

## Farcical History of Richard Greenow, Aldous Huxley

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#### I

THE most sumptuous present that Millicent received on her seventh birthday was a doll's house. "With love to darling little Mill from Aunty Loo." Aunt Loo was immensely rich, and the doll's house was almost as grandiose and massive as herself.

It was divided into four rooms, each papered in a different colour and each furnished as was fitting: beds and wash-stands and wardrobes in the upstairs rooms, arm-chairs and artificial plants below. "Replete with every modern convenience; sumptuous appointments." There was even a cold collation ready spread on the dining-room table—two scarlet lobsters on a dish, and a ham that had been sliced into just enough to reveal an internal complexion of the loveliest pink and white. One might go on talking about the doll's house for ever, it was so beautiful. Such, at any rate, was the opinion of Millicent's brother Dick. He would spend hours opening and shutting the front door, peeping through the windows, arranging and rearranging the furniture. As for Millicent, the gorgeous present left her cold. She had been hoping—and, what is more, praying, fervently, every night for a month—that Aunty Loo would give her a toy sewing-machine (one of the kind that works, though) for her birthday.

She was bitterly disappointed when the doll's house came instead. But she bore it all stoically and managed to be wonderfully polite to Aunty Loo about the whole affair. She never looked at the doll's house: it simply didn't interest her.

Dick had already been at a preparatory school for a couple of terms. Mr. Killigrew, the headmaster, thought him a promising boy. "Has quite a remarkable aptitude for mathematics," he wrote in his report. "He has started Algebra this term and shows a" — "quite remarkable" — "scratched out (the language of reports is apt to be somewhat limited) — "a very unusual grasp of the subject.'" Mr. Killigrew didn't know that his pupil also took an interest in dolls: if he had, he would have giped at Dick as unmercifully and in nearly the same terms as Dick's fellow-schoolboys—for shepherds grow to resemble their sheep and pedagogues their childish charges. But of course Dick would never have dreamt of telling anyone at school about it. He was chary of letting even the people at home divine his weakness, and when anyone came into the room where the doll's house was, he would put his hands in his pockets and stroll out, whistling the tune of, "There is a Happy Land far, far away, where they have Ham and Eggs seven times a day," as though he had merely stepped in to have a look at the beastly thing—just to give it a kick.

When he wasn't playing with the doll's house, Dick spent his holiday time in reading, largely, devouringly. No length or incomprehensibility could put him off; he had swallowed down Robert Elsmere in the three-volume edition at the age of eight. When he wasn't reading he used to sit and think about Things in General and Nothing in Particular; in fact, as Millicent reproachfully put it, he just mooned about. Millicent, on the other hand, was always busily doing something: weeding in the garden, or hoeing, or fruit-picking (she could be trusted not to eat more than the recognized tariff—one in twenty raspberries or one in forty plums); helping Kate in the kitchen; knitting mufflers for those beings known

vaguely as *The Cripples*, while her mother read aloud in the evenings before bedtime. She disapproved of Dick's mooning, but Dick mooned all the same.

When Dick was twelve and a half he knew enough about mathematics and history and the dead languages to realize that his dear parents were profoundly ignorant and uncultured. But, what was more pleasing to the dear parents, he knew enough to win a scholarship at Aesop College, which is one of our Greatest Public Schools.

If this were a Public School story, I should record the fact that, while at Aesop Dick swore, lied, blasphemed, repeated dirty stories, read the articles in *John Bull* about brothels disguised as nursing-homes and satyrs disguised as curates; that he regarded his masters, with very few exceptions, as fools, not even always well-meaning. And so on. All which would be quite true, but beside the point. For this is not one of the conventional studies of those clever young men who discover Atheism and Art at School, Socialism at the University, and, passing through the inevitable stage of Sex and Syphilis after taking their B.A., turn into maturely brilliant novelists at the age of twenty-five. I prefer, therefore, to pass over the minor incidents of a difficult pubescence, touching only on those points which seem to throw a light on the future career of our hero.

It is possible for those who desire it— incredible as the thing may appear—to learn something at Aesop College. Dick even learnt a great deal. From the beginning he was the young Benjamin of his mathematical tutor, Mr. Skewbauld, a man of great abilities in his own art, and who, though wholly incapable of keeping a form in order, could make his private tuition a source of much profit to a mathematically minded boy. Mr. Skewbauld's house was the worst in Aesop: Dick described it as a mixture between a ghetto and a home for the mentally deficient, and when he read in Sir Thomas Browne that it was a Vulgar Error to suppose that Jews stink, he wrote a letter to the School Magazine exploding that famous doctor as a quack and a charlatan, whose statements ran counter to the manifest facts of everyday life in Mr. Skewbauld's house. It may seem surprising that Dick should have read Sir Thomas Browne at all. But he was more than a mere mathematician. He filled the ample leisure, which is Aesop's most precious gift to those of its Alumni who know how to use it, with much and varied reading in history, in literature, in physical science, and in more than one foreign language. Dick was something of a prodigy.

"Greenow's an intellectual," was Mr. Copthorne-Slazenger's contemptuous verdict. "I have the misfortune to have two or three intellectuals in my house.

They're all of them friends of his. I think he's a Bad Influence in the School." Copthorne-Slazenger regarded himself as the perfect example of *mens sana in corpore sano*, the soul of an English gentleman in the body of a Greek god. Unfortunately his legs were rather too short and his lower lip was underhung like a salmon's.

Dick had, indeed, collected about him a band of kindred spirits. There was Partington, who specialized in history; Gay, who had read all the classical writings of the golden age and was engaged in the study of mediaeval Latin; Fletton, who was fantastically clever and had brought the art of being idle to a pitch never previously reached in the annals of Aesop. These were his chief friends, and a queer-looking group they made—Dick, small and dark and nervous; Partington, all roundness, and whose spectacles were two moons in a moonface; Gay, with the stiff walk

of a little old man; and Fletton, who looked like nobody so much as Mr. Jingle, tall and thin with a twisted, comical face.

"An ugly skulking crew," Copthorne-Slazenger, conscious of his own Olympian splendour, would say as he saw them pass. With these faithful friends Dick should have been — and indeed for the most part was—very happy. Between them they mustered up a great stock of knowledge; they could discuss every subject under the sun. They were a liberal education and an amusement to one another. There were times, however, when Dick was filled with a vague, but acute, discontent. He wanted something which his friends could not give him; but what, but what? The discontent rankled under the surface, like a suppressed measles. It was Lord Francis Quarles who brought it out and made the symptoms manifest.

Francis Quarles was a superb creature, with the curly forehead of a bull and the face and limbs of a Graeco-Roman statue. It was a sight worth seeing when he looked down through half-shut eyelids, in his usual attitude of sleepy arrogance, on the world about him. He was in effect what Mr. Copthorne-Slazenger imagined himself to be, and he shared that gentleman's dislike for Dick and his friends. "Yellow little atheists," he called them. He always stood up for God and the Church of England; they were essential adjuncts to the aristocracy. God, indeed, was almost a member of the Family; lack of belief in Him amounted to a personal insult to the name of Quarles.

It was half-way through the summer term, when Dick was sixteen, on one of those days of brilliant sunshine and cloudless blue, when the sight of beautiful and ancient buildings is peculiarly poignant. Their age and quiet stand out in melancholy contrast against the radiant life of the summer; and at Aesop the boys go laughing under their antique shadow; "Little victims"—you feel how right Gray was. Dick was idly strolling across the quadrangle, engaged in merely observing the beauty about him — the golden-grey chapel, with its deep geometrical shadows between the buttresses, the comely rose-coloured shapes of the brick-built Tudor buildings, the weathercocks glittering in the sun, the wheeling flurries of pigeons.

His old discontent had seized on him again, and to-day in the presence of all this beauty it had become almost unbearable. All at once, out of the mouth of one of the dark little tunnelled doors pierced in the flanks of the sleeping building, a figure emerged into the light. It was Francis Quarles, clad in white flannels and the radiance of the sunshine. He appeared like a revelation, bright, beautiful, and sudden, before Dick's eyes. A violent emotion seized him; his heart leapt, his bowels were moved within him; he felt a little sick and faint—he had fallen in love.

Francis passed by without deigning to notice him. His head was high, his eyes drowsy under their drooping lids. He was gone, and for Dick all the light was out, the beloved quadrangle was a prison-yard, the pigeons a loathsome flock of carrion eaters. Gay and Partington came up behind him with shouts of invitation. Dick walked rudely away. God! how he hated them and their wretched, silly talk and their yellow, ugly faces.

The weeks that followed were full of strangeness. For the first time in his life Dick took to writing poetry. There was one sonnet which began :  
Is it a vision or a waking dream? Or is it truly Apollo that I see,  
Come from his sylvan haunts in Arcady to laugh and loiter, sing and saunter by  
an English stream. . . .

He kept on repeating the words to himself, "Sylvan haunts in Arcady,"  
"laugh and loiter "(after much thought he had adopted that as more

liquidly melodious than "sing and saunter "). How beautiful they sounded!—as beautiful as Keats—more beautiful, for they were his own.

He avoided the company of Gay and Fletton and Partington; they had become odious to him, and their conversation, when he could bring himself to listen to it, was, somehow, almost incomprehensible. He would sit for hours alone in his study; not working—for he could not understand the mathematical problems on which he had been engaged before the fateful day in the quadrangle—but reading novels and the poetry of Mrs. Browning, and at intervals writing something rather ecstatic of his own. After a long preparatory screwing up of his courage, he dared at last to send a fag with a note to Francis, asking him to tea; and when Francis rather frigidly refused, he actually burst into tears. He had not cried like that since he was a child.

He became suddenly very religious. He would spend an hour on his knees every night, praying, praying with frenzy.

He mortified the flesh with fasting and watching. He even went so far as to flagellate himself—or at least tried to; for it is very difficult to flagellate yourself adequately with a cane in a room so small that any violent gesture imperils the bric-a-brac. He would pass half the night stark naked, in absurd postures, trying to hurt himself. And then, after the dolorously pleasant process of self-maceration was over, he used to lean out of the window and listen to the murmurs of the night and fill his spirit with the warm velvet darkness of midsummer. Cophorne-Slazenger, coming back by the late train from town one night, happened to see his moon-pale face hanging out of window and was delighted to be able to give him two hundred Greek lines to remind him that even a member of the Sixth Form requires sleep sometimes.

The fit lasted three weeks. "I can't think what's the matter with you, Greenow," complained Mr. Skewbauld snuffingly. "You seem incapable or unwilling to do anything at all. I suspect the cause is constipation. If only everyone would take a little paraffin every night before going to bed! . . ." Mr. Skewbauld's self-imposed mission in life was the propagation of the paraffin habit. It was the universal panacea—the cure for every ill.

His friends of before the crisis shook their heads and could only suppose him mad. And then the fit ended as suddenly as it had begun.

It happened at a dinner-party given by the Cravisters. Dr. Cravister was the Headmaster of Aesop—a good, gentle, learned old man, with snow-white hair and a saintly face which the spirit of comic irony had embellished with a nose that might, so red and bulbous it was, have been borrowed from the properties of a music-hall funny man. And then there was Mrs. Cravister, large and stately as a galleon with all sails set. Those who met her for the first time might be awed by the dignity of what an Elizabethan would have called her "swelling port." But those who knew her well went in terror of the fantastic spirit which lurked behind the outward majesty.

They were afraid of what that richly modulated voice of hers might utter. It was not merely that she was malicious—and she had a gift of ever-ready irony; no, what was alarming in all her conversation was the element of the unexpected. With most people one feels comfortably secure that they will always say the obvious and ordinary things; with Mrs. Cravister, never. The best one could do was to be on guard and to try and look, when she made a more than usually characteristic remark, less of a bewildered fool than one felt.

Mrs. Cravister received her guests— they were all of them boys — with stately courtesy. They found it pleasant to be taken so seriously, to be treated as perfectly grown men; but at the same time, they always had with Mrs. Cravister a faint uncomfortable suspicion that all her politeness was an irony so exquisite as to be practically undistinguishable from ingenuousness.

"Good evening, Mr. Gay," she said, holding out her hand and shutting her eyes; it was one of her disconcerting habits, this shutting of the eyes. "What a pleasure it will be to hear you talking to us again about eschatology."

Gay, who had never talked about eschatology and did not know the meaning of the word, smiled a little dimly and made a protesting noise.

"Eschatology? What a charming subject!" The fluty voice belonged to Henry Cravister, the Headmaster's son, a man of about forty who worked in the British Museum. He was almost too cultured, too erudite.

"But I don't know anything about it," said Gay desperately.

"Spare us your modesty," Henry Cravister protested.

His mother shook hands with the other guests, putting some at their ease with a charming phrase and embarrassing others by saying something baffling and unexpected that would have dismayed even the hardiest diner-out, much more a schoolboy tremblingly on his good behaviour. At the tail end of the group of boys stood Dick and Francis Quarles. Mrs. Cravister slowly raised her heavy waxen eyelids and regarded them a moment in silence.

"The Graeco-Roman and the Gothic side by side!" she exclaimed. "Lord Francis is something in the Vatican, a rather late piece of work; and Mr. Greenow is a little gargoyle from the roof of Notre Dame de Paris. Two epochs of art—how clearly one sees the difference. And my husband, I always think, is purely Malayan in design— purely Malayan," she repeated as she shook hands with the two boys.

Dick blushed to the roots of his hair, but Francis' impassive arrogance remained unmoved. Dick stole a glance in his direction, and at the sight of his calm face he felt a new wave of adoring admiration sweeping through him.

The company was assembled and complete, Mrs. Cravister looked round the room and remarking, "We won't wait for Mr. Copthorne-Slazenger," sailed majestically in the direction of the door. She particularly disliked this member of her husband's staff, and lost no opportunity of being rude to him. Thus, where an ordinary hostess might have said, "Shall we come in to dinner": Mrs. Cravister employed the formula, "We won't wait for Mr. Copthorne-Slazenger"; and a guest unacquainted with Mrs. Cravister's habits would be surprised on entering the dining-room to find that all the seats at the table were filled, and that the meal proceeded smoothly without a single further reference to the missing Copthorne, who never turned up at all, for the good reason that he had never been invited.

Dinner began a little nervously and uncomfortably. At one end of the table the Headmaster was telling anecdotes of Aesop in the sixties, at which the boys in his neighbourhood laughed with a violent nervous insincerity. Henry Cravister, still talking about eschatology, was quoting from Sidonius Apollinarius and Commodianus of Gaza. Mrs. Cravister, who had been engaged in a long colloquy with the butler, suddenly turned on Dick with the remark, "And so you have a deep, passionate fondness for cats," as though they had been intimately discussing the subject for the last hour. Dick had enough presence of

mind to say that, yes, he did like cats— all except those Manx ones that had no tails.

"No tails," Mrs. Cravister repeated— "no tails. Like men. How symbolical everything is! "

Francis Quarles was sitting opposite him, so that Dick had ample opportunity to look at his idol. How perfectly he did everything, down to eating his soup! The first lines of a new poem began to buzz in Dick's head:

"All, all I lay at thy proud marble feet— My heart, my love and all my future days. Upon thy brow for ever let me gaze, For ever touch thy hair: oh (something) sweet. . ."

Would he be able to find enough rhymes to make it into a sonnet? Mrs. Cravister, who had been leaning back in her chair for the last few minutes in a state of exhausted abstraction, opened her eyes and said to nobody in particular:

"Ah, how I envy the calm of those Chinese dynasties!"

"Which Chinese dynasties?" a well-meaning youth inquired.

"Any Chinese dynasty, the more remote the better. Henry, tell us the names of some Chinese dynasties."

In obedience to his mother, Henry delivered a brief disquisition on the history of politics, art, and letters in the Far East.

The Headmaster continued his reminiscences.

An angel of silence passed. The boys, whose shyness had begun to wear off, became suddenly and painfully conscious of hearing themselves eating. Mrs. Cravister saved the situation.

"Lord Francis knows all about birds," she said in her most thrilling voice. "Perhaps he can tell us why it is the unhappy fate of the carrion crow to mate for life."

Conversation again became general. Dick was still thinking about his sonnet. Oh, these rhymes!—praise, bays, roundelays, amaze: greet, bleat, defeat, beat, paraclete. . . . .

"... to sing the praise In anthems high and solemn roundelays Of Holy Father, Son and Paraclete."

That was good—damned good; but it hardly seemed to fit in with the first quatrain. It would do for one of his religious poems, though. He had written a lot of sacred verse lately.

Then suddenly, cutting across his ecstatic thoughts, came the sound of Henry Cravister's reedy voice.

"But I always find Pater's style so coarse" it said.

Something explosive took place in Dick's head. It often happens when one blows one's nose that some passage in the labyrinth connecting ears and nose and throat is momentarily blocked, and one becomes deaf and strangely dizzy. Then, suddenly, the mucous bubble bursts, sound rushes back to the brain, the head feels clear and stable once more. It was something like this, but transposed into terms of the spirit, that seemed now to have happened to Dick.

It was as though some mysterious obstruction in his brain, which had dammed up and diverted his faculties from their normal course during the past three weeks, had been on a sudden overthrown. His life seemed to be flowing once more along familiar channels.

He was himself again.

"But I always find Pater's style so coarse"

These few words of solemn foolery were the spell which had somehow performed the miracle. It was just the sort of remark he might have made three weeks ago, before the crisis. For a moment, indeed, he almost thought it was he himself who had spoken; his own authentic voice, carried across the separating gulf of days, had woken him again to life! He looked at Francis Quarles. Why, the fellow was nothing but a great prize ox, a monstrous animal. "There was a Lady loved a Swine. Honey, said she . . ." It was ignoble, it was ridiculous. He could have hidden his face in his hands for pure shame; shame tingled through his body. Goodness, how grotesquely he had behaved!

He leaned across and began talking to Henry Cravister about Pater and style and books in general. Cravister was amazed at the maturity of the boy's mind; for he possessed to a remarkable degree that critical faculty which in the vast majority of boys is—and from their lack of experience must be—wholly lacking.

"You must come and see me some time when you're in London," Henry Cravister said to him when the time came for the boys to get back to their houses. Dick was flattered; he had not said that to any of the others. He walked home with Gay, laughing and talking quite in his old fashion. Gay marvelled at the change in his companion; strange, inexplicable fellow! but it was pleasant to have him back again, to repossess the lost friend. Arrived in his room, Dick sat down to attack the last set of mathematical problems that had been set him. Three hours ago they had appeared utterly incomprehensible; now he understood them perfectly. His mind was like a giant refreshed, delighting in its strength.

Next day Mr. Skewbald congratulated him on his answers.

"You seem quite to have recovered your old form, Greenow," he said. "Did you take my advice? Paraffin regularly . . ."

Looking back on the events of the last weeks, Dick was disquieted. Mr. Skewbald might be wrong in recommending paraffin, but he was surely right in supposing that something was the matter and required a remedy. What could it be? He felt so well; but that, of course, proved nothing. He began doing Miiller's exercises, and he bought a jar of malt extract and a bottle of hypo-phosphites. After much consultation of medical handbooks and the encyclopaedia, he came to the conclusion that he was suffering from anaemia of the brain; and for some time one fixed idea haunted him: Suppose the blood completely ceased to flow to his brain, suppose he were to fall down suddenly dead or, worse, become utterly and hopelessly paralysed. . . . Happily the distractions of Aesop in the summer term were sufficiently numerous and delightful to divert his mind from this gloomy brooding, and he felt so well and in such high spirits that it was impossible to go on seriously believing that he was at death's door.

Still, whenever he thought of the events of those strange weeks he was troubled. He did not like being confronted by problems which he could not solve. During the rest of his stay at school he was troubled by no more than the merest velleities of a relapse. A fit of moon-gazing and incapacity to understand the higher mathematics had threatened him one time when he was working rather too strenuously for a scholarship. But a couple of days' complete rest had staved off the peril. There had been rather a painful scene, too, at Dick's last School Concert.

Oh, those Aesop concerts! Musically speaking, of course, they are deplorable; but how rich from all other points of view than the merely aesthetic! The supreme moment arrives at the very end when three of the

most eminent and popular of those about to leave mount the platform together and sing the famous Farewell." Greatest of school songs! The words are not much, but the tune, which goes swooning along in three-four time, is perhaps the masterpiece of the late organist, Dr. Pilch.

Dick was leaving, but he was not a sufficiently heroic figure to have been asked to sing, "Aesop, Farewell." He was simply a member of the audience, and one, moreover, who had come to the concert in a critical and mocking spirit. For, as he had an ear for music, it was impossible for him to take the concert very seriously. The choir had clamorously re-crucified the Messiah; the soloists had all done their worst; and now it was time for "Aesop, Farewell." The heroes climbed on to the stage. They were three demi-gods, but Francis Quarles was the most splendid of the group as he stood there with head thrown back, eyes almost closed, calm and apparently unconscious of the crowd that seethed, actually and metaphorically, beneath him. He was wearing an enormous pink orchid in the buttonhole of his evening coat; his shirt-front twinkled with diamond studs; the buttons of his waistcoat were of fine gold. At the sight of him, Dick felt his heart beating violently; he was not, he painfully realized, master of himself.

The music struck up—Dum, dum, dumdidi, dumdidi; dum, dum, dum, and so on. So like the Merry Widow. In two days' time he would have left Aesop forever. The prospect had never affected him very intensely. He had enjoyed himself at school, but he had never, like so many Aesopians, fallen in love with the place. It remained for him an institution; for others it was almost an adored person. But to-night his spirit, rocked on a treacly ocean of dominant sevenths, succumbed utterly to the sweet sorrow of parting. And there on the platform stood Francis. Oh, how radiantly beautiful! And when he began, in his rich tenor, the first verse of the Valedictory:  
"Farewell, Mother Aesop, Our childhood's home! Our spirit is with thee,  
Though far we roam ..."  
he found himself hysterically sobbing.

## II

CANTELOUP COLLEGE is perhaps the most frightful building in Oxford—and to those who know their Oxford well this will mean not a little. Up till the middle of last century Canteloup possessed two quadrangles of fifteenth-century buildings, unimpressive and petty, like so much of College architecture, but at least quiet, unassuming, decent. After the accession of Victoria the College began to grow in numbers, wealth, and pride. The old buildings were too small and unpretentious for what had now become a Great College. In the summer of 1867 a great madness fell upon the Master and Fellows. They hired a most distinguished architect, bred up in the school of Ruskin, who incontinently razed all the existing buildings to the ground and erected in their stead a vast pile in the approved Mauro-Venetian Gothic of the period.

The New Buildings contained a great number of rooms, each served by a separate and almost perpendicular staircase; and if nearly half of them were so dark as to make it necessary to light them artificially for all but three hours out of the twenty-four, this slight defect was wholly outweighed by the striking beauty, from outside, of the Neo-Byzantine loopholes by which they were, euphemistically, "lighted."

Prospects in Canteloup may not please; but man, on the other hand, tends to be less vile there than in many other places. There is an equal



profusion at Canteloup of Firsts and Blues; there are Union orators of every shade of opinion and young men so languidly well bred as to take no interest in politics of any kind; there are drinkers of cocoa and drinkers of champagne. Canteloup is a microcosm, a whole world in miniature; and whatever | your temperament and habits may be, whether you wish to drink, or row, or work, or hunt, Canteloup will provide you with congenial companions and a spiritual home.

Lack of athletic distinction had prevented Dick from being, at Aesop, a hero or anything like one. At Canteloup, in a less barbarically ordered state of society, things were different. His rooms in the Venetian gazebo over the North Gate became the meeting-place of all that was most intellectually distinguished in Canteloup and the University at large. He had I had his sitting-room austere-ly upholstered and papered in grey. A large white Chinese figure of the best period stood pedestalled in one corner, and on the walls there hung a few uncompromisingly good drawings and lithographs by modern artists. Fletton, who had accompanied Dick from Aesop to Canteloup, called it the "cerebral chamber "; and with its prevailing tone of brain-coloured grey and the rather dry intellectual taste of its decorations it deserved the name.

To-night the cerebral chamber had been crammed. The Canteloup branch of the Fabian Society, under Dick's presidency, had been holding a meeting. "Art in the Socialist State "was what they had been discussing. And now the meeting had broken up, leaving nothing but three empty jugs that had once contained mulled claret and a general air of untidiness to testify to its having taken place at all. Dick stood leaning an elbow on the mantelpiece and absent-mindedly kicking, to the great detriment of his pumps, at the expiring red embers in the grate. From the depths of a huge and cavernous arm-chair, Fletton, pipe in mouth, fumed like a sleepy volcano.

"I liked the way, Dick," he said, with a laugh—" the way you went for the Arty-Crafties. You utterly destroyed them."

"I merely pointed out, what is sufficiently obvious, that crafts are not art, nor anything like it, that's all." Dick snapped out the words. He was nervous and excited, and his body felt as though it were full of compressed springs ready to jump at the most imponderable touch. He was always like that after making a speech.

"You did it very effectively," said Fletton. There was a silence between the two young men.

A noise like the throaty yelling of savages in rut came wafting up from the quadrangle on which the windows of the cerebral chamber opened. Dick started; all the springs within him had gone off at once—a thousand simultaneous Jack-in-the-boxes.

"It's only Francis Quarks' dinner-party becoming vocal," Fletton explained. "Blind mouths, as Milton would call them."

Dick began restlessly pacing up and down the room. When Fletton spoke to him, he did not reply or, at best, gave utterance to a monosyllable or a grunt.

"My dear Dick," said the other at last, "you're not very good company to-night," and heaving himself up from the arm-chair, Fletton went shuffling in his loose, heel-less slippers towards the door. "I'm going to bed."

Dick paused in his lion-like prowling to listen to the receding sound of feet on the stairs. All was silent now: Gott sei dank. He went into his bedroom. It was there that he kept his piano, for it was a piece of furniture too smugly black and polished to have a place in the cerebral chamber. He had been thirsting after his piano all the time Fletton was

sitting there, damn him! He drew up a chair and began to play over and over a certain series of chords. With his left hand he struck an octave G in the base, while his right dwelt lovingly on F, B, and E. A luscious chord, beloved by Mendelssohn—a chord in which the native richness of the dominant seventh is made more rich, more piercing sweet by the addition of a divine discord. G, F, B, and E—he let the notes hang tremulously on the silence, savoured to the full their angelic overtones; then, when the sound of the chord had almost died away, he let it droop reluctantly through D to the simple, triumphal beauty of C natural—the diapason closing full in what was for Dick a wholly ineffable emotion.

He repeated that dying fall again and again, perhaps twenty times. Then, when he was satiated with its deliciousness, he rose from the piano and opening the lowest drawer of the wardrobe pulled out from under his evening clothes a large portfolio. He undid the strings; it was full of photogravure reproductions from various Old Masters. There was an almost complete set of Greuze's works, several of the most striking Ary Scheffers, some Alma Tadema, some Leighton, photographs of sculpture by Torwaldsen and Canova, Boecklin's "Island of the Dead," religious pieces by Holman Hunt, and a large packet of miscellaneous pictures from the Paris Salons of the last forty years.

He took them into the cerebral chamber where the light was better, and began to study them, lovingly, one by one. The Cezanne lithograph, the three admirable etchings by Van Gogh, the little Picasso looked on, unmoved, from the walls.

It was three o'clock before Dick got to bed. He was stiff and cold, but full of the satisfaction of having accomplished something. And, indeed, he had cause to be satisfied; for he had written the first four thousand words of a novel, a chapter and a half of Heartsease Fitzroy: the Story of a Young Girl.

Next morning Dick looked at what he had written overnight, and was alarmed. He had never produced anything quite like this since the days of the Quarles incident at Aesop. A relapse? He wondered. Not a serious one in any case; for this morning he felt himself in full possession of all his ordinary faculties. He must have got overtired speaking to the Fabians in the evening. He looked at his manuscript again, and read:

"'Daddy, do the little girl angels in heaven have toys and kittens and teddy-bears?'

"'I don't know,' said Sir Christopher gently. 'Why does my little one ask?'

"'Because, daddy,' said the child— 'because I think that soon I too may be a little angel, and I should so like to have my teddy-bear with me in heaven.'

"Sir Christopher clasped her to his breast. How frail she was, how ethereal, how nearly an angel already! Would she have her teddy-bear in heaven? The childish question rang in his ears. Great, strong man though he was, he was weeping. His tears fell in a rain upon her auburn curls.

"'Tell me, daddy,' she insisted, 'will dearest God allow me my teddy-bear?'

"'My child,' he sobbed, 'my child

The blushes mounted hot to his cheeks; he turned away his head in horror. He would really have to look after himself for a bit, go to bed early, take exercise, not do much work. This sort of thing couldn't be allowed to go on.

He went to bed at half-past nine that night, and woke up the following morning to find that he had added a dozen or more closely written pages to his original manuscript during the night. He supposed he must have written them in his sleep. It was all very disquieting. The days passed by; every morning a fresh instalment was added to the rapidly growing bulk of Heartsease Fitzroy. It was as though some goblin, some Lob-lie-by-the-Fire, came each night to perform the appointed task, vanishing before the morning. In a little while Dick's alarm wore off; during the day he was perfectly well; his mind functioned with marvellous efficiency. It really didn't seem to matter what he did in his sleep provided he was all right in his waking hours. He almost forgot about Heartsease, and was only reminded of her existence when by chance he opened the drawer in which the steadily growing pile of manuscript reposed.

In five weeks Heartsease Fitzroy was finished. Dick made a parcel of the manuscript and sent it to a literary agent. He had no hopes of any publisher taking the thing; but he was in sore straits for money at the moment, and it seemed worth trying, on the off-chance. A fortnight later Dick received a letter beginning: "DEAR MADAM, -Permit me to hail in you a new authoress of real talent. Heartsease Fitzroy is GREAT," - and signed "EBOR W. SIMS, Editor, Hildebrand's Home Weekly."

Details of the circulation of Hildebrand's Home Weekly were printed at the head of the paper; its average net sale was said to exceed three and a quarter millions. The terms offered by Mr. Sims seemed to Dick positively fabulous. And there would be the royalties on the thing in book form after the serial had run its course.

The letter arrived at breakfast; Dick cancelled all engagements for the day and set out immediately for a long and solitary walk. It was necessary to be alone, to think. He made his way along the Seven Bridges Road, up Cumnor Hill, through the village, and down the footpath to Bablock Hithe, thence to pursue the course of the "stripling Thames" - haunted at every step by the Scholar Gipsy, damn him! He drank beer and ate some bread and cheese in a little inn by a bridge, farther up the river; and it was there, in the inn parlour, surrounded by engravings of the late Queen, and breathing the slightly mouldy preserved air bottled some three centuries ago into that hermetically sealed chamber-it was there that he solved the problem, perceived the strange truth about himself.

He was a hermaphrodite.

A hermaphrodite, not in the gross obvious sense, of course, but spiritually. Two persons in one, male and female. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: or rather a new William Sharp and Fiona MacLeod -a more intelligent William, a vulgarer Fiona. Everything was explained; the deplorable Quarles incident was simple and obvious now. A sentimental young lady of literary tastes writing sonnets to her Ouida guardsman. And what an unerring flair Mr. Sims had shown by addressing him so roundly and unhesitatingly as "madam"!

Dick was elated at this discovery. He had an orderly mind that disliked mysteries. He had been a puzzle to himself for a long time; now he was solved. He was not in the least distressed to discover this abnormality in his character. As long as the two parts of him kept well apart, as long as his male self could understand mathematics, and as long as his lady novelist's self kept up her regular habit of writing at night and retiring from business during the day, the arrangement would be admirable. The more he thought about it, the more it seemed an ideal

state of affairs. His life would arrange itself so easily and well. He would devote the day to the disinterested pursuit of knowledge, to philosophy and mathematics, with perhaps an occasional excursion into politics.

After midnight he would write novels with a feminine pen, earning the money that would make his unproductive male labours possible. A kind of spiritual souteneur. But the fear of poverty need haunt him no more; no need to become a wage-slave, to sacrifice his intelligence to the needs of his belly. Like a gentleman of the East, he would sit still and smoke his philosophic pipe while the womenfolk did the dirty work. Could anything be more satisfactory?  
He paid for his bread and beer, and walked home, whistling as he went.

### III

TWO months later the first instalment of Heartsease Fitzroy: the Story of a Young Girl, by Pearl Bellairs, appeared in the pages of Hildebrand's Home Weekly. Three and a quarter millions read and approved. When the story appeared in book form, two hundred thousand copies were sold in six weeks; and in the course of the next two years no less than sixteen thousand female infants in London alone were christened Heartsease. With her fourth novel and her two hundred and fiftieth Sunday paper article, Pearl Bellairs was well on her way to becoming a household word.

Meanwhile Dick was in receipt of an income far beyond the wildest dreams of his avarice. He was able to realize the two great ambitions of his life—to wear silk underclothing and to smoke good (but really good) cigars.

### IV

DICK went down from Canteloup in a blaze of glory. The most brilliant man of his generation, exceptional mind, prospects, career. But his head was not turned. When people congratulated him on his academic successes, he thanked them politely and then invited them to come and see his Memento Mori. His Memento Mori was called Mr. Glottenham and could be found at any hour of the day in the premises of the Union, or if it was evening, in the Senior Common Room at Canteloup. He was an old member of the College, and the dons in pity for his age and loneliness had made him, some years before, a member of their Common Room.

This act of charity was as bitterly regretted as any generous impulse in the history of the world. Mr. Glottenham made the life of the Canteloup fellows a burden to them; he dined in Hall with fiendish regularity, never missing a night, and he was always the last to leave the Common Room.

Mr. Glottenham did not prepossess at a first glance; the furrows of his face were covered with a short grey sordid stubble; his clothes were disgusting with the spilth of many years of dirty feeding; he had the shoulders and long hanging arms of an ape—an ape with a horribly human look about it. When he spoke, it was like the sound of a man breaking coke; he spoke incessantly and on every subject. His knowledge was enormous; but he possessed the secret of a strange inverted alchemy — he knew how to turn the richest gold to lead, could make the most interesting topic so intolerably tedious that it was impossible, when he talked, not to loathe it.

This was the death's-head to which Dick, like an ancient philosopher at a banquet, would direct the attention of his heartiest congratulators. Mr. Glottenham had had the most dazzling academic career of his generation. His tutors had prophesied for him a future far more brilliant than that of any of his contemporaries. They were now Ministers of State, poets, philosophers, judges, millionaires. Mr. Glottenham frequented the Union and the Canteloup Senior Common Room, and was—well, he was just Mr. Glottenham. Which was why Dick did not think too highly of his own laurels.

V

"WHAT shall I do? What ought I to do?" Dick walked up and down the room smoking, furiously and without at all savouring its richness, one of his opulent cigars.

"My dear," said Cravister—for it was in Cravister's high-ceilinged Bloomsbury room that Dick was thus unveiling his distress of spirit—"my dear, this isn't a revival meeting. You speak as though there were an urgent need for your soul to be saved from hell fire. It's not as bad as that, you know."

"But it is a revival meeting," Dick shouted in exasperation—"it is. I'm a revivalist. You don't know what it's like to have a feeling about your soul. I'm terrifyingly earnest; you don't seem to understand that. I have all the feelings of Bunyan without his religion. I regard the salvation of my soul as important.

How simple everything would be if one could go out with those creatures in bonnets and sing hymns like, 'Hip, hip for the blood of the Lamb, hurrah!' or that exquisite one:

"The bells of Hell ring tingalingaling

For you, but not for me.

For me the angels singalingaling;

They've got the goods for me.'

Unhappily it's impossible."

"Your ideas," said Cravister in his flutiest voice, "are somewhat Gothic. I think I can understand them, though of course I don't sympathize or approve. My advice to people in doubt about what course of action they ought to pursue is always the same: do what you want to."

"Cravister, you're hopeless," said Dick, laughing. "I suppose I am rather Gothic, but I do feel sometimes that the question of ought as well as of want does arise."

Dick had come to his old friend for advice about Life. What ought he to do? The indefatigable pen of Pearl Bellairs solved for him the financial problem. There remained only the moral problem: how could he best expend his energies and his time? Should he devote himself to knowing or doing, philosophy or politics? He felt in himself the desire to search for truth and the ability—who knows?—to find it.

On the other hand, the horrors of the world about him seemed to call on him to put forth all his strength in an effort to ameliorate what was so patently and repulsively bad. Actually, what had to be decided was this: Should he devote himself to the researches necessary to carry out the plan, long ripening in his brain, of a new system of scientific philosophy; or should he devote his powers and Pearl Bellairs' money in propaganda that should put life into the English revolutionary movement?

Great moral principles were in the balance. And Cravister's advice was, do what you want to!

After a month of painful indecision, Dick, who was a real Englishman, arrived at a satisfactory compromise. He started work on his new Synthetic Philosophy, and at the same time joined the staff of the Weekly International, to which he contributed both money and articles. The weeks slipped pleasantly and profitably along. The secret of happiness lies in congenial work, and no one could have worked harder than Dick, unless it was the indefatigable Pearl Bellairs, whose nightly output of five thousand words sufficed to support not only Dick but the Weekly International as well.

These months were perhaps the happiest period of Dick's life. He had friends, money, liberty; he knew himself to be working well; and it was an extra, a supererogatory happiness that he began at this time to get on much better with his sister Millicent than he had ever done before. Millicent had come up to Oxford as a student at St. Mungo Hall in Dick's third year. She had grown into a very efficient and very intelligent young woman. A particularly handsome young woman as well. She was boyishly slender, and a natural grace kept on breaking through the somewhat rigid deportment, which she always tried to impose upon herself, in little beautiful gestures and movements that made the onlooker catch his breath with astonished pleasure.

"Wincing she was as is a jolly colt, Straight as a mast and upright as a bolt:"

Chaucer had as good an eye for youthful grace as for mormals and bristly nostrils and thick red jovial villainousness.

Millicent lost no time in making her presence at St. Mungo's felt. Second- and third-year heroines might snort at the forwardness of a mere fresh-girl, might resent the complete absence of veneration for their glory exhibited by this youthful bejauna; Millicent pursued her course unmoved. She founded new societies and put fresh life into the institutions which already existed at St. Mungo's to take cocoa and discuss the problems of the universe. She played hockey like a tornado, and she worked alarmingly hard. Decidedly, Millicent was a Force, very soon the biggest Force in the St. Mungo world.

In her fifth term she organized the famous St. Mungo general strike, which compelled the authorities to relax a few of the more intolerably tyrannical and anachronistic rules restricting the liberty of the students. It was she who went, on behalf of the strikers, to interview the redoubtable Miss Prosser, Principal of St. Mungo's. The redoubtable Miss Prosser looked grim and invited her to sit down, Millicent sat down and, without quailing, delivered a short but pointed speech attacking the fundamental principles of the St. Mungo system of discipline.

"Your whole point of view," she assured Miss Prosser, "is radically wrong. It's an insult to the female sex; it's positively obscene. Your root assumption is simply this: that we're all in a chronic state of sexual excitement; leave us alone for a moment and we'll immediately put our desires into practice. It's disgusting. It makes me blush. After all, Miss Prosser, we are a college of intelligent women, not an asylum of nymphomaniacs."

For the first time in her career, Miss Prosser had to admit herself beaten. The authorities gave in—reluctantly and on only a few points; but

the principle had been shaken, and that, as Millicent pointed out, was what really mattered.

Dick used to see a good deal of his sister while he was still in residence at Canteloup, and after he had gone down he used to come regularly once a fortnight during term to visit her. That horrible mutual reserve, which poisons the social life of most families and which had effectively made of their brotherly and sisterly relation a prolonged discomfort in the past, began to disappear. They became the best of friends.

"I like you, Dick, a great deal better than I did," said Millicent one day as they were parting at the gate of St. Mungo's after a long walk together.

Dick took off his hat and bowed. "My dear, I reciprocate the sentiment. And, what's more, I esteem and admire you. So there."

Millicent curtsied, and they laughed. They both felt very happy.

VI

"WHAT a life!" said Dick with a sigh of weariness as the train moved out of Euston.

Not a bad life, Millicent thought.

"But horribly fatiguing. I am quite outreined by it."

"Outreined" was Dick's translation of *ereintt*. He liked using words of his own manufacture; one had to learn his idiom before one could properly appreciate his intimate conversation.

Dick had every justification for being outreined. The spring and summer had passed for him in a whirl of incessant activity. He had written three long chapters of the *New Synthetic Philosophy*, and had the material for two more ready in the form of notes. He had helped to organize and bring to its successful conclusion the great carpenters' strike of May and June. He had written four pamphlets and a small army of political articles.

And this comprised only half his labour; for nightly, from twelve till two, Pearl Bellairs emerged to compose the masterpieces which supplied Dick with his bread and butter. *Apes in Purple* had been published in May. Since then she had finished *La Belle Dame sans Morality*, and had embarked on the first chapters of *Daisy's Voyage to Cythera*. Her weekly articles, "For the Girls of Britain," had become, during this period, a regular and favourite feature in the pages of *Hildebrand's Sabbath*, that prince of Sunday papers. At the beginning of July, Dick considered that he had earned a holiday, and now they were off, he and Millicent, for the North.

Dick had taken a cottage on the shore of one of those long salt-water lochs that give to the west coast of Scotland such a dissipated appearance on the map. For miles around there was not a living soul who did not bear the name of Campbell—two families only excepted, one of whom was called Murray-Drummond and the other Drummond-Murray. However, it was not for the people that Dick and Millicent had come, so much as for the landscape, which made up in variety for anything that the inhabitants might lack. Behind the cottage, in the midst of a narrow strip of bog lying between the loch and the foot of the mountains, stood one of the numerous tombs of Ossian, a great barrow of ancient stones.

And a couple of miles away the remains of Deirdre's Scottish refuge bore witness to the Celtic past. The countryside was dotted with the black

skeletons of mediaeval castles. Astonishing country, convulsed into fantastic mountain shapes, cut and indented by winding fiords. On summer days the whole of this improbable landscape became blue and remote and aerially transparent. Its beauty lacked all verisimilitude. It was for that reason that Dick chose the neighbourhood for his holidays. After the insistent actuality of London this frankly unreal coast was particularly refreshing to a jaded spirit.

"Nous sommes ici en plein roman-tisme," said Dick on the day of their arrival, making a comprehensive gesture towards the dream-like scenery, and for the rest of his holiday he acted the part of a young romantic of the palmy period. He sat at the foot of Ossian's tomb and read Lamartine; he declaimed Byron from the summit of the mountains and Shelley as he rowed along the loch. In the evening he read George Sand's *Indiana*; he agonized with the pure, but passionate, heroine, while his admiration for Sir Brown, her English lover, the impassive giant who never speaks and is always clothed in faultless hunting costume, knew no bounds.

He saturated himself in the verses of Victor Hugo, and at last almost came to persuade himself that the words, *Dieu, infinite, eternite*, with which the works of that deplorable genius are so profusely sprinkled, actually possessed some meaning, though what that meaning was he could not, even in his most romantic transports, discover. Pearl Bellairs, of course, understood quite clearly their significance, and though she was a very poor French scholar she used sometimes to be moved almost to tears by the books she found lying about when she came into existence after midnight. She even copied out extracts into her notebooks with a view to using them in her next novel.

"Les plus desesperes sont les chants les plus beaux, Et j'en sais d'immortels qui sont de purs sanglots,"

was a couplet which struck her as sublime.

Millicent, meanwhile, did the housekeeping with extraordinary efficiency, took a great deal of exercise, and read long, serious books; she humoured her brother in his holiday romanticism, but refused to take part in the game.

The declaration of war took them completely by surprise. It is true that a Scotsman found its way into the cottage by about lunch-time every day, but it was never read, and served only to light fires and wrap up fish and things of that sort. No letters were being forwarded, for they had left no address; they were isolated from the world. On the fatal morning Dick had, indeed, glanced at the paper, without however noticing anything out of the ordinary. It was only later when, alarmed by the rumours floating round the village shop, he came to examine his Scotsman more closely, that he found about half-way down the third column of one of the middle pages an admirable account of all that had been so tragically happening in the last twenty-four hours; he learnt with horror that *I* Europe was at war and that his country too had entered the arena. Even in the midst of his anguish of spirit he could not help admiring the Scotsman's splendid impassivity—no headlines, no ruffling of the traditional aristocratic dignity. Like Sir Rodolphe Brown in *Indiana*, he thought, with a sickly smile.

Dick determined to start for London at once. He felt that he must act, or at least create the illusion of action; he could not stay quietly where he was. It was arranged that he should set out that afternoon, while Millicent should follow a day or two later with the bulk of the luggage. The train which took him to Glasgow was slower than he thought it possible for any train to be. He tried to read, he tried to sleep; it was



no good. His nervous agitation was pitiable; he made little involuntary movements with his limbs, and every now and then the muscles of his face began twitching in a spasmodic and uncontrollable tic.

There were three hours to wait in Glasgow; he spent them in wandering about the streets. In the interminable summer twilight the inhabitants of Glasgow came forth into the open to amuse themselves; the sight almost made him sick. Was it possible that there should be human beings so numerous and so uniformly hideous? Small, deformed, sallow, they seemed malignantly ugly, as if on purpose.

The words they spoke were incomprehensible. He shuddered; it was an alien place—it was hell. The London train was crammed. Three gross Italians got into Dick's carriage, and after they had drunk and eaten with loud, unpleasant gusto, they prepared themselves for sleep by taking off their boots. Their feet smelt strongly ammoniac, like a cage of mice long uncleaned. Acutely awake, while the other occupants of the compartment enjoyed a happy unconsciousness, he looked at the huddled carcasses that surrounded him. The warmth and the smell of them was suffocating, and there came to his mind, with the nightmarish insistence of a fixed idea, the thought that every breath they exhaled was saturated with disease.

To be condemned to sit in a hot bath of consumption and syphilis—it was too horrible! The moment came at last when he could bear it no longer; he got up and went into the corridor. Standing there, or sitting sometimes for a few dreary minutes in the lavatory, he passed the rest of the night. The train roared along without a stop. The roaring became articulate: in the days of his childhood trains used to run to the tune of "Lancashire, to Lancashire, to fetch a pocket-handkercher; to Lancashire, to Lancashire . . ." But to-night the wheels were shouting insistently, a million times over, two words only—"the War, the War; the War, the War." He tried desperately to make them say something else, but they refused to recite Milton; they refused to go to Lancashire; they went on with their endless Tibetan litany—the War, the War, the War.

By the time he reached London, Dick was in a wretched state. His nerves were twittering and jumping within him; he felt like a walking aviary. The tic in his face had become more violent and persistent. As he stood in the station, waiting for a cab, he overheard a small child saying to its mother, "What's the matter with that man's face, mother?" "Sh-sh, darling," was the reply. "It's rude."

Dick turned and saw the child's big round eyes fixed with fascinated curiosity upon him, as though he were a kind of monster. He put his hand to his forehead and tried to stop the twitching of the muscles beneath the skin. It pained him to think that he had become a scarecrow for children.

Arrived at his flat, Dick drank a glass of brandy and lay down for a rest. He felt exhausted—ill. At half-past one he got up, drank some more brandy, and crept down into the street. It was intensely hot; the pavements reverberated the sunlight in a glare which hurt his eyes; they seemed to be in a state of grey incandescence. A nauseating smell of wetted dust rose from the roadway, along which a water-cart was slowly piddling its way. He realized suddenly that he ought not to have drunk all that brandy on an empty stomach; he was definitely rather tipsy. He had arrived at that state of drunkenness when the senses perceive things clearly, but do not transmit their knowledge to the understanding. He was painfully conscious of this division, and it needed all the power of his will to establish contact between his parted faculties.

It was as though he were, by a great and prolonged effort, keeping his brain pressed against the back of his eyes; as soon as he relaxed the pressure, the understanding part slipped back, the contact was broken, and he relapsed into a state bordering on imbecility. The actions which ordinarily one does by habit and without thinking, he had to perform consciously and voluntarily. He had to reason out the problem of walking—first the left foot forward, then the right. How ingeniously he worked his ankles and knees and hips! How delicately the thighs slid past one another!

He found a restaurant and sat there drinking coffee and trying to eat an omelette until he felt quite sober. Then he drove to the offices of the Weekly International to have a talk with Hyman, the editor. Hyman was sitting in his shirtsleeves, writing.

He lifted his head as Dick came in. "Greenow," he shouted delightedly, "we were all wondering what had become of you. We thought you'd joined the Army."

Dick shook his head, but did not speak; the hot stuffy smell of printer's ink and machinery combined with the atrocious reek of Hyman's Virginian cigarettes to make him feel rather faint. He sat down on the window-ledge, so as to be able to breathe an uncontaminated air.

"Well," he said at last, "what about it?"

"It's going to be hell."

"Did you suppose I thought it was going to be paradise?" Dick replied irritably. "Internationalism looks rather funny now, doesn't it?"

"I believe in it more than ever I did," cried Hyman. His face lit up with the fervour of his enthusiasm. It was a fine face, gaunt, furrowed, and angular, for all that he was barely thirty, looking as though it had been boldly chiselled from some hard stone. "The rest of the world may go mad; we'll try and keep our sanity. The time will come when they'll see we were right."

Hyman talked on. His passionate sincerity and singleness of purpose were an inspiration to Dick. He had always admired Hyman—with the reservations, of course, that the man was rather a fanatic and not so well-educated as he might have been—but to-day he admired him more than ever. He was even moved by that perhaps too facile eloquence which of old had been used to leave him cold. After promising to do a series of articles on international relations for the paper, Dick went home, feeling better than he had done all day.

He decided that he would begin writing his articles at once. He collected pens, paper, and ink and sat down in a businesslike way at his bureau. He remembered distinctly biting the tip of his penholder; it tasted rather bitter.

And then he realized he was standing in Regent Street, looking in at one of the windows of Liberty's.

For a long time he stood there quite still, absorbed to all appearance in the contemplation of a piece of peacock-blue fabric. But all his attention was concentrated within himself, not on anything outside. He was wondering—wondering how it came about that he was sitting at his writing-table at one moment, and standing, at the next, in Regent Street. He hadn't—the thought flashed upon him—he hadn't been drinking any more of that brandy, had he? No, he felt himself to be perfectly sober. He moved slowly away and continued to speculate as he walked.

At Oxford Circus he bought an evening paper. He almost screamed aloud when he saw that the date printed at the head of the page was August 12th. It was on August 7th that he had sat down at his writing-table to compose those articles. Five days ago, and he had not the faintest recollection of what had happened in those five days.

He made all haste back to the flat. Everything was in perfect order. He had evidently had a picnic lunch that morning—sardines, bread and jam, and raisins; the remains of it still covered the table. He opened the sideboard and took out the brandy bottle. Better make quite sure. He held it up to the light; it was more than three-quarters full. Not a drop had gone since the day of his return. If brandy wasn't the cause, then what was?

As he sat there thinking, he began in an absent-minded way to look at his evening paper. He read the news on the front page, then turned to the inner sheets. His eye fell on these words printed at the head of the column next the leading article:

"To the Women of the Empire. Thoughts in War-Time. By Pearl Bellairs." Underneath in brackets: "The first of a series of inspiring patriotic articles by Miss Bellairs, the well-known novelist." Dick groaned in agony. He saw in a flash what had happened to his five missing days. Pearl had got hold of them somehow, had trespassed upon his life out of her own reserved nocturnal existence. She had taken advantage of his agitated mental state to have a little fun in her own horrible way.

He picked up the paper once more and began to read Pearl's article. "Inspiring and patriotic": those were feeble words in which to describe Pearl's shrilly raucous chauvinism. And the style! Christ! to think that he was responsible, at least in part, for this. Responsible, for had not the words been written by his own hand and composed in some horrible bluebeard's chamber of his own brain? They had, there was no denying it. Pearl's literary atrocities had never much distressed him; he had long given up reading a word she wrote. Her bank balance was the only thing about her that interested him. But now she was invading the sanctities of his private life. She was trampling on his dearest convictions, denying his faith. She was a public danger. It was all too frightful.

He passed the afternoon in misery. Suicide or brandy seemed the only cures. Not very satisfactory ones, though. Towards evening an illuminating idea occurred to him. He would go and see Rogers. Rogers knew all about psychology—from books, at any rate: Freud, Jung, Morton Prince, and people like that. He used to try hypnotic experiments on his friends and even dabbled in amateur psychotherapy. Rogers might help him to lay the ghost of Pearl. He ate a hasty dinner and went to see Rogers in his Kensington rooms.

Rogers was sitting at a table with a great book open in front of him. The reading-lamp, which was the only light in the room, brightly illumined one side of the pallid, puffy, spectacled face, leaving the other in complete darkness, save for a little cedilla of golden light caught on the fold of flesh at the corner of his mouth. His huge shadow crossed the floor, began to climb the wall, and from the shoulders upwards mingled itself with the general darkness of the room.

"Good evening, Rogers," said Dick wearily. "I wish you wouldn't try and look like Rembrandt's f Christ at Emmaus' with these spectacular chiaroscuro effects."

Rogers gave vent to his usual nervous giggling laugh. "This is very nice of you to come and see me, Greenow."

"How's the Board of Trade?" Rogers was a Civil Servant by profession.

"Oh, business as usual, as the Daily Mail would say." Rogers laughed again as though he had made a joke.

After a little talk of things indifferent, Dick brought the conversation round to himself.

"I believe I'm getting a bit neurasthenic," he said. "Fits of depression, nervous pains, lassitude, anaemia of the will. I've come to you for professional advice. I want you to nose out my suppressed complexes, analyse me, dissect me. Will you do that for me?"

Rogers was evidently delighted. "I'll do my best," he said, with assumed modesty. "But I'm no good at the thing, so you mustn't expect much."

"I'm at your disposal," said Dick.

Rogers placed his guest in a large armchair. "Relax your muscles and think of nothing at all." Dick sat there flabby and abstracted while Rogers made his preparations. His apparatus consisted chiefly in a notebook and a stop-watch. He seated himself at the table.

"Now," he said solemnly, "I want you to listen to me. I propose to read out a list of words; after each of the words you must say the first word that comes into your head. The very first, mind, however foolish it may seem. And say it as soon as it crosses your mind; don't wait to think. I shall write down your answers and take the time between each question and reply."

Rogers cleared his throat and started.

"Mother." he said in a loud, clear voice. He always began his analyses with the family. For since the majority of kinks and complexes date from childhood, it is instructive to investigate the relations between the patient and those who surrounded him at an early age. "Mother."

"Dead," replied Dick immediately. He had scarcely known his mother.

"Father."

"Dull." One and a fifth seconds' interval.

"Sister." Rogers pricked his ears for the reply: his favourite incest-theory depended on it.

"Fabian Society," said Dick, after two seconds' interval. Rogers was a little disappointed. He was agreeably thrilled and excited by the answer he received to his next word: "Aunt."

The seconds passed, bringing nothing with them; and then at last there floated into Dick's mind the image of himself as a child, dressed in green velvet and lace, a perfect Bubbles boy, kneeling on Auntie Loo's lap and arranging a troop of lead soldiers on the horizontal projection of her corsage.

"Bosom," he said.

Rogers wrote down the word and underlined it. Six and three-fifths seconds: very significant. He turned now to the chapter of possible accidents productive of nervous shocks.

"Fire."

"Coal."

"Sea."

"Sick."

"Train."

"Smell."

And so on. Dull answers all the time. Evidently, nothing very catastrophic had ever happened to him. Now for a frontal attack on the fortress of sex itself.

"Women." There was rather a long pause, four seconds, and then Dick replied, "Novelist." Rogers was puzzled.

"Breast."

"Chicken." That was disappointing. Rogers could find no trace of those sinister moral censors, expurgators of impulse, suppressors of happiness. Perhaps the trouble lay in religion.

"Christ," he said.

Dick replied, "Amen," with the promptitude of a parish clerk.

"God."

Dick's mind remained a perfect blank. The word seemed to convey to him nothing at all. God, God. After a long time there appeared before his inward eye the face of a boy he had known at school and at Oxford, one Godfrey Wilkinson, called God for short.

"Wilkinson." Ten seconds and a fifth.

A few more miscellaneous questions, and the list was exhausted. Almost suddenly, Dick fell into a kind of hypnotic sleep. Rogers sat pensive in front of his notes; sometimes he consulted a text-book. At the end of half an hour he awakened Dick to tell him that he had had, as a child, consciously or unconsciously, a great Freudian passion for his aunt; that later on he had had another passion, almost religious in its fervour and intensity, for somebody called Wilkinson; and that the cause of all his present troubles lay in one or other of these episodes. If he liked, he (Rogers) would investigate the matter further with a view to establishing a cure.

Dick thanked him very much, thought it wasn't worth taking any more trouble, and went home.

## VII

MILLICENT was organizing a hospital supply depot, organizing indefatigably, from morning till night. It was October; Dick had not seen his sister since those first hours of the war in Scotland; he had had too much to think about these last months to pay attention to anyone but himself. To-day, at last, he decided that he would go and pay her a visit. Millicent had commandeered a large house in Kensington from a family of Jews, who were anxious to live down a deplorable name by a display of patriotism. Dick found her sitting there in her office— young, formidable, beautiful, severe—at a big desk covered with papers.

"Well," said Dick, "you're winning the war, I see."

"You, I gather, are not," Millicent replied.

"I believe in the things I always believed in."

"So do I."

"But in a different way, my dear—in a different way," said Dick sadly. There was a silence.

"Had we better quarrel?" Millicent asked meditatively.

"I think we can manage with nothing worse than a coolness—for the duration."

"Very well, a coolness."

"A smouldering coolness."

"Good," said Millicent briskly. "Let it start smouldering at once I must get on with my work. Good-bye, Dick. God bless you. Let me know sometimes how you get on."

"No need to ask how you get on," said Dick with a smile, as he shook her hand. "I know by experience that you always get on, only too well, ruthlessly well."

He went out. Millicent returned to her letters with concentrated ardour; a frown puckered the skin between her eyebrows.

Probably, Dick reflected as he made his way down the stairs, he wouldn't see her again for a year or so. He couldn't honestly say that it affected him much. Other people became daily more and more like ghosts, unreal, thin, vaporous; while every hour the consciousness of himself grew more intense and all-absorbing. The only person who was more than a shadow to him now was Hyman of the Weekly International. In those first horrible months of the war, when he was wrestling with Pearl Bellairs and failing to cast her out, it was Hyman who kept him from melancholy and suicide. Hyman made him write a long article every week, dragged him into the office to do sub-editorial work, kept him so busy that there were long hours when he had no time to brood over his own insoluble problems.

And his enthusiasm was so passionate and sincere that sometimes even Dick was infected by it; he could believe that life was worth living and the cause worth fighting for. But not for long; for the devil would return, insistent and untiring. Pearl Bellairs was greedy for life; she was not content with her short midnight hours; she wanted the freedom of whole days. And whenever Dick was overtired, or ill or nervous, she leapt upon him and stamped him out of existence, till enough strength came back for him to reassert his personality. And the articles she wrote! The short stories! The recruiting songs! Dick dared not read them; they were terrible, terrible.

#### VIII

THE months passed by. The longer the war lasted, the longer it seemed likely to last. Dick supported life somehow. Then came the menace of conscription. The Weekly International organized a great anti-conscription campaign, in which Hyman and Dick were the leading spirits. Dick was almost happy. This kind of active work was new to him and he enjoyed it, finding it exciting and at the same time sedative. For a self-absorbed and brooding mind, pain itself is an anodyne. He enjoyed his incessant journeys, his speechmaking to queer audiences in obscure halls and chapels; he liked talking with earnest members of impossible Christian sects, pacifists who took not the faintest interest in the welfare of humanity at large, but were wholly absorbed in the salvation of their own souls and in keeping their consciences clear from the faintest trace of blood-guiltiness. He enjoyed the sense of power which came to him, when he roused the passion of the crowd to enthusiastic assent, or breasted the storm of antagonism. He enjoyed everything—even getting a bloody nose from a patriot hired and intoxicated by a great evening paper to break up one of his meetings.

It all seemed tremendously exciting and important at the time. And yet when, in quiet moments, he came to look back on his days of activity, they seemed utterly empty and futile. What was left of them? Nothing, nothing at all. The momentary intoxication had died away, the stirred ant's-nest had gone back to normal life. Futility of action! There was nothing permanent, or decent, or worth while, except thought.

And of that he was almost incapable now. His mind, when it was not occupied by the immediate and actual, turned inward morbidly upon itself. He looked at the manuscript of his book and wondered whether he would ever be able to go on with it. It seemed doubtful. Was he, then, condemned to pass the rest of his existence' enslaved to the beastliness and futility of mere quotidian action? And even in action his powers were limited; if he exerted himself too much—and the limits of fatigue were soon reached— Pearl Bellairs, watching perpetually like a hungry tigress

for her opportunity, leapt upon him and took possession of his conscious faculties.

And then, it might be for a matter of hours or of days, he was lost, blotted off the register of living souls, while she performed, with intense and hideous industry, her self-appointed task. More than once his anti-conscription campaigns had been cut short and he himself had suddenly disappeared from public life, to return with the vaguest stories of illness or private affairs—stories that made his friends shake their heads and wonder which it was among the noble army of vices that poor Dick Greenow was so mysteriously addicted to. Some said drink, some said women, some said opium, and some hinted at things infinitely darker and more horrid. Hyman asked him point-blank what it was, one morning when he had returned to the office after three days' unaccountable absence.

Dick blushed painfully. "It isn't anything you think," he said.

"What is it, then?" Hyman insisted.

"I can't tell you," Dick replied desperately and in torture, "but I swear it's nothing discreditable. I beg you won't ask me any more."

Hyman had to pretend to be satisfied with that.

## IX

A TACTICAL move in the anti-conscription campaign was the foundation of a club, a place where people with pacific or generally advanced ideas could congregate.

"A club like this would soon be the intellectual centre of London," said Hyman, ever sanguine.

Dick shrugged his shoulders. He had a wide experience of pacifists.

"If you bring people together," Hyman went on, "they encourage one another to be bold — strengthen one another's faith."

"Yes," said Dick dyspeptically. "When they're in a herd, they can believe that they're much more numerous and important than they really are."

"But, man, they are numerous, they are important!" Hyman shouted and gesticulated.

Dick allowed himself to be persuaded into an optimism which he knew to be ill-founded. The consolations of religion do not console the less efficaciously for being illusory.

It was a longtime before they could think of a suitable name for their club. Dick suggested that it should be called the Sclopis Club. "Such a lovely name," he explained. "Sclopis—Sclopis; it tastes precious in the mouth." But the rest of the committee would not hear of it; they wanted a name that meant something. One lady suggested that it should be called the Everyman Club; Dick objected with passion. "It makes one shudder," he said. The lady thought it was a beautiful and uplifting name, but as Mr. Greenow was so strongly opposed, she wouldn't press the claims of Everyman. Hyman wanted to call it the Pacifist Club, but that was judged too provocative. Finally, they agreed to call it the Nov-embriest Club, because it was November and they could think of no better title.

The inaugural dinner of the Novembriest Club was held at Piccolomini's Restaurant. Piccolomini is in, but not exactly of, Soho, for it is a cross between a Soho restaurant and a Corner House, a hybrid which combines the worst qualities of both parents—the dirt and inefficiency of Soho, the size and vulgarity of Lyons. There is a large upper chamber reserved for agapes. Here, one wet and dismal winter's evening, the Novembriests assembled.

Dick arrived early, and from his place near the door he watched his fellow-members come in. He didn't much like the look of them. "Middle class" was what he found himself thinking; and he had to admit, when his conscience reproached him for it, that he did not like the middle classes, the lower middle classes, the lower classes. He was, there was no denying it, a bloodsucker at heart—cultured and intelligent, perhaps, but a bloodsucker none the less.

The meal began. Everything about it was profoundly suspect. The spoons were made of some pale pinchbeck metal, very light and flimsy; one expected them to melt in the soup, or one would have done, if the soup had been even tepid. The food was thick and greasy. Dick wondered what it really looked like under the concealing sauces. The wine left an indescribable taste that lingered on the palate, like the savour of brass or of charcoal fumes.

From childhood upwards Dick had suffered from the intensity of his visceral reactions to emotion. Fear and shyness were apt to make him feel very sick, and disgust produced in him a sensation of intolerable queasiness. Disgust had seized upon his mind to-night. He grew paler with the arrival of every dish, and the wine, instead of cheering him, made him feel much worse. His neighbours to right and left ate with revolting heartiness. On one side sat Miss Gibbs, garishly dressed in ill-assorted colours that might be called futuristic; on the other was Mr. Something in pince-nez, rather ambrosial about the hair. Mr. Something was a poet, or so the man who introduced them had said. Miss Gibbs was just an ordinary member of the Intelligentsia, like the rest of us.

The Lower Classes, the Lower Classes...

"Are you interested in the Modern Theatre?" asked Mr. Something in his mellow voice. Too mellow—oh, much too mellow 1

"Passably," said Dick.

"So am I," said Mr. Thingummy. "I am a vice-president of the Craftsmen's League of Joy, which perhaps you may have heard of."

Dick shook his head; this was going to be terrible.

"The objects of the Craftsmen's League of Joy," Mr. Thingummy continued, "or rather, one of the objects— for it has many—is to establish Little Theatres in every town and village in England, where simple, uplifting, beautiful plays might be acted. The people have no joy."

"They have the cinema and the music hall," said Dick. He was filled with a sudden senseless irritation. "They get all the joy they want out of the jokes of the comics and the legs of the women."

"Ah, but that is an impure joy," Mr. What's-his-name protested.

"Impure purple, Herbert Spenser's favourite colour," flashed irrelevantly through Dick's brain.

"Well, speaking for myself," he said aloud, "I know I get more joy out of a good pair of legs than out of any number of uplifting plays of the kind they'd be sure to act in your little theatres. The people ask for sex and you give them a stone."

How was it, he wondered, that the right opinions in the mouths of these people sounded so horribly cheap and wrong? They degraded what was noble; beauty became fly-blown at their touch. Their intellectual tradition was all wrong. Lower classes, it always came back to that. When they talked about war and the International, Dick felt a hot geyser of chauvinism bubbling up in his breast. In order to say nothing stupid, he refrained from speaking at all. Miss Gibbs switched the conversation on to art. She admired all the right people. Dick told her that he thought Sir Luke



Fildes to be the best modern artist. But his irritation knew no bounds when he found out a little later that Mr. Something had read the poems of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke. He felt inclined to say, "You may have read them, but of course you can't understand or appreciate them."  
Lower Classes . . .

How clear and splendid were the ideas of right and justice! If only one could filter away the contaminating human element. . . . Reason compelled him to believe in democracy, in internationalism, in revolution; morality demanded justice for the oppressed. But neither morality nor reason would ever bring him to take pleasure in the company of democrats or revolutionaries, or make him find the oppressed, individually, any less antipathetic.

At the end of this nauseating meal, Dick was called on to make a speech. Rising to his feet, he began stammering and hesitating; he felt like an imbecile. Then suddenly inspiration came. The great religious ideas of Justice and Democracy swept like a rushing wind through his mind, purging it of all insignificant human and personal preferences or dislikes. He was filled with pentecostal fire. He spoke in a white heat of intellectual passion, dominating his hearers, infecting them with his own high enthusiasm. He sat down amid cheers. Miss Gibbs and Mr. Thingummy leaned towards him with flushed, shining faces.

"That was wonderful, Mr. Greenow. I've never heard anything like it," exclaimed Miss Gibbs, with genuine, unflattering enthusiasm. Mr. Thing said something poetical about a trumpet-call. Dick looked from one to the other with blank and fishy eyes. So it was for these creatures he had been speaking!  
Good God!...

X

DICK'S life was now a monotonous nightmare. The same impossible situation was repeated again and again. If it were not for the fact that he knew Pearl Bellairs to be entirely devoid of humour, Dick might have suspected that she was having a little quiet fun with him, so grotesque were the anomalies of his double life. Grotesque, but dreary, intolerably dreary. Situations which seem, in contemplation, romantic and adventurous have a habit of proving, when actually experienced, as dull and daily as a bank clerk's routine. When you read about it, a Jekyll and Hyde existence sounds delightfully amusing; but when you live through it, as Dick found to his cost, it is merely a boring horror.

In due course Dick was called up by the Military Authorities. He pleaded conscientious objection. The date of his appearance before the Tribunal was fixed. Dick did not much relish the prospect of being a Christian martyr; it seemed an anachronism. However, it would have to be done. He would be an absolutist; there would be a little buffeting, spitting, and scourging, followed by an indefinite term of hard labour. It was all very unpleasant. But nothing could be much more unpleasant than life- as he was now living it. He didn't even mind very much if they killed him. Being or not being-the alternatives left him equally cold.

The days that preceded his appearance before the Tribunal were busy days, spent in consulting solicitors, preparing speeches, collecting witnesses. "We'll give you a good run for your money," said Hyman. "I hope they'll be feeling a little uncomfortable by the time they have done with you, Greenow."

"Not nearly so uncomfortable as I shall be feeling," Dick replied, with a slightly melancholy smile.

The South Marylebone Tribunal sat in a gloomy and fetid chamber in a police station. Dick, who was extremely sensitive to his surroundings, felt his fatigue and nervousness perceptibly increase as he entered the room. Five or six pitiable creatures with paralytic mothers or one-man businesses were briskly disposed of, and then it was Dick's turn to present himself before his judges. He looked round the court, nodded to Hyman, smiled at Millicent, who had so far thawed their wartime coolness as to come and see him condemned, caught other friendly eyes. It was as though he were about to be electrocuted. The preliminaries passed off; he found himself answering questions in a loud, clear voice. Then the Military Representative began to loom horribly large. The Military Representative was a solicitor's clerk disguised as a lieutenant in the Army Service Corps.

He spoke in an accent that was more than genteel; it was rich, noble, aristocratic. Dick tried to remember where he had heard a man speaking like that before. He had it now. Once when he had been at Oxford after term was over. He had gone to see the Varieties, which come twice nightly and with cheap seats to the theatre after the undergraduates have departed. One of the turns had been a Nut, a descendant of the bloods and Champagne Charlies of earlier days. A young man in an alpaca evening suit and a monocle. He had danced, sung a song, spoken some patter. Sitting in the front row of the stalls, Dick had been able to see the large, swollen, tuberculous glands in his neck. They wobbled when he danced or sang. Fascinatingly horrible, those glands; and the young man, how terribly, painfully pathetic. . . . When the Military Representative spoke, he could hear again that wretched Nut's rendering of the Eton and Oxford voice. It unnerved him.

"What is your religion, Mr. Greenow?" the Military Representative asked. Fascinated, Dick looked to see whether he too had tuberculous glands. The Lieutenant had to repeat his question sharply. When he was irritated, his voice went back to its more natural nasal twang. Dick recovered his presence of mind.

"I have no religion," he answered.

"But, surely, sir, you must have some kind of religion."

"Well, if I must, if it's in the Army Regulations, you had better put me down as an Albigensian, or a Bogomile, or, better still, as a Manichean. One can't find oneself in this court without possessing a profound sense of the reality and active existence of a power of evil equal to, if not greater than, the power of good."

"This is rather irrelevant, Mr. Greenow," said the Chairman.

"I apologize." Dick bowed to the court.

"But if," the Military Representative continued—"if your objection is not religious, may I ask what it is?"

"It is based on a belief that all war is wrong, and that the solidarity of the human race can only be achieved in practice by protesting against war, wherever it appears and in whatever form."

"Do you disbelieve in force, Mr. Greenow?"

"You might as well ask me if I disbelieve in gravitation. Of course, I believe in force: it is a fact."

"What would you do if you saw a German violating your sister?" said the Military Representative, putting his deadliest question.

"Perhaps I had better ask my sister first," Dick replied. "She is sitting just behind you in the court."

The Military Representative was covered with confusion. He coughed and blew his nose. The case dragged on. Dick made a speech; the Military Representative made a speech; the Chairman made a speech. The atmosphere of the court-room grew fouler and fouler. Dick sickened and suffocated in the second-hand air. An immense lassitude took possession of him; he did not care about anything—about the cause, about himself, about Hyman or Millicent or Pearl Bellairs. He was just tired. Voices buzzed and drawled in his ears—sometimes his own voice, sometimes other people's. He did not listen to what they said. He was tired—tired of all this idiotic talk, tired of the heat and smell. . . .

Tired of picking up very thistly wheat sheaves and propping them up in stooks on the yellow stubble. For that was what, suddenly, he found himself doing. Overhead the sky expanded in endless steppes of blue-hot cobalt. The pungent prickly dust of the dried sheaves plucked at his nose with imminent sneezes, made his eyes smart and water. In the distance a reaping-machine whirred and hummed. Dick looked blankly about him, wondering where he was. He was thankful, at any rate, not to be in that sweltering courtroom; and it was a mercy, too, to have escaped from the odious gentility of the Military Representative's accent. And, after all, there were worse occupations than harvesting.

Gradually, and bit by bit, Dick pieced together his history. He had, it seemed, done a cowardly and treacherous thing: deserted in the face of the enemy, betrayed his cause. He had a bitter letter from Hyman. "Why couldn't you have stuck it out? I thought it was in you. You've urged others to go to prison for their beliefs, but you get out of it yourself by sneaking off to a soft alternative service job on a friend's estate. You've brought discredit on the whole movement." It was very painful, but what could he answer? The truth was so ridiculous that nobody could be expected to swallow it. And yet the fact was that he had been as much startled to find himself working at Crome as anyone. It was all Pearl's doing.

He had found in his room a piece of paper covered with the large, flamboyant feminine writing which he knew to be Pearl's. It was evidently the rough copy of an article on the delights of being a land-girl: dewy dawns, rosy children's faces, quaint cottages, mossy thatch, milkmaids, healthy exercise. Pearl was being a land-girl; but he could hardly explain the fact to Hyman. Better not attempt to answer him. Dick hated the manual labour of the farm. It was hard, monotonous, dirty, and depressing. It inhibited almost completely the functions of his brain. He was unable to think about anything at all; there was no opportunity to do anything but feel uncomfortable. God had not made him a Caliban to scatter ordure over fields, to pick up ordure from cattle-yards. His role was Prospero.

"Ban, Ban, Caliban"—it was to that derisive measure that he pumped water, sawed wood, mowed grass; it was a march for his slow, clotted feet as he followed the dung-carts up the winding lanes. "Ban, Ban, Caliban—Ban, Ban, Ban . . ."

"Oh, that bloody old fool Tolstoy," was his profoundest reflection on a general subject in three months of manual labour and communion with mother earth.

He hated the work, and his fellow-workers hated him. They mistrusted him because they could not understand him, taking the silence of his overpowering shyness for arrogance and the contempt of one class for

another. Dick longed to become friendly with them. His chief trouble was that he did not know what to say. At meal-times he would spend long minutes in cudgelling his brains for some suitable remark to make. And even if he thought of something good, like—"It looks as though it were going to be a good year for roots," he somehow hesitated to speak, feeling that such a remark, uttered in his exquisitely modulated tones, would be, somehow, a little ridiculous.

It was the sort of thing that ought to be said rustically, with plenty of Z's and long vowels, in the manner of William Barnes. In the end, for lack of courage to act the yokel's part, he generally remained silent. While the others were eating their bread and cheese with laughter and talk, he sat like the skeleton at the feast—a skeleton that longed to join in the revelry, but had not the power to move its stony jaws. On the rare occasions that he actually succeeded in uttering something, the labourers looked at one another in surprise and alarm, as though it were indeed a skeleton that had spoken.

He was not much more popular with the other inhabitants of the village. Often, in the evenings, as he was returning from work, the children would pursue him, yelling. With the unerringly cruel instinct of the young they had recognized in him a fit object for abuse and lapidation. An outcast member of another class, from whom that class in casting him out had withdrawn its protection, an alien in speech and habit, a criminal, as their zealous schoolmaster lost no opportunity of reminding them, guilty of the blackest treason against God and man—he was the obviously predestined victim of childish persecution. When stones began to fly, and dung and precocious obscenity, he bowed his head and pretended not to notice that anything unusual was happening. It was difficult, however, to look quite dignified.

There were occasional short alleviations to the dreariness of his existence. One day, when he was engaged in his usual occupation of manuring, a familiar figure suddenly appeared along the footpath through the field. It was Mrs. Cravister. She was evidently staying at the big house; one of the Manorial dachshunds preceded her. He took off his cap. "Mr. Greenow!" she exclaimed, coming to a halt.. "Ah, what a pleasure to see you again! Working on the land: so Tolstoyan. But I trust it doesn't affect your aesthetic ideas in the same way as it did his. Fifty peasants singing together is music; but Bach's chromatic fantasia is mere gibbering incomprehensibility."

"I don't do this for pleasure," Dick explained. "It's hard labour, meted out to the Conscientious Objector."

"Of course, of course," said Mrs. Cravister, raising her hand to arrest any further explanation. "I had forgotten. A conscientious objector, a Bible student. I remember how passionately devoted you were, even at school, to the Bible."

She closed her eyes and nodded her head several times.

"On the contrary" Dick began; but it was no good. Mrs. Cravister had determined that he should be a Bible student and it was no use gainsaying her. She cut him short.

"Dear me, the Bible. . . . What a style! That alone would prove it to have been directly inspired. You remember how Mahomet appealed to the beauty of his style as a sign of his divine mission. Why has nobody done the same for the Bible? It remains for you, Mr. Greenow, to do so. You will write a book about it. How I envy you! "

"The style is very fine," Dick ventured, "but don't you think the matter occasionally leaves something to be desired?"

"The matter is nothing," cried Mrs. Cravister, making a gesture that seemed to send all meaning flying like a pinch of salt along the wind—"nothing at all. It's the style that counts. Think of Madame Bovary."  
"I certainly will," said Dick.

Mrs. Cravister held out her hand. "Good-bye. Yes, I certainly envy you. I envy you your innocent labour and your incessant study of that most wonderful of books. If I were asked, Mr. Greenow, what book I should take with me to a desert island, what single solitary book, I should certainly say the Bible, though, indeed, there are moments when I think I should choose Tristram Shandy. Good-bye."

Mrs. Cravister sailed slowly away. The little brown basset trotted ahead, straining his leash. One had the impression of a great ship being towed into harbour by a diminutive tug.

Dick was cheered by this glimpse of civilization and humanity. The unexpected arrival, one Saturday afternoon, of Millicent was not quite such an unmixed pleasure. "I've come to see how you're getting on," she announced, "and to put your cottage straight and make you comfortable."  
"Very kind of you," said Dick. He didn't want his cottage put straight.

Millicent was in the Ministry of Munitions now, controlling three thousand female clerks with unsurpassed efficiency. Dick looked at her curiously, as she talked that evening of her doings. "To think I should have a sister like that," he said to himself. She was terrifying.

"You do enjoy bullying other people!" he exclaimed at last. "You've found your true vocation. One sees now how the new world will be arranged after the war. The women will continue to do all the bureaucratic jobs, all that entails routine and neatness and interfering with other people's affairs. And man, it is to be hoped, will be left free for the important statesman's business, free for creation and thought. He will stay at home and give proper education to the children, too. He is fit to do these things, because his mind is disinterested and detached. It's an arrangement which will liberate all man's best energies for their proper uses. The only flaw I can see in the system is that you women will be so fiendishly and ruthlessly tyrannical in your administration."

"You can't seriously expect me to argue with you," said Millicent.

"No, please don't. I am not strong enough. My dung-carrying has taken the edge off all my reasoning powers."

Millicent spent the next morning in completely rearranging Dick's furniture. By lunch-time every article in the cottage was occupying a new position.

"That's much nicer," said Millicent, surveying her work and seeing that it was good.

There was a knock at the door. Dick opened it and was astonished to find Hyman.

"I just ran down to see how you were getting on," he explained.

"I'm getting on very well since my sister rearranged my furniture," said Dick. He found it pleasing to have an opportunity of exercising his long unused powers of malicious irony. This was very mild, but with practice he would soon come on to something more spiteful and amusing.

Hyman shook hands with Millicent, scowling as he did so. He was irritated that she was there; he wanted to talk with Dick alone. He turned his back on her and began addressing Dick.

"Well," he said, "I haven't seen you since the fatal day. How is the turnip-hoeing? "

"Pretty beastly," said Dick.

"Better than doing hard labour in a gaol, I suppose? "

Dick nodded his head wearily, foreseeing what must inevitably come.

"You've escaped that all right," Hyman went on.

"Yes; you ought to be thankful," Millicent chimed in.

"I still can't understand why you did it, Greenow. It was a blow to me. I didn't expect it of you." Hyman spoke with feeling. "It was desertion; it was treason."

"I agree," said Millicent judicially. "He ought to have stuck to his principles."

"He ought to have stuck to what was right, oughtn't he, Miss Greenow?"

Hyman turned towards Millicent, pleased at finding someone who shared his views.

"Of course," she replied— "of course. I totally disagree with you about what is right. But if he believed it right not to fight, he certainly ought to have gone to prison for his belief."

Dick lit a pipe with an air of nonchalance. He tried to disguise the fact that he was feeling extremely uncomfortable under these two pairs of merciless, accusing eyes.

"To my mind, at any rate," said Millicent, "your position seems quite illogical and untenable, Dick."

It was a relief to be talked to and not about.

"I'm sorry about that," said Dick rather huskily—not a very intelligent remark, but what was there to say?

"Of course, it's illogical and untenable, Your sister is quite right."

Hyman banged the table.

"I can't understand what induced you to take it up "

"After you'd said you were going to be one of the absolutes," cried

Hyman, interrupting and continuing Millicent's words.

"Why? " said Millicent.

"Why, why, why?" Hyman echoed.

Dick, who had been blowing out smoke at a great rate, put down his pipe. The taste of the tobacco was making him feel rather sick. "I wish you would stop," he said wearily. "If I gave you the real reasons, you wouldn't believe me. And I can't invent any others that would be in the least convincing."

"I believe the real reason is that you were afraid of prison."

Dick leaned back in his chair and shut his eyes. He did not mind being insulted now; it made no difference. Hyman and Millicent were still talking about him, but what they said did not interest him; he scarcely listened.

They went back to London together in the evening.

"Very intelligent woman, your sister," said Hyman just before they were starting. "Pity she's not on the right side about the war and so forth." Four weeks later Dick received a letter in which Hyman announced that he and Millicent had decided to get married.

"I am happy to think," Dick wrote in his congratulatory reply, "that it was I who brought you together."

He smiled as he read through the sentence; that was what the Christian martyr might say to the two lions who had scraped acquaintance over his bones in the amphitheatre.

One warm afternoon in the summer of 1918, Mr. Hobart, Clerk to the Wibley Town Council, was disturbed in the midst of his duties by the sudden entry into his office of a small dark man, dressed in corduroys and gaiters, but not having the air of a genuine agricultural labourer.

"What may I do for you?" inquired Mr. Hobart.

"I have come to inquire about my vote," said the stranger.

"Aren't you already registered?"

"Not yet. You see, it isn't long since the Act was passed giving us the vote."

Mr. Hobart stared.

"I don't quite follow," he said.

"I may not look it," said the stranger, putting his head on one side and looking arch—"I may not look it, but I will confess to you, Mr.—er—Mr.—er "

"Hobart."

"Mr. Hobart, that I am a woman of over thirty."

Mr. Hobart grew visibly paler. Then, assuming a forced smile and speaking as one speaks to a child or a spoiled animal, he said:

"I see — I see. Over thirty, dear me."

He looked at the bell, which was over by the fireplace at the other side of the room, and wondered how he should ring it without rousing the maniac's suspicions.

"Over thirty," the stranger went on. "You know my woman's secret. I am Miss Pearl Bellairs, the novelist. Perhaps you have read some of my books. Or are you too busy?"

"Oh no, I've read several," Mr. Hobart replied, smiling more and more brightly and speaking in even more coaxing and indulgent tones.

"Then we're friends already, Mr. Hobart. Anyone who knows my books, knows me. My whole heart is in them. Now, you must tell me all about my poor little vote. I shall be very patriotic with it when the time comes to use it."

Mr. Hobart saw his opportunity.

"Certainly, Miss Bellairs," he said. "I will ring for my clerk and we'll—er—we'll take down the details."

He got up, crossed the room, and rang the bell with violence.

"I'll just go and see that he brings the right books," he added, and darted to the door. Once outside in the passage, he mopped his face and heaved a sigh of relief. That had been a narrow shave, by Jove. A loony in the office—dangerous-looking brute, too.

On the following day Dick woke up and found himself in a bare whitewashed room, sparsely furnished with a little iron bed, a washstand, a chair, and table. He looked round him in surprise. Where had he got to this time? He went to the door and tried to open it; it was locked. An idea entered his mind: he was in barracks somewhere; the Military Authorities must have got hold of him somehow in spite of his exemption certificate. Or perhaps Pearl had gone and enlisted. . . . He turned next to the window, which was barred. Outside, he could see a courtyard, filled, not with soldiers, as he had expected, but a curious motley crew of individuals, some men and some women, wandering hither and thither with an air of complete aimlessness. Very odd, he thought—very odd.

Beyond the courtyard, on the farther side of a phenomenally high wall, ran a railway line and beyond it a village, roofed with tile and thatch, and a tall church spire in the midst. Dick looked carefully at the spire. Didn't he know it? Surely—yes, those imbricated copper plates with which it was covered, that gilded ship that served as wind vane, the little gargoyles at the corner of the tower—there could be no doubt; it was Belbury church. Bel-bury—that was where the . . . No, no; he wouldn't believe it. But looking down again into that high-walled courtyard, full of those queer, aimless folk, he was forced to admit it.

The County Asylum stands at Belbury. He had often noticed it from the train, a huge, gaunt building of sausage-coloured brick, standing close to the railway, on the opposite side of the line to Belbury village and church. He remembered how, the last time he had passed in the train, he had wondered what they did in the asylum. He had regarded it then as one of those mysterious, unapproachable places, like Lhassa or a Ladies' Lavatory, into which he would never penetrate.

And now, here he was, looking out through the bars, like any other madman. It was all Pearl's doing, as usual. If there had been no bars, he would have thrown himself out of the window. He sat down on his bed and began to think about what he should do. He would have to be very sane and show them by his behaviour and speech that he was no more mad than the commonalty of mankind. He would be extremely dignified about it all. If a warder or a doctor or somebody came in to see him, he would rise to his feet and say in the calmest and severest tones: "May I ask, pray, why I am detained here and upon whose authority?" That ought to stagger them. He practised that sentence, and the noble attitude with which he would accompany it, for the best part of an hour.

Then, suddenly, there was the sound of a key in the lock. He hastily sat down again on the bed. A brisk little man of about forty, clean shaven and with pince-nez, stepped into the room, followed by a nurse and a warder in uniform. The doctor! Dick's heart was beating with absurd violence; he felt like an amateur actor at the first performance of an imperfectly rehearsed play. He rose, rather unsteadily, to his feet, and in a voice that quavered a little with an emotion he could not suppress, began:

"Pray I ask, may . . ."

Then, realizing that something had gone wrong, he hesitated, stammered, and came to a pause.

The doctor turned to the nurse.

"Did you hear that?" he asked. "He called me May. He seems to think everybody's a woman, not only himself."

Turning to Dick with a cheerful smile, he went on:

"Sit down, Miss Bellairs, please sit down."

It was too much. Dick burst into tears, flung himself upon the bed, and buried his face in the pillow. The doctor looked at him as he lay there sobbing, his whole body shaken and convulsed.

"A bad case, I fear."

And the nurse nodded.

For the next three days Dick refused to eat. It was certainly unreasonable, but it seemed the only way of making a protest. On the fourth day the doctor signed a certificate to the effect that forcible feeding had become necessary. Accompanied by two warders and a nurse, he entered Dick's room.

"Now, Miss Bellairs," he said, making a last persuasive appeal, "do have a little of this nice soup. We have come to have lunch with you."

"I refuse to eat," said Dick icily, "as a protest against my unlawful detention in this place. I am as sane as any of you here."

"Yes, yes." The doctor's voice was soothing. He made a sign to the warders. One was very large and stout, the other wiry, thin, sinister, like the second murderer in a play. They closed in on Dick.



"I won't eat and I won't be made to eat!" Dick cried. "Let me go!" he shouted at the fat warder, who had laid a hand on his shoulder. His temper was beginning to rise.

"Now, do behave yourself," said the fat warder. "It ain't a bit of use kicking up a row. Now, do take a little of this lovely soup," he added wheedlingly.

"Let me go! "Dick screamed again, all his self-control gone. "I will not let myself be bullied."

He began to struggle violently. The fat warder put an arm round his shoulders, as though he were an immense mother comforting an irritable child. Dick felt himself helpless; the struggle had quite exhausted him; he was weaker than he had any idea of. He began kicking the fat man's shins; it was the only way he could still show fight.

"Temper, temper," remonstrated the warder, more motherly than ever. The thin warder stooped down, slipped a strap round the kicking legs, and drew it tight. Dick could move no more. His fury found vent in words—vain, abusive, filthy words, such as he had not used since he was a schoolboy.

"Let me go," he screamed—"let me go, you devils! You beasts, you swine! beasts and swine!" he howled again and again.

They soon had him securely strapped in a chair, his head held back ready for the doctor and his horrible-looking tubes. They were pushing the horrors up his nostrils. He coughed and choked, spat, shouted inarticulately, retched. It was like having a spoon put on your tongue and being told to say A-a-h, but worse; it was like jumping into the river and getting water up your nose—how he had always hated that!—only much worse. It was like almost everything unpleasant, only much, much worse than all. He exhausted himself struggling against his utterly immovable bonds. They had to carry him to his bed, he was so weak.

He lay there, unmoving—for he was unable to move—staring at the ceiling. He felt as though he were floating on air, unsupported, solid no longer; the sensation was not unpleasant. For that reason he refused to let his mind dwell upon it; he would think of nothing that was not painful, odious, horrible. He thought about the torture which had just been inflicted on him and of the monstrous injustice of which he was a victim. He thought of the millions who had been and were still being slaughtered in the war; he thought of their pain, all the countless separate pains of them; pain incommunicable, individual, beyond the reach of sympathy; infinities of pain pent within frail finite bodies; pain without sense or object, bringing with it no hope and no redemption, futile, unnecessary, stupid. In one supreme apocalyptic moment he saw, he felt the universe in all its horror.

They forcibly fed him again the following morning and again on the day after. On the fourth day pneumonia, the result of shock, complicated by acute inflammation of the throat and pleura, set in. The fever and pain gained ground. Dick had not the strength to resist their ravages, and his condition grew hourly worse. His mind, however, continued to work clearly—too clearly. It occurred to him that he might very likely die. He asked for pencil and paper to be brought him, and putting forth all the little strength he had left, he began to make his testament.

"I am perfectly sane," he wrote at the top of the page, and underlined the words three times.

"I am confined here by the most intol. injust." As soon as he began, he realized how little time and strength were left him; it was a waste to finish the long words. "They are killing me for my opins. I regard this

war and all wars as utter bad. Capitalists' war. The devils will be smashed sooner later. Wish I could help. But it won't make any difference," he added on a new line and as though by an afterthought. "World will always be hell. Cap. or Lab., Engl. or Germ.— all beasts. One in a mill, is GOOD. I wasn't. Selfish intellect. Perhaps Pearl Bellairs better. If die, send corp. to hosp. for anatomy. Useful for once in my life! "

Quite suddenly, he lapsed into delirium. The clear lucidity of his mind became troubled. The real world disappeared from before his eyes, and in its place he saw a succession of bright, unsteady visions created by his sick fantasy. Scenes from his childhood, long forgotten, bubbled up and disappeared. Unknown, hideous faces crowded in upon him; old friends revisited him. He was living in a bewildering mixture of the familiar and the strange. And all the while, across this changing unsubstantial world, there hurried a continual, interminable procession of dromedaries—countless high-domed beasts, with gargoyle faces and stiff legs and necks that bobbed as though on springs. Do what he could, he was unable to drive them away. He lost his temper with the brutes at last, struck at them, shouted; but in vain. The room rang with his cries of, "Get away, you beasts.

Bloody humps. None of your nonconformist faces here." And while he was yelling and gesticulating (with his left hand only), his right hand was still busily engaged in writing. The words were clear and legible; the sentences consecutive and eminently sane. Dick might rave, but Pearl Bellairs remained calm and in full possession of her deplorable faculties. And what was Pearl doing with her busy pencil, while Dick, like a frenzied Betsy Trotwood, shouted at the trespassing camels? The first thing she did was to scratch out all that poor Dick had said about the war. Underneath it she wrote:

"We shall not sheathe the sword, which we have not lightly . . ." And then, evidently finding that memorable sentence too long, particularly so since the addition of Poland and Czecho-Slovakia to the list of Allies, she began again.

"We are fighting for honour and the defence of Small Nationalities. Plucky little Belgium! We went into the war with clean hands." A little of Pearl's thought seemed at this moment to have slopped over into Dick's mind; for he suddenly stopped abusing his dromedaries and began to cry out in the most pitiable fashion, "Clean hands, clean hands! I can't get mine clean. I can't, I can't, I can't. I contaminate everything." And he kept rubbing his left hand against the bedclothes and putting his fingers to his nose, only to exclaim, "Ugh, they still stink of goat!" and then to start rubbing again.

The right hand wrote on unperturbed. "No peace with the Hun until he is crushed and humiliated. Self-respecting Britons will refuse to shake a Hunnish hand for many a long year after the war. No more German waiters. Intern the Forty-Seven Thousand Hidden Hands in High Places! " At this point, Pearl seemed to have been struck by a new idea. She took a clean page and began:

"To the Girls of England. I am a woman and proud of the fact. But, girls, I blushed for my sex to-day when I read in the papers that there had been cases of English girls talking to Hun prisoners, and not only talking to them, but allowing themselves to be kissed by them. Imagine! Clean, healthy British girls allowing themselves to be kissed by the swinish and bloodstained lips of the unspeakable Hun! Do you wonder that I blush for my sex? Stands England where she did? No, emphatically no, if these

stories are true, and true—sadly and with a heavy bleeding heart do I admit it—true they are."

"Clean hands, clean hands," Dick was still muttering, and applying his fingers to his nose once more, "Christ," he cried, "how they stink! Goats, dung . . ."

"Is there any excuse for such conduct?" the pencil continued. "The most that can be said in palliation of the offence is that girls are thoughtless, that they do not consider the full significance of their actions. But listen to me, girls of all ages, classes and creeds, from the blue-eyed, light-hearted flapper of sixteen to the stern-faced, hard-headed business woman—listen to me. There is a girlish charm about thoughtlessness, but there is a point beyond which thoughtlessness becomes criminal. A flapper may kiss a Hun without thinking what she is doing, merely for the fun of the thing; perhaps, even, out of misguided pity. Will she repeat the offence if she realizes, as she must realize if she will only think, that this thoughtless fun, this mawkish and hysterical pity, is nothing less than Treason? Treason—it is a sinister word, but . . ."

The pencil stopped writing; even Pearl was beginning to grow tired. Dick's shouting had died away to a hoarse, faint whisper. Suddenly her attention was caught by the last words that Dick had written—the injunction to send his body, if he died, to a hospital for an anatomy. She put forth a great effort.

"NO. NO," she wrote in huge capitals. "Bury me in a little country churchyard, with lovely marble angels like the ones in St. George's at Windsor, over Princess Charlotte's tomb. Not anatomy. Too horrible, too disgust . . ."

The coma which had blotted out Dick's mind fell now upon hers as well, Two hours later Dick Greenow was dead; the fingers of his right hand still grasped a pencil. The scribbled papers were thrown away as being merely the written ravings of a madman; they were accustomed that sort of thing at the asylum.

The End