy. Early Christians suffered martyrdom rather than disclaim such a belief and Mahommedans have faced death in thousands because they believed in a different paradise. It is useless to argue about a belief of that sort. All I say is that no traveller has returned to tell about it. Others say that death is the end—a man falls as a tree falls and his body rots back into the clay. These outward and visible changes may be symbols of changes invisible. I know of no evidence either in proof or disproof. These very opposite views and all the other views lying between them offer a considerable choice to anyone who needs a creed. My own mind does not travel so far. The only *credo* I profess is that it is up to us to do our best to get the old Empire on its legs again. If we manage to get that done, the rest will come of itself. We hold together on the common desire to revive old England; those who are not with us are against us. Let them go forth and form a community of their own far away from this one, so that there may be no interchange of thought or opinion. This is not punishment, only separation, and I think that the Christians will see that it is better for them as well as for us. If you mix fire and water, one will go out and the other pass away as steam. We are the fire and our business and what we want is not water but fuel.

“To talk plainly and not in images, there lies before us and those who follow us a work that will need hard,

strong men to carry it through. Christians among us would make for weakness, not for strength. What do we want with the doctrines of love, pity, humility, prayer, fasting, turning the other cheek to the smiter, forgiveness and enduring the ills of this world for the sake of a kingdom not made with hands? Our choice lies between separation or eternal opposition. Which do you prefer?"

It was a cunning speech and it created the impression of being unanswerable. Several other speakers enlarged on the topic to the same purport before the answer of the elders was delivered. None of them got up, but they followed the custom of selecting a spokesman to explain a change of attitude that had taken place. They had no written law and tradition had handed down a dislike of lawyers, but a vigilant look-out was kept for those who had aptitude for stating a case. In this instance, a good choice had been made. The man who got up to reply differed from the opener of the debate inasmuch as he was young, pleasant, homely and humorous.

He said: "I am no great hand at argument, but while the talking was going on I was just thinking who they are that it is proposed should be sent wandering to the west. It wasn't easy to mind their last names. They are known to everybody by their common names—Ted, Jock, Bill, Dan, Hobby and Josh. Nobody ever says Edward Richardson or John Bryson. The same with their wives—Meg and Peg, Sis and Nell. Why is this? You all know and respect Ambrose Pilkington, who made such a clever but cruel opening. Everybody respects him. If we followed the old custom, he would never be mentioned except as Mr. Ambrose Pilkington or Ambrose Pilkington, Esq. He might even have had a title such as Baron Pilkington of Knaresborough; that is where his family came from.

Those who take an interest in these things tell me that Hobby and Jock have as good an origin. Why is it that you address them with a sort of kindly familiarity? I think I can tell you. It is because each of them is a bit silly, just the sort to be carried away by any passing crank of the day. They are not very useful members of the community. I like them and you like them, so we do not say behind their backs anything we could not say in front of them without giving offence. What would banishment, for banishment it is, do for them? You know the answer better than I do. They could not shift for themselves in a new country that is not yet broken up. They have never learned themselves to work seriously. Which of them would you find joining a company to take in new land where the work is very hard and the reward has to be waited for? Yet we like to have them among us. They are cheery, hand-to-mouth characters, and we cherish them. And what about their so-called conversion? I will tell you how it happened, but I would defy any human being to make them understand the story any more than you can make a puppy or a kitten understand. The boy, Adam Grey, who set it all going, never went to any of their meetings, never knew he had been taken up in that sense at all. It appears that after getting somebody to learn him his A.B.C., he taught himself to read out of an old Prayer Book a verse at a time. He lives a very quiet life with his sheep and diverts himself first by puzzling out the meaning of the words by using his dictionary and pestering people with questions. At last, when it's all off by heart he begins repeating it in the open air, sometimes whispering, sometimes shouting like a maniac. But he's a fine lad. Once when Dr. Turnbull was over here, he happened to see and hear him. 'Cædman redevivus,' he said with a pleased laugh, 'a sight like that is good for

sair e'en.' And when I asked who Cædman was, I wrote down his reply on a piece of paper to make no mistake. 'Oh, Cædman was a herd laddie who rehearsed hymns in a shippon two thousand years ago, and why should we not have a Cædman?'"

It was clever of the advocate to bring in the name of the Doctor Turnbull of that day. Probably nobody but he knew who Cædman was, but they took it that he must have been a good man. At any rate interference with private thought and belief was against their principles. Perhaps it is enough to know the result. At any rate I had to hasten away. Hart's daughter had returned with an invitation to meet Dr. Turnbull.

XII

THE VISITOR RIDES WITH THE CAPTAIN'S DAUGHTER TO DR. TURNBULL'S HOUSE IN A DISTANT PART OF THE SETTLEMENT. THEY CROSS THE BARRIER TO VISIT A CAVE-WOMAN.
HER STORY

THE morning of the day on which, under Bessie's guidance, I made the journey to Dr. Turnbull's house, left a very pleasant memory behind. It was typical of a frosty Yuletide. The sun came up shining red through the haze; red too were beech leaves lying under bare trees, like a wedding carpet in a church aisle. The last cottage we passed stood with its back to the beeches that spread their large twiggy branches over its thatch. The front was set with bushes of holly and laurel, red berries, green leaves and tawny thatch melting into a harmony of colour. Bessie, with her ringing laugh and her dog-like brown eyes under eyelashes black as soot laughed like a woodland elf as we trotted along.

She had brought two of the ponies of the country, and her merriment began when she saw me eyeing with a rueful suspicion the unclipped animal which, apparently, I was expected to ride bare-backed with a farm-rope for bridle.

"Dear Visitor," she said, in answer to what she thought my unspoken complaint, "we have but one leather saddle

and must reserve it for high occasions. Let me show you the way."

While speaking she had adjusted a wickerwork pannier laden with provisions on the shoulders of her mount, and with a spring she was astride on its back. Her little steed made a caracole, and then persuaded by a skilful application of her riding switch flew off at a gallop which she speedily reduced to a sober trot.

I never have been much of a horseman, but having been brought up where horses were an institution, I, in following her example as far as mounting was concerned, had no difficulty. My occupation of the seat was brief. In a moment, the pony had risen on its hind legs and standing erect seemed trying to thrust its head among the stars. Luckily, it did not topple over backwards; only it had no sooner resumed its quadrupedal attitude than up went its hind legs and I slid ingloriously over its head to the ground. I managed to hold on to the rope and after pulling me a few yards it stood still and positively leered at me out of the white of its eyes. My feelings were not smoothed by the unquenchable laughter of Bessie, who had for all I knew seen what happened through the back of her head, and had returned to survey the effect of the catastrophe, which she evidently regarded as an excellent joke.

In humiliation and rage I jumped to my feet and regained my place on the pony's back. He would have repeated the performance, but anger and vexation had dissipated the first hesitation. With knees stuck to his ribs and a use of the switch that was far from being playful, I managed to reduce him to seriousness and made little attempt to check his speed when, with nose almost on the ground, he started like a hare to race over the clean sward on which ran a track up hill.

By the time the last cottage was reached the two quadrupeds were trotting along together like old stagers. It was good firm going on the downland track, and very soon I had joined Bessie in laughing at the incident. She soon grew more serious, and at the foot of the next rise jumped off inviting me to follow her example.

The ponies were steaming and blowing clouds of vapour from their nostrils. "You were always gamesome, Paddy, and so ready to show it," she said to my mount. "With your head hanging down you look so sad a stranger couldn't imagine your tossing a man on the ground as if he were a baby."

To me she said: "Let us walk; you prefer it to riding I'm sure, and besides, I am dying for a little rational conversation. There are few who have the gift of it here." She paused and then went on in a quizzical kind of way between jest and earnest. "Being in charge of you for the time being places me in a difficulty and it is equally embarrassing that though madly in love with my father, my Uncle Cecil and Dr. Turnbull, I am going to act against their wishes, and what is more, feel tempted to lead you astray also."

"Ha, temptress! into what rash adventure would you wile your swain?" I asked in mock heroics.

"Didn't you think the ancient armour symbolic?" she asked, and I had to grope for her meaning till she became impatient.

"Children, mere children!" she exclaimed. "Don't you follow? These people of the mud-flats and woods have reverted to childhood for a moment of time. Like children they are happy and cruel, cunning, unthinking." She stopped suddenly and then resumed in a different tone: "This is neither the time nor the place, and I am mad to

let thought and tongue wander from the immediate purpose. It may have been wrong to let you come," she added and paused.

Curious as I was in regard to her reserve and hesitation, it seemed to me the only hopeful method to let her take her own way. After a while she asked if I could make out in the distance what looked like a mound and a row of palisades.

When I had done so—"That is our Land's End," she said, "and beyond it the land is wilderness and inhabited by savages. Will you stop here till I go and return?"

"No, I will not," was the prompt reply. "Where you go I also am going."

She did not seem displeased at the decision with which this was said.

"You cannot go without knowing what my errand is," she said, and added: "If you were told you might not be sympathetic."

"Why not tell me and find out?" I asked, "unless you have discovered some reason for distrust."

"No, no," she replied impatiently, "I trusted you at sight, but my way leads through briars and thorns. It was a mad impulse; most unfair to bring you. Let me go and trust me when I say it is innocent and merciful. You must be in no way responsible."

"That's neither here nor there, Bessie," I said, "to go beyond the boundary is dangerous, and you should not go alone."

"I've done so many a time before," she rejoined, and once more became quiet as if immersed in thought, while I waited patiently. At last she broke the silence.

"I have always acted on the principle 'Trust not at all or all in all,' and I trust you though our acquaintance has

been short." She spoke without a suspicion of impulse, but deliberately and coldly as if formulating a decision at which she had slowly arrived.

"What I am going to say," she resumed, "you will very likely put down to the arrogance of youth and inexperience. It is very easy for the young to believe they can set the world right on a great matter till they have failed in many a small one. Also, it is to me hateful that I should oppose the kith and kin from whom I have had nothing but love, yet faithfulness to myself cannot really be unfaithfulness to them. I am a heretic to the creed of the Settlement. My faith in the future has swung round to the stunted, half-witted, beast-like savages."

"You astonish me!" I exclaimed, but I did not say that the astonishment was magnified by the intense hatred she crowded into the last three adjectives. Her tone was like the hissing of red-hot iron when thrown into ice.

"You mean, I suppose, that after being coddled and schoolmastered by generations of the benevolently minded, they will grow strong and overcome their benefactors?"

"That is a possibility I had overlooked," she replied, "one that Cecil at least, would contemplate without dissatisfaction. His object would be achieved and the instrument for which there is no further use destroyed in the process, but Nature does not provide two men like him in a hundred years. 'Noble and humble,' is the phrase for him."

The observation seemed to bring her back to her usual self, and she continued:

"As I promised to hand you over to Dr. Turnbull by mid-day, we must do our explanation another time. Just now I can put it all in an eggshell. They are increasing, we diminishing in numbers. It isn't only that we have more

boys than girls—the boys have not long lives. They come into the world as beautiful babies, and as children they are still more charming, but looked at closely they are too slender, too fine in the bone, and it may be against them that they have a close family resemblance to one another. They are active, but not strong, and many die between the ages of twenty and twenty-five. As families are not large, there has been a serious falling off in population, and it is no longer made good by adherents who used to be continually arriving from their hiding places. The caves are all empty now. I can give you on the spot a curious proof of what I say. Look at the barrier!” The morning haze had now disappeared and an unclouded sun was shining, so I could easily see the barrier stretching away for miles.

“Watch it,” she said, “while I make a noise they will know. It is a cry often heard in the woodland.”

It was indeed a strange cry, and had I heard it when alone in the wood it would have been puzzling to decide whether it came from a wild animal or a human being. The sound roused into life what had seemed to be a number of dead logs lying at intervals along the barrier. From the way in which their tails were carried, I saw that they were great dogs of the old type of rough-haired greyhound.

“Men acted as sentinels till lately,” she explained, “but they cannot be spared any longer, and so dogs had to be trained under the supervision of veterans no longer fit for hard work. While our numbers have declined those of the wild people have increased. You will be surprised to hear it considering the number of deaths even in a mild winter and that the feeble whether old or young are killed whenever they can be caught. It is due to the numbers born. An old and worn out race is nursing a young and vigorous one—a lean and slippered pantaloon dandling

the baby fated to destroy him! Every one of our men has to give up some time to learn soldiering because of an apprehension that the savages will learn to co-operate with one another and attack their benefactors. Look! this is old William, one of our military heroes, who, at the end of his life has become a commander of dogs."

A frail old figure in a flowing homespun cloak had indeed appeared and was rating the dogs that lay down again at his bidding.

"Let us get further in among the trees," urged Bessie. "I fancy the dogs are still suspicious. I would not for worlds that old William caught sight of us. He would talk about it to everyone he met for weeks after. A man gossip is ten times worse than a woman gossip."

Bessie resumed the conversation in a whisper. "It is luck to have spotted old William at this particular place. Further along is my favourite crossing. A good friend waits me there."

Withdrawing into the woodland, leading ponies that made no noise on the bare ground, which being under the beeches remained moist in spite of the frost, we skirted, I should think, a hundred and fifty yards of barrier, then drew up and tied the ponies.

"It looks as if I were bringing you into a secret plot," she said with a laugh, as she loosened the cord of her wicker-work pannier.

"Before leading you further into danger, let me explain that it is only a conspiracy to feed a poor woman. There is no fighting against necessity, and I have no scruples about deceiving old William."

Time and place were not suitable for discussion, even if I had felt inclined to it, so my only reply was to lay hold of her well-filled pannier and tell her to march on. Before

doing so, she took from the basket a little parcel with hay tied round it—this for cleanliness I divined in seeing a good thick end of bone sticking out from the hay—and it was hardly necessary for her to explain that it was “a bite for my four-footed Charon.” She had chosen the best possible place to cross in privacy. It was where a tiny rivulet glanced down a channel worn deep into the soil. Charon rose to his feet as we approached, and turned out to be a great, firmly-knit brindled mongrel, who I could see would be a formidable enemy to anyone of whom he had a suspicion. I have been among dogs all my life and I never saw one with a wiser head, though many would only have noticed how formidable were the strong jaws, the brilliant eye and gleaming teeth. On this occasion, a wag of his tail showed that he recognised a friend, and when, at her request, I gave him the bone—a large and meaty one—his attitude said as plainly as words: “My friend’s friend is my friend.” So we crossed the barrier without disagreeable incident and crept into the new Heathendom by a hole that had been made in the rotten palisade.

“He will never forget; you could come back by yourself now,” said Bessie, and a little glow came into my heart at the idea of her having taken such a possibility into consideration.

I noticed very little difference between the land outside the pale and that within. Bessie, speaking in a low voice, almost a whisper, said that on the assumption that more and more land would be required, the barrier had been erected well beyond the cultivated area. Fancy a wilderness in winter, an irregular forest where a sprinkling of timber trees stand beside scrubby hawthorn thickets and accumulations of bramble. Bessie followed the brook’s course.

“It is just here,” she said, poised on a large stone round which the water bubbled, and pointed to an opening in the face of the bank that might have led to the lair of some wild animal. Then she gave the sharp, cat-like cry of the little owl and a face peered out very cautiously. A shock of black untidy hair proclaimed it to be that of a woman, and it was followed by the wail of a fretful baby.

“Poor things,” whispered Bessie, “they must be without food.”

Quickly she clambered up and entered on all fours. What she did in a few seconds took me as many minutes, and before I got into the dark cave, she had produced a vessel of milk and was feeding both the mother and the child. At her side was a dog very like the one on the barrier. He stopped his endearments to show his white teeth and growl on my entry, but at her “Hush, Roger, a friend!” he resumed his former attentions and paid no other heed to the stranger.

“I have not forgotten you,” speaking to the dog as though he were a human friend, “take that and go to your corner.”

He marched off wagging his tail, and Bessie, having found something to eat for all, became busy emptying her pannier talking to the woman the while and giving me time to look round. I imagine the child must have been about twelve months old or so; at any rate, it was weaned and the mother was feeding it with bread and milk.

Bessie gave me a look which said plainly: “Don’t ask questions just now; we can talk afterwards.”

An altogether new Bessie was disclosed. What a fool I had been not to observe her hands! It had often occurred to me that hands were a revelation of character. Hers had efficiency written all over them; hands that never seemed to move rapidly, but that was because there was no fuss

or superfluous movement. They unloaded her parcels of food and laid each away while she told what was to be done with it. One was for to-day's use, another for to-morrow, and a third would keep and would be something in the house in case of another supply being delayed. There was bread, fresh meat, cheese, salt meat, salt fish and salt butter. Then the same hands became motherly as she took the child and while cooing and talking to it, examined skin and clothing, putting on and taking off, while all the time the baby was kept happy and smiling.

While she proceeded, I noticed that the cave was formed by a rift in the chalk which had become filled with earth. The first excavator was probably a badger or a fox, but human hands had recently been busy, and the absence of any accumulation of earth outside made it look probable that it was only thrown out when the flooded rivulet was in a condition to wash it away. No furniture was visible, unless the word could be applied to a bed made by covering the floor of the cave with dried grass and heather, a log to sit on and a few vessels of rough earthenware. The girl inhabitant was young, but it was difficult to guess her age. She was small, but more inclined to be plump than thin. Her eyes were gentle in repose, but at the slightest alarm they lit up and glowed like those of a wild beast at bay. I could guess what would happen if she were at bay by a little incident that happily was followed by no grave mishap.

Our first warning was given by the dog. He dropped his bone under his fore paws, cocked his ears and gave a low growl like that with which he had greeted my entrance. In a moment the woman climbed to the roof of the cave by some out-jutting bits of rock which I had not previously noticed in the imperfect light, picked up a stone very gently and peeped out. Bessie followed her example,

and so did I. What we saw was only a man chasing some animal, which we thought must be a squirrel. Probably it had a limb, or maybe two, broken by a stone, as he got it while it was making ineffectual attempts to get up a beech tree. He retired with it to a thicket. He took the direction exactly opposite to ours, and shortly after Bessie and I started on the return journey.

She spoke little till we got back to civilised territory. Then she said anxiously and with a curious timidity :

“ You do not blame me for breaking my father’s rule, do you ? I could not help it.”

“ It is impossible for you to imagine me capable of doing so,” I replied fervently, “ but won’t you tell me all the story ? ”

Her face beamed in a way that filled me with self-reproval for not having earlier discerned her gentleness and humility.

“ The tale is very simple,” she replied. “ Had I been a boy I would have been an adventurer in this waste, for I have loved to wander in it from childhood, but I am only a girl and was afraid to go further in by myself than what would be a good run back. I can run and swim as well as most, but at fighting would have no chance. Last April when getting spring flowers just outside the barrier, I saw this woman carrying her child under her arm in a way they have and looking among the beech and oak trees for any mast or acorns that might have been left from last autumn. She was about fifty yards away and did not see me or the dog, the same that you saw in the cave. Every now and then she sat down to rest and looked very tired and emaciated. I had some bread and jam in my pocket and was hesitating about giving her it when I caught sight of a man evidently stalking her. He too, looked like some famished wild beast, for the hardest time in the year is that which comes

between winter and summer. When within twenty yards or so, he cast a stone at her from his sling. Luckily, it hit the trunk of the tree under which she was sitting. In the twinkling of an eye she managed to get to a tree further away while he was fixing another stone in his sling. He was again foiled and he started to run towards her brandishing a heavy stick. For a moment I was paralysed by horror. A fight between two powerful men is bad enough, but between two famine-stricken wretches it was dreadful, so I set the dog at him just when the woman had stumbled and fallen. She lay still and the dog went straight for the man. He yelled and flourished his club, but the dog with his tail between his legs and an ugly grin on his face rushed as he has often done at one of the forest boars; whereupon the man saved himself in the squirrel's way by springing up a tree. I then hurried up, seized the baby and telling the woman to follow, ran for it. Since then I have been in the habit of giving her food at times when I know she must be pinched, and made over to her the secret cave in which I used to play housekeeping when a girl. Its nearness to the barrier has been her salvation, as the fiercest of these people avoid as far as they can a neighbourhood in which there are men with guns and fierce dogs."

I expressed a wonder that they did not themselves keep dogs, to which she replied that they stole every stray puppy they could lay hands on, but all living things disappeared in the winter except the wild creatures which could take care of themselves to the extent of avoiding extermination.

"Wasn't the baby splendid?" exclaimed Bessie as soon as, with light feet, we had got well away from the barrier. She paused as if waiting for an enthusiastic endorsement. Not having been more than once or twice in highly polished society I lied, as a famous Scotsman "jocked," with diffi-

culty, and answered that other things being so interesting, my attention had not been concentrated on the infant, but it seemed to conform to the impression one had of babies. It was not very clean, it cried when it felt hungry and crowed when its little stomach was replenished. When it could absorb no more, it became so aggressively happy that in pure joy it began pulling its mother's abundant hair, and when that attack was foiled, tried playfully to gouge her eye out with its finger; in short, behaved in the way usual with a little monkey of that age.

"You may be disappointed," I concluded, "with my want of appreciation, but the child seemed to me just a child differing in no essential from other little persons whom the fond mother holds up for admiration. To her doting mind its playfulness indicates that it will grow up gay and generous; she forgets that the engaging kitten becomes the gloomy cat. If, when stuffed with food it becomes dull, its dullness is interpreted as wisdom. To me, the beloved offspring of one is just the same as the blessed offspring of another. Your child of the waste does not differ by one iota from any other child."

Bessie hung with concentrated eagerness on my description, just as though every commonplace word had been weighed as a wise-acre might his platitudes. At the end, her features lit up like the top of an eastern hill when the sun rises.

"I am glad that I brought you," and no vein of irony could find a place in her cooing voice. "I was afraid you might have noticed something dreadful. When you said monkey, I felt cold all over. You cannot guess how relieved I was when you made me feel that the child of the outcast is exactly like those of the civilised. If it is the same, it is better, because it is sturdier than those in our

own 'rising one' class. The pity is that it will never look so well again. Hunger will prevent its growing. Why until a few years ago our own cattle grew so weak from want of winter food that they had to be half led, half lifted to pasture when the spring grass came. They never became a fourth of the weight of the beasts we breed now.

"If growing children have to go through a famine once a year how can they become full-grown men and women? That's at the very essence of my gospel. Don't trust to relieving them with food in wintry weather. Collect these infants when quite young, by force if necessary, feed and school them and you will rejuvenate the race. Now we must get off, no more time for lagging. Turn this over in your mind and I am sure you will support my plan."

She was evidently "bucked," as you would say, by my very commonplace remarks about the child, for she dashed her little steed with a yell of delight at a broad drain which separated the desert from the sown, took it at a flying leap and swept over a piece of turf as if she were behind a pack in full cry. As I followed with an eye on her tossing hair, I felt like a ruled but unruly groom!

XIII

THE TRAVELLER DISCOVERS THAT HE HAS BEEN TAKEN TO DR. TURNBULL'S HOUSE AS A PATIENT SUFFERING FROM ONE OF THE DELUSIONS COMMON IN THE SETTLEMENT. THE DOCTOR IS ASSURED OF HIS SANITY AND ALLOWS HIM TO COPY FROM AN OLD MANUSCRIPT THE STORY OF THE FIRST DR. TURNBULL'S ESCAPE FROM GLASGOW

IS he a physician in the modern sense or only the Medicine Man of a tribe had become a very practical question in my mind when, in the light of a fire of logs reinforced by that of two wax candles, I sat down opposite to Dr. Turnbull. Until then, there had been no opportunity for real conversation. On our arrival his salute was only "Hallo, Betty." Her introduction was but to say: "This is the visitor father spoke to you about," after which she made off, saying as she went: "Don't heed his calling me Betty; I choose to be Bessie and nothing else."

Dr. Turnbull had been called away just as we were starting our mid-day meal, and he did not return till dusk. His absence left me with an hour or two in which to become acquainted with this distant part of the Settlement. It was like the other, girt with swelling woods, had the same homesteads with thatched cottages, gardens and patches of meadow or ploughland. Apparently, the land was part of a plateau that had been damp or even marshy in character,

as there were many open drains leading the water down to a great ditch on the edge of the wood and thence to the river. There were men in the fields digging out new channels.

Of the houses, the most remarkable was that at which I was a guest. It was large and looked like a number of low-roofed cottages merged into one. Each had a door of its own and a small window. A shrewder head than mine would have gathered the character of the place more quickly. Always keen to make acquaintance with my whereabouts, I started for a walk round, after a brief but sufficient meal. Later on something will be said about this portion of the Settlement, but to avoid unnecessary mystification it may be as well to set down in plain terms what had dawned on my mind, but never till now assumed definite shape. It was that I had been set down as a harmless lunatic, one suffering from a great delusion. I was a patient rather than a guest in the Doctor's home. It was the character of this dwelling that turned suspicion into certitude. The house consisted of six cottages, only one of which was occupied by the Doctor. In each of the others a patient was located who was feeble-minded. They were sunning themselves on the south side of a wall where benches had been placed. Their attitude to one another would have been highly amusing had it not been pathetic.

As is customary in such cases each thought all the others crazy, and himself or herself the only sane member of the company. Consequently, they irritated one another when they attempted conversation, but were willing and eager to talk to a new-comer.

Crazy Bob was always running away from a Shape his fancy saw at his lintel; crazy Nan was continually taking some man for her father and embarrassing him with attention,

her latest victim was no less a person than the Doctor. Equally silly were the crazes of Dick, Jack and Nell. To a layman like myself they had the physical appearance of being sturdy rustics, restless eyes only giving a hint of intellectual defect. One of them gave me a shock ; he asked where I was staying, and on my answering that I was the Doctor's guest : " He is the Doctor's guest, tehee, tehee ! " he said.

He had a thin vacant laugh that seemed to be an indication in itself of lunacy, and when the others replied in chorus : " He'll soon come to us, tehee, tehee," I could not help what I knew to be a senseless irritation and left them.

Off I started at a sharp pace, but ere long I found myself reconstructing the conspiracy. No doubt, Cecil, when he found a stranger appearing in the midst, wearing what in his eyes must have appeared a fantastic dress and speaking the native tongue in a strange accent, must have concluded that here was a " lunatic." At the same time one hopes that he discovered some glimmering of an intelligence superior to Dr. Turnbull's feeble-witted patients.

" There's no harm in the poor chap, but for this craze he would be one of the best of us," would in all probability be the kindly verdict that he passed on to Captain Hart.

So concentrated was I in imagining what was likely to have taken place, that I walked on for miles, and might have been lost had it not been that my way led up the river and I had only to follow it in the opposite direction to get back to the starting point.

The shadows of night were creeping over the valley before I got back to the Doctor's house. I was tired enough to appreciate a rest before the blazing wood fire.

A walk seldom fails to clarify my ideas, and they had

become definite before a word was said. First, it was clear that in the circumstances I had been so far treated with kindness. Hart had apparently agreed with Cecil that I was a simple soul living under a hallucination. They evidently pitied me so much that for them to listen to my story would have been as disagreeable as watching a friend exposing a sore that demanded a surgical operation. Hart's daughter was dear to him as the apple of his eye, yet he had not hesitated to let her be my companion in a journey that was long as journeys were reckoned in the Settlement. Then I was not so completely purged of human vanity as to believe myself wholly uninteresting to a young and intelligent girl. In her heart of hearts she must have wondered who I was, what I was and whence I came. When to myself I frankly admitted a share of human vanity, it was equally plain that she, as a daughter of Eve, must have inherited a touch of the curiosity for which that experimentalist in forbidden fruit forfeited Eden; yet she asked no question. She ignored every hint that I was not only eager but willing to relate my story. Eliminating every other explanation, the conclusion arrived at was that her father had enjoined her neither to ask nor listen to anything about myself.

It appeared possible that other inhabitants had been given a hint to maintain the same attitude. At any rate, pains had been taken to remove everything strange in my outward appearance. Captain Hart had found me a suit of clothes such as were worn by himself and his neighbours, and Bessie had used a very coaxing smile to persuade me to substitute them for garments that ordinary to me, would have looked foreign. She had also on more than one occasion mimicked my pronunciation and taught me that of the place and period. Everything was done and done

very gently to induce me to lay aside external signs of the delusion under which they thought me to be labouring.

Meditation produced a feeling far from unpleasant. It showed that I had been accepted as a friend and equal, not on account of written or other formal credentials, but on my own account. It was easy to guess that whatever was the urgent business that took Hart over here the very first day after the conclusion of his river voyage, he had taken occasion to tell what he knew of my case. It would have been churlish of me, when they trusted me, to disturb their faith. At any rate, if Dr. Turnbull had worn the look of a devil incarnate, I would have pawned my soul to make friends with him. Did he not keep the chronicle for this reversion of civilisation? Was he not the most learned in its history? I was prepared to lick the dust at his feet if he would cast a light, were it only the feeblest glimmer, on the events which preceded this culmination. So far I had only known Dr. Turnbull by repute and a brief hurried interview. Now that I was meeting him at his own fireside, I was all on edge to study and know him inside and out.

“A Scot” was my first mental comment, for a thousand years are but as a day in the history of that race. The Scot changeth not any more than the Jew, never mind what seas have roared between him and his native land. Look for the type in the portraits of the ancient kings or in the old statuary. There you will find it as marked as it is in the Glasgow Baillies, the Minister, Elders of the General Assembly, the schoolmasters, the doctors and the sportsmen of to-day.

I think Dr. Turnbull was conscious that he must have resembled the portrait of one of his own ancestors as Wilkie

might have painted it. In his prime he had been exceptionally strong, but advancing years found him spare and almost gaunt. His mouth was hidden under a shaggy and grizzled beard. Grizzled too were the eyebrows that hung over his large grey eyes, like thatch above two pent-house windows. His air of genuineness and sincerity inspired confidence. The expression of his face was that of a democrat of the old style, a democrat such as Scotland alone can produce. One felt sure of his breeding. One saw in the mind's eye his first progenitor in "poortith cauld" brought up on cakes and porridge, literally working his way to and through a university that had a special care for the poor, no lily-handed gentleman, but one who had toiled with the toilers on equal terms and thought nothing of it. To make the picture complete he had a clay pipe in his mouth, a jar of tobacco and a goblet of whisky on the table.

"Don't ask, but help yourself," he said, "it's all good of its sort. The 'bacca' was grown in my garden and cured by myself; the jar that holds it is an antique, and part of a German shell in the long ago; the Auld Kirk too is home-made. Tradition says that a canny man left his breeks behind in the old days in order to bring a 'worm' for a little still. And what have you been making of yourself since Betty left? Isn't it bad luck by-the-bye that they should have called her Bessie? They try to stick to the old names and a good thing too, but Bessie was the maid-of-all-work, she that came in first of the guizards to 'red sticks, red stools. Here come in a pack of fools,' while many an officer must have had a Lady Betty among his aunts?"

"Can you fancy the great Queen Bess as Queen Betty?" I asked.

"Tutt! The Harridan! Who's going to choose a name because it belonged to her? Had it been Mary Queen of

Scots now ! Let them that like call her Bessie ; she'll aye be Betty to me," he retorted, " but you haven't answered my question yet."

Having resolved to come to close quarters instantly, I replied that I had been looking at some of his harmless lunatics and hearing about their delusions, a subject of very great interest to me.

He lifted his heavy eyebrows and exclaimed slowly and pointedly : " Of very great interest, and why ? "

" Because," I answered with a little of his manner, " I have been ruminating and rather think that my new friends have begun to suspect that I too have what you call a bee in my bonnet, and they have sent me to you that you may do your best to get it out."

He laughed and remarked : " That's the downright English blundering way. Now if you were like me, with Scottish blood in your veins, you would have kept these ruminations up your sleeve and approached this delicate subject prudently and cautiously, leading up to the point by degrees. I promised myself some interest and even entertainment from your case, and maybe a clean bill at the end, but the English never had either sense or tact, and you've spoilt all my plans."

" Not at all, Doctor," I replied. " What good can come of making a great mouthful of a small and simple matter ? Acting on your invitation, I, while you were out, had a glance through your bookcase. I see that you have been a great collector of literature of the century from which I come. Nobody living in this Settlement knows the period better than you. Let me tell my story and call me a humbug if I am not able to prove that the words of an eye-witness are in this case of more value than the most complete collection of writings."

Dr. Turnbull's grey eyes opened, then half shut as though he were trying to look right inside his visitor. Then he deliberately replenished his glass, but I noticed that he put in only a spoonful of whisky and filled to the brim with cold water. Evidently he realised that he would need all his wit to cope with one who was either sane or a most tremendously cunning lunatic.

"My young friend," he said in a graver voice than he had used before, "I like your appearance and can readily understand how Cecil and Hart were drawn to you at first sight, but that counts for little; I will not say that it counts nothing with me as a physician. Let us get to plain ground. I would like to hear your story if you really wish to tell it; if you do not wish, that ends the whole matter as far as I am concerned. Should you on the other hand wish to know anything about me, you have only to ask. Indeed, I would much rather you asked because in the exercise of his profession a doctor wants frankness from his patient, and in return, should be frank himself. You must look upon me as a friend to be trusted; otherwise, there is nothing I can do for your benefit. A kindly Scot can be as direct as any bluff Englishman! Now ask what questions you like and consider this only a friendly means to make us acquainted with one another."

I thanked him and said that I thought his proposition most reasonable. It was but an idle curiosity that made me wonder how the Settlement had managed to set up a College of Medicine from which he had obtained his degree.

"Dod," he exclaimed with a return to his first manner, "no Scot could have put that with a cannier wit. It's verra right you should know that we haven't got as far as colleges yet. Did you expect me to say Glasgow, Edinburgh, St. Andrew's or Aberdeen? No, no! the first of my fore-

bears was a doctor, and there being no other in the community, he taught his son what he knew himself and that son carried it on to the next generation, and so you see I inherited my degree as a gentleman of the old time inherited his father's coat-of-arms."

"And I suppose with their medical lore they handed down their scraps of the Scottish dialect which I notice in your conversation?"

Dr. Turnbull's eyes blazed with anger. "Scottish dialect!" he exclaimed. "That's a queer bit of ignorance to be dug out of the grave where it has rested a good two hundred years. Scottish language you mean! Do you think that when we half-dozen Scottish families have for all this time cherished the memory of Scotland, making a circle of our own among the Southerners, that we forgot the language? We would sooner have forgotten medicine than the writings of Auld Dunbar, Blind Harry and Gavin Douglas, the Songs of Burns, the 'Heart of Midlothian' and 'The Antiquary,' the only language ever invented that can deliver the thought clean and clear to the understanding. English by comparison is what you may call a high horse language, fine for paying compliments in, but no use for heart talking to heart." He pronounced it "hairt talking to hairt."

I only partly assuaged his wrath by confessing that I had spoken in ignorance and that my acquaintance with Scotland was slight, and the names he had mentioned were to me names only.

"Have you preserved copies of their works?" I asked.

The question by some mental process, which at the moment I could not follow, brought him back to the purpose of the interview, and it seemed to me that it brought with it also a touch of suspicion.

"We have a library of them," he replied, "and you may like to know that the first and second generations of my family found time among all the tribulation to collect every book and every newspaper that had escaped destruction. As a result, there is in my possession a large collection of literature published in the reign of George V. Reading these books and journals has been my hobby and has filled hours that would have otherwise been very dull to an unmarried man who has no domestic pleasures or duties. It may interest you," he added meaningly, "to know that there is nobody living who has so full and intimate a knowledge of Great Britain in the early part of the twentieth century as I have."

"Except myself," I said very quietly, stifling an impulse to break into laughter. The Doctor had completely given himself away, but it was necessary to avoid irritating him. If I did that, there was an end to any hope of securing his friendly help or co-operation, and it was plain that he was irascible and accustomed to think his word was law. He reminded me of a gnarled old oak as he sat opposite with a frown on his heavy face. Yet he had to be made to yield, and my own persistency came into play, so that I could not help repeating the two words: "Except myself," firmly and in a voice that was quietly challenging.

He was quick to notice it and answered sarcastically, "I suppose you have duplicates of all these papers and with your superior brain have extracted more from them in a week than I have done in fifty years?"

"Not at all," I answered sweetly. "I would never dream of pitting my brain against yours. The difference is only between seeing things and reading about them. Suppose you could raise Newton from the dead and asked him a trivial question, say, the quickest way to get to-day from

his old home in Wiltshire to Threadneedle Street in London, would his mighty intellect be of as much avail as that of a commercial traveller? Just try to answer a similar question. Suppose yourself in a motor journeying from Cheapside, down Ludgate Hill, along Fleet Street and the Strand, past Charing Cross and Trafalgar Square, and thence to Marble Arch, could you picture the traffic or describe the notable places by the way as well as those to whom the route is familiar?"

"I'll grant it's a fair test," he replied with the gallantry of one who would not take refuge in a quibble. "I know what a motor is. They call it a 'stink-pot' in one of my books, and I gather it to be a devilish and dangerous invention smoking behind and emitting a most evil smell as it scurries along, till there comes an accident or a breakdown, after it has startled hens, sent dogs yammering, frightened young people, run over the old, lost its brake going down a hill, and smashed the shop windows."

"Listen now, Doctor," I said as he halted, "and don't think me wishful to argue. It is only to convince you of my own good faith. You speak of ancient history, and how is it possible that you could know how rapidly the old jolting 'bus has been improved? The car of to-day runs along noiselessly; in it you can talk as comfortably as in this room, even if your companion has the low voice which is said to be an excellent thing in women. It passes through traffic you have no conception of, throngs crowding out of the city, throngs crowding into it, huge petrol-driven omnibuses full to the last seat, huger lorries carrying furniture and other goods, vans, drays, carts, all obedient to the policeman's finger. You can have no idea of that tide and counter-tide till you have gone through it."

He was too combative to surrender to a first attack,

but he was rudely shaken. When every statement he quoted from a book was met with a torrent of contradiction, explanation or enlargement, as the case might be, he was glad to change the subject by asking for my story.

As I told it Dr. Turnbull listened silently, but with an attention that made itself felt, it was so intense. I was afraid that he would dismiss the whole thing as a monstrous improbability, but instead, he began to tell me that he was a Sun worshipper. He said he had read all he could find about religion, but without any satisfaction. As far as could be seen, we owed everything, including our existence, to the Sun. We live by light and we perish in darkness, and all life comes from the Sun. His warm rays bring out the buds in spring when the birds sing and mate, ripen the grain, and without him there would be food neither for man nor beast. Growth is feeblest in winter. You can notice it in children as well as in calves and foals. The Sun's warmth revives life in plants that have withered and almost died in winter. Deprived of his warmth, life recedes and tends to vanish; when it is restored, life follows it. The Sun divides day from night and season from season. He is the giver of seed-time and harvest, and the lord of all life.

"I sound the depths of my ignorance when trying to explain what I feel to be true," he said, "but how can anyone believe that the Sun called into existence intelligent human inhabitants for this little planet only? There may be in other planets inhabitants gifted with powers far beyond any we dream of. It is a perfectly reasonable assumption that some planet may have inhabitants far superior to man, exceeding him in intelligence as much as man excels the dumb animals."

He would not go so far as to say without the authority

of witnesses that there are inhabitants of Mars or the Moon who could traverse space and endow a native of the Earth with a share of their transcendent power, neither was he prepared to contradict my statement, but "You have been there," he concluded, "and you are here, so you may look upon me as a friendly neutral."

Then with a touch of humour he said that it was no great boon to ask for years double those of Methuselah.

"Man, it was a young kind of thing to do," he said. "When you get to my age, you'll not be so keen on going on for ever like the Wandering Jew. Your energy gets burnt up and your brain weary, even if you miss the rheumatic pains which are a curse to this ill-drained country. Eternal life without health and youth would not be heaven but hell. Many of the first settlers when they had to face the miserable and hopeless life which was all the place gave them in the early days, did away with themselves and many more would have liked to finish but hadn't pluck enough to take the plunge. Others keep their grip on life and fight as long as a spark is left."

Now there came a pause, and I saw a curious change of expression come over the good Doctor's face. It was absurd in a way, yet it did not make me laugh. The rugged features puckered for a moment, and then, as I have seen the clouds in a wild, tossing sky break and disclose a patch of April blue, they seemed to dissolve in tenderness and regret. "Whether hallucinated or not I like you, and now that I have to go out, will leave you with a treasure that I trust to few."

He went to a small oak coffer that might have held a Bible in one of our churches in the day of Cardinal Wolsey and took from it what appeared to be a book wrapped in sheepskin.

“Now you’ll not take it near the fire,” he said, “and ye maunna smoke when you’re reading it, and if you go outdoors, if it’s only for a second, you’ll roll it up and put it in the box. You’ll not on any account take it beyond these four walls, and if you copy it or any part of it, you’ll take care it’s not smudged! It’s the story of my forebears who escaped from the sack of Glasgow.”

No priest, were he ever so devoted, could have carried the sacramental vessels with more solemn piety and devotion than were in his bearing when he laid before me the bundle in sheepskin. A gleam of humour, nevertheless, passed across his face as if in self-mockery.

“You’ll be thinking that there’s no fool like an old one,” he said. “When I was young and rash as you, I would have called it doddering superstition; for it is only about the dead that are dead and done with. They have played their part; they are mouldering in the grave; their bones and blood have passed into the ivy and grass. Long ago, their adventures would have been turned into verse like fables of Jason and Medea, of Agamemnon and Helen, Ajax and the slave girl Briseis, Roland and Oliver, Arthur and Lancelot. Why, nineteen-twentieths of the people here put the stories told them of the old British Empire along with those of ancient Troy and the isle where Calypso entertained Ulysees. I generally try to hide it, but at bottom there’s always the feeling that these musty old papers make a living bridge between me and my ancestors. I don’t really think you will mock either at them or me, and it’s only habit that makes me enjoin you to take care of them. Had I not felt sure you would, they would never have been taken out of their bit boxie!”

There are few men who have not an hour in which they give way to sentiment, be their guard against it ever so

vigilant, and the Doctor I could see was divided between an impulse to give free expression to thoughts whose surging he usually kept under severe control, and an idea that doing so would be interpreted as a sign of weakness. There was no need on my part to say anything, I could only give him a look of sympathy and understanding, and probably he was grateful for my silence.

XIV

THE FIRST DR. TURNBULL'S ACCOUNT OF HIS ESCAPE FROM
GLASGOW WHEN IT WAS SACKED BY THE COLOURED ARMY.
HOW HE MAKES HIS WAY TO ABERFOYLE—THE VILLAGE TO
WHICH HE HAD SENT HIS WIFE

NO sooner was he gone than I became dead to the world in a study of the documents he had handed me, and as he might possibly change his mind, I lost no time in getting ready to transcribe them. The heading of the first was in the cramped hand which comes of writing out many prescriptions. It was headed :

NARRATION OF THOMAS TURNBULL, M.D. (EDINBURGH).

I wrote the first part of this narrative while waiting in urgent fear of death under a heap of masonry in order to let survivors know my fate if I should be starved to death in this strange prison. I am perplexed to know what has happened. Apparently, I have been lying unconscious, but there is no means of knowing how long. My recollections are as follows :

Everybody in Glasgow thought that a Bolshevik revolution was on the cards. Rumours of the kind had often been heard recently, and though I did not believe them, it seemed only prudent to send my wife and child into a place of safety, and there did not seem to be a better plan

than that of despatching them to a remote hill farm belonging to my wife's uncle. It is about three miles from the Clachan of Aberfoyle and a bit more from the station. I saw her and little Neddy, my infant son, and Janet the maid into the train at Queen Street, going back afterwards to Sauchiehall Street, where several patients were expecting me. I promised to follow the household if the outlook grew worse.

Mrs. Turnbull was almost hysterical at the station and refused to go into the train unless I agreed to do this. For a little while things went on quietly and people were beginning to laugh and say that there had been a false alarm. Then fear and panic got into the air. A march of the unemployed was taking place when suddenly the bagpipes by which it was accompanied stopped and so did the procession. A hum of talk arose and even while it was going on the ranks began to thin. Men whispering to one another with very white faces slipped away up the closes. Some of the bolder sort gathered in bands and began to break windows and loot shops. I was just hearing from my neighbour that wireless messages had been received saying that assaults from the air had been launched simultaneously on all the southern towns when, with the fearfulest noise, a bomb exploded in Glasgow ; fires broke out, streets were laid flat and the air resounded to a yelling of anguish and despair such as might have come from the bottomless pit.

There is nothing further in my memory except a vague impression of a still more awful explosion. Nothing can I recall after that till I came to in this place, whether dead or alive I could not be sure, till after a time spent between waking and sleeping, or more properly between life and death, complete consciousness returned. My first instinct was to discover if any bones were broken or any

serious injury sustained. Being able to move without pain I concluded that the answer was in the negative. Above, two huge masses of wall had fallen against one another and formed a cave-like protection. How they leaned could easily be perceived through the daylight which came through a number of little chinks. My immediate fear was that one or other of the walls would give way and I would be crushed to death and buried underneath. This grew into an obsession, so that I was afraid to move lest a support should be accidentally disturbed. Another reason for lying quiet was that the most horrible sounds began to reach my prison, the worst of them those that must have arisen so often in old days. In the Old Testament it is recorded as an every-day occurrence of warfare that the people of such and such a town or country had been "put to the sword." Every now and again the air was rent by an explosion to the like of which no ears had listened even in the terrible German war. It was torture to crouch among the stones, but if I ventured to move, it seemed to my excited ears that the noises began to rise in close vicinity.

At first I hearkened dully, like one emerging from a heavy sleep, but the return of consciousness was accelerated by the continual din, a commingling of strange, uncouth shouts of men fighting, shrieking of women, wailing of children and the bursting of explosives. It stung me into mental life, and at the same time paralysed me with abject terror. My days had been spent in laboratories or among books, and my disposition is timid to the verge of cowardice. No soldierly resolution came to my heart, only fear and despair, so that I would willingly have gone back to stupor and even death. I lay motionless and mentally dead. It was neither hope nor courage, but the urgent need of

food that roused me from this lethargy. When I noticed that the storm centre was shifting perceptibly to the west, some glimmer of hope must have come to me or the vague desire for food would not have changed into acute hunger. The time was approaching sunset and I knew the direction because a breeze blew from a sky that began to show the colours of evening. In my fear I had not previously noticed that there was a crevice on the west side large enough for egress. My instincts had been for concealment rather than for facing the dangers of the open.

On taking a look out, a surge of hope lifted my failing spirit. I paid no heed to the ruin and desolation, at least not with the eye—a picture of it had got into my brain. It was only a memory, but burned as vivid as fire many a long day and dreaming night. For the moment, I scanned the wilderness of stones and household *débris*, lit up here and there by fire and sown with dead bodies, for something that might serve as the basket of manna dropped to the hungry prophet, and, to my joy, found it. The middle of what had been a street was covered with wreckage, not of the houses only, but of the vehicles that had been passing along—lorries, carts, motors, carriages—all that composes the traffic of a great city. Among them was a badly smashed baker's van with loaves and cakes scattered about. Such was my basket of manna, and for drink there was the clear water bubbling up from a broken pipe.

After I had eaten and drunk, something like composure returned, and yet I remained as one in a nightmare. Though bereft of the power of thought and resembling a captured mouse mesmerised by the play of a savage cat, I had at least an instinct to escape. At first, my only thought was to get as far away as possible from the carnage and luckily

this took me in the direction in which my wife and child had gone. Their images returned during a laborious journey in which my signpost was a star, for at few places could the wreckage of a street or a highway be discerned. I had carried bread from the scattered contents of the baker's van, and I was in that dreaming, only half-conscious condition, which often follows severe physical or mental shock. As I went along dazed and deaved I made little mental pictures of the surprise and delight with which Neddy and his mother would receive such unexpected gifts. You may think it strange for my mind to be taken up with such trifles, but after so great a shock physical and mental powers are turned upside down, and the trivial is often accepted as the important.

It took me three days and three nights to get to Aberfoyle despite the fact that I made a quick physical and mental recovery. The marching had to be done at night as was made clear the very first morning. I had been toiling on in the darkness over a country like the rocky shore of a sea which had strewn the land with boulders. During the night many times I heard the groaning of wounded or dying men, and with difficulty managed to repress the doctor's instinct to succour those in pain. It was comparatively easy to do so at night when one hears without seeing anything.

Just as the light was breaking, I nearly stumbled upon a youth who had a wound in his mouth, so that he could only gasp in a hoarse whisper that he wanted water. This I gave, and then shifted him into as comfortable a position as possible and was proceeding on my way when the expression of his eye caught mine. It was so beseeching and full of despair as to arrest my steps, but as I hesitated and lingered, a low-flying airship came over and someone whose

brutal laugh was audible, flung out a small bomb or grenade as he passed. It did not fall near, but the warning could not be disregarded. I did not again look at the young man lest I should be tempted to stay, which would have only brought about the death of both of us. Rushing to a mound of stones, which was probably the ruins of a large house, I crept in among them and remained there for the day. At nightfall I was irresistibly drawn to the place where the wounded one lay, but he was cold and stiff, and must have died shortly after I saw him.

While the daylight lasted the air had been traversed by large numbers of 'planes and several had flown close to the ruins. One in particular came so near that I could see it was manned by dark-complexioned soldiers in a uniform new to me. For the first time there dawned on my mind an inkling of the fact that the great alliance of dark and yellow races, of which rumours had been current for years, had planned and carried out from the sea a simultaneous attack on the towns of Great Britain. This faint suspicion, which was fully confirmed later, quickened my steps. Also, there was the memory of an incident at which I had laughed when it occurred, but now it seemed to show that my wife had been the wiser of the two. She, the tenderest of women, had bought a revolver and paid a man to teach her to shoot. It was never far from her afterwards, and once when I was laughing and chaffing her about it, her face had flushed as she exclaimed: "We are drifting into very difficult times, Tommy, and one might need a thing like this."

Every time I recalled her words my uneasiness intensified, but attempts at hurry were worse than useless. There was danger on all sides. From the road came a rattle of wheels and guns that told of soldiers on the march.

If they halted I could distinctly hear words of command. Though the language was foreign, the meaning, or at least the character of the orders, could be divined. At first it seemed as though the best way would be along the railway lines, but incendiaries were at work at the stations. So if one walked for a mile or two on the track, a circuit had to be made when a station or even a siding was approached.

There were others than myself struggling to escape to the hills. We saw one another's furtive movements, and I think telepathy must have helped us to start a kind of greeting to bamboozle a foreigner. It was, to use in place of a watchword, some brief Scottish phrase, such as : " A braw nicht, laird ! " No Englishman, far less a foreigner, could catch the Glasgow accent. Everybody understood without telling that it was safer to go singly. Even in bright moonlight one could glide unobserved from shadow to shadow without attracting notice, but a company, were it only of two, would have been in greater peril. It was slow and difficult going. Two years previously I had walked all the way from Glasgow to Aberfoyle in one day, but on this occasion it took me three. Every night began with clear and perfect moonlight, but every morning before dawn a mist had arisen from the meadows and the marshland, so that it was best to steal noiselessly along the line till daylight mastered the fog.

In spite of the greatest caution I found myself close to the invaders, and was in terror till I recollected that it was easy to see them stirring up or adding new material to a blazing fire, but those close to the fire could not so easily see a man in the thickness of a Scottish mist. It was in such a fog that one morning I chose a strange hiding-place, I say chose, but it was Hobson's choice, as it was necessary to get out of the way of a body of soldiers, the sound of whose

marching step showed them to be unpleasantly near. They had evidently been looting each on his own, as their hands were full and their pockets bulged. I got out of their way by dropping into what had once been a pig-sty, but it is doubtful if they would have noticed me in any event, as they were so drunk and sleepy that the officer in charge had to use his cane to prevent their dropping on the road. They held fast to the clocks and other articles that they had stolen, but every now and then one would drop a loaf or bottle, or a piece of meat. I did not hurry away and so beheld an omen that boded no good. It was, that hosts of rooks, jackdaws, starlings and sparrows very quickly cleared the ground of any eatable that had been dropped or thrown away. Streets in Glasgow and in the suburbs lay strewn with food and drink at the time of my starting, and up to now so much was lying on the ground that scarcity of victuals had not struck me as a possibility. I had not calculated that the beasts of the field and the birds of the air would demand their share.

Before reaching Aberfoyle I was alarmed to perceive that those who were making the same journey did not observe what seemed to me the necessary caution. In the early stages it was a rare occurrence to catch sight of a dark shadow stealthily advancing and taking advantage of every possible cover. Like me they hid in daylight and began to move forward between the gloaming and the mirk. My idea was that there could not be more of them than half a dozen at the outside, and I could not help running over in my mind the many week-end or holiday places among the hills or on the coast that probably were being approached in the same way by desperate and distracted men, for the last out-going trains had been crammed with women and children sent to these resorts for safety from the supposed Bolshevik disturbances.

When we got closer to Aberfoyle, the fugitives seemed partly to recover hope and confidence. Many like me must have been dazed and stupefied at starting, but fresh air and exercise even in these awful circumstances had helped to revive their spirits. It alarmed me to see them formed into groups and marching on briskly in the clear moonlight. They were rapidly approaching the Rob Roy country, the Highland fastness which in old times had so often sheltered the Macgregor and other thieves and cattle-lifters. Close in front were the hills of Menteith, and behind the quarries of Aberfoyle towered Ben Venue and his companion hills. It seemed a natural assumption that in this wild country fugitives were safe. So they drew together and by the time dawn began to break had got within a short distance of the railway station. Visibility had ceased to be good when the moon went down, but was improving now that the first streaks of dawn were stretching across the sky.

When they drew together and began talking as carelessly as they might have done in a Glasgow street three days before, I slipped off and crossed the highway that leads to the Port of Menteith and Stirling. Taking advantage of the bushes and trees planted round a large villa, I tried to obtain a sight of the famous clachan or village of Aberfoyle. The morning light showed that the house, which I knew well, had been levelled to the ground. Nervous and apprehensive, I cast a glance at the station, or rather, at the site on which it stood. The buildings had been totally destroyed.

The discovery had sobered and frightened my travelling companions, who numbered about a score. In a panic, they started to run for the houses to which evidently they had sent their women and children. Just as suddenly they

stopped. Whether they had caught a view of the smoking ruins or were arrested by a movement in an adjoining plantation never can be known. I, too, had seen a movement among the trees, and before I quite realised what was taking place, six men in foreign uniforms had begun firing into the group with guns that gave off no smoke and scarcely any sound. The living men had become dead bodies, and the men who had killed them rushed out of their cover to make sure that none had escaped, and to rifle the pockets of the slain.

For years this scene came to me in sleep as a dream or nightmare, but at the time it did not more than turn me into a dead thing with a wooden unintelligent stare. Had the soldiers come my way I would have been incapable of moving. They returned to their cover laden, talking and gesticulating. Evidently their victims had brought away their money and valuables. Without casting a glance in my direction in a few minutes they departed in an aeroplane. My eyes followed it stupidly, yet events had been registered in my mind. In imagination I often afterwards watched that aeroplane flying low over the railway track and swinging first to one side and then to the other as if search were being made for the hiding places of any other fleeing wretches.

I might have sat staring for hours had not my hand been taken by another, which lifted it to a mouth to be kissed and fondled, while tears rained hot upon it. My wife told me afterwards how long it was before she could get any response except that she heard me muttering: "It's a war of extermination, war of extermination!"

I have a very imperfect memory of what occurred during the next few days. The narrative must be read in the words of my wife.

XV

THE DOCTOR'S WIFE BEGINS THE STORY OF HER ESCAPE

I HAD much ado to keep from crying after my husband left me in the train at Queen Street station, but fear of making Janet nervous steadied me. Concealing the tears that would not be withheld, by taking the baby and kissing him I managed after a while to assume an air of cheerfulness, though my heart was heavy and depressed. Fortunately there was nobody else in the carriage at first ; nor was there any crowd in the train, just the well-off people, mostly women and children who had their Highland houses and week-end cottages to go to.

At Maryhill Station, crowds invaded the carriages and seemed to consist of working men's wives and families sent to the hills for safety. They were under the guidance of policemen. My alarm was not decreased by this evidence that the authorities anticipated serious danger. The new passengers showed no apprehension, but laughed and sang Scottish songs of the type popularised by Harry Lauder.

Little did I anticipate that their number and rowdiness would lead to the saving of our lives. Indeed that was not in my head at all ; I did not guess what was happening. I calculated that after the train was emptied into Aberfoyle every house in the little village would be crowded. That the passengers knew as much I gathered from their conversation.

“There’ll no be a bed for one in ten, and they’ll want a ransom for it,” said a thrifty-looking wife to another. “Faith,” was the reply, “when the heather’s burning, it’s no every man’s bairn could sleep on the hillside.”

“I’m no for wasting time in Aberfoyle,” said the thrifty one, “what d’ye say about speelin’ the brae and makkin’ for the houses ayont. Herd-folk and fairmers aye have byres and hemels if the worst comes to the worst.”

Such talk did not add to one’s cheerfulness. The farmhouse at which we had been accustomed to stay in summer was easily reached, but it was not ours, and we had no special claim on it. Before we could get there with the baby it would probably be crowded. The prospect made me restless, and I got up and walked along the corridor of the train. Many groups of passengers had come out. Some stopped their conversation when any one came near; others went on talking. I gathered that all but the young and the very thoughtless were anxiously considering where they were likely to find places to sleep in. They did not imagine that beds could not be found in the Highlands.

At Dunoon, where I went to school, they called me “the open-air freak.” Many a night I have slept outdoors among these hills and been up and away before the herds had wakened. So when we left the station I managed to get round the church and run for a place nobody else was likely to know. This was a cliff cavity on the side of Ben Venue that could be reached by a slope. None of the city people was likely to know about it, and those who did know, would recognise danger rather than safety in its loneliness. We had scarcely got to it when the aeroplanes began to spread over the hillside.

Here let me put in a note. Though they called me a

freak, I am only a woman, and if I had the pen of Zola, I would not attempt to describe the awful sights that now began. How one got through is a miracle and a mystery. I and my maid, Janet, were two Scotch women-folk who had never seen more bloodshed than that of a cut finger, and suddenly we were pitch-forked into the worst horrors of war. I was near fainting, but if I gave way it was certain that the lass Janet would do so as well, and the thought of my baby being tossed up on a bayonet point, a vision that flashed into my mind, so roused the de'il in me that I gripped the bairn, gave Janet a push that sent her stottering, and rushed for shelter. It proved one of the very best. From the bottom it looked as if some hill-god had been pouring stones down from the top of the cleft, as grains pass down a mill-hopper, and suddenly cried "Stop!" and they stopped. From the top there was nothing to be seen but a lump of jagged rock sticking out.

The aeroplanes were beginning to come over and the guns were firing. It was getting on to dusk by now, and from our high position we could see flames rising and hear the guns and other sounds of war. What had happened I did not know, and it was not the question that mastered me. The safety of my child having been secured, anxiety for my husband grew beyond all bounds. He had promised to follow immediately if his professional services were not demanded. As I stood at the opening of our refuge wondering what it was possible to do, I was mechanically counting the fires that began to rise from the towns and villages, and tracing the railway lines by them. I thought the little fires would be those of the small stations, and the tremendous conflagrations those of the large towns. They could not be due to a revolution as the wildest anarchist would not set fire to his own dwelling or the dwellings of his friends,

whereas there seemed as many blazes as there are stars in the sky. The biggest conflagration I put down as being at Glasgow. It was but too easy to know that when a passenger train was met it was destroyed, since from those not far away a shrieking and screaming arose that left no doubt about what was being done.

You, who read this in years to come, may have gone back to the comfort in which we used to live, and it will be hard for you to realise that we were almost at once faced with hunger. When Janet, the baby, and I first scrambled into our rock shelter we were too frightened to think of meat. It was only hiding we thought of, but as the hours went by and it grew colder and colder, we began to feel that we could not stand it without something to eat or drink. Janet shivered every time she looked at the bare, wet rocks, with cold water soaking over the edges and oozing out of every crack. We never had meant to stop there any length of time, but just had run to it as frightened rabbits run into their burrows. So we plotted that when night came on and the moon rose, we would spy out the land and try to beg or pick up something to eat, not having yet realised what had happened. Janet reminded me of a decent old herd, whose cot we reckoned to be not more than a mile off. I fell in with the notion, and off we started, not for a moment thinking anybody would injure an innocent shepherd or touch his belongings.

It was yet to be learned what a war of extermination meant. When we came near the place where there used to be a low-walled cottage, roofed with thatch, very thick and overgrown with moss, nothing but a heap of rubbish could be seen. "They've dung it doon," exclaimed Janet, "but sakes, ma'am, what's that?"

Her finger trembled as it pointed to a form emerging

from the gorse bushes, and she shuddered when it uttered a loud, dreary moan. She was Highland, and Highlanders are proverbially superstitious. To me, not quite so fearful, it was a glad sight and a glad sound. Anxiety about my own dear little brat had quickened my wit.

"It's the cow come home to be milked," I exclaimed. "The dumb animal can't understand what's happened, and she is lowing for someone to relieve her of her milk. Run up to the place and see if they have left a pail or a pan into which to milk her."

Janet was in such fear and excitement that imagination ran away with her reason. "Oh, mistress, gang na near it," she implored, "that's not a real cow, but only its ghaist. She'll come here and moo every moonlight night till they give her master Christian burial."

"Take the wean," I said impatiently, and though her crying made him cry, I marched up to Mally, as I heard the shepherd when he was alive call his cow, and picking up an iron pot, which old country people called a yetling, I was soon straining the milk into it, humming as I did so, an old ballad my mother taught me.

Until that moment nobody, myself least of all, dreamed of my having any ability as an actress. I was really sick with horror, for while petting and encouraging the cow, I had caught sight of her master's long, grey beard in a patch of gorse, and it had no body to it. To speak the truth, at that moment a selfish love for myself and my child made me determine that I would do nothing to unnerve the slip of a girl who might be the only companion left, so I laughed and told her that no ghostly milk could hiss like this, as it rained into the old kail pot, and my voice rang clear and true as I sang :

Bonny Mary to the yow buchts, has gan
To milk her daddy's yows,
And aye she sang, her bonnie voice rang,
Right over the tops of the knowes, knowes,
Right over the tops of the knowes.

I took no thought of the danger of being heard, and fortunately at night-fall no one was left in that wild desolation. I sang the second verse as I never sang it before, nor ever will again :

There were a troop of gentlemen,
Came merrily riding by,
And one of them to the yow bucht has gan
To see Mary milking her yows, yows,
To see Mary, Mary milking her yows.

Every nerve was strained, but when the crisis comes the strength is given to meet it. My very sight was quickened by excitement, and I picked out something that revealed the comparatively uninjured part of the cottage. Then I divined that the house must have been set on fire in the belief that the thatch was inflammable and would complete the work of destruction, whereas it was so sodden and old that it would have taken the heat of a furnace to burn it into ashes. In point of fact, my eye had fallen on a corner of the old man's kist three parts covered with the fallen thatch. According to custom, he kept in this his store of oatmeal. As I milked, this guess passed through my mind quicker than it takes to tell, and I guessed aright. We carried away not only a potful of milk, but a good supply of meal for making porridge.

In this way the difficulty of finding means of subsistence

were overcome, but my heart was wae with anxiety about my husband. That was not lessened by the noise of shooting that began every morning at dawn in the neighbourhood of Aberfoyle railway station. You may be sure I got up early, so early that I saw the aeroplanes bringing shooters from some camp not far off. It was plain to me that men and women in little companies were taking this way to the safety of the Highlands and that they were trapped and shot on their arrival. Horrible it was to go near, but love of my husband made me face it, and I slouched and waited in the bush and bield hoping and fearing yet always managing to obtain a look at any face like his even if it were that of a dead man.

XVI

MRS. TURNBULL'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED, HER LONG VIGIL AND FINAL DISCOVERY OF HER HUSBAND

JANET was kept in ignorance of my experience, but the memory nearly drove me mad on those nights and early mornings when I hung about Aberfoyle and witnessed the machine-like way in which every fugitive from Glasgow who came by the highroad or the railway-track was shot. As soon as daylight came, aeroplanes began their work of hunting for such as were still on the way or had turned back. Thus, the chances were all against my husband escaping. No force of will could keep me from dreaming during my snatches of sleep and imagining when awake, that I had seen *his* head in the gorse.

My husband had promised to start as early as he could. It made me feel faint to remember his promise, yet I would not give up hope. Next evening, having heard nothing, I stole out and dusk saw me concealed waiting. Presently there arrived a number of men and women and children who had evidently fled from Glasgow and tried to get to the hills on foot. They were one and all shot down, and those who did it rushed forward to kill such as had only been wounded and strip and murder them. It might have been expected that I, being little more than a girl, and

tender-hearted at that, should have turned sick, swooned, burst into tears, or in some other way given expression to my horror. It did not happen that way. My great anxiety about my husband drove out every other feeling and I remained cold and collected as if looking at a stage play. At the same time the instinctive cunning of a wild beast awoke in me and I dropped to the ground and crawled to deeper cover where I would be better hid and still have a good look out on the railway line. I waited patiently as far as my body was concerned, but with an impatience of mind that seemed to burn me. I longed to turn over these dead men and make sure that my man was not among them. It was that and nothing heroic that made me edge in among the brambles, then sit without a movement waiting for the murderers to go away.

It seemed ages, but could not have been an hour till all was over. The soldiers rushed out of their concealment, stripped the slain of what seemed valuable in their eyes, thrust knives and daggers into any part of their clothes where articles of value might be concealed, emptied their pockets and then returned. At a word of command they lined up, divided into halves, and marching out into the open, took possession of two aeroplanes and went off on a new errand as could be seen by their zig-zag course along the railways and the roads. Now was my chance! Putting all my womanish terrors and superstitions on one side, I crept to the bodies warily, thinking if only one soldier was left he could use his gun. My heart did not lighten till I had looked at the last dead face.

This was repeated for three days on end without result. Had the odds not been so heavy against his escape from Glasgow I might have felt less dowie, but every morning when I finished the dreary search, it was only thinking

what might happen to Janet and the bairn that kept me from giving way to despair. Till the worst came to the worst I made up my mind that tears would not wet my cheek and a cry would not come from my mouth. Over and over again I had to stifle the beginning of one or the other. Hope was at its lowest ebb. Sometimes I tried to think that one more wary than the others had perceived the danger soon enough to turn back to warn those coming on, but that would not stand thinking about. The firing must have been like death, that bourne from which no traveller returns.

I was mumbling and repeating that sad phrase to myself in the grey dawn of a winter morning, a cold grisly morning that made me shiver as I crouched among the withered branches, while down below were men whom I'd got to think of as fiends, each in a heavy overcoat and with a rifle on his shoulder—a sight that made me sick to look at. My watching and waiting seemed of no use, and, as always happened on such mornings when I knew that the same dreadful killing would be repeated, I said to myself that if nothing occurred this morning I would give all my attention to saving the baby, for my man must be lost. Though sunk in this reflection, my eye was kept on the line along which I had already seen so many parties come confidently, and believing the worst was past. It was to me the end of that journey and all journeys. There they came, just like the others : one, two, three, I counted till I had numbered fifteen all looking brisk and brave when they had got together, but my heart fluttered within me like the wings of a bird when I saw at a glance one whom I immediately recognised by his walk to be my own dear husband looking very thin and tired in the growing light. Was he to go down as the rest had done ?

Some folk pretend that they can communicate their thoughts from mind to mind without speaking or writing, and at that moment I would have given the head on my shoulders for such a gift. If mental concentration could have done it, I must have succeeded, but he had only his own wit to guide him. The first sense of relief came when, instead of following the track to the station as the others did, he took the footroad by the burn, crossed the Menteith Road and got into the plantation. All this was visible to me and not to the murderers, because I was at the top of the crag and they were at the bottom. My heart nearly went out of me when I realised that if he followed the path which led into Aberfoyle he would go straight to destruction because they were actually on that footroad. Forgetting everything else, I had started to rush down to warn him, though that would have meant the death of us both, but luckily I had only got a yard or two when I noticed that he was coming up and was evidently making for a track that led to the farmhouse, but avoided the village. Before getting half-way up he had to sit down to rest, as he was evidently weak from want of sleep and food. Had he known what was going to happen, he could not have picked out a better place for seeing it. When I got to him the tragedy had been enacted and had proved too much for him, so that he had fallen into a kind of dream or stupor. His eyes especially frightened me; they were wide open and fixed in a stare like eyes in an image.

How I got him back I hardly remember though I can never forget the happiness. You, who read, will forgive me the expression so out of keeping with the misery that was flowing over Scotland if you think of the woe-begone, hopeless outlook that had been mine till I found him. What I do remember is that I crooned two lines

of a sad old ballad that came into my head as I helped him along :

I took his body on my back,
And whiles I gaed, and whiles I sat.

The lady had lost her knight and I had saved mine, but it was not long before I found myself envying her luck. Yet I have no doubt that she would have envied us. After such a parting with its terror lest we should never come together again, it came natural to be wildly happy, and I mind my husband coming to himself and saying : " So it is really you, my little wife. I was afraid it would turn out a dream and that I would let the dream fall and break as it has always done. The luck's changed. You'll see things are not quite so bad as they look. The British Empire's too big a thing to be blown to bits at one stroke. Probably we on the west coast have had the first and hardest knock, but I am all for backing white to win in the end against any one colour or all the other colours put together."

He rallied in spirit but was terribly weak, and it was a hard business getting him to our wild home, but that was a labour easily forgotten. Pleasure and excitement were keeping him up. He made nothing of his sufferings when I pleaded that he should get to sleep.

He said : " I thought you would have liked to go on talking for a week."

He did not accept the suggestion when it was repeated, but the third time he could scarcely keep his eyes open. So I got him into his bed of dry bracken and he was asleep before I could put my shawl on him.

His long sleep proved a good medicine ; it was untroubled by a dream or memory. At his waking, one of

the old holiday smiles lightened up his face just as it used to in the old days when we stole off to the Highlands and forgot paved streets among the heather. Not for hours did either of us allude to the dule and woe that had fallen on the land. We would have been content to bury it in oblivion, but no such easy escape was foredoomed.

We recognised that so far our escape had been due to no planning or cleverness, but only to instinct and accident. To live through the winter on this bare mountain-side was impossible; and it appeared equally so to make an escape through a country occupied by a savage foe. My bodeful feeling was that if Tommy had proposed that we should die at this happy moment, I would have consented, but instead he said: "Lift up your heart," and I meekly answered: "Let us lift them up to the Lord."

Three happy days in spite of danger, and on the fourth began a new set of anxieties. Tommy and I had risen before the dawn to go on the prowl. At daybreak one could look around in safety. Nobody stayed on the hills all night. It was too cold and uncomfortable, and should a thick fog come, it was dangerous even for a native to move about. Our object in rising early was to seize the only safe moment to gather what food might be picked up in the wrecked hamlets, and to discern if a better shelter could be found than the wind-swept cleft.

In spite of my own forebodings, I was glad to find that my husband's courage and high spirits were coming back and to hear his "Cheer up, little woman. Great Britain is a lot to swallow at one mouthful. The bulk of the soldiers are in England. If it be at all feasible, we should edge our way south. A stand will have to be made somewhere. We shall go on tramp and pick up our living as Gipsies do."

I did my best to reply in the same vein, half inspired by his confidence and half because I was pleased to find that his spirit and resolution instead of being destroyed, had risen above his misfortune. We were making for a ruined home observed the day before, on the chance that some provisions might be left in it. We exchanged chaff and pleasantries in the old way as we threaded our way through the heather in the direction of the road to Port of Menteith.

Simultaneously we stopped to listen. "A car!" I exclaimed. "More like a char-a-banc," he asserted, and we climbed the high bank to see. By the time we got high enough, it had come round a distant corner and was at top speed racing in our direction. Hurriedly a load of children was discharged, each already furnished with two bags. A man of a thin, but soldierly figure, marshalled them in order, and in not more than three minutes they were walking smartly off to a wooded and broken bit of country, to be followed by another and another batch, till I lost count of the number. As soon as it was empty, the vehicle turned and dashed away, to be quickly followed by others. "Boy Scouts," exclaimed my husband. "No," I replied in a tone that refused to be cheerful, "there is something about all this that fills me with fear. The children look as if packed for a journey, a large bag for clothes and a small one for food. I hope they are not turning them out in the wild as a last and desperate attempt to save them."

My forebodings turned out to be justified. We went down and no one paid attention to our presence. They were so intent on getting the children away, that the few who gave a hurried answer to our questions took us for an anxious pair whose offspring were among the fugitives.

XVII

MRS. TURNBULL'S STORY CONTINUED. HOW SHE DISCOVERED
AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE TURNED SPY AND TRAITOR. HIS
STORY AND FATE

JUST before sunset the gun reports became fewer, and at last died down altogether. My nature has always been an active one, and despite the remonstrance of my husband, I made ready to go down and spy out the land. He talked of danger and possible surprise, but I brushed that aside.

“Nobody could descend from the top without a ladder,” I said, “and there is only one way up, so that anyone to reach you must pass me.”

He made no further resistance, and on noiseless feet and with revolver in pocket, I started downward creeping close to the great rock which rose like a wall from the little path. It was a relief for me to do anything instead of sitting idle while my imagination was gathering material to furnish nightmares for the rest of my life. It would be hard to say how often in my dreams I have seen black troopers hunting on the moor, and sometimes children were flying before them, but more often a dishevelled figure, which had been Civilisation.

This melancholy train of thought was, however, swept temporarily out of my mind because a party of three began

to approach the bottom of the path where I stood, and I withdrew as deeply into the shadow of the wall as was possible, to observe them more carefully before I gave the alarm. When danger took the very definite form of three individuals advancing towards our refuge, I felt as if the devils of misery and terror had suddenly been cast out of me. Once again I was myself. Who were they and what were they doing? In regard to one, at least, there was no room for doubt. He was a runner on foot who carried a small bag or parcel which, at the direction of one of the others, he laid on a large boulder that adjoined the path. Now this showed me that here was one familiar with the ground. On three sides of that boulder the gorse was cropped by deer and sheep on the top, and rabbits and hares lower down. It was exactly the sort of corner, sheltered and out of doors, that I would have selected for a sleeping place. The wind that was moaning about the crags would not reach anyone there, as the gorse was not only dense, but covered a considerable extent of ground.

The other two men, who were on horseback, dismounted and fastened their horses to the thick stems of the whin-bushes.

I was not close enough to make out their features in the growing dusk, but the moment they were on foot the swagger of the Glasgow Medical School was as plain to me as the nose on your face. As my father had held a Medical Chair in the University for fifteen years and my husband was a doctor, not only was it familiar, but in the graceless years of girlhood I, and a few equally giddy companions, used to imitate and burlesque it. At that time its chief features were that the head was held a little forward, the shoulders, even those in the rugger team, made to look drawn in and close, the left leg was slightly trailed,

and the stick, carried always in a gloved hand, was held at an exact angle. We swimming, hockey-playing, wildly natural, uncorseted females used to laugh no end at the pains which the most athletic young medicals took to make themselves look round-shouldered and deformed.

My curiosity was sharpened even in that moment of alarm by seeing these young men of a most pronounced swagger which was quite different from that of Oxford or Cambridge, of Eton or Piccadilly. I remembered too that it was a swagger hardly discernible in students who set their eyes on a higher distinction than superficial mannerisms and was entirely ignored by those who swotted by day and night for high academical honour. Whereas, those of no scholastic distinction and of a reputation that was seldom unblemished, cultivated the swagger as diligently as they studied the cut of their trousers and the colour of their socks and neckties.

Observations of this sort had by us girls been tossed to one another in a spirit of fun, banter and irony not so long ago, though now it seemed in some far distant age, but on this occasion they came like sparks from a whirling brain. There was not a medical student at the time when men of their age were at college whom I had not seen, and of a vast number I remembered the appearance. It was that made me climb as softly as a mouse on the steep ledge bounding the scarcely noticeable track up the mountain. Tunnels had been made under the gorse by sheep which were attracted by food and shelter. Along them I crept slowly and silently, risking much to see and hear the men. At last only a few feet separated us, and as I drew near, one of them turned on the light of an electric torch. What his purpose was, there was nothing to tell. From what took place afterwards it may have been a precaution against

being assailed in the dark by his companions. The actual result was to place the men in a lighted circle surrounded by walls of darkness, a situation that suited most admirably the spectator and eavesdropper.

It happened that I had seen them once, but it was an occasion which I could not help remembering—a New Year's Eve ball given by the Lord Provost. Although not a university function, invitations had been sent to all students, and these two had entered the ballroom and secured partners for the sixth dance. One was a pale-faced Indian student, and the other a Glaswegian named Macgregor. Only a fortnight previously they had emerged from a murder trial that had aroused great interest even at a time when people were satiated by newspaper reports of sensational cases. The murder was that of a young woman in circumstances that had excited the greatest pity for her. Owing, it was said, to a clever advocate and a sentimental judge, they had got off with a verdict of "not proven." This verdict means that the jury feel instinctively that the accused is guilty, but that the evidence is not so clear and direct as to preclude the idea of innocence. On this occasion every man, woman and child in Glasgow was convinced that the two men, in the words of a famous judge: "Wadna be the waur o' a hangin'."

The public gave a clear and decided expression of their opinion in the ballroom. Hardly had the dance begun than it became known to every one within the walls that the two notorieties had not only gained admission, but were actually dancing with two girls respectably connected, but about whom least said soonest mended. Men and women, the old and the young, soon knew what had happened. Lady Arthur, the Provost's wife, who was dancing

with one of the Campbells of Argyll, abruptly stopped. Every other couple too became glued to the ground. It was an embarrassing moment for everybody except the Lord Provost. He gave his wife a look at which she and her partner resumed dancing and the guests followed her example, all but the two unbidden guests and their partners. They found themselves engaged in quiet conversation with an immaculately dressed gentleman who smiled benignantly as he showed them his visiting card. He was the Head of the Highland Police Force.

As quickly as a dream flits across the mind of a sleeper the scene came back to my recollection, and also the rumour that shortly afterwards the two had left the country and gone abroad. My conclusion that they had turned traitor tallied only too well with the perfect knowledge of the environs of Glasgow shown by the invaders. I was indeed thankful for having come, and conceived a hope that they would let out something that might be of help to us.

It is unfortunate from this point that they turned out to be no longer confederates. Macgregor, a big, raw-boned Scot with a sullen but cunning face, appeared to be afraid and suspicious of his companion. He could not conceal his uneasiness though he summoned up enough courage to ask why he had been brought out to this — (the adjective may be guessed) place on a cold, winter night. He supposed that he being out of favour and the latter in, he did it to show his authority.

The Indian looked very much more at his ease. He wore the uniform of a superior officer, while he who had once been his partner in crime wore that of a sub-lieutenant, a sign, I guessed, that he had never been promoted. He replied with perfect calm in a dulcet purring voice that suggested deceit in every syllable.

“Friend Mac,” he said in the slightly Indian accent which had not been wholly eliminated by Scottish university life and the intercourse it leads to. He spoke slowly, as if cuddling his words before he let them go, and his hesitations were put in with the scrupulous care of an artist or a surgeon. “Suspicion is not gentlemanly, especially suspicion of your best friend. Haven’t I always been your best friend? Did I not get you a commission? Did I not arrange the wages for this last transaction, and have I not stuck out for the English gold you demanded in payment? Surely you guess why it is to be handed over to you in this solitary spot? My people belong to a sun-steeped land and are, let us call it, naturally sunny and soft in temperament, but after their strange shooting, they have a disease not unknown to you, my friend. Do not forget I’ve seen you with blood fever. Gold is yellow and blood is red. You would not have had them pay you in yellow English gold, and then take it back in red blood. If you wish that, let us go back and you will be honestly paid.”

He took up the parcel or bag. I could not exactly make out which it was, and, incidentally flashed the brilliant light on his companion’s face. It was as white as milk, yet he made a strong effort to pull himself together and answer coolly.

“You would be a great fighter,” he said, “if you could stab with your knife as well as you can stab with your tongue. Leave off fingering that gun in your pocket and hand over the tin. It doesn’t look as if I had a dog’s chance left, but if I’ve got to go, it will be your turn first.”

The Indian hastily withdrew his hand from the revolver in his pocket and obviously quailed before the ready and desperate Scot.

“I did not come here to injure you,” and it seemed to

me there was a little quaver, real or pretended, in his voice, "but to help you. Our commander is honourable according to the white standard. He ordered me to pay you the price and see to it that you are not killed and robbed. Do not take out your gun; it would only bring the sportsmen over here—the camp is not a quarter of an hour's gallop away. I am the only friend you have left. You know the wave of religion, which you name fanaticism, that has swept over the army since our victories. It has made them look upon the slaughter of a white as a key to Paradise. Our commander is a soldier who wants to keep faith with those who have joined his enterprise. He will protect you as long as he can, but advises you to look out for some other service, if possible with one of the allied countries not connected with the British Empire."

The Scot gathered the deadly meaning of this message. It was obvious from the sudden despair of his expression. What he said gave no indication of anything except his recognition that his fate was sealed. "How long?" was all he asked.

"Oh, you may consider yourself safe for a week," replied the Indian. "Bring my horse and hold my stirrup, will you."

As he rode off, a gleam of his white teeth showed that it was no small satisfaction to have cowed and frightened his formidable confederate.

As soon as the Indian renegade had trotted out of sight and almost out of hearing, only the patter of his horse's feet being audible, it seemed as if the Scot was about to relieve his mind by a prolonged curse. He shook a clenched fist in the direction he had gone and exclaimed in a voice half suffocated with hatred: "The damned swine!" Then he stopped as if arrested by a realisation

of his own danger. "It is time to be shifting," he muttered. "I've felt it in the air." He kept on saying things to himself till he got on horseback, but I was unable to catch more than a word or two.

There was no time to lose. I ran up the path like a hare and told my husband and Janet what I had heard. They realised the situation at once—a camp of murdering fanatics close at hand, mad with spilling the blood of children, the cynics who spoke of massacre as "shooting the coverts." Where would we be if they found us? How to get away, how to avoid falling into their hands if we ventured out in the darkness in country that we scarcely knew by daylight? These were dreadful problems that made us envy the friends and relations who lay dead among the ruins of Glasgow, and for ever safe from the rage of the pursuer and the torture of their own thoughts.

XVIII

THE STORY OF DR. TURNBULL'S WIFE CONCLUDED. JANET
THE MAID LEADS THEM TO A HIDING-PLACE IN THE WILD
OCHILS

IT was a dark, bad moment, and to our surprise, it was the maid, Janet, who let a little pinhole of light and hope fall on it. She had gone through some mental change since the first day when her terror was so great as to make me fear for her sanity. She may have got used to the new conditions or developed a strength of mind hitherto latent. At any rate, she proved herself the most self-possessed of the party. Her own explanation was that after she saw "the maister" come away safe and sound from Glasgow, she could not believe that our time had come yet.

"I'll wager," she said, "the neygars would ne'er find out Aunt Tibbie's hidy hole. You may look and look for it and see naething. Some say it used to be a cow byre, and some that it was a hemel, that's a field shelter for nowt or sheep. Ony way, it's roofed wi' green divots and it's built like what you call a lean-to, only it doesn't lean to a wall but to the grund and a big rock, and slants down to the grass."

Janet was starting off to give particulars of no great importance just at the moment, but my husband broke in with a few pointed questions. Then we learnt that

Janet at one time lived with her aunt in this primitive dwelling. It was a solitary place on the moor rising beyond Alva on the Ochil Hills. When leaving she had travelled by the road, having got a lift from the distillery man at Alva, who was delivering kegs of whisky at various inns between Alva and Aberfoyle. She remembered inns at which they stopped. They did not enter the town of Stirling, but served a hotel a mile out of it, two inns at Bridge-of-Allan, one at the Port of Menteith, where the landlady made her a cup of tea, and one at Doune. There was a good road all the way. It would be a long walk, she did not know how many miles, but not impossible.

It looked like the straw a drowning swimmer will clutch at, but the situation was so desperate that anything was better than lying here like the doomed awaiting execution. While my husband and I were talking it over, Janet slipped out and returned with a supply of milk. Her eyes were running with tears which drew alarmed questions from us. "Oh, it's nothing, ma'am," she said, "just Mally. I've learned to like the cow, and now we're to leave her to the mercy o' thae cut-throats."

We felt almost as sad as she did about the poor beast, but the danger was too pressing for more than a brief word of regret. Filling three of the bottles that had been picked up in our wanderings, with milk, we made haste to depart from a shelter that was no longer safe.

For half an hour of the deepest anxiety we struggled and stumbled across the moorland. We knew the direction in which the road lay and were able to keep a fairly straight line. The threat of snow had passed for the time being, and a frost set in which was to our advantage, as we realised when ice began to crunch under our feet, so that instead of having at places to wade through rivers of mud, we had

hard ground till we came to an unhedged mountain-track that led down to the main road. A dangerous stage of the journey had been accomplished without mishap.

Our first alarm occurred after about a quarter of a mile on the highway had been covered, when we heard the sounds made by the hoofs of a galloping horse which became louder as the animal and its rider emerged from the grassy moor and began to hurry along the hard surface of the highway. Was it a pursuer? We had no time to consider. Tom, who was splendid that night, drew us under the shadows of a ragged hawthorn hedge where none but a searching eye was likely to discover us, and we drew out our revolvers. But he who rode past wore the air of a fugitive rather than that of a pursuer. At a first glance, I suspected who he was, and when he rode away exhibiting the same seat on his saddle which I had observed from my place of concealment, no doubt remained of the identity either of the man or the horse. It surprised us when he pulled up within twenty yards of where we were. My husband, to whom I had whispered who he was, glided noiselessly forward and I followed.

We saw him stop at a gate on the other side of the road. It opened into a clear space in front of a quarry which had evidently been used as a dumping ground for motor-cars looted in the neighbourhood. They stood there in hundreds and there appeared to be no one in charge, although several of the cars showed lights as if kept in readiness for any urgent necessity. Macgregor seemed by his confident manner to know that there would not be any one in charge at the moment. At any rate, without hesitation, he jumped into one of two cars that stood close together near the gate, and without seeing that lights and machinery were

in order, he drove out on to the road. He stopped the car to release his horse, which, with a cut of his riding switch he sent along the road at racing pace. Almost as soon as he did so, my husband had jumped into the other car, had it on the road and got us all in. He was not usually so prompt in action, but he thought there must be somebody in charge, and if so, he might return at any moment. We followed the other car till before coming to Stirling, it took the road to Alloa, and we that to Alva which we reached without any mishap.

My husband watched the road carefully in case it should have been rendered impassable, but even when it ran through a village street it was clear of obstacles.

"The enemy must have used the road or intended to use it," he concluded, after having stopped the car in the middle of a ruined village and stepped out to see if any stones or other *débris* blocked the way. There was nothing, but on each side bits of masonry and planks of wood were embanked showing clearly that a way had been cleared after the houses had been blown up. He thought it likely that the object of the enemy had been to paralyse the natives by the destruction of the railways, telegraph wires and wireless stations and keep the roads clear for their own transport.

"If we live we shall know the facts some day," he remarked. "The enterprise has been planned by a master hand and carried out with an indifference to human suffering which suggests that it comes from the Far East. The aim evidently is not only the conquest, but the total annihilation of the old country."

At Alva we stopped, as Janet said there was no motor road up the glen and her aunt lived beyond the edge of it. Tom was puzzled what to do with the car.

“Let those folk steal it,” said Janet, whose quick eye had caught sight of the figures of four or five wild-looking men who evidently had been searching for what they could pick up in the ruins. They were too much absorbed in the endeavour to get some large object out of its burial place or hiding to notice the small light of the car, and we took care that they could not possibly see its passengers. A frantic cheer broke from them as they unearthed a case of bottles, and knocking off the neck by a neat tap on a stone, they each raised a bottle to his mouth.

“Distillery workers—that’s him used to drive the motor—cut across to the gate,” said Janet in such haste that you would have thought her trying to crowd all the words into one mouthful. When we had crossed into a grass field she turned on the headlight and followed as quickly as a fawn after a hind. She seemed, however, to have eyes in the back of her head, for she whispered to us to “wait a bit.”

The men had stopped in the middle of their drinking and with crooked elbows and upraised bottles looked more like stone busts than men. Where had that brilliant light dropped from? Evidently the first instinct of many of them was to make a run for it, but potations of strong drink, which probably had been numerous, gave courage even to the coward. He who according to Janet drove the motor lorry of the distillery advanced cautiously to survey the phenomenon, saw that the car was unmistakably empty, door open, no place where a fox could be concealed. He went near and ultimately jumped in and drove up to his companions.

They were too afraid or too astonished to cheer, but they did not hesitate. Within a minute or two they and

their bags and the case of spirits were all squeezed into the car and they drove away at great speed.

All of us smiled and almost came near laughing. It was the only incident of that awful day that conveyed even a remote sense of amusement. With a sense of relief we faced the dark hills, not indeed ignoring that the chances were in favour of disappointment at the end, and that it might be necessary to spend the night on this high exposed moorland, but with a little of the confidence engendered in a gambler by the fact that luck has been on his side. It was a last throw of the dice, but there was nothing to do but chance it.

Janet, carrying my little boy, had started vigorously as if the air of the Ochils had given her a new energy. When my husband tried to relieve her of the burden she answered that many a time she had carried heavier weights up and down this steep path. The journey was toilsome, but it brought us at last to the dwelling of her aunt. Had Janet not been there we might have spent the night in seeking it. A stream running past suggested that it might have been originally constructed as a shelter for anglers, but there are other explanations of its existence just as possible. Up to the middle of the nineteenth century the Ochils formed a notorious part of a wild country frequented by deer-stealers and other poachers, smugglers who brought tobacco and spirits that had never paid revenue, up the Forth, and other dubious members of the community who were of wandering habits or had reasons for not wishing to come into close contact with officers of the law. At all events it was about the most primitive piece of architecture possible to imagine. A few tree stems placed so as to slope from the summit of the rock to the ground, then laid with branches and covered over with sods. Dry

bracken stuffed hard between two rows of posts sufficed at least to keep the wind away at the two ends. In one there was an apology for a door through which Janet dived as one who knew the way.

She came back with a sober face. Her aunt was in bed very ill. She had "gotten a gliff"; in other words, she had been terrified out of her senses when, not knowing what had happened all over the country, she had gone half-way down to Alva with her donkey and its usual load of eggs and butter. Such a yelling and burning broke on ear and eye as made her turn and fly in terror. Since then she had been afraid to move. Janet, with more tact and promptitude than I gave her credit for, had told her aunt that she had brought the doctor to see her, and as usual with women of her class in the country, no announcement could have been more welcome. It was a doctor she had been hoping for ever since the great fright had left her sick in body and depressed in spirit.

My husband was at a great disadvantage because he had not even the simplest medicaments at hand, but he sat on a stool by her primitive bed and was able to suggest several things that could be done to comfort her mind and cure her bodily ill. His trouble was in vain. Within a day or two her frail life flickered out and we buried her down by the burnside, where lay many of her progenitors.

It was not altogether a quiet period. Few of the invaders came up the Glen, and none of them appeared to imagine that there was any hiding place here as we lay very close, and in time we dug out a place in which our live-stock could be driven in an emergency. They often had caused us anxiety. Aeroplanes came over many times and three times we watched a battle in the skies. On two occasions there was only one aeroplane on each side; on

the third we counted nine, but their battle drifted out of sight and we were afraid to venture any distance across the moor, so that we never learned whether any of them had come down or not.

Eventually things became very quiet and we even began at times to feel a little dull, yet we were glad to have no work more exciting than that of attending to the cows, the pigs and the poultry. A mild excitement was experienced when a creature that had reverted to wildness in wartime returned under the stress of hunger or stirred by the memory of domestic comfort. Fowls often did so. Otherwise, life dropped into an even routine and might have become unbearable if my husband, who loved on moonlight nights to go poking among ruined houses, had not picked up a number of books very miscellaneous in character. Nobody seems to have thought either of destroying them or carrying them away.

At last after about three years of this kind of life, we were roused into new hope and activity by a message from the south. To my dying day I shall not forget how it came. It will be easily understood that we had become as watchful and suspicious as weasels. We hurriedly concealed ourselves and our belongings when one day two singular looking men came riding up the glen, each on a shaggy, long-tailed pony. Who or what they were neither I nor my husband could at first make out. We had not time to get even to the lean-to shed we called a house, but drew back behind some birch trees and high fern so close to the path that one could hear the sound of the men's voices though not the exact words at first. Black-avised men they were with long hair and beards that fell to their chests. They wore outlandish garments of drab cloth, a sort of jacket, a Tam o'Shanter hat,

and undergarments that seemed cut and made to imitate kilts.

“Disguised,” whispered my husband, feared like, “a trap.” Our noses went close to the ground at the thought. As they came nearer, the outlandish men stopped their ponies and without getting off began to sing: What do you think? We could hardly believe our ears.

“O Willie brew’d a peck o’maut,
And Rob and Allan cam to see;
Three blyther hearts, that lee-lang night,
Ye wadna found in Christendie.

“We are na fou, we’re nae that fou,
But just a drappie in our e’e;
The cock may craw, the day may daw,
And ay we’ll taste the barley bree.”

To me their accent appeared to be true Scottish though not Glasgow, but my husband remained suspicious even after they had gone through every verse of the song and roared out the chorus three times. He held my hand tight and breathed rather than said: “Sh, sh, or we’ll never get clear this time.”

The singers appeared to be disappointed.

“No kindly Scot lies here, Jock,” one said to his companion, “or Robbie’s words would have wakened him from the dead.”

“Hout Tam,” replied the other, “our poor freens have cause to be wary, but I got a glimpse of a chuckie, and where there’s hens there is sure to be wimmen. If they’re here they came from Glasga’, so let’s try them with the Forty-second.”

“ Wha saw the forty-second ?
Wha saw them run awa ?
Wha saw the forty-second
Marching to the Broomielaw ?
Some o’ them had shoes and stockings
Some o’ them had nane ava ;
Wha saw the forty-second ?
Wha saw them run awa ? ”

The “ Forty-second ” was irresistible as it was sung by those grave-looking figures. With laughter and tears we stood up and acknowledged them. The singer who had spoken last turned to his companion, and not abating his gravity by a whit, said : “ I knew that would bring them oot, Tam.”

It is beyond me to describe the conversation that went on during the next days. All the time I was dizzy with excitement and delight. It was the end of a life that had become hateful, and the dawn of one full of promise. After that there was so much to do in selecting what to take and what to leave, and in preparing such food as could be carried and such clothes as might be worn that I had not a minute to spare. One advantage we had over the southern friends who joined later on was that we needed no shoes and stockings. There was a very small supply to begin with, and so we accustomed ourselves to go barefoot. That was a very great help in the journey. As far as we could, we also kept to the high ground in the middle of England, where the rivers are little and could be forded. I did not take down anything in writing during the journey and must leave to some other day the task of putting on to paper my recollections.

XIX

THE ATTEMPT AT REVOLUTION IN LONDON

IT was only from an accidental allusion by Dr. Turnbull that I came to know that the invasion of England had been preceded by a terrible, and in blood, most costly attempt at revolution in London. Over and over again I had been surprised in the same way. It was assumed that every person of intelligence knew of the most lurid passages in English history. Controversies had raged over them, they had been recorded in prose, sung in verse. How could anyone be ignorant of them? It was unthinkable that an occurrence in London as frightful as any in the German War could be unknown to an Englishman. Dr. Turnbull was, however, most patient. He told me that in the course of three years a revolutionary wave had travelled from north to south. It failed because the population of Great Britain had not become revolutionary at heart, and those born and brought up in an island had not got over their prejudice against foreigners.

So the revolutionary force which started in Aberdeen took the best part of three years to get to London. It travelled by Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh, then crossed the border to Newcastle, and at intervals appeared at Darlington, Leeds, Manchester, York, Hull, Nottingham, Northampton, Luton, and finally at London, where it was

suppressed by an explosion at which humanity had not yet ceased to shudder.

On my asking if there had been much writing about it, "A great deal," he answered. "You should however read it up in the better class magazines of the period, which were not run for profit or partizanship, like many of the daily and weekly papers, but gave the truth as they knew it."

He showed me about a dozen from which I selected one to copy. The account had for centre a deadly and domineering man of science who would have pawned his soul to achieve a discovery and prided himself on being above the sentimentality that would avoid the shedding of blood merely for its innocence.

Here is the story as it was written close to the time, and obviously by one familiar with contemporary men of mark.

WHO WAS MR. BINYON ?

(From a contemporary magazine.)

Two years after the revolution in London this question is being asked as eagerly and as much in vain as it was immediately after the tragical ending of that unhappy movement. Had the Government encouraged "instead of denouncing independent investigation, an answer might have been found by now. When I was asked to make enquiry into the mystery, the difficulties had enormously increased. Binyon disappeared so completely that many believed him dead, and of his associates some are definitely known to have died naturally or been killed by accident or design ; but of his fate nothing is known. A feature of the case is that his memory is hated by the revolutionaries as bitterly as the name of Cromwell is hated by the Irish. At no time could the Government have been ignorant of the

character of the rebellion or the individuals who planned it.

The movement began in Glasgow and was continued in Newcastle, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Nottingham, and was to have found its climax in London. The history of the attempt made in the great manufacturing towns of the provinces was almost the same in each case. Apparently a small number of extremists—adherents of Nihilism under one of the numerous forms it assumed in our day—miscalculated the extent of the support they could command and ignored the average Englishman's dislike of extreme creeds. At any rate the government always had at hand a force large enough to quell each rising at its birth. It stood like a man at a rat-hole with a stick ready to bludgeon the animal as soon as it left its hiding-place.

Subsequent events proved that the authorities knew who were the ringleaders, most of whom were arrested and shot. The rising in London assumed far larger proportions ; but the partizans of the Government contended that forces were prepared to deal efficiently and without much bloodshed with it.

They argued that the gigantic explosion of the evening of June must have been the work of a third party. Was that party composed of Mr. Binyon and a handful of confederates is the question which I am seeking to answer.

I was chosen for the task partly because I had some acquaintance with the man. Nobody took me seriously when I explained how slight it was, and their scepticism may be described as natural since it was my introduction that made him known to my cousin, Sir James Eliot, who was the means by which he came to know Lord Oisel, the Minister for War. My introduction to him was purely accidental. One evening in my club three men were arguing about the distribution of weight in a vehicle so

as to secure a maximum of speed with a minimum of energy, the question having turned up in relation to a new motor carriage of which the inventor had a model with him. Looking on was Mr. Binyon, then unknown to any who were present.

He butted in rather rudely. "Can't settle the question by arguing. Words no use. Let me test it, got a little thing in my pocket."

While speaking he had taken from his pocket a tube no thicker than a man's forefinger and set it on a wheeled frame with four indicators marked respectively, Time, Place, Distance, Energy expended. Working very quickly he took some little weights from his pocket and adjusted them in the position suggested by one of the disputants. Everybody acclaimed the brevity and certainty of the tests as he adjusted his instrument in accordance with the other opinions expressed, but his only comment was: "No use wasting breath in talk—a practical test's the thing."

I was not interested so much in the test as in the man. He looked what he was, the embodied spirit of science. Yet to the ordinary man he possessed no feature out of the common. He was short and at first sight rather stodgy-looking with a thick neck and broad shoulders, on which his head was poised like a stiff piece of sculpture. It was the head of a strong man, perhaps of a genius but not of an imaginative artistic genius. The hard features and the equally hard blue eyes spoke of science rather than art. A first and lasting impression made on my mind was that of a strong man with many of the less admirable characteristics that are associated with strength such as concentration, aggressiveness, self-absorption exaggerated to the highest degree.

It was evident that the three disputants recognised

their master, or it might be more correct to say the amateurs recognised a genius. Without heeding their flattery and appreciation he turned to me and said abruptly: "You don't profess to understand a thing like that, you are not an engineer?" "Not at all," I said in answering the implied query. "You'd have to begin at the A B C if you wished to teach me your mystery."

"Well," he said with an unexpected approach to toleration, "we cannot be all alike, and it is for another purpose I wanted to make your acquaintance. Could you lunch with me to-morrow?"

The man's personality interested me and I consented—the more willingly because there was no apparent reason why he should show me this civility.

When we met the next day he did not leave me long in doubt. We had finished the more solid part of our meal, and were coquetting with a very fine port which he pressed on me while merely sipping at it himself. All the while he committed the enormity of puffing at a large cigar. Not that I personally cared what law a man made for himself, but whatever might be his other claim to distinction, Mr. Binyon proclaimed himself a barbarian by spoiling the flavour of a fine port by mingling it with that of tobacco. Worse was to follow, but of that anon.

"You are a relative of Sir James Eliot?" he asked inquiringly, as he passed the port and his cigar case. Meanwhile a waiter was serving coffee and liqueurs. Mr. Binyon banished the common liqueurs with a wave of his hand. "Bring the 1827 brandy," he ordered.

The waiter went for this treasure of the wine cellar, and while he was gone I drank coffee, lighted a cigar and answered that he was right, Sir James Eliot was my cousin.

"I take no other liqueur except this old brandy, and

they serve it in glasses that can hold more than a tot," he remarked as the waiter returned with a bottle of this noble wine and the spherical bulging tumblers best fitted to develop its flavour when fondled and warmed by loving hands.

The wise waiter presented the long-necked bottle with the reverence of a high priest who regarded his office as sacred. He interposed humbly, but firmly, when Mr. Binyon attempted to fill the glasses generously.

"Not above the line please, sir, not above the line, or you will spoil the aroma," he pleaded. Mr. Binyon thought perhaps he had been transgressing against the edicts of Deity, for he stopped at not more than double the usual allowance, and the waiter went away with the air of one turning from sin.

"Damned curious fellow, but takes his job seriously," remarked Mr. Binyon, drinking half of the 1827 brandy at a gulp and pouring the rest into his coffee. "To come to the point," he said, "do you think you could get me to know Sir James. He is close in with the War Minister, Lord Oisel, and that's the man I want!"

It will be understood that at the time I knew little about Mr. Binyon, and still less about his plans or ambitions, nor was his personality at all winning. During our conversation he had thrown out many hints about his own greatness and importance, but had not made a remark or asked a question about any interest of mine. He had ordered a rather vulgarly sumptuous lunch, and appeared to think me a mere pawn in some game he was playing. Also I resented his assumption and answered: "You would not get on with my cousin. No two men could be more different. You have opposite standards. Sir James Eliot is an ultra-fashionable society man who gives no end of thought to

the cut of his clothes, to his hat, his boots, and all that lie between them. About these matters I judge you care little. You are absorbed in yourself and your work. It is impossible for you to realise how far you are asunder. For example he has said to me not once but many times that he would not eat twice in company with a man who smoked when drinking port, emptied his liqueur glass into his coffee or gulped down an old and rare brandy without fondling his glass, as I do this to warm it slightly and bring out the delicacy of the aroma."

The look of surprise in his face was something to see, but he retorted in the tone of a business man who recognises that a scheme is failing and turns to another method of attaining his end.

"You are kidding," he said, "and probably that's only a way of turning it down."

Shortly afterwards we parted, and I thought the affair ended; but it turned out otherwise.

Within a week I met Sir James Eliot and almost his first words were: "I hear you know a man called Binyon. Can you arrange an introduction? The Minister of War wants to meet him, and so I think does the P.M."

Mr. Binyon had no place in his mind for small quarrels. His eye was fixed on the one object of getting the ear of someone in power and if his vanity had been ruffled at our previous interview, he did not show it. He only asked when and where he could meet Sir James; and on my suggesting taking a taxi to his flat in Mount Street he promptly agreed, and shortly afterwards we were shown into the old bachelor's quarters. Probably their elegance was thrown away on Mr. Binyon. Never before had I met a man so concentrated on the attainment of an object. What that object was I did not know. He had used me only as

a tool, and evidently his next step was to use Sir James in the same way. I perceived this and immediately feeling *de trop* departed on the plea of having another appointment.

To the reader I may seem to have been too particular in recounting so small an event, but as very little is known about Mr. Binyon, and scarcely anything of him before the revolution, it seemed worth while to make a note of my brief experience. Sir James Eliot, though only a man of society, had an instinct for character, which he shared with "naturals," children, and dumb animals.

"That's the stuff out of which Royalty, the uncrowned, the oil-king is made. You know the sort of man gets in his head one idea—and one only—and lets it engross him. It matters nothing what it is, coal or cotton, poultry or pigs, he builds his world on it; if it's pig, he thinks pig and dreams bacon; if it's chemistry as it is with this man, it swallows him entire. Nothing else matters. Here's one who has got something and the world's well lost if only he can get a show with it. Gad, I half envy him, feel as if life had only given me a few mince-pies and him a joint of beef. Then there's another sign by which you can always recognise the born winner. He has no use for the squeezed lemon. He uses me for a purpose as he used you for a purpose. The purpose served, the lemon squeezed, the rind is tossed away. He would not be drawn about his secret, and when he got what he wanted—an introduction to the Minister for War, he says to me coolly that I had been very sporting to give up so much of my time and he would not keep me longer from my gay diversions. It would only bore me to listen to the serious talk he meant to have with Oisel, in short I was turned down."

Sir James spoke with unwonted bitterness. No wonder. There was nothing he enjoyed more than to have a secret

which he could impart to the ladies in strict confidence, and on condition that not a word was to be divulged.

The important point is made clear that, whatever Mr. Binyon was, he succeeded in obtaining access to one of the most powerful and the least scrupulous Ministers of the day. Had he not been so intent on his chemical studies he might have learnt that it was not a very difficult feat to get to know this particular servant of the Crown. On the formation of the Cabinet, Lord Oisel had been given the portfolio of the War Office, not for military, but for political reasons. He was one of the new aristocracy who had won his way to fame or to notoriety by his business qualities. Among these was the accomplishment of being able to assume a reckless devil-may-care frankness combined with a real secretiveness in everything that mattered.

In plain words he was a very cunning man, one of those who vigilantly studied how to take full advantage of every favourable breeze. He and Binyon were alike in possessing a gift of concentration. The difference between them was, that whereas the Minister was ready at any time to sacrifice friends and adherents if they stood between him and the only object of his sincere worship, Money, the chemist was prepared to go equally far in devotion, to science in general, and particularly the science of chemistry. The Prime Minister of the day has also to be taken into account. He was a politician who had worked his way to the front by his ability to win votes. If he worshipped in any fane it was at the altar of that feminine divinity—Popularity.

It is known that these three frequently met, assumably in a bargaining spirit, but there is no report of the proceedings. Each knew the value of secrecy. A few facts leaked out, chiefly because advisers and experts had to be

consulted. It is known that the trio were agreed that a rising had been planned to take place and each had some knowledge of the date ; the two Ministers from the Secret Intelligence Department, and Mr. Binyon from a source he would not divulge.

It is also clear that Binyon wished to secure full power to suppress the revolution which he said he could do without help from the army or any other source. He was however most unreasonable or most dictatorial in his submission of terms. Yet there was some who defended him. It was clear he had made an important discovery and to say anything about it in any way before an agreement was signed and sealed was to trust Lord Oisel, and far from trusting, he viewed the man with keenest suspicion regarding him as one who would make no bones about applying to his own end knowledge thus acquired.

The Prime Minister in all probability knew enough to make a shrewd guess at the truth, even if he did not hit it exactly.

Sir James Eliot who could play the fool admirably and was often doing so, nevertheless had a keener mind than he got credit for, and it was sharpened by his rebuff. He made a bold guess when he said :

“Your scientific acquaintance has a Hunnish look, but I am told by those able to judge that his chemistry is not a sham. I’ll wager he has got a new poison gas or some contrivance of that kind for downing insurrections ; and if I read him rightly wants above everything else to experiment with it on a crowd of people. He looks the sort of genius who would not count the cost in life if only he could get his infernal war engine tried and himself protected from the consequences. Oisel is trying to squeeze the secret out of him as a means of power. He is never more

satisfied than when diddling a genius out of the credit that belongs to him. The P.M. is considering how best he can impress the electorate with the devastating power of the discovery and then win their votes by destroying it as too deadly a weapon for a nation to use against a brother nation."

"I comprehend. He always seeks a pose where another would have a policy, and what a splendid pose! So Christian and pacific."

With a Prime Minister deeply engaged in formulating plans to save himself and his party at the approaching general election, and a War Minister plotting to victimise an inventor it is no wonder that less than necessary attention was given to the threat of revolution. Indeed, very few people took it seriously. Many who were believed to be in the know held that the danger had practically passed away. Nothing connected with it appeared in the papers.

It was in official minds that the rising was timed to take place on July 20th. The secret agents had the most convincing proof of it. Only they forgot that a revolution is not like a church festival fixed to a day. Cleverly and noiselessly their leaders advanced the date, and as everybody knows the attempt at revolution was made in the early morning of June 20th.

XX

CONTINUATION OF MAGAZINE ARTICLE

AFTER revolution had shown its grisly face in London, many of those who had places in the country retired to them, and among others was Sir James Eliot. When asked to make this investigation, my mind turned naturally to him. His cousin, Lord Oisel, as is well known, was killed in the rising, and I knew that he and Sir James had been thought by the inner circle of Ministers to have been in some way responsible for the massacre which made June 20th a hated day in English history. In answer to my request to see him about the matter, he wrote by return that it would give him great satisfaction to do so.

I motored to the old-fashioned little grange in a wooded nook of the Wiltshire Downs in which he was leading the simple life, and caught him in the act of trimming the neat grass walks of his flower garden. He looked extremely healthy, but a little more serious than before.

There was no difficulty about getting him to talk. When I came out of the house after having removed the stains of travel, he hailed me from a corner where the garden spread out into a down. The corner was a tiny enclosure surrounded by a clipped hedge of cypress. As he poured out the tea, he warned me never to have anything to do with politicians. If a politician could use you to

serve himself, he would always do it. A few more ejaculations of more acrid character than was customary with him in the old times, and he was right into the heart of his grievance.

“Did you not expect the mob to lynch some of them?” he asked. “Where was their secret service that they let the capital be exposed to a surprise? It was not like a sudden rising of unarmed men; there were regiments of trained soldiers. Where did they practise their exercises and their shooting? They had motors too and aeroplanes.”

“But tell me precisely what is your personal grievance,” I asked, and I repeated this whenever he returned to the bitter mood which seemed a result of too much brooding.

Sir James is not a rural swain, but, if he will forgive my saying so, an elderly butterfly of fashion who regards himself as an exile and finds no compensation for Piccadilly, its clubs and gossip, in the charms of Downland. He was in his element canvassing the part played by various people in the revolutionary crisis.

“Members of the Government,” he said, “were among themselves agreed that they owed their discredit and eventual downfall to Mr. Binyon.”

He went on to tell me that Binyon had disappeared after that terrible night in London when the revolution was brought to a tragic standstill by the use of a new agent in war which the best Government experts were unable to identify. Some held it to have been the new explosive for which chemists had long been seeking; others demonstrated to their own satisfaction that it must have been a type of poison gas. The only point on which they agreed was that it had been employed indifferently against friend and foe. If Mr. Binyon had been found, he would have been shot as a traitor or tried for murder, and the Government

would have prosecuted Sir James Eliot if they could have found evidence enough. They had in their ranks many excellent business men who took the view that public resentment would be assuaged if somebody were caught and hanged.

Sir James was most pathetic about the persecution to which he had been subjected. A beady-eyed detective in plain clothes, accompanied by two large policemen, entered his flat with authority to search it for "papers." He had difficulty in finding anything to furnish the flimsiest pretext for suspicion, for the only letters Sir James preserved were those from his estate. For invitations and so on he used the telephone. Their disappointment changed to exultation when they found on his writing table a book entitled "Private Notebook," artlessly concealed under a sheet of blotting paper.

"I'll thank you for that book, Sir James," exclaimed the expert from Scotland Yard in a tone less diplomatic than he had hitherto used. No doubt he had observed a flush of guilt and shame on his victim's face.

"It's only my very private notebook," pleaded the baronet. "You will find nothing in that."

His answer was a cunning and a meaning gleam of a smile in the beady eyes.

Of course he took it away to study and when it came back it was thumbed in a way to show that several people had scanned it in search for an address or a secret code. In vain, for it was only a prompter for the old Society man. Here he jotted down the impromptu anecdotes and stories, brief extracts from the newest book, songs, *môts*, expressions that woven into his conversation produced the charm that made it famous. A more disagreeable scene occurred at the very exclusive club to which he belonged, when the secretary led him to understand that he was expected to

resign. "Beastly hard luck," he added, "but we cannot have a damned policeman lurking round to watch a member. You would hate it yourself—best to resign."

He felt that the last and worst blow had come when he found that a new valet whom he had engaged was a detective appointed to watch his comings and goings. One evening he discovered him opening his letters with the aid of warm water, reading and fastening them up again with gum, all in the most dexterous manner. This was the last straw. It made him resolve to leave London for his little country house. He informed the Government of his intention and said if anyone claimed a right to interfere, he would challenge it in the law courts. The worm had turned. His defiance was not accepted, and they did not interfere with his migration. Perhaps by the time this had occurred, they had lost all hope of finding Mr. Binyon.

The worst of it was that Sir James remained dissatisfied in his own mind. He asked me to say this, leaving me free to give the facts in my own way. He said his cousin, Lord Oisel, after several interviews, held that Binyon had probably discovered a highly effective new war weapon, but was too jealous and suspicious to trust anyone with the secret. On the part of the Government, Oisel had offered a million pounds for it, which had been obstinately refused. Binyon said that he would suppress that or any other attempt at revolution for that sum. It would be risking his life and he would chance that, but he would not part with his secret. What he wanted was *carte blanche* to deal with the rebels. When that was done he would be prepared to discuss terms of sale. They had asked what he would require if the revolution fizzled out of itself, and he had replied promptly: "No play, no pay!"

“My cousin, who was not an imaginative man,” continued Sir James, “began to think that despite Binyon’s solid matter-of-fact appearance and the scientific learning to which all testified, he could be nothing but a lunatic. ‘Do you really believe,’ he asked, ‘that England would or could enter into a contract with anyone to settle her rebellion if there is one?’”

“Why not?” replied Binyon obstinately and sulkily.

Lord Oisel, a soldier with a lawyer’s craft, had what he called a brain wave. “Damn it! I know what I’ll do,” he said, and rang the house telephone bell. “Ring up my doctor, and send up William and James.”

The suspicious rage that flushed his visitor’s face might have told anyone else than Lord Oisel that he had been a little previous. “I’ll have you examined by a doctor, my friend,” he said in a changed tone.

“And have me shut up in a madhouse,” exclaimed Binyon starting to his feet and beginning to move towards a French window opening on to a garden. My cousin rushed to stop him, but was himself stopped by a blow that sent him reeling into the arms of the two grooms he had summoned.

“Catch him,” he cried, as Binyon was making his exit. Then, as the two men hesitated, he told them not to. After all, he was in the wrong and thought also that he had made a fool of himself. As likely as not he had come very near turning comedy into tragedy. The air at the time was very full of rumours about new explosives and poison gasses being invented, and the Government had promised, along with other Governments of the west, not to use them. His simple plan had been devised to keep a possibly dangerous man in confinement till the revolution had either arrived or passed definitely into the category of things not done.



XXI

CONCLUSION OF MAGAZINE ARTICLE. EVIDENCE OF MAJOR FISHER OF THE AIR SERVICE

WHEN Sir James sat down to dinner he was a different man. The airing of his grievances had been a relief after his much brooding and loneliness. He was one of those who prefer "the sweet shady side of Pall Mall" to all the meadows in Arcady. He became more like himself as he asked :

"Do you know how I caught out the police spy so nicely ? A real valet or butler is often as much of a 'kernooser' in wine as his master, but this ignorant fellow knew nothing about the bottle of Madeira he had found open. It came from a cellar in France, and was a precious wine, and so old and strong that even I had to drink it from a liqueur glass. The spy must have thought it merely cider or some equally light thirst-quencher, for he had emptied the bottle a tumblerful at a time, and though he could mechanically open and close the letters, he was blind to everything else and did not see me enter the room and stand right in front of him."

When Sir James came to the Madeira, that is to say, at the end of the meal when other Christian men drink port, he held his liqueur glass up to the light to admire the colour of the wine, brought it under his nose, slowly sipped and then said :

“You should see Major Fisher, a top-hole man and one of the few who know how to reserve speech till the right moment. He was on duty on the fateful night, commanding the airmen who were supposed to guarantee London against the threatened revolution. He got into the thick of it, and was so badly wounded that at one time it was believed he had gone out altogether. No one asked what he knew, and he did not volunteer, as it seemed to him, as to all of us, that Ministers were only endeavouring to save their faces, and that a trustworthy and impartial commission should be appointed to sift the facts. We do not ask in the interest of abstract virtue, nor even to clear besmirched reputations, but because it was of Imperial importance to find out who stopped the revolution. You will find Fisher like myself an assenting party to your proposal to publish the facts in your paper. Go and see him in the morning. He lives in a cottage on the Wylie. I would also advise you to find out what you can about a limited liability company called ‘Chemicals, Ltd.’ It began as a pottering little business, grew into a very large one, but after the revolution, was, I think, wound up. Now let us play billiards and talk nonsense. I have not had such a spell of serious conversation for years.”

Even when pushing the billiard balls about, my mind refused to work on any but the same topic. It was different with Sir James. He shuttered down all serious questions and concentrated his wit on the game, losing no opportunity to praise his own game, pour scorn on mine, and address endearing or angry language to the billiard balls.

By ten o'clock the next morning I was pushing my way along the road to Major's Fisher's cottage.

Major Fisher had been apprised by telephone that I was on the way and was awaiting my arrival on the lawn

in front of his diminutive but pretty old cottage. He was in a cleverly contrived vehicle shaped like a child's perambulator, in which he could either sit or lie. With his hand he could work a lever that enabled him to run along the paths as easily as could be done on a bicycle. Maimed and scarred as he was, it required no effort of imagination to realise that he must have been a brave, alert soldier.

With military directness too, as soon as the first greetings were spoken and an offer of hospitality made and refused, he entered upon the business that had brought me to him.

"Sir James Eliot told me all about you on the telephone," he said. "It would be a pity to waste such a fine morning indoors. You will find a chair and a table in the shadow of that yew." And he wheeled away to a great tree that might have been planted when they laid the foundation of the old cottage.

"I am going to leave you here," he continued. "When it still was doubtful whether I would ever regain the use of my hand, I dictated an account of what I saw as exact as I could make it. That is the manuscript on the table. You are at liberty to read it on two conditions. The first is, that if printed, it must appear as it stands without change either of interpolation or omission; the second is that if you cannot give this guarantee, you will restore the paper and make no use of it direct or indirect. The importance of this will be apparent when I tell you that when it was written, it was still on the cards that I might pass out, and with that knowledge before me I naturally tried to set it all down as truthfully and colourlessly as I could."

On receiving the required assurance he departed in his tiny coach, but not before indicating a little cabinet in the deepest shade of the yew "Wherein," said he, "you will find hock, seltzer and ice should you feel thirsty or

require a stimulus to carry you through my story, which is merely a statement of facts such as I might have made to my O.C. It has not any literary touch whatever."

It seemed a good time then to have a hock and seltzer, so I opened the cabinet before setting myself to study the document which is here reprinted exactly as it was received :

On the night of the 20th June, I was in command of the patrolling aircraft based at Hendon. I came on at 10 p.m. and was due off at 2 a.m. Instructions were to start aeroplanes at the rate of one every 15 minutes so as to keep a chain of them circling over London. All were armed, but my orders, read to every airman before starting, were that his duty was not primarily concerned with fighting. His duty was intelligence. He was handed a key map showing for the circuit the most convenient receiving post to which any sign of disturbance should be reported. Acting on a custom which was beyond the original instructions, but was approved by my Commanding Officer, at 1.15 I went up, leaving Captain Norman in temporary command.

My object was to take an irregular course over the East End and centre of London. It was a clear, starlit night—visibility good. Following the river till it reached the City, all was quiet. At 1.45 a.m. the first signs of disturbance were observed at Covent Garden market and the Borough market. It seemed that the large motor vans used for fruit and vegetables were more numerous than usual, but as the season for strawberries and other soft fruit was at its height, there was little ground for suspicion. As, however, the stir increased tremendously, I extinguished my lights and descended low enough to see what was taking place. From their attitude, policemen were apparently wishing to examine the contents of the closed motor lorries, and the drivers refusing to open them. As I rose, wondering

whether the incident was worth reporting, a great bell started ringing, the time being 2.30 a.m. Immediately a new commotion began. The lorries were flung open and from each a number of armed men trooped out. Some of the policemen bravely tried to make arrests, but were quickly overpowered or shot. The revolution had begun.

I signalled Hyde Park, where our troops were assembled, but they had already been warned and the first of them were dashing up in motors. If they imagined that there was only a fray to settle they were woefully disappointed. What I had witnessed was only a slight example of the manner in which rebel troops had been brought into the city. That they were troops was unmistakably true. No uniform could be discerned, but the men fell in, marched and wheeled in a way that showed them to have been trained and drilled. Here was a situation in which aircraft could take no part as a fighting unit. Friend and foe were indistinguishable, especially as there were groups in which men in khaki and civilian dress were obviously fighting shoulder to shoulder. Either there had been a great desertion from the British ranks, or the enemy leaders had put some of their followers into uniform for the purpose of stealing an advantage out of the confusion that ensued. We in the air were paralysed for the same reason—if we dropped bombs, it would be to kill friend with foe.

I had little time to debate the point as it soon became evident that in the air were craft easily distinguishable from those of the British army; also, it became equally clear that some of those which showed our flag and used our signals were hostile.

My first impression, after having examined the scene below, was that of a number of infuriated mobs, among whom was a leavening of men with some military training,

looting and burning, each mob acting in isolation. The terrified inhabitants issued from the houses only partially dressed, and fled, those in the neighbourhood of Hyde Park rushing for safety to the camp there. It looked to me as if the rising would easily be suppressed, as, whenever a new outbreak occurred troops were immediately dispatched to the scene, and the rioters made no stiff resistance. Most of them seemed more intent on robbery than fighting. Still, as one rising was suppressed, another started, and more troops were sent out. It is of importance to put it on record that as far as my observation goes, there was up to this point comparatively little bloodshed. The riff-raff were too keen on the goods to take the trouble to kill the owners unless resistance was offered, and the loyal soldiers did not shoot for shooting's sake. Often they were seen assisting the gallant firemen to quell the blazes that otherwise might have spread over London.

They were obviously succeeding when the situation was suddenly changed. Nearly every small band of insurgents had been dissipated, the army excelling itself in the precision with which each new conflagration was located and in the speed with which relief was dispatched. One began to think that the attempt at a revolution had definitely failed, though that was evidently not the opinion of the citizens who, many of them from dwellings that had not yet been attacked, continued to stream into Hyde Park.

I was watching all this and at the same time keeping an eye on two suspicious-looking aeroplanes circling above the turmoil like falcons ready to swoop, when my ear amid the din caught the sound of rifles and machine guns. A disciplined and well-equipped army led by tanks was also entering the Park. How it came there was a mystery solved afterwards, but all I thought of then was that these

minor attacks had only been feints, means to distract attention and compel the army to weaken itself by rushing troops to the rescue. This was the great attack, and it was delivered fearlessly and skilfully. It had always seemed to me that the military authorities had taken too light-hearted an estimate of the fighting power of those who were known to be organising a revolution. Young officers of the Guards were only echoing their seniors when they spoke contemptuously of having been put on to a police job. The revolutionary leaders were experienced military leaders. It was easy to reconstruct their plan of battle. Small bodies of incendiaries were sent out for the purpose of spreading alarm and diverting attention. Spies and scouts had instilled into the minds of the citizens that if war broke out, the safest place was the camp. That, of course, is a theory only, but its truth can, and no doubt will be tested. About the facts there can be no question. Many fighting men had been dispatched to quell disturbances in other parts of London and vast numbers of non-combatants had been omitted.

Though weakened in these ways, the army would probably have been able to master the situation but for an occurrence that neither loyalist nor rebel could have foreseen. I had been ordered by wireless to concentrate attention on the aircraft, and what I saw deserves close attention as it may mark the beginning of a disastrous chapter in English history.

Among the aeroplanes was a grey-coloured one that carried nothing to show its nationality. Up to now it had circled above the field of operation at no great pace except that when a larger crowd than usual collected, it would dash to the neighbourhood at very high speed. At the moment, it hung in the air high above Hyde Park as

if the aviator were making a complete survey of the battle. He could see the aeroplanes, a cluster of British, obviously working in combination with one another, about fifty others flying separately, each apparently avoiding the rest and the one I was in; on the ground, two armies rapidly becoming intermingled in a fight that began with a bayonet charge and remained a hand-to-hand scuffle. Those who had bayonets or revolvers fought with them, and such as had lost their weapons fought with their fists. A huge panic-stricken crowd of refugees ran confusedly first this way then that. The grey aeroplane descended in a spiral and circled round the field of combatants and fugitives. Instinctively recognising that the airman must have an object in view, I planed across to watch him.

When his survey was over, he mounted, flew north a little, then swung back and came south again with the wind in his teeth. Over the masses of struggling men he slowed for a few seconds, then dashed into the wind. Almost simultaneously there was such an explosion as I had never heard before. The noise of fighting was stilled, and a dark cloud of smoke covering all except the leaping flames which in places changed the blackness to a moving fiery gold. I did my best to intercept him, and with a foolish stubbornness held on even after it was clear that my 'plane was out-flown and outranged. The man, whoever he was, simply played with me, slowing down and even circling back and shooting at long range, as if experimenting with a new gun. My only chance was that through over-confidence he might meet with an accident, but the luck was against me. My memory is not clear whether he hit me or the 'plane first.

What remains of my story was told me afterwards. I was found lying unconscious beside the wrecked aeroplane in a field close to the Sussex Downs and within

sight of St. Margaret's Bay. The field belonged to a dear old woman called Mrs. Dare, who had been a nurse but, having become too old for hospital nursing, had taken to keeping poultry as a means of eking out her scanty means of subsistence. I owe everything to her care and skill. She induced the onlookers—a half-dozen or so of farm labourers, who had witnessed the crash and run to see who had been brought down—to carry me to the nearest dwelling, her own little thatched cottage, on an improvised stretcher, at the same time dispatching the daughter who lived with her to bring the village medical man. He came, made his examination, shook his head and said that the case was hopeless. The hospital nurse did not over-rate the village doctor. She hurried out and returned with Mr. Trevor-Birkendale, the famous surgeon, who had retired to spend the evenings of his days on his little estate on the Downs.

“Never was a call more welcome,” he explained to me afterwards. “I was bored stiff with doing nothing and accepted a really difficult task as a godsend. It was not you I welcomed, but a complicated and almost hopeless case. It gave me fresh energy; it renewed my youth. I laughed with the old glee when, after long pondering there came to me a solution of the difficulty many would have thought insoluble. You have been of as much use to me as I to you.”

The Service acted as though they assumed me dead. Only two enquiries were made, both before my removal from Mrs. Dare's cottage to Birkendale Lodge. The first was by the village policeman, who had previously been to the local doctor. He came, pocket-book and pencil in hand, wanting to know my name, occupation, residence, age and particulars of the occurrence. Not being able to obtain a positive reply to any of his queries, he asked if

there was anyone charged. Mrs. Dare said that she did not know. She only saw the aeroplane come down.

“It must be left to the inquest,” he replied, and went on to “reckon they would have to decide whether it was an act of God or a common murder.”

The other was put by the petty officer in charge of the disposal of Government aeroplanes wrecked during military operations. He sold the wreckage to a man who buys such things to break them up and sell the materials. A printed form was handed to Mrs. Dare ordering Blank of Blank rank and Blank address to report himself at the Air Office with a doctor's certificate when convalescent.

In neither case was any further inquiry made, so that for the two years which elapsed I was dead to the army. For many weeks I lay in semi-consciousness, hovering between life and death; for many more my mind was blank and stupefied, and only recently has it returned to the normal. Gradually, however, memory revived and I am now able to trace the course of events clearly.

Some may think that I ought as soon as possible to have placed this information before the authorities. I say deliberately that I refrained from distrust of the Government. They were in close communication with Mr. Binyon for two months haggling and bargaining for the possession of his secret. It was impossible for them to come to a clear decision because they were divided into a military faction which wanted it as a source of power, and a pacifist faction which beheld in their mind's eye millions of horrified voters refusing to vote for a Government possessed of so deadly a war weapon.

They were also inefficient. Never yet have they been able to answer the question, “Who was Mr. Binyon?” I, still an invalid, and till the end a cripple, found the

answer by the application of a little common sense that was not swayed by ambition or fear of any electorate. He began his active career as Professor Bennett Loughton in the University of Leeds. That position contented him for a very brief period. Brilliant as were his prospects, he resigned, changed his name and retired to a country house in Wales for the purpose of working at an invention of which he already had conceived the idea. It was necessary for him, as secrecy was necessary, that he should depend upon the accuracy of his calculations. Experiments would have been fatal to secrecy. An opportunity for experiment occurred, and he carried it out coldly and ruthlessly, without hate and without pity.

Where is Mr. Binyon now? I do not know, but for my wounds the rest of my life would be devoted to searching for him among the countries which hate and envy England. It is impossible for me to get rid of the foreboding that he has carried his devilish invention to our enemies, but I am out of action, a helpless cripple for life. Some upheld the story that Mr. Binyon had been seen in his grey aeroplane flying seaward high above the white cliffs of Dover; that he had landed on the sea and been taken aboard a ship that seemed to wait for him and thereafter went down in deep water. Many believed that he would come again with our enemies. No material existed for enabling one to sift the grains of truth hidden under the growing mass of legend and myth.

* * * * *

So ended Major Fisher's account as printed in the magazine. After I had finished reading I continued to gaze at the much-fingered, time-worn grey paper as it were a spell. Whenever I think of it the scene returns

with undiminished vividness—the room with its hand-made furniture and log fire, Bessie composedly doing needlework, Dr. Turnbull discussing a new water-mill with Captain Hart, who had come over for the purpose.

The conversation that followed illustrated the vast difference in our point of view. I was as one staggered by the news of an awful calamity; they who had read the paper a hundred times and had come to regard it as the account of an episode in long-past history were composed and matter-of-fact. To Bessie it was an enthralling though sorrowful tale, and she embroidered it with a few of the legends and traditions that had been handed down about Mr. Binyon. She related them as they had been heard on the lips of those who were not far separated as she from the time when these things happened.

XXII

THE SCARLETT MS. HOW SIR JOHN SCARLETT BOXED WITH A COLOURED OFFICER OF HIGH RANK

AS I sat next morning brooding in depression on the sidelight that had been thrown on England's fate, Bessie came in aglow with her ride across the Downs in a cold north-east wind. She was always in high spirits after a gallop or a run.

"I am going to take you to see the last of our aristocrats," she said, "and you must be sure to address her properly. She is Lady Crosby Scarlett, a descendant of the Scarletts of Scarlett Honour in the County of Yorkshire. Nobody in the Settlement calls her so except myself, for they all think, like Dr. Turnbull, that titles of nobility are the vainest of distinctions, but I adore them."

"I am sure you do," I answered in her own vein, for even at the moment of most extreme dejection I could not resist the contagion of her high spirits. "What would give you more joy than to change plain Bessie into Lady Elizabeth or even Lady Betty? It would be like quitting the stillroom for the boudoir. You couldn't imagine a Lady Betsy, and Lady Bet is impossible. How would you like Lady Lizzie? It sounds like a half-way house. What is Lady Crosby Scarlett's first name? And why do you want me to see her?"

“Her name is not that of housekeeping Bessie, nor Elizabeth, nor Betsy; it’s neither Bet nor Lizzie. I want you to see her that you may love her for herself alone, old though she be. Also, she has an account of the escape of her progenitor, Sir John Scarlett. He discarded the title which she has preserved, and liked to be known simply as Jack Scarlett, who was one of the best of the founders of the Settlement. Lady Crosby Scarlett loves him for his bravery and hates him for discarding the title. In this simple republic not all with blue blood in their veins really forget it when trying to be hail-fellow-well-met with Tom, Dick and Harry, but they bow the knee in public to democratic equality whatever they may think in private. She is an out-and-outer. Only it will be fun for you to discover for yourself. Come along and make her acquaintance.”

I thought at first she was making game of me, but she soon dispelled that idea.

“We are nearing the noble lady’s ancestral hall,” she said, “so buck up; I hate to catch you nursing your hump——”

The rest of the sentence came not from her lips, but from her eyes—a glance shot under her black eyelashes.

“She will expect the distinguished stranger—that is you—to show us poor rustics an example, as thus: ‘My lady, I am proud to meet your ladyship.’ Too antique, you say, too like the family butler? I have read the phrase in novels, but maybe they were those of the eighteenth century, and her style is of the twentieth. She likes me to call her auntie, and in a country of no titles it has not been thought worth while to enquire into her right to use one, but she will be pleased no end if you do it only once. So please say something courtly to her.”

We had approached the seat of the Lady Elizabeth

Crosby Scarlett, and though only a thatched cottage, it was not without touches of refinement. A few pots with last year's withered flowers, a branch of woodbine—green budding already—a berry-laden holly bush, distinguished the garden from the mere cabbage and potato plots of the other cottages.

Bessie opened the door and we walked straight in. A woman well over fifty, with bright eyes like those of a robin, advanced to greet me. With a bow I said that it was a pleasure and an honour to meet Lady Crosby Scarlett, of whom I had heard so much. She answered with a delighted smile and the ordeal was over.

It was easy to converse with her because she liked to do the talking herself. Thus there was abundant opportunity to study her face. It was a curious example of the way in which type and feature can be transmitted for generations, though a droop of her lips and a very small chin told plainly that the force and freedom of the great ladies of the twentieth century, though not the amiability, had weakened in her case. Her conversation was mainly on two subjects—her family, and, sad to say, the rheumatism which had been her malady for years.

One of her very feminine characteristics was conspicuously advertised. Hanging on the wall were a number of fashion-plates such as the twentieth century magazines issued with every number. That was not unusual. These pictures, originally not sold but given away, had now become scarce and valuable—I had come across several people who collected them. But she had attempted to copy the fashion in her own dress, and made with the simple woollens of the Settlement, and I could scarcely help laughing at the result, which might have been to parody the fashions of women's dress in the years that followed the Great War.

By the purest luck I found a way straight to her heart. When fishing on a moorland stream in Yorkshire I had come across the Honour of Scarlett. It was a ruin, covered with a great matting of ivy and the Crosby Scarletts lived in a modern mansion called "The New Honour," about two miles distant. The name of the owner was Crosby, but he had married a Scarlett, purchased the property, assumed the name of Crosby Scarlett, ran a pack of hounds of his own, bred pedigree cattle, carried on with greater success than ever his great factory at Leeds, and at the same time was a recognised county magnate. So I was soon deep in a conversation about her celebrated family, the country round, the Honour, its moors, streams and tough Yorkshire farmers.

No sort of talk could have been sweeter to her ears. When Bessie, who had previously been a quiet, attentive listener, exactly at the right moment suggested that I might like to see or even to copy her famous manuscript she met the request as one who receives rather than grants a favour.

LADY SCARLETT'S MS.

"It is rather precious," said Lady Scarlett, as she opened an old oak chest. She took out a paper covered with what to me looked quite modern script.

"It is a hundred and sixty years old, and was written by the Honourable Horatio Fitzwilliam, who was born in the Settlement many years after the arrival of my progenitors. He married the youngest daughter of my ancestor, Sir John Scarlett, and was a great favourite with her father and mother, who in later life were fond of telling about their escape and subsequent adventures. The Scarletts were a

far older family than the Fitzwilliams, and I have all the necessary documents to prove our rank when this period of trial is over and England is restored to her old proud position with her King and Parliament, her landed gentry, her cathedrals and village churches, her villages and beautiful almshouses. Often when I have a bad night and cannot sleep, I console myself with trying to recover the heavenly vision of England as she must have been in the reigns of Queen Victoria, Edward VII and George V.

She handed the manuscript to Bessie. Not for worlds would she have hinted distrust of a stranger.

“It is like killing two birds with one stone,” she said. “Dr. Turnbull asked me for it a little while ago. He wants it copied for his collection of documents relating to the Settlement. He may keep it as long as he likes; there is no need to tell *him* to take care of it.”

The manuscript was named “The Escape of Sir John and Lady Scarlett, as told by them to the writer and their son-in-law, Horatio Fitzwilliam.” What follows is a copy of it:—

Sir John Scarlett was twenty-four and newly married at the time of the invasion. Even in old age he was straight and strong, healthy and jolly. In his youth he must have been a fine example of manhood, distinguished at the University more as a sportsman than a student, fond of out-door pursuits, a first-rate shot, a sound bat at cricket, a plus golfer and extremely handy with his fists. He had chosen a wife like himself—a hockey-player, a horsewoman and a mountaineer. They were still in the honeymoon stage and had occupied Scarlett Honour, not the ruin of that name but the new house called after it, their family seat, for six weeks.

When the catastrophe occurred they were eating a

simple lunch in the shelter of a small plantation overlooking the timbered park in which the house lay half concealed from the village outside. Sir John had been shooting, and as a sharp wind was blowing they had retired to the little wood to consume sandwiches and apples. Suddenly there came the noise of an explosion followed by cries of pain and terror. Both rushed to the edge of the wood, only to see their house blazing and the poor hinds with their wives and children being killed, some shot from aeroplanes that had appeared on the scene and were dashing hither and thither, pursuing groups and even individuals who could scarcely run for terror. Armed men jumped out as the aeroplanes landed, and with savage yells joined in the slaughter. Sir John threw down his uneaten apple and would have rushed to the rescue, but his wife flung herself on him, exclaiming, "They are a hundred to one, Jackie. What could you do with your shot-gun? You may be of far more use if you wait to see what it is all about."

Impulsive and reckless as he was, it was apparent to him that she was right. One man had not the remotest chance against an armed band, so he held back and watched while those who followed their instinct to run were shot down mercilessly; such as tried to make a fight underwent the same fate, and a little group of women and children who piteously held their hands up and begged for mercy were ruthlessly slain.

Sir John and his wife crept back to the wood. It was already too late for a rescue even if there had been any force to carry it out. The assassins were expert at their dreadful work and soon the English voices were silent and the shooting almost ceased. One aeroplane after another rose and went away, and the men who were left set about the destruction of the houses.

“ We must leave at once,” said Sir John. “ This wood is too near. Presently they will search it for fugitives. Come, my love, let us make for the loneliest part of the moor where I know a gully which they are very unlikely to find.”

They quitted the wood. They crept over the most exposed places ; they ran when out of sight in the depressions and eventually reached a great rent in the earth, called Ploughman’s Dene, where they rested till the daylight failed. Then they climbed to the top of the bank and watched the fires break out and flare up across the countryside. They listened to the explosions and sometimes caught, or imagined they caught, the distant shrieking of men and women who a few hours ago had probably been working and jesting with one another in the fields. No disturbance occurred in their immediate neighbourhood, even when on the second day there came what they thought a new army completing the fiendish work of the first. Probably the spies and informers believed there was nobody on the bare moorland to which they had fled. There were no human dwellings, and from a distance it looked unfit to provide even a rabbit with a hiding-place. Yet there were some irregularities in the surface, and the fugitives could always keep out of sight.

Sir John, after three days, thought that the immediate danger was past, and began to consider what next he should do. He did not move from his gully except to collect food, plentiful enough in the wake of a well-fed army. A surprise awaited him.

One fine afternoon he and his wife were having their mid-day meal at a little distance from their place of concealment. They chose it for the sake of the water from a well that came poppling over the rocks to a ripple of a

brook that ran down the deep middle of the Dene. Some hazel bushes screened them from view, if there had been any visitor to a spot so lonely.

Sir John was handing water to his wife and cheering her by saying that it was the wine of the country, when suddenly an aeroplane came into view flying so low as almost to brush the heather. They crouched under the hazel bushes as they saw the occupant alight on a flat piece of ground near them. He was a young coloured officer in uniform. They watched him the more closely because Sir John had no weapon if it came to fighting.

The coloured officer first took out a parcel which seemed to be food. Then he took up his gun and then a camera. For a moment or two he hesitated and carefully scanned the countryside. He could see for miles, and no human figure, no human habitation, was visible. Sir John gave a sigh of relief when he saw him put the gun back in the aeroplane. Evidently he meant to enjoy himself, for, after looking about, he chose an inconspicuous seat among the heather and was soon engaged in making a meal. Sir John was in hopes that he would go quietly back. That was not to be. The stranger took his water-bottle, found it empty, and without hesitation made for the water which he saw bubbling over the stones. Sir John pulled himself together.

“It will be a race for the gun,” he whispered to his wife. The man could not avoid seeing them, and there was no chance of Sir John carrying out a surprise attack.

Lady Scarlett had scarcely time to creep among the bushes before the men came into full view of one another. The stranger might be astonished, but did not show it.

“Hands up!” he cried in the tone of one used to command. Sir John’s brain had been working rapidly. He

recognised in an instant that if the stranger could get to his aeroplane, which was on the level about a hundred yards distant, he would not only have the advantage of a weapon, but be in a position to call up some of the coloured soldiers who had not time to get far away. At once, therefore, he himself made a sprint for the aeroplane. But the other was nearer and seemed to divine his intention, and started to run back. Lady Scarlett watched the race with growing despair. Her husband, though a good runner, was outpaced, and the dark soldier got the gun without needing to enter the machine. It was a wicked-looking new invention.

“Another step forward and you are dead,” said his opponent in the convincing tone of one inured to battle and danger. Sir John pulled up, hoping that in a parley he might catch his antagonist momentarily off his guard.

The black soldier’s stern and keen face held out little promise of that. Yet there was something about him in that moment of suspense which astonished an Englishman who, like most of his countrymen, held “niggers” in very slight estimation. This one’s voice was as clear and cultivated as that of a professor and his English as pure. Strongly built and well set up, his appearance was as soldierly as that of a Guardsman. When he spoke it was in a tone of hard irony.

“It’s a fine afternoon,” he said, “and butcher’s work is nauseating, but in these times the rule is safety first, and unless you can give me a better explanation than seems likely to be forthcoming . . . well, you, a white man, would have made short work of me if your legs had not failed.”

“There you are wrong,” retorted Sir John stoutly ; “it

would have been enough for me to get between you and the gun. My bare hands would have done the rest."

"You mean you could have made short work of a wretched nigger if you were on level terms?"

"That is my exact meaning," said Sir John in a tone of contempt.

The dark officer's face for one moment looked like that of one who had been lashed across the face with a whip. His hand tightened on his gun and his eyes glittered like steel as he saw the insolent scorn of an enemy whose life was in his hands. Then covering Sir John with his gun, he said:

"I in your estimation am a savage, not because I am stupid or ignorant—I was educated in the same college as yourself and took a higher degree, if, as I suppose, you are Sir John Scarlett—but because my skin is not white. Even desperation cannot quell your insolence. I could shoot you as easily and with as much pleasure as I could stamp on a wasp, but it would give me more satisfaction to knock the stuffing out of a damned Englishman. As to the gun, look, I toss it on the bank and stand between you and it. Come for it if you dare; there are only two fists in the way."

Suiting the action to the word, he drew back, placed the gun on a grassy knoll and then stepped forward to confront the considerably astonished Sir John.

"I never thought a nigger could be so good a sport," said he, taking off his coat.

The officer's eyes blazed at the word "nigger," but he uttered not a word. His reply took the form of a blow which narrowly missed Sir John's chin, but caught his shoulder, drove him back for three paces and incidentally let him know that he was not dealing with a novice. On his part the officer's confidence was confirmed by the effect

of his first blow ; he evidently under-estimated his opponent. He was to discover his mistake. Sir John Scarlett was not a carpet knight. At Eton and Cambridge he had been more intent on physical than mental education, and although not the most brilliant sportsman of his day, was pre-eminently what is called a "sticker," the sort of man who never failed when put on to stop a rot.

His adversary, having failed in his ambition to end the fight with a single overwhelming punch, followed with a whirlwind attack in which he feinted in one direction, struck in another and danced round his man ready to seize the slightest chance of an opening. Sir John scarcely appeared to move, yet there was always something in the way of his opponent's fist, and the dark fighter seemed to learn instinctively that he was being waited for ; that a mistake on his part would be promptly taken advantage of by this quiet fighter.

The knowledge seemed to madden him so that he fought in a very ecstasy of fury, so much so that Sir John believed that he would wear himself out. Almost, but not quite too late, he discovered that there was a method in the other's madness. Suddenly he dashed in and gripped Sir John and the fight was changed into a wrestling match. Then an unhappy occurrence deepened the mutual animosity. Sir John was a great wrestler, and managed to obtain a grip that would have ended the contest if the dark man had not in his desperation forgotten the ideas of good form he had picked up at Cambridge and bit viciously at the neck of his adversary, at the same time kicking with the spurred boot. Pain and disgust enraged the Englishman. With a tremendous effort he lifted his opponent off the ground, swung him round and round, then brought him to the earth with a thud. He lay motionless.

Sir John, panting after his great exertion, stood by with clenched fists ready to end the combat when he rose.

This was the position when Lady Scarlett, who had up to this watched the fortunes of the fray with silent agony, now rushed forward exclaiming, "Don't hit him again, Jackie, he spared our lives, dear; Jackie, don't!" Her last ejaculation was caused by a hard, vigilant motion of her husband, who thought he saw his adversary pulling himself together as if to rise.

"It's a case of kill or be killed," replied Sir John without moving his eye from the prostrate figure. "If he has had enough, let him say so."

The man rose to his feet and said: "I thank you, madam," and looked strangely proud in his new attitude of humility.

Sir John, feeling as he said afterwards, that they were in a new atmosphere, made no attempt to renew the conflict.

"It makes no difference, madam," said the officer, "except that I prefer to keep my vow."

"And what is your vow?" asked Lady Scarlett with the gentleness of an angel.

"That of one hundred thousand soldiers of my country," he replied, "who have sworn that if beaten by an Englishman at anything they will never see another sun go down."

He walked toward his aeroplane and had almost reached it when Sir John ran up to him with the gun that had apparently been forgotten. It was refused by the dark man, who said: "Keep it in memory of my folly and of your own, for you are doomed as well as I, *Carthago delenda est*. Your England has fallen; her glory has passed away. Already the work of destruction is near completion. If you escape a soldier's death, it will only be to die of

famine or pestilence. To have shot you would have been a merciful act."

He had been starting his engine as he spoke and was out of hearing before an answer could be made.

Lady Scarlett stood as still as an image, for the manner of the officer had on her imaginative mind a more woe-producing effect than his words. Her more practical-minded husband remarked that it was a damned near thing, and he now remembered the man at Cambridge, not in his college though.

"Our college knew the folly of admitting coloured students, who were only spies," he added.

He slipped down to a pool of water, and while washing away the blood that he had shed freely, remarked that his adversary was a curious mixture—if you scratched those gents from the Orient you would find a Tartar—when his comments were interrupted by the suppressed shriek of his wife, who was looking fixedly up at the sky. He stopped to look and saw the aeroplane that had ascended to a great height was swiftly and without any guidance descending. In a very short time, which nevertheless seemed ages, it crashed on the earth miles away. They did not go to look, but they knew that the officer had carried out his vow.

XXIII

THE SCARLETT MS. CONTINUED. HOW REFUGE WAS FOUND IN A SHEBEEN

SIR JOHN was nothing if not practical. As, with the assistance of Lady Scarlett, he was washing the blood and mud from his wounds, and she was giving thanks that they were not more serious, he stopped all of a sudden and exclaimed: "By Jove, I've got it!"

"Got what?" she asked.

"A hiding-place," he replied. "It is not safe here, and it wouldn't be safe to tramp far, but not more than five miles away there's the best hiding-place in Yorkshire."

"What sort of a place?"

"A shebeen," said he.

"And what on earth's a shebeen?" she enquired.

"An illicit distillery," he answered. "You see, one Government after another has been piling high duties on beer and spirits. Then gangs of ne'er-do-wells got together to make whisky on the quiet. Whether the tax is nine-tenths or nineteen-twentieths of the price, I cannot say, but if they dodge the tax and take a third or even a fourth of the price charged by publicans they get a good sale and high profit. Do you understand?"

Womanlike, she did not understand, not even when he said it all over again, but proposed to go the next day.

“No, to-night, dearie,” he answered. “I’ve a feeling that this place is no longer safe, and the smuggler’s den is about five miles across the moor; we must start now.”

She thought he wouldn’t be fit after so hard a fight, but he laughed her objection away. It wanted a quarter to one when the fight began, and it wasn’t half-past two now; besides, it might be occupied. The police had not found it, nor the revenue officials. They might suspect what was going on, but they had not spotted the shebeen so far.

She said that it would be risky to go across the moor in daylight, but he argued that it would be still more so in the dark, and besides, he had only been once there, and the entrance was cunningly hidden and strongly barred.

Although Sir John was very much at home on the moors he felt some doubt about the route he should follow. On any ordinary occasion he would have taken the highway which ran through the little valley below the fir plantation in a corner of which they stood, but what he had seen of the hamlets and single cottages had made him pull his wife into cover very hastily. Soldiers were in the cruel antique style laying the country waste and dealing with the inhabitants with indescribable barbarism. He was anxious to save her from witnessing scenes that had gone far to unnerve him. Had Lady Scarlett already noticed them? She was not the sort to faint or exclaim, but she had placed a hand over her eyes and dived into the wood where she now stood quiet but with dilated eye and nostril, while every now and then her head shook violently and her teeth clashed together.

“Darling,” he said, and took her in his arms, and there came to her the relief of tears. They streamed down her cheeks and there was no further need for explanation or repression.

“ We will take the hill road, though it’s longer and more difficult,” said Sir John, forcing himself to speak simply and without emotion, “ and we will start now.”

As is the case with many who lead an out-door life and are interested in natural history, observation had become a habit and an instinct with Sir John. He was in no mood for talking, and he judged by his wife’s face that it had been enough to show his sympathy and understanding. Any further attempt to comfort her would only renew her excitement and distress. So they passed silently along the green ride that ran through the middle of the wood. He looked up, remembering the pheasants he had shot in this very ride, and was wondering if ever he would shoot pheasants more, when, instead of a pheasant, a flight of aeroplanes flew over. After an interval came another, then more and more, till he luckily began to surmise that they were being systematically despatched, a guess which proved true when he timed the period between flights by his watch. Mechanically he noted the intervals till they came to the very edge of the wood. Exactly ten minutes was usual, but one batch came at a twelve minutes’ interval, another at eight.

He did not speak to his wife till they had almost got through the last grove of old oak-trees, and then there lay in front of them a stretch of bare pasture bounded by a piece of wild country occupied only by tall broom and gorse. Then he said :

“ Darling, I have been timing these aeroplanes. They are being despatched from Hull, I should think, at the rate of a company every ten minutes, and are flying very low over the hills. After the next passes, can you make a sprint so as to clear this open space before the new lot makes its appearance ? ”

At first she did not understand as her wits had been wandering, but on the words being repeated she pulled herself together, and when he gave the word, started and ran like a hare across the danger zone, getting under the broom a good three minutes before the next detachment of aircraft appeared on the far horizon. The incident was probably the beginning of her salvation. It brought her mind back from the horrors in which she found herself placed, to the peril of the moment. At every new difficulty she rose to the occasion and played her part with a concentrated attention which left no room for spectres.

It was dusk when they arrived at the shebeen and Sir John was in a ferment of anxiety. He knew that those engaged in illicit distilling belonged to the dregs of society, landless and desperate men who were in the habit of running great risks every day and every hour of the day. He could not imagine that during an orgy of murder and plunder they would be content to lie inactive in their cavern, and if they did, how was he to compel an entrance ?

He was soon to discover that there was no immediate cause for foreboding. The great stone used to block and guard the entrance was thrown down and the door open. Inside they found on a rock that served for a table, six plates of meat apparently untasted, and six jugs of beer that had not been even sipped.

XXIV

THE SCARLETT MS. CONTINUED. THEY ARE JOINED BY OTHER FUGITIVES

SIR JOHN and his lady in after days used to relate with amusement that they accepted this arrangement as a natural dispensation of Providence in their favour. On the way they had maintained their courage by trying to cheer one another, but as they had entered this novel refuge they were glad to drop on the first seat that presented itself. Lady Scarlett stretched her legs on one long-saddle and her husband did likewise on another. There were several in the cave. All had apparently been roughly but strongly knocked together out of rough-sawn wood, and a coverlet on the back of each suggested that by day it was a seat, by night a bed. Sir John had not reclined very long before he began to recognise that in addition to being tired and leg weary, worn out in body and depressed in spirit, he was assailed by pangs of hunger. He seized one of the jugs, but did not taste the beer, as his nose told him how stale it was, as though it had stood there for hours, perhaps for days.

“We will leave that for the guest it was meant for,” he said to Lady Scarlett, but she was so done out that she had immediately fallen into a half-conscious doze and only murmured an unintelligible reply. Her plight renewed his energy.

“I suppose I must have eaten double my share of the eatables we carried,” he muttered and roused himself to see what could be done for her.

“Only a cannibal could eat that,” he soliloquised, pointing to the beef on the plates, large in quantity, but coarse and under-cooked and buttressed by heaps of pickled red cabbage.

Then he looked round and especially into the corners and recesses, and to his joy found the place provisioned like a castle for a siege. At the time he was too intent to draw inferences, but later on he recalled the rumour that illicit distillers lived like fighting cocks. Even his concentration on the task of finding something his wife could eat did not prevent him from giving a start of surprise and pleasure when looking round for means to cook some eggs, he discovered several oil cooking-stoves and a liberal supply of oil. Then he recalled how often in his experience on the Bench smoke had betrayed the illicit distillery. On a moor north of this one it had been noticed by the officers of the law that what was apparently a rabbit-hole had a coating of soot on it, and prompt investigation had shown that the old rabbit-hole was in reality a chimney for the still-room of a shebeen. In another case some pieces of coal dropped on the turf led to a discovery of the still. The inhabitants of this den had taken care not to betray themselves in such ways. Sir John lost no time in getting one of the oil-stoves lighted, and while a dish of eggs and bacon was being cooked on it he took occasion to drink a jug of excellent beer from a newly tapped cask. It made him feel like a giant refreshed.

In a very short time his wife, having struggled against the lethargy following over-exertion, found tea, bacon and eggs awaiting her. When she finished eating, she lay back

and fell into a sound and refreshing sleep, and Sir John followed her example, after making a more substantial meal of cold meat, cheese, bread and many draughts of ale.

They were not left long to themselves. On the fourth morning after their arrival, Sir John had risen while it was still dark and stolen out with his gun. He and his wife, unaccustomed to live entirely on salt and tinned food, had already begun to long for a change. Game, both furred and feathered, abounded. During the night he had heard a strong wind start to blow and it showed no sign of dropping in the morning. It appeared to him, therefore, that he might venture a shot without much risk of its being heard as the wind would carry away the sound. He was a man of active temperament who had all his life been devoted to field sports and was at heart not ill-pleased to have the excuse of an empty larder for indulging his love of shooting.

Just across a depression scarcely deep or large enough to be called a valley, there was a young wood of Scotch fir or spruce—he had not been near enough to determine which, and he judged that as the trees did not look more than from six to eight feet high, the plantation would afford him sufficient concealment, and was full of game. Day had begun to break when he got to it, and he was not long in securing as large a bag as he desired.

He stopped reluctantly, for he loved shooting, but as he counted his bag which contained two cock pheasants, a hare and a brace of partridges as well as a number of rabbits, he felt he had killed enough when there was no one to whom he could give any surplus.

Before starting homewards he received a surprise. Emerging from an older and more distant plantation and coming in his direction trudged a party of four men. At a distance they looked like labourers going to work, dragging

one lazy leg after the other. As they drew closer he saw their stubbly and unwashed faces, their torn clothes, and their general seediness. He was at first afraid they might be the shebeeners returning after a night of riot and pillage. They had certainly slept in their clothes and most likely after a drinking bout.

He was silently waiting till they were past, and they too were as silent as ghosts, even their heavy feet falling noiselessly on the rain-drenched ground. But when they came near, which they did without seeing him, he noticed that their dress was good though neglected and that their eyes were sunken and their cheeks hollow. As to their expression, it was that of stoics who had come through hell, or, in simple words, men of the best English blood, who in desperate peril, were braced to meet with courage whatever ills awaited them.

Sir John came out of the wood and stood in front of them, his gun on his shoulder. His appearance surprised but did not frighten them. A hard glint came into their eyes which proclaimed that enfeebled or not they could make a fight of it, but when he questioned them with the single word "Escaped?" and smiled at the signs of fight, they merely nodded their heads and said "Yes."

"What are you looking for?" Sir John asked.

"A shebeen," was the reply, as if the speaker could scarcely find strength to form the syllables.

"Come along then," he said, as if the answer had been exactly what he expected, "and do not talk if you are too tired."

Lady Scarlett had come out of the cavern intending to run and meet her husband and tell him that she had breakfast hot and ready, but when she saw the strangers and noticed the slow pace at which they marched, she

divined what they were more quickly than he had done, and rushing back had tea ready for all before they entered.

She gave orders in her clear young voice which they obeyed like children. They were not to take at present more than a little tea and bread and butter. After that they were to lie down and sleep till they were awakened, when they could wash if they felt that would be refreshing. Meantime, she would have something more substantial for them. Slowly the travellers drank their tea and then withdrew to an adjacent apartment where they each dropped on an improvised bed of sacks piled one on top of another. Of sacks there appeared to be no end in the place.

Lady Scarlett used to delight in repeating this part of the story. Youth and love are naturally lighthearted, and she and her husband for a moment deemed their own misfortunes trifling as compared with such horrors as had aged their visitors before their time. The pleasure to them to be able to succour others took them out of their own misery. It was clear that they should get a meal ready immediately. What it should be might have led to much argument, but for the fact that they had no time to spare. She, who had not hitherto had much practical experience, was for cooking all the game at once, pheasants, rabbits and hare in one big pot, but as an old campaigner Sir John knew better than that. He ruled the pheasants out because they would have to be plucked and trussed, and besides, they needed hanging, so did the hare. Therefore, stewed rabbit must be the choice. If you think that Lady Scarlett was deeply impressed by this knowledge and decision, it must be because you forget her sex, but while she was summoning up a hundred arguments to show that hers was the right Gipsy way, he had retired with the rabbits to a secret place whence he emerged in an

incredibly short space of time with the animals skinned, cleaned, cut up and ready for the pot. Next remarking that the keeper's wife used to say that "rabbits were fine eating but wanted a lot of kitchen," he cut slices of bacon and collected onions and carrots to make the stew appetising.

"All that remains," he now declared with the air of a cook, "is to let it gently simmer." At the same time he adjured her to make a pudding, "and then you have a lunch you might set before a king."

She obeyed him with a mixture of pride and petulance, and the result came out near enough to plan to satisfy all concerned.

Their light-heartedness sprang from ignorance of the full extent of the catastrophe and their own comparatively easy escape. Before the cookery had well got under weigh, human voices began to be heard from the adjacent room in which the guests were sleeping. It had already become evident from the sounds of restlessness that excitement had prevented sleep from closing their weary eyes at once. Yet in a while, fatigue seemed to have gained the victory, and all became quiet save for their heavy breathing which grew more and more troubled until it ended in a kind of clamour. Each of the four sleepers began talking in his sleep without addressing his companions, of whose existence indeed he had become ignorant. The words were not intelligible, but the accents expressed every shade and aspect of raging emotion—above all despair, which seemed in the voice of one a wail of endless anguish, of another, defiance hurled at death itself.

"What a time they must have come through!" said Sir John. "I hate listening. Come with me and look for wine to give them—it was always rumoured that the smugglers bartered some of their whisky for French Burgundy

which they sold quite openly in the neighbourhood. If there is any decent wine, it will be better than whisky for men in that condition."

"You hunt for wine," said his wife, "and I will get the plates and dishes ready," and she hurried off to conceal the tears which were welling down her cheeks.

Sir John hastened away as if in the most transcendent hurry, but forgot his errand and sat down and smoked for three-quarters of an hour at a kind of 'look-out' which already had become a favourite resort where he could puff at his pipe and feast his eyes on the dale, the brown grass on the hill and the dark spinneys. He did not apostrophise them this time, but muttered more than once: "These chaps must have had a damned thin time!"

He had done that a thousand times before he gave a thought to the wine. Yet he had a plentiful supply on the table when the four men entered for lunch.

When it came to the meal, each was perfectly self-possessed, and if they had been actors speaking after full rehearsal they could not have filled their parts more perfectly. Sir John amused them with his story of the wine hunt, saying he had often heard that the establishment they were in was run by a company, a non-liability company, and that it made a great share of its profits by bartering whisky for wine, which it worked off at certain country inns it owned, "and you know the prices country inns charge for wine!" He declared that he had sat for an hour drinking coffee with a damp towel round his head before he could hit upon the place it was stored in.

Lady Scarlett displayed an aptitude for humour equally simple, explaining with great emphasis that it was entirely her husband's blame that they had stewed rabbit foisted upon them. She would much rather have stewed the

entire contents of the bag in one pot—indeed, she would have preferred to send him to shoot other things to add to the stew, such as wood-pigeons, woodcock, snipe and a hedgehog. Your true Gipsy never thought a stew complete unless it contained a hedgehog.

All this well-intended pleasantry led to an unexpected result. To the four new fugitives it was delightful. Greatly cheered by it and also by “the frolic wine” which came as a novel surprise, the most distinguished-looking of them asked if it would be boring if he gave an account of himself. He spoke in a tone as easy as that of Lady Scarlett herself, and she without giving the matter a thought, said that she would love it.

Before that, a fear had entered her mind that some fearful sight or suffering had endangered their reason, but the suspicion vanished when they were seen comporting themselves in exactly the same style as their host and hostess. It went all very well at first.

The speaker with a smile explained that his name was Munro, and he was Chemistry Professor at Armstrong College, Newcastle. He and his assistant and friend Andrew Frazer, had been engaged on an experiment, when they were interrupted by the sound of a tremendous uproar, and almost immediately afterwards he saw from a little window a number of black soldiers making for the door of his laboratory.

“It happened that the stuff I was engaged on had a most fearful stink, so I opened the door and let it out.” He went on with a laugh to tell how the cry “Poison Gas!” was raised and produced a panic that gave him and his assistant time to get away by a little side door. Whether assumed or not, the touch of gaiety was ephemeral. He had a small car for running to and fro between the college

and his home on the North Tyne a few miles from Hexham. Of what must have been a very perilous journey he told little ; what he did say in a dry hard voice was that " they," meaning his young wife, were dead. Had it not been that Andrew took charge and carried him away among the wild fells, he would have shared their fate.

Here he fell in with Mr. Matthewson, a squire of Durham, and his factotum, Messor. He went on in a dull, mechanical voice that nevertheless made them see the throes of England as though they were painted with the blood of the slain.

Lady Scarlett, weeping, implored him not to go on, but he did not seem to hear her or indeed to realise that there was anybody but himself in the room, and his narrative became unintelligible. He made a series of ejaculations by which his companions alone could follow the history. Even this was too much for him. In a dull and inexpressibly desolate tone he rambled on about taking refuge in a wood, then stopped abruptly, and making a desperate effort at self-restraint, he said something about feeling ill and left the room, Andrew Frazer following him.

The Durham Squire made a rather uncouth but not unkind attempt at apology, to which Lady Scarlett replied : " I will never forgive myself for this ; he ought at all costs to have been spared."

Yet it set her mind working, and, as will be seen, she devised a remedy for Professor Munro that became of the utmost value to the Settlement as well as the band of fugitives who found refuge and concealment in a place which until then had served no other purpose than that of manufacturing and disseminating a brand of whisky on which no duty was paid.

XXV

THE SCARLETT MS. CONTINUED. STORY OF A DESPERATE FIGHT

LADY SCARLETT was well pleased with the result of her experiment, and made the most of such amusing little incidents as occurred. When Messor, the Squire's factotum, announced one day at the mid-day meal, with an air at once excited and superior, that he had discovered how the smugglers had supplied themselves with fresh eggs, she begged him in a gently ironical tone to explain the plan to the company.

"Oh, it's very simple," he replied, "just at the edge of the cave and lighted from a crack in the rock they have fixed up a wooden shed full of straw and chaff. A sack of corn hangs in the middle, and out of a small slit the grains dribble on to the litter with which it is mixed by the scratchings of the birds who thus make for themselves the pleasure of unscratching it. Once a month I should think the sack wants filling, and there's a little gate for letting them out when they need greenstuff."

"That's a topping plan," said Sir John, and the rest joined in his admiration. "But how did you discover it?" he asked Messor, "and what are you giggling at?" he enquired of his wife.

"Only laughing at you and men generally," she said.

“ Here we have been shut up in this cave for more than a week, cut off from the world as completely as Robinson Crusoe on his island, and every morning every one has had his fresh egg or eggs for breakfast just as if he were at home. Not one asked where the eggs came from ; you just ate them and said nothing. Then one of you discovered my little secret, and you are struck dumb with wonder. Such are the ways of the creature called Man. I think after to-day’s work is done we must try a way to improve your wits. What do you say to a little competition ? Let it be to define what work really means and is, the said definition not to exceed fifty words in length.”

They had nothing better to do, and after much preliminary chatter, accepted the idea enthusiastically, though Sir John cast more than one inquiring gaze at his wife which seemed not innocent of suspicion.

“ Are you coming in, Sally ? ” he asked.

“ No,” she replied, “ or rather, yes. I will read your answers first and then deliver my own with notes and illustrations, and please remember, no collusion.”

At the evening meal she asked them to put their replies in the crown of a hat, and then with eyes averted she took one out. It was Professor Munro’s, and read rather too stately and dignified for a mere game : “ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might—that is the sum total of work.”

Sarah read it out in a staccato voice and then counted the words in the same tone : “ One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen ; Professor Munro, eighteen words.”

The next she took out was that of the Squire ; it was

shorter still: "'Work is losing no time.' Squire Matthewson, one, two, three, four, five words."

Sir John's came next. "'Play is exercise for fun; work is exercise for profit.' Ten words," said his wife, and went on to the next which was Messor's. "God's curse on humanity," she read. "Four words," said Lady Scarlett. "Making shift," wrote the Professor's assistant. "Two words, and the prize for brevity."

The company laughed and then cried: "Now it is your turn; read out your own." Lady Scarlett complied with a smile.

"I have no wit, no clever wit at any rate," she began. "Mine is a housewife's definition and its point lies in the application. 'Work is putting things in their places.' It is very simple, but will bear thinking about. Our friend, Messor, ought to be one of the first to see its application. He deals with manure—a noisome, filthy substance when out of place, but if he digs it into the earth, it sustains and nourishes the vegetables we require. He has put it in its place. The rabbit is out of place when eating cabbages. My husband enjoys both play and work when he shoots the rabbits. Professor Munro knows that the elements out of which gunpowder is made exist in the wrong place. When he collects and combines them in gunpowder, he has put them in a right place because it is useful and may become necessary to us. Squire Matthewson tells me that one of his hobbies is carpentering. I notice a great deal of wood lying about in the shape of planks and boxes that are only in the way when we need chairs and tables and furniture of all kinds. That is a hint for him to put the wood in the right place. There is other important work for all to be done if we are to survive. It is to make expeditions to the ruined towns and villages to collect such

necessaries as have escaped destruction, particularly seeds, potatoes, plants for the garden, clothes for our backs and shoes for our feet. There is danger in exploration, but probably not so much as there was a week ago. I would not have touched on the subject had I not made up my mind to share in the danger. Sudden death is preferable to the lingering torture of famine which is urgently threatening."

She had given a very grave hint, but the conditions she described were all understood and the simple little speech was applauded and a dozen methods of starting suggested. When a suitable opening occurred, it was she again who pointed out the first practical thing to do.

"It is in all your minds," she said, "that there is a nuisance over there to be removed." She pointed to the east where smoke still was rising from a smouldering village, and all had noticed, though they did not like to mention it before her, that when the wind blew from that direction, it carried a sickly odour.

They were out with spades and shovels at the next morning's dawn and came back very weary, but it was agreed that what they saw and what they did should never be spoken about or even alluded to. It was silently classified with what the Professor had seen in the wood and other horrors that might be talked about when callous, gibbering age came upon them, but not now.

It was considered advisable to put in the chronicle an exact account of Lady Scarlett's innocent artifices, because in the after time there grew up a legend that she had made the first step towards a reconstruction of society. She disclaimed the credit for having done anything of the kind, and wished it to be known that such a far-reaching thought was far beyond her capacity. "It was hand-to-mouth with me," she said. "Every morning I tried to think of

something that would take our minds away from horrid thoughts.”

Nevertheless, it became the beginning of a movement. When they began providing for a future, they also began to believe there was a future.

Messor took upon himself the gardening side and rummaged not in vain for seeds and plants, rakes and hoes. In a little ruined town he found a nursery almost intact and a seedsman's shop attached to it. The nursery, being stocked mostly with fruit trees and garden shrubs was of no use to them ; nor were the flower seeds ; but the vegetable seeds were invaluable.

The Squire, as Mr. Matthewson got to be named, distinguished himself by the patience with which he wooed the confidence of a horse. Most of the horses had been either captured or killed by the invaders, but here and there one was found leading the life of a wild animal, his old friendship for man changed to shyness and distrust. If the foreign soldier failed to capture a horse, his orders were apparently either to kill the animal or inflict the greatest possible injury, with a view to making him valueless henceforth. The discovery of a horse that haunted the neighbourhood was an event so rare that it led to an attempt at capture. It was a proud moment for the Squire when, after laying corn in the haunts of this wild steed and giving it to him in a nosebag, he eventually was able to lead him by the forelock into a little stable he had made near the hen coops. Many weeks were spent over this achievement, and months passed before the horse was turned into a regular companion.

Sir John searched with equal diligence for guns, but they belonged to a type of article that the enemy had taken great pains to carry away or render useless.

Professor Munro's care was for cartridges. He met with the same difficulty, and grew tired of useless searching, preferring to stay in the cave. So deep is the habit of suspicion rooted in humanity that signs of its existence began to be exhibited even in the little company. It began to be hinted and whispered that Munro was showing the white feather and remained in cover to avoid danger. Everybody, even Lady Scarlett, heard the accusation which was passed from one to another in strict confidence. Madam was indignant that any one should entertain the slightest trace of distrust, yet she could not deny the reluctance to go out that Munro took no pains to conceal. His eagerness to take advantage of every excuse for remaining at home was certainly open to misunderstanding. She could not explain and was too loyal to think any ill of him or even accept her husband's bluff but not unkind explanation :

"Old Munro's all right," he would say. "Like you, he thinks that work, to put it short, is shifting things, but he would do his shifting inside rather than outside. I'll never forget how he broke down like a man going off his dot at the very mention of a certain wood. He either got a doing there himself, or some of his friends had to go through with it. I don't wonder he is a bit shaky about showing again in the open. We have had some narrow shaves you know."

She made no reply to talk like this. Her husband meant no wrong, but it was impossible for her to believe that the Professor feared a narrow shave. It came about one day that his courage was put to a sharp test. He was more unwilling than usual to go with them, although they had made a real find.

In a town about seven miles away they had discovered

an ironmonger's shop in which, by some unknown fortune, nothing had been destroyed, and it was stocked with the very things they stood in need of—nails, hammers, choppers, axes, saws and the like. As they were examining this treasure trove they heard the distant but not unfamiliar sound of people flying for their lives and some of them shrieking for fear. Whoever they were they avoided the ruined town and could be dimly seen running towards a cover of tall broom. Panic very nearly seized the members of the expedition, but fortunately, Messor had a very cool head and pointed out that the chase was going in a direction opposite to that which led back to the shebeen. At his suggestion they turned on their tracks and reached the cave unperceived and not minding the tiredness caused by a long run.

They were by this time inured to such risks and made ready to start again next day, as it was very uncommon for the enemy to keep in the district two days running. On this occasion it was soon discovered that the rule had not been followed. Scarcely had they left before the sight of a distant flight of aeroplanes filled their minds with fear and uncertainty. Had the troop been foiled the night before, and were now resuming the hunt? Or could it be that they had got wind of the shebeen and its tenants? They waited for a while in anxiety and then, to use the squire's fox-hunting expression, "went to ground."

As soon as they got inside they sought for Munro, and duly found him with a very elated and energetic expression shovelling away the last remains of a mound of earth. No one at the moment heeded his occupation, but they told him of the danger. He apprehended the position in a moment.

"Someone must go out and watch, so that they do

not take us without warning," he said quickly. "I haven't been doing my share in your excursions lately, so it is my turn to go on duty."

"This is an extra turn and the odds are a hundred to one against the man that takes it. I vote that we draw lots," said Sir John.

"Nonsense," replied Munro, "the odds were against you last night and I was out of it. The turn is mine and I take it."

He started without further argument. On getting outside he examined the situation as composedly as if he were out to stalk deer. The last of the aeroplanes was dropping on the sward adjoining one of the fir plantations. It was obvious that the only feasible place from which to get a view was where a line of jutting rocks faced the hollow and woodland beyond it. Without hesitation he ran as fast as he could over the ground where he could not possibly be in sight, then crawled slowly on hands and knees till he got behind the crags and chose a place where there was an interstice between two perpendicular pieces of rock. Holding a bunch of withered heather in front of his face, he looked down on a remarkable spectacle—the end of some furious battle which must have been fought miles away. Munro judged and most likely he was right that a brave contingent of the defeated were making a last and hopeless stand.

Sharpshooters were hurriedly taking their places at every point where those who had taken cover in a wood if they emerged must face open country. About a hundred soldiers were concentrated at a place where the people in the plantation would need only a rush of fifty yards to attain a rougher and larger stretch of woodland. It was their only chance, and Munro from his superior position

judged that they meant to take it. He counted twenty-five men each crouching in the undergrowth where they could not possibly be seen by any who stood on the same level.

Shots were fired into the wood at random, but evoked no reply. If those within had firearms they did not use them.

No time was wasted by the enemy. A contingent of about a dozen men were sent into the wood to bomb the inmates, but the undergrowth was so thick that in trying to penetrate it they became separated and not one came out alive. Each was pulled down and slain. As soon as this was realised, an aeroplane began to rise and Munro's heart seemed to stop beating as he saw the besiegers evidently in obedience to a signal or command, withdraw till they surrounded the wood in a wider circle. It was clear that they were getting out of the way of the explosives which would presently be dropped from the air.

There appeared to be no hope for the brave and desperate band. Yet they seemed to be at least as cool and resolute as their enemies. The corner of the wood had a north point and a south point. After what appeared to be a brief consultation, the largest part of the company wormed themselves to the very edge of the southern point, while, with much less attempt at concealment, the others moved to the north point. In a moment or two these hid no longer, but with loud battle yells and a fusillade that laid several of the enemy low, they made a dash at the opening. Probably they achieved their object. It was a feint to draw the enemy away from the main body and everyone who took part in it must have known that he was going to his death. Only four of them got far enough through to get to hand-to-hand grips. Great stalwart men animated with the fury of despair, it seemed for a brief moment as

though they would achieve the impossible. Those opposed to them, unable to use their firearms, became huddled together, while three with bayonets and one giant who towered above the others felling men to right and left, drove them back. It was a glorious feat of arms that might have succeeded in the heroic days when hero faced hero armed with sword and lance, but modern weapons made all the difference, and Munro noticed that a single little man, who appeared to be a commander, shot the three who used the bayonet with his revolver and would have served the giant in the same way had the latter not succeeded in dashing his brains out with the butt of his gun, the last stroke he was to deliver, for a crowd bore him to the ground hanging on to him like hounds to a wild boar.

The battle lasted only a few minutes, yet it gave time enough for the main body to escape. They emerged from the wood silently and started to run across the open space while attention was concentrated on the furious encounter. Before being noticed they had covered half the distance and the few shots at them went wide. For the time, at any rate, they were safe. It would be easier to baffle pursuers in a great wood than in a few acres planted originally as a pheasant cover.

Munro now began to think of his own position. He looked ironically at his rifle, thought of what little use it had been, and wondered if his friends would have been able to imagine what had been going on. They must have heard the report of firearms and also the savage yelling that prevailed during the fight. It was unlikely that any one had detected his presence as a spectator, and he calculated that even the airmen could not have made him out, for he was ensconced in a rift between two rocks so that only the dark hair on the top of his head was exposed, and

it approximated closely to the colour of the rocks. So there was no need to hurry, especially as the coloured soldiers were on the move. Some were told off to watch the edges of the big wood and prevent any escape from it; others had collected their few wounded and were taking them away in aeroplanes, and would probably return with reinforcements.

In a few moments or so it seemed that the bloody pageant faded away. Not a sound rose either from the little wood or the big one except the raucous cries of a few carrion crows and magpies that were cautiously hovering round the dead wondering if their enemy Man had left a feast behind or was only beguiling them into one of his devilish traps. They were none of your unsophisticated dwellers in the wilderness, but creatures made wary by contact with the treachery and cunning which from their point of view were the leading characteristics of civilised man.

Diminishing, till they appeared only as spots, the aeroplanes might have been taken for birds winging their way to another shore. Munro gazed vacantly as in the old days he often had done after a pack of foxhounds had interrupted his open-air thoughts. Before his mind could be fully withdrawn from the intellectual atmosphere in which it dwelt, the yelping dogs had settled to a deadly chase, the huntsman's horn was silent, the whipper-in no longer cracked his whip. In front was a usual English scene, a woodland covert, a bit of park, a landscape of pasture and ploughland, square fields enclosed between dark hedgerows, neat and uniform, save where a sentinel tree waved its dark arms. So did he imagine that what he had witnessed must have been a dreadful nightmare. He might have convinced himself that it was so except for the figures of men lying on the turf, and lying very still.

XXVI

THE SCARLETT MS. CONTINUED. THE TRAGEDY OF A HORSE

WITHIN the cave there had been much perturbation. The Squire said that he had never before understood what the rabbits in the burrow felt when they knew that the two-legged fiends were plotting their ruin. He likened certain well-concealed orifices the smugglers had cut out for peep-holes or flight in emergency to the bolt holes from the city of the rabbit. He drew a picture of the ferret as they saw him, a bigger, fiercer foe than the stoat; he made a soliloquy for the wise old buck considering which tunnel was likely to bring him to the least dangerous opening and taking carefully into account the dangers to be faced, the guns, dogs, nets and man's other infernal contrivances for doing in the harmless and playful rabbit.

It was creditable to him that he drew smiles from them when the wells from which tears came were full to overflowing, especially when he brought Munro into the picture.

The arrival of the subject of this sketch cut short the Squire's whimsical essay which might have been soothing if it had not been so obviously more the outcome of apprehension than of fancy. Relief at Munro's information that danger had passed for the moment would have been joyous

but for the evidence that the enemy was as unrelenting as ever, and for grief over the fate of the devoted band who had given up their lives to save the lives of their comrades. They could talk of nothing else till they became too tired to continue.

It was not until several days had passed that the entire company sought out Munro in the middle of the forenoon to apologise for having entertained the slightest shadow of a suspicion of his courage and of a readiness for duty. He was at first unable to grasp the point, and when at last it dawned on him, first there came a slight flush to his cheek, and then he laughed outright.

“Yes,” he said at last, in the tone of a man thinking and talking to himself, “I did not take that into account—desperate men at the hazard of the dice—yes, yes, I have a little word to say, but will keep it. A far more important point is, shall we stick it here or go out and take our chance?”

They had talked of nothing else since the fight in the wood. Evidently something was astir, as aeroplanes had been going and coming every day, almost every hour, many of them coming right over their heads. Munro had so far been left out of the council; he was the sort of man who is out of place in a common argument, but one whose judgment is generally accepted as final in the end. While they set forth arguments on one side and the other, he listened without doing more than put a question here and there. Finally he summed it up in a few words:

“You think that the enemy is beginning to get too much with us, probably searching high and low in his mission to exterminate our race. He is not likely to quit the district as long as there’s a living Englishman in it, and possibly he has marked this place down for destruction when he thinks it will be full of fugitives. It is only a guess

on your part and too clever." He stopped, hesitated and thought, then abruptly asked the Squire how old he thought the cave was.

"Not two hundred years," was the answer. "It is just about that time since the fearful duties on intoxicating drink led to the revival of illicit distilling, shebeening and smuggling. It's likely that they dug it out then."

"What splendid diggers they must have been," exclaimed Munro, and if ironically, the irony was hidden. "Look at the dimensions of it, the corridors, galleries, divisions. If the British labourer turned distiller accomplished all this in half a century, he must be a greater devil to work than ever we imagined in the good old days of ca' canny."

They looked round and thought themselves fools for not having thought of this. The Squire alone made a feeble attempt to justify his opinion.

"I don't know who inhabited it if they did not ;" he argued, "look at the plant, the still, the kegs !"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the Professor, "they carried on their trade in it, but the cave probably existed before the human race did. You can see how they have enlarged it a little and adapted it to their purpose. It is not really my job, but I was investigating all this when you thought I was playing the old soldier. Come and look at the earth I shifted," and he led them along a gallery to it. "Now look at the relics," and he lifted a cloth and showed them two or three articles with the dust not rubbed off them.

Matthewson clutched at them in triumph. "Primitive man indeed !" he exclaimed in scorn. "That's what the ancient villager called a gallows button, and we a common trouser button, and that a 'bacca' box for twist, and that——"

"Enough," broke in Munro, "to show that labourers

of to-day made the mound and therefore enough to make me shift it back again to see what had been covered up."

He showed as he found them, worked flints, a hammer-head, the antlers of a deer and a heap of bones.

"Let them remain as they are," he said. "In days to come they may be re-discovered by a better anthropologist than I am. The immediate point is that this natural cave must have been used for concealment thousands of years ago and then remained unused probably for centuries till a few law-breakers probably came upon it by accident and found it suitable for their purpose. No other human being dreamt of its existence. I have examined the outside most carefully and not found a clue that would guide any one to it. Aircraft have gone over within a few feet of the ground and seen nothing. My advice is to stick to it unless any one can suggest a more secure refuge."

Needless to say, his point was carried. The little company remained there till they got a message from the Settlement, and it is largely due to them that so much civilisation was preserved intact. For about six weeks the district was harried at intervals by bodies of soldiers, a few of whom came from the air, but by far the greater proportion on foot or on horseback. Many who had gone into hiding were discovered and slain. Bands who moved about were chased as if they were wild animals, and what remained of houses and property was mostly destroyed, but the existence of the cave was unsuspected even though regiments passed over it marching to wild oriental music or singing words and tunes unintelligible to the white people below, who, while they listened, crouched as men crouch under the scourge.

During these weeks they scarcely ventured out, and it was fortunate for them that a good store of victuals

had been accumulated within. They began to think that the work of extermination must have been nearly complete, but something happened to create uneasiness about a new danger. It was the Durham Squire who had the first warning. As long as the district was disturbed, he had found it difficult to exercise the horse which has already been mentioned, and he had trained it to go out for a canter by itself in the dusk when there did not appear to be any special cause for alarm. He released it before feeding time, so that, as we may say, it was pulled back by the nosebag. One day he had done this earlier than usual, and then he walked to the top of the cliff where it was possible to see without being seen.

And what he saw gave the first intimation of a new peril. He looked down on a short lane that led to a paddock towards which the horse, which had kicked up its heels and gone off at a canter when set free, was now advancing slowly. In the absence of traffic, the little ears of grass had started to invade the roadway, and the horse bent its long neck to crop a morsel, and then go on again. Every now and then, as if glorying in the freedom to use its limbs, it would fling out its heels and start on a little run which would be stopped short when a tuft of fresh grass met his eye. Matthewson, after watching the horse for a minute or two, happened to glance further along the winding road. His eye was caught at once by a band of pedestrians. He had picked up a field-glass in his search of the devastated villages and by its use made out some of the individual forms in an extraordinary company.

They looked like an army of beggars, ragged, dirty and unshaven. No firearms were to be seen, but each carried some sort of weapon. Clubs that might have been torn from the nearest tree were the most common. Farm

implements like forks and spades were favourite weapons, and not quite so wicked-looking as a scythe or even a sickle wrapped to the end of a stout pole. The weapons in fact were such as peasants used at Sedgemoor and Russian peasants in the Carpathians. Matthewson regretted not having brought out his gun, for he said to himself they did not look like making two bites of a cherry. When the horse, which had been nibbling for a few minutes, began to trot towards them their alarm was patent.

At first it took an angry form. They grasped their clubs and crowded together like wasps when their nest is threatened. Then, as the patter of the horse's feet could be heard coming along the lane, prudence got the better of courage, and in a twinkling the whole of the ruffianly band passed out of sight.

The horse, unalarmed, pursued its leisurely way, but Matthewson was not slow to notice that several men, apparently having discovered there was no rider, had pushed forward, and by cutting across the field where the next long winding occurred, had got well in front of the horse. At the same time, others had planned to intercept its return by placing the limbs of a tree that had been crashed to bits at some time during the war, in a heap across the road.

"Stealing is one thing, torturing another; they'll break his legs," said the agitated owner to himself, but he dared not interfere.

Then a very savage hunt began. Lumps of rock hurled at him by howling demons made the poor horse turn and fly along the road like lightning, his speed accelerated every now and then by a well-directed stone from behind the wall, till at last when the obstacle was reached, there emerged round him a band of furies beating him with clubs, prodding with forks, hurling stones at his ribs

till he dashed mad and blind at the obstacle, and, as was inevitable, came to the ground. With incredible swiftness the ruffians, who had evidently planned this, rushed in and managed in one way or another to secure and tie his legs, and in a second afterwards they had cut his throat and he was bleeding to death.

Matthewson had watched the proceedings with dumb amazement. He was not imaginative and could see no reason for the act except on the assumption that he was watching the inmates, who, in the confusion of the time, had escaped from a lunatic asylum. This, however, was but a superficial and contemptuous expression. In his heart there surged a deep and passionate anger that made him rush back to his friends, seize his gun and implore them to take theirs so as to clear the countryside of what he called "a gang of blood-suckers." He was almost too much beside himself with rage to give intelligible answers to the questions addressed to him, but enough was gathered for them to imagine the scene. Sir John and the others looked with dubious eyes at the vehement exhortation to be up and doing with their guns. Lady Scarlett wept silently. When the Squire perceived this, he was to some extent mollified, because he thought he had found a sympathiser, and implored her not "to take on so about the horse. It was sure to have come to an ill fate some time or another," and generally poured the best commonplaces he could think of into her ear.

He was more than surprised when Lady Scarlett looked up and said very frankly and simply: "I was not thinking of your horse, though I do indeed pity the poor animal. He was the nicest and gentlest horse that I was ever near. Still, I did not think of him. My heart was moved on account of the men. Not many weeks ago I imagine each

of them must have been living a useful and quiet life without any apprehension of the great calamity that has fallen on them. It is apparent to me that they have been driven mad by terrible hunger, and they have killed the horse to satisfy it. You speak of them being dirty and ragged and looking like footpads and ruffians, but that only tells me of the fearful life they must have been living the last few weeks, hiding by day and at night foraging a country that has been rapidly stripped of food and the other essentials of life. It seems to me that they call for pity and sympathy, and not for our anger."

The Squire was not a cruel and revengeful man, and became at once a convert to her way of thinking.

"What you say must be true," he ejaculated, "but to the mind of an ass like myself it would not have occurred if I turned it over for a month of Sundays. If what you say is true, there is, at any rate, no need for us to act, because the poor devils will get it in the neck soon enough."

It turned out that his prophecy was fulfilled more promptly than he expected. In those weeks there seemed to be always hovering far in the air one of those military birds of prey that resembled vultures in more ways than one, and when a crowd was gathered together there the vulture would be found. Within an hour or two, military forces were on the track of this band of broken men, and though the facts never can be known, it is, to say the least, very doubtful if any one of them survived. The incident is of importance only because it was the first warning that there were two sets of Englishmen who had survived the dangers of the catastrophe, and that one was in the wild and reverted to barbarism, while the other tried hard to keep the flag of civilisation flying and to live according to the moral standards of their ancestry.

For three years the party had no other shelter. When on the last day of the first of these years they ventured on a little merrymaking, everybody felt as Messor did when, previous to drinking a general health to them from his brown jug, he remarked that he never thought any of them would come through it.

Without rest or stoppage the enemy had pursued the grim work of extermination. Every few days there would appear in the neighbourhood one or two Englishmen whom flight and suffering had despoiled of the frank and manly characteristics by which the race used to be distinguished. From being continually hunted and starved with no hope of sustaining a fight, they had become furtive and cunning. Quick, and owing to their bare feet noiseless in movement, they were but pitiful shapes to eyes that watched from outlooks cunningly arranged by the smugglers of old. Famine was after them as well as inhuman foes. They were stalked and killed with a zest that told of race-hatred as well as a military command.

By the end of the year it had become rare to see any of them, and it was evident that the patrols who at intervals swept over the district, found that their duties had become nominal. That could be followed by the unseen observers who watched them occasionally standing round two men sparring and wrestling. At times too, one man would back his horse against another's and the pair would be matched against each other on the grassy pastures of the moor.

The second year was notable and remembered for the flocks of small children that were seen from time to time. Sir John jotted down in a little note-book or diary he kept seven occasions on which companies of young children were seen. He thought it probable that they were scholars who had fled in terror when the schools were

destroyed. They were thin, miserable-looking specimens of humanity. Four times he had been concealed close by while they rummaged for acorns and mast under the dead leaves of oak and elm. They paid no attention to the natural sounds made by animals or rain or wind, but at the tread of a human foot they fled to the nearest cover.

On one occasion while he was hiding in a thicket, one of them chanced to enter. Sir John feigned to be asleep while he watched the boy with half-closed eyes. The boy uttered no word of alarm or surprise, but withdrew with footsteps as soft and silent as those of a kitten; nor did he give any audible warning to his companions, yet, when a moment after Sir John stepped forth from his place of concealment, they had all disappeared. He did not search for them. By this time the inhabitants of the cave had learned the great need for caution when any fugitive old or young, was in the neighbourhood, as the enemy was sure to follow hot on the track.

In the third year dramatic surprises and encounters ceased to occur. They afterwards remembered it as the first time in which they could give attention to their little arts of husbandry. Previously, such efforts had been very irregular and consisted for the main part of sowing wheat, barley and oats in odd corners not too near their place of concealment. No important crops could be grown, and the best hoped for was a supply of fresh seed. Enough had been stored by the smugglers to meet their wants as far as food went. Also, they had planted potatoes, not in fields or gardens, and nowhere on a scale that would attract attention—just a dozen roots or so planted where they might have come up accidentally. There was not enough in any one place to attract attention amid the weeds that had now over-run the land.

XXVII

THE SCARLETT MS. CONCLUDED. THEY COME TO THE END
OF THEIR TROUBLES. THE JOURNEY SOUTH

LADY SCARLETT in the comparative freedom of this year lost no opportunity of urging them to industry in their work, saying nothing of the example she had set even in the most troubled times. She might have had inward doubts, but outwardly her steadfast faith never flagged. Out of affection the others did as she wished, but they had not the same unswerving belief. They said nothing to one another, but as they ranged far and wide in the hope of picking up some of the common articles essential to existence, they felt very scared and depressed to notice the havoc made in what they used to consider the first country in the world.

Hope had nearly fled from them, when in a sunny interlude of a showery April day the intimation came to them that the survivors of the war were gathering in the south of England. The message was brought by two men mounted on ponies. They were foreign-looking men, but that, no doubt, was due to their rough made clothes and their uncouth general appearance. They had very strong bass voices and were singing with the utmost gusto a song of the olden time :

"Where are the boys of the Old Brigade,
 Who fought with us side by side ?
 Shoulder to shoulder, and blade by blade,
 Fought till they fell and died ;
 Who so ready and undismayed ?
 Who so merry and true ?
 Where are the boys of the Old Brigade ?
 Where are the lads we knew ?

"Then steadily shoulder to shoulder,
 Steadily blade by blade ;
 Ready and strong, marching along
 Like the boys of the Old Brigade ;
 Then steadily shoulder to shoulder,
 Steadily blade by blade,
 Ready and strong, marching along
 Like the boys of the Old Brigade."

Some of the hearers were suspicious, but Lady Scarlett's fine instinct made her divine at once what had happened. She told the writer of this memoir afterwards that it had always been her hope and opinion that something like this would happen, and often she had entertained herself by inventing the means that would be adopted to bring survivors out of their hiding places. She made no hesitation, therefore, but rushed out in spite of all protest and eagerly shook hands with the newcomers. The whole party followed her example and very soon they were busy exchanging notes over a meal inside the shebeen. From that moment the whole time was devoted to arranging a long trek to the south.

In spite of the high spirits and sense of relief engendered by the knowledge that the enemy had evacuated Britain,

it was a melancholy pilgrimage from the Northern moors of Yorkshire to the Thames Valley. They waited till the first of May before starting, to ensure the best chance of good weather and to give the indefatigable messengers time to collect from their hiding-places some of the others who had been able to escape. The company eventually numbered thirty, and it was a sunny spring morning on which they started ; and for a time all was as pleasant as a holiday. The moor bore no trace of human devastation, and the air was full of birdsong, larks trilling from the sky, cuckoos flying and calling, a million small songsters making a confused but pleasant babel of music. Lady Scarlett was the only representative of her sex. She was mounted on the stout pony one of the messengers had ridden. He had insisted on her taking it. Other horses were running about masterless and he could manage them ; this was perfectly quiet and easy to ride.

So they started, laughing, joking and humming little airs. The messengers departed northwards in search of other recruits, but not before they had given many warnings and directions to which in their excitement and exultation they had not given the heed they deserved. A single day's march, in which they covered about twenty miles, took them out of the moors into the Vale of York and then they began to realise what had happened.

Historians had agreed that the German devastation of the Somme valley was the most awful outrage of its kind in modern history, but it was nothing to the completeness with which the coloured army had laid England waste. In the agricultural districts farmhouse and cottage had been levelled with the ground ; towns had become heaps of stones. What proved an almost insuperable difficulty was that all the important bridges had been destroyed.

How were they to get over the Ouse at York? Had Sir John not been able to work out its geographical position they would not have believed that the confused stone quarry was all that was left of the ancient capital. The Minster had been pulverised, the ancient buildings and the modern, the palace and the factory, were all laid low; but the pilgrims were so engrossed with the practical difficulty about crossing the river that they could not realise the departed glories of architecture.

It was one of the younger men who first saw a way out of the dilemma. As further advance to the south was checked by the Derwent, he strolled in the opposite direction till he came opposite the meeting place of the Wharfe and the Ouse. In a little cove just below he caught sight of a thick tree-trunk that had apparently been carried off by a flood. Being a lad of quick resolution he stripped, and making his clothes into a bundle which he held clear of the water as he waded in and swimming with legs and one arm reached the tree. Its course down-stream had been interrupted by the limbs of a willow tree. Leaving most of his clothes behind and putting on the minimum that decency required, he shoved off and began floating down stream using his bare legs at first to give a little impetus to his strange barque and to keep it in the required direction. Those on shore quickly assembled to watch the voyage, and Lady Scarlett did not fail to notice that the trunk wobbled a great deal, as if it had a natural inclination to advance by going round and round wheel fashion. Whereupon she made up her mind that the style of navigation would not suit a lady. The young man divined her thoughts.

“Dobbin will carry you all right, madam,” he said. “We will make some kind of a lanyard to tow him with if he doesn’t like going out of his depth, but in any case you

are like to have a bit of a splashing. I'd send most of my clothes in the luggage boat if I were you. We will take them and you on the next trip."

He was already fixing up six men with himself as seventh. "Just fancy yourselves a 'Varsity crew with me as stroke," he said arranging them stride-legs on the log, after they had laid aside their nether garments. "Now men altogether and with a will. One, two, one, two, one, two. She is going like a racer. Ten yards in half an hour!"

His high spirits were contagious. They laughed and made an effort to keep time. But all this took longer than is suggested by the hurried writing, and by the time they had got the tree to advance at a snail's pace the lady had mounted her steed, of which a nervous individual had the bridle. Dobbin seemed to eye the raft as though he knew all about it. He shook his bridle clear of the nervous hand that held it and advanced briskly into the water. Lady Scarlett made a feeble attempt to check him, then gave him his head in the hope that his instinct would be better than her guidance. Her confidence was rewarded. The stout little horse plunged into the water and though he sunk to the gunwale so to speak, swam boldly when out of his depth and passed the log and its occupants almost immediately.

"Splendid," shouted the young man. "Hold on to him Lady Scarlett. The little chap must have done this many a time when going north."

She recognised that this must be true and felt much encouraged.

"If you could only infuse the spirit of the pony into this damned log," remarked the stroke to his crew, who, in their grave elderly way tried to ply their thin shanks to more purpose.

The crossing though slow and laborious was accomplished without any casualty, and the incident not only had a cheering effect but furnished material for conversation during the next two hours at least.

It would be needless to recount how a similar difficulty arose again and again, and how each was surmounted. There was not one who had not from time to time travelled the road in the carriages of the Great Northern Railway, over whose grass-grown track they often walked, but never had they realised the number of rivers in the midland counties or what an awkward job it was to get over a comparatively small stream. Their moods changed frequently. Sometimes they would join in a popular song, bringing it out merrily as if to defy fate, but ever and anon the waste and desolation would make themselves felt again and the spirited attempt to be jolly would fade away or turn into fear and apprehension.

Poor, quiet, commonplace citizens! It was against all their previous experience to find the weeds spread over the whole landscape, covering field and road alike. They would recall memories that seemed very far off now; clouds of dense smoke from busy factories, ringing of church bells, swift passage of motors. Instead, the stillness of the grave lay over England's heart. It oppressed them all the more because of their constant hunger. Each had brought a little bag of meal, and, like the Scotch soldiers described by Froissart, Lady Scarlett carried a girdle at her stirrup, so that when they stopped she could make cakes for them. If they had the luck to come on a marshy place or pool, and these had multiplied through neglect of drainage, they could collect eggs enough for a feast, cooked on a fire of fallen wood. But these were windfalls. The meal bags were emptying and the pace was slow. Only by

strict rationing could they hope to win through. Hunger began to be continuous, and every kind of apprehension becomes serious on an empty stomach.

They saw very few specimens of the human race. They were without exception small, thin, and apparently young; exceedingly timid too. They fled in terror at the sight of strangers and hid in the woods or reeds till the procession went by, though they could be seen creeping out again to search the last halt for a scrap of food. A few, emboldened by hunger and desperation, attempted acts of hostility. Luckily they had no firearms or weapons of any kind except such as were employed by primitive man. At a place judged to be a little south of Peterborough stones were thrown at the pony from the edge of a spinney. At the discharge of a gun the assailants fled, though it was fired in the air and meant only to give them a warning.

No serious mishap of any kind occurred to them. A hopeful spirit and a long tramp in the open air dismissed the last remnants of sadness and sickness from their minds. They had many a long search for food on the way, but they managed to arrive stronger and healthier in every way than they were at the setting out.

XXVIII

THE END

FOR eight weeks I was Dr. Turnbull's guest ; and the period is figured in my mind as a single day that opened with dew and sunlight and long morning shadows, but closed in storm and darkness. This is a mental impression of the inward life, by no means a record of weather. The English winter was seen at its worst. Every day seemed gloomier than the day preceding. Snow and frost, thaw, rain and flood followed one another with a rare glimpse of sunshine or a thunderstorm between.

In my very brief expeditions I felt, rather than saw, that the people were becoming sullen and apprehensive ; but I did not guess what was the ground of their alarm. Weather did not matter much to one who had an engrossing task indoors and two companions of whom it was impossible to grow weary. Dr. Turnbull did not go out except to urgent cases ; and partly for my benefit, but still more to make a survey of what he and others had done in the Settlement, he talked by the hour about its affairs in general, but chiefly about the mistakes in government which had led to the ruin of the old order ; and he described with pride the means by which the new generation avoided the worst of their errors. He found in me a more docile listener than in Bessie who, altogether disdaining weather, would

arrive in snowy mantle clad, dripping wet or steaming with frost, she and her pony, according to what she encountered on the moor. She was always ready to engage the Doctor in argument and an unsympathetic observer might have supposed them at daggers drawn, but that was just because he had from infancy taught her to judge for herself. They were at heart the greatest friends.

A perpetual cause of argument between them was the "Records of the Settlement," a journal that had been kept from early days by the Head Man of his time. The Doctor urged me to copy it out, a formidable undertaking as it had been kept for a century and a half, and to each year there was a goodly volume much larger than our National Register. Bessie with her practical sense contended that it would be labour in vain because the writers had not been able in every case or even in the majority of cases to distinguish between the important and the unimportant.

"One of the best annalists," she said, "was more interested in fish than in any other topic. He had made and stocked many fish ponds, and his volume was only interesting when he wrote about fish. 'O flesh, flesh, how art thou fishified,' might have been his motto. Another was a keen excavator of ruined cities. He had no imagination, but was great at measuring and weighing. His book was filled with dimensions and discoveries. You could make a book out of things of this kind and call it 'Nothing like Leather,'" said Bessie.

She finished her mocking suggestion with a laugh that roused Dr. Turnbull, but he could not make an effective reply—especially as in order to encourage impartiality it had been agreed that each chronicler should be allowed to keep his writing secret till he died. Bessie pressed home her victory by declaring that after all it was human nature

that counted most, and she considered the story of "The Five Widows of Cardiff" of more value than any official record and it had the advantage of being a hundred times more amusing. When she mentioned a thing of that kind I made a mental note to read and copy it.

These were happy times. Disputes were always arising but there was no bitterness or ill-will, so that it only required a merry jape to dissolve opposition in laughter. I wrote industriously but read even more, as in their encounters each of the combatants was continually bringing up something that was new, something interesting to me. All the time I was living in a fool's paradise. The first intimation of that fact came accidentally and received little attention at the time though it made me uncomfortable for the moment. One morning I was enjoying a gleam of sunshine on the southern side of a laurel hedge when Dr. Turnbull and Bessie came along the path on the opposite side.

"Isn't our visitor happy," she exclaimed.

"Call no man happy till he's dead," answered the Doctor in a dry, ominous tone that made me feel as though I had received a douche of cold water.

It was not real happiness but illusion. My former life had faded into a blurred memory. It was as though the spirit from fields of asphodel was looking back at the old hopes, dreams, ambitions and finding them too trivial even for laughter. For the moment there was no future and no past. I seemed to be anchored to the everlasting Now.

Bessie, as is clear enough now, had made repeated efforts to stir me out of this state of mind, but she did it so gently with such a tender reluctance to pain or alarm that she failed to make her prepossessed hearer listen to the warning bell. It was stupid not to have noticed that while she

became almost motherly in her solicitude towards me and my well-being she had become shy of taking me out with her. But she always had an excellent reason. There was rain or snow or fog. If the sky were clear the frost was keen or it was so hot that a winter thunderstorm must be approaching. Such excuses easily served the purpose. I had lost the will to go out.

One afternoon she entered my room with a look on her face which should have been enough in itself to rouse me out of my complacency. Its fixity of purpose did indeed draw from their hidden depths a horde of doubts and apprehensions that had gained a footing in my subconscious self, but as at the same moment my admiration drove everything else away, and the momentary fear vanished again.

I said her brown eyes were like stars when their brightness is dimmed by the silver foam of scudding clouds, but she made no immediate answer, but looked out at the window where dusk was beginning to creep over wood and wold. The single trees near the Settlement assumed their darkest robes as the light waned, and eventually became massive black figures. Nearer the wood they were in clumps that gradually merged into a deep mysterious beechwood. Bessie gazed like one entranced at the woodland gradually being engulfed in night, and I completely failed to trace her thought.

Instead of dwelling on her manifest anxiety I allowed my mind to follow her glance and began to talk about the magic of a big woodland.

“All day it is dominated by man, but with the coming dusk it deepens its shadows and gradually hides the opening of the little woodland ways as if preparing to enjoy its nightly return to primeval grandeur—a gigantic mass

presently to be swallowed in the darkness of night. Then it becomes the shore of old romance, dryads and gnomes and little elves return to their old haunts," I said.

Bessie was very far from falling into my train of thought. She said : " You could not have taken a more effective way to prove yourself only a Visitor here than by talking about the forest at night-time being beautiful and enchanted. Every native hates and fears it. There is no pleasure or romance in the surprise of meeting a bear, a pack of wolves or a wild boar. Common people will tell you these are the least of the terrors. They have come to believe it has worse in the shape of monsters and devils. I can't say much about the latter, but I have had experience of the former. This forest three times in my short life has sheltered a monster. In each case it has turned out to be a wild man fiercer and more cunning than any beast. Dr. Turnbull holds, and I think he is right, that occasionally a child from beyond the barrier grows to a man's normal height and becomes a giant. Now, ask what effect would be produced if for any cause you had to make a woodland journey at night. You would have to be on the look-out for the wild beasts among which the crafty giant with his club counts as one, for he like them, waits his chance to slay and devour. Would not a man of nerve and courage be put on his mettle ? And if so, the ordinary child-like superstitious rustic would be driven frantic. Imagination especially in moonlight sees what you call gnomes and elves in the twigs and branches of the trees. I, who do not believe in dryads or fairies, have often been frightened at what appeared to be a human head though it was only a passing jest of the wind who wove the resemblance out of greenery as a child makes shadow rabbits on the wall. There is no mother of superstition as prolific as the forest. For every real and terrible enemy it harbours,

imagination produces a horde of shapes. Let the wind get up and howl in brake and thicket and you will speedily believe in anything visible or invisible."

She ceased a moment and then resumed in a tone of disappointment and vexation: "I see by your face that you do not regard this as anything but an amusing absurdity. You cannot blame them for their superstition if you think of all that they have gone through, they and their forebears. I cannot complain even though superstition has sharpened their anger against you. I daresay you scarcely have noticed, for you do not mind such things, that lately the rain has been excessive, and it has roused old memories of the flood and the famine. Somebody has evidently mentioned you as a mysterious being who is the cause of this misfortune. Think of it, my dear. You are living among a people whose minds are chokeful of gross and morbid terrors. Their attention has been drawn to you. Some say you don't belong to this world at all. It has been noticed that you do not pretend to be anything but a stranger, you do not carry a tool or a gun like other men, but go about with a note-book and a pencil in your hand. You speak our tongue but like a foreigner. You wear our dress but it does not disguise your strangeness. So far they have been held back by fear alone from attempting to injure you. In that way you have been my protection. They are in the mood to tear me to bits for being your friend, but they dare not."

All at once the torrent ceased and in her sweetest, gentlest accent she was entreating: "Do not be angry, dear Visitor. I tried to warn you by hint, and hoped ignorant animosity would die down, but that was not to be, so I have told you all. Your Bessie has told you all."

Her tears and her tender, broken voice melted my heart,

and what I would have done I do not know, for I was checked by a noise like that of a rushing wind, and her figure and mine became fixed like marble. A presence invisible made itself felt in the room. Yet I was unconscious of any sign of displeasure, rather of an encouragement to frankness that had the force of a command to speak the truth without any mental reservation or comment.

"Bessie, my darling," I said, "our spirits, still embodied, have met only in the little playfields of time. We have to part now, as sister parts from brother, when the priest throws the first handful of mould on the coffin. Our hope and faith is in eternity."

"Ah, dear Visitor," she replied, "teach me your faith. Godless am I, and of Godless folk I have come. When you aspire to an eternity of bliss I think of generations wending their way through daylight and dark and falling at last into a pit where the body moulders and moulders till it passes into living tissue again, tissue of man, tissue of goose and ass."

"The spirit wove the flesh only as a garment," I was beginning, when she broke out with impatient tenderness:

"We have but one life to live, O my heart. Let us enjoy the present hour. We have but one life."

I had pressed a finger on my lips entreating her silence, but she, not knowing of the invisible form that watched, pushed the finger away gently and laid her lips to mine.

While this conversation was going on, my whole being was so concentrated on it that I scarcely heard, or heard only as in a dream, the threatening turmoil of a crowd that had been gathering round the house, but now the voices that had been partially subdued grew into a great roar, and there were cries of "The Stranger, the Stranger: bring him out!" As these words were repeated with increasing

vehemence, I at last stepped out into the full light of the torches. The effect was to me incomprehensible. The rude faces began to quake with fear, and the hands that held the torches trembled. They tried in vain to articulate any clear language, yet I knew that they meant some accusation.

“What is my offence?” I asked.

“The weather,” was the answer given by a thin, trembling voice in the crowd. “’Twas a witch last brought a drowning to the Vale. We drowned her and the waters abated. You we cannot drown and we cannot shoot.” I could not help laughing, but as I did so a low, mournful moan went up from the crowd.

“He only laughs at us,” “Our cows have perished,” “Our swine are dying,” “We shall die of hunger,” were phrases that came to me from the crowd. I did not know what to do. There was no way of appeasing them or allaying their terror.

I held up my hand for silence. To my surprise the effect was to make them suddenly stand as stiff and silent as though they had, like Lot’s wife, been turned into pillars of salt.

“My friends,” I said as calmly as I could, “there is no evil intent in my mind towards any of you, and if I can relieve you of your burden you have only to tell me how.”

“Leave us,” they replied with one accord. A voice said, “You must.”

Whether it came from within me or without I do not know, but I realised it was final and irresistible, like an ordinance of nature.

The clamour of the crowd was sounding in my ears when above it approached the noise of a mighty wind. I

turned to look at Bessie, whose dear form seemed to fade as I did so, although her eyes still burned into mine. As I gazed a mist grew between us, the torches went out, and silence grew deeper and deeper. Space enfolded me. I fell blinded through it, through nothingness and annihilation it seemed for years, till with a deep sigh and sob I saw a little cave of light. It grew and grew; familiar forgotten scenes sprung to life as my sight returned. I found myself as of old waking from sleep in my own bedroom in the Kentish tower. But clasped in my hand was a little bundle of papers. They were the notes of the records of New London. That yielded a melancholy satisfaction. It proved that the eternal power was not altogether displeased, and tacitly allowed that the story of my expedition into time should be told as an experience and warning.

That is all I live for now. My longing for two thousand years of life has ended. It is replaced by a more intense desire that the moment will quickly arrive in which I shall leave time for eternity and regain a dear companionship.



END OF THE UNKNOWN'S MANUSCRIPT.



