Fernando Pessoa.

TONO-BUNGAY

"Our talk must have been serious . . . ."—P. 30.

Tono-Bungay

BY

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BOOK THE FIRST

THE DAYS BEFORE TONO-BUNGAY WAS INVENTED

TONO-BUNGAY

CHAPTER I

Of Bladesover House, and my Mother; and the Constitution of Society

§ 1

Most people in this world seem to live "in character"; they have a beginning, a middle and an end, and the three are congruous one with another and true to the rules of their type. You can speak of them as being of this sort of people or that. They are, as theatrical people say, no more (and no less) than "character actors." They have a class, they have a place, they know what is becoming in them and what is due to them, and their proper size of tombstone tells at last how properly they have played the part. But there is also another kind of life that is not so much living as a miscellaneous tasting of life. One gets hit by some unusual transverse force, one is jerked out of one's stratum and lives crosswise for the rest of the time, and, as it were, in a succession of samples. That has been my lot, and that is what has set me at last writing something in the nature of a novel. I have got an unusual series of impressions that I want very urgently to tell. I have seen life at very different levels, and at all these levels I have seen it with a sort of intimacy and in good faith. I have been a native in many social countries. I have been the unwelcome guest of a working baker, my cousin, who has since died in the Chatham infirmary; I have eaten illegal snacks—the unjustifiable gifts of footmen—in pantries, and been despised for my want of style (and subsequently

married and divorced) by the daughter of a gasworks clerk; and—to go to my other extreme—I was once—oh, glittering days!—an item in the house-party of a countess. She was, I admit, a countess with a financial aspect, but still, you know, a countess. I've seen these people at various angles. At the dinner-table I've met not simply the titled but the great. On one occasion—it is my brightest memory—I upset my champagne over the trousers of the greatest statesman in the empire—Heaven forbid I should be so invidious as to name him!—in the warmth of our mutual admiration.

And once (though it is the most incidental thing in my life) I murdered a man. . . .

Yes, I've seen a curious variety of people and ways of living altogether. Odd people they all are, great and small, very much alike at bottom and curiously different on their surfaces. I wish I had ranged just a little further both up and down, seeing I have ranged so far. Royalty must be worth knowing and very great fun. But my contacts with princes have been limited to quite public occasions, nor at the other end of the scale have I had what I should call an inside acquaintance with that dusty but attractive class of people who go about on the high-roads drunk but *en famille* (so redeeming the minor lapse), in the summertime, with a perambulator, lavender to sell, sun-brown children, a smell, and ambiguous bundles that fire the imagination. Navvies, farm-labourers, sailormen and stokers, all such as sit in 1834 beer-houses, are beyond me also, and I suppose must remain so now for ever. My intercourse with the ducal rank too has been negligible; I once went shooting with a duke, and in an outburst of what was no doubt snobbishness, did my best to get him in the legs. But that failed.

I'm sorry I haven't done the whole lot, though. . . .

You will ask by what merit I achieved this remarkable social range, this extensive cross-section of the British social organism. It was the Accident of Birth. It always is in England. Indeed, if I may make the remark so cosmic, everything is. But that is by the way. I was my uncle's nephew, and my uncle was no less a person than Edward Ponderevo, whose comet-like transit of the financial heavens happened—it is now ten years ago! Do you remember the

days of Ponderevo, the *great* days, I mean, of Ponderevo? Perhaps you had a trifle in some world-shaking enterprise! Then you know him only too well. Astraddle on Tono-Bungay, he flashed athwart the empty heavens—like a comet—rather, like a stupendous rocket!—and overawed investors spoke of his star. At his zenith he burst into a cloud of the most magnificent promotions. What a time that was! The Napoleon of domestic conveniences! . . .

I was his nephew, his peculiar and intimate nephew. I was hanging on to his coat-tails all the way through. I made pills with him in the chemist's shop at Wimblehurst before he began. I was, you might say, the stick of his rocket; and after our tremendous soar, after he had played with millions, a golden rain in the sky, after my bird's-eye view of the modern world, I fell again, a little scarred and blistered perhaps, two and twenty years older, with my youth gone, my manhood eaten in upon, but greatly edified, into this Thames-side yard, into these white heats and hammerings, amidst the fine realities of steel—to think it all over in my leisure and jot down the notes and inconsecutive observations that make this book. It was more, you know, than a figurative soar. The zenith of that career was surely our flight across the channel in the Lord Roberts *B*. . . .

I warn you this book is going to be something of an agglomeration. I want to trace my social trajectory (and my uncle's) as the main line of my story, but as this is my first novel and almost certainly my last, I want to get in too all sorts of things that struck me, things that amused me and impressions I got—even although they don't minister directly to my narrative at all. I want to set out my own queer love experiences too, such as they are, for they troubled and distressed and swayed me hugely, and they still seem to me to contain all sorts of irrational and debatable elements that I shall be the clearer-headed for getting on paper. And possibly I may even flow into descriptions of people who are really no more than people seen in transit, just because it amuses me to recall what they said and did to us, and more particularly how they behaved in the brief but splendid glare of Tono-Bungay and its still more glaring offspring. It lit some of them up, I can assure you! Indeed, I want to get in all sorts of things. My

ideas of a novel all through are comprehensive rather than austere. . . .

Tono-Bungay still figures on the hoardings, it stands in rows in every chemist's storeroom, it still assuages the coughs of age and brightens the elderly eye and loosens the elderly tongue; but its social glory, its financial illumination, have faded from the world for ever. And I, sole scorched survivor from the blaze, sit writing of it here in an air that is never still for the clang and thunder of machines, on a table littered with working drawings, and amid fragments of models and notes about velocities and air and water pressures and trajectories—of an altogether different sort from that of Tono-Bungay.

§ 2

I write that much and look at it, and wonder whether, after all, this is any fair statement of what I am attempting in this book. I've given, I see, an impression that I want to make simply a hotch-potch of anecdotes and experiences with my uncle swimming in the middle as the largest lump of victual. I'll own that here, with the pen already started, I realize what a fermenting mass of things learnt and emotions experienced and theories formed I've got to deal with, and how, in a sense, hopeless my book must be from the very outset. I suppose what I'm really trying to render is nothing more nor less than Life—as one man has found it. I want to tell—*myself*, and my impressions of the thing as a whole, to say things I have come to feel intensely of the laws, traditions, usages, and ideas we call society, and how we poor individuals get driven and lured and stranded among these windy, perplexing shoals and channels. I've got, I suppose, to a time of life when things begin to take on shapes that have an air of reality, and become no longer material for dreaming, but interesting in themselves. I've reached the criticizing, novel-writing age, and here I am writing mine—my one novel—without having any of the discipline to refrain and omit that I suppose the regular novel-writer acquires.

I've read an average share of novels and made some starts before this beginning, and I've found the restraints and rules

of the art (as I made them out) impossible for me. I like to write, I am keenly interested in writing, but it is not my technique. I'm an engineer with a patent or two and a set of ideas; most of whatever artist there is in me has been given to turbine machines and boat-building and the problem of flying, and do what I will I fail to see how I can be other than a lax, undisciplined story-teller. I must sprawl and flounder, comment and theorize, if I am to get the thing out I have in mind. And it isn't a constructed tale I have to tell but unmanageable realities. My love-story—and if only I can keep up the spirit of truth-telling all through as strongly as I have now, you shall have it all—falls into no sort of neat scheme of telling. It involves three separate feminine persons. It's all mixed up with the other things. . . .

But I've said enough, I hope, to excuse myself for the method or want of method in what follows, and I think I had better tell without further delay of my boyhood and my early impressions in the shadow of Bladesover House.

§ 3

There came a time when I realized that Bladesover House was not all it seemed, but when I was a little boy I took the place with the entirest faith as a complete authentic microcosm. I believed that the Bladesover system was a little working model—and not so very little either—of the whole world.

Let me try and give you the effect of it.

Bladesover lies up on the Kentish Downs, eight miles perhaps from Ashborough; and its old pavilion, a little wooden parody of the temple of Vesta at Tibur, upon the hill crest behind the house, commands in theory at least a view of either sea, of the Channel southward and the Thames to the north-east. The park is the second largest in Kent, finely wooded with well-placed beeches, many elms and some sweet chestnuts, abounding in little valleys and hollows of bracken, with springs and a stream and three fine ponds and multitudes of fallow deer. The house was built in the eighteenth century, it is of pale red brick in the style of a French château, and save for one pass among the crests

which opens to blue distances, to minute, remote, oast-set farm-houses and copses and wheatfields and the occasional gleam of water, its hundred and seventeen windows look on nothing but its own wide and handsome territories. A semicircular screen of great beeches masks the church and village, which cluster picturesquely about the high-road along the skirts of the great park. Northward, at the remotest corner of that enclosure, is a second dependent village, Ropedean, less fortunate in its greater distance and also on account of a rector. This divine was indeed rich, but he was vindictively economical because of some shrinkage of his tithes; and by reason of his use of the word Eucharist for the Lord's Supper he had become altogether estranged from the great ladies of Bladesover. So that Ropedean was in the shadows through all that youthful time.

Now, the unavoidable suggestion of that wide park and that fair large house, dominating church, village and the country-side, was that they represented the thing that mattered supremely in the world, and that all other things had significance only in relation to them. They represented the Gentry, the Quality, by and through and for whom the rest of the world, the farming folk and the labouring folk, the trades-people of Ashborough, and the upper servants and the lower servants and the servants of the estate, breathed and lived and were permitted. And the Quality did it so quietly and thoroughly, the great house mingled so solidly and effectually with earth and sky, the contrast of its spacious hall and saloon and galleries, its airy housekeeper's room and warren of offices with the meagre dignities of the vicar, and the pinched and stuffy rooms of even the post-office people and the grocer, so enforced these suggestions, that it was only when I was a boy of thirteen or fourteen and some queer inherited strain of scepticism had set me doubting whether Mr. Bartlett, the vicar, did really know with certainty all about God, that as a further and deeper step in doubting I began to question the final rightness of the gentlefolks, their primary necessity in the scheme of things. But once that scepticism had awakened it took me fast and far. By fourteen I had achieved terrible blasphemies and sacrilege; I had resolved

to marry a viscount's daughter, and I had blacked the left eye—I think it was the left—of her half-brother, in open and declared rebellion.

But of that in its place.

The great house, the church, the village, and the labourers and the servants in their stations and degrees, seemed to me, I say, to be a closed and complete social system. About us were other villages and great estates, and from house to house, interlacing, correlated, the Gentry, the fine Olympians, came and went. The country towns seemed mere collections of shops, marketing places for the tenantry, centres for such education as they needed, as entirely dependent on the gentry as the village and scarcely less directly so. I thought this was the order of the whole world. I thought London was only a greater country town where the gentlefolk kept town-houses and did their greater shopping under the magnificent shadow of the greatest of all fine gentlewomen, the Queen. It seemed to be in the divine order. That all this fine appearance was already sapped, that there were forces at work that might presently carry all this elaborate social system in which my mother instructed me so carefully that I might understand my "place," to Limbo, had scarcely dawned upon me even by the time that Tono-Bungay was fairly launched upon the world.

There are many people in England to-day upon whom it has not yet dawned. There are times when I doubt whether any but a very inconsiderable minority of English people realize how extensively this ostensible order has even now passed away. The great houses stand in the parks still, the cottages cluster respectfully on their borders, touching their eaves with their creepers, the English country-side—you can range through Kent from Bladesover northward and see—persists obstinately in looking what it was. It is like an early day in a fine October. The hand of change rests on it all, unfelt, unseen; resting for awhile, as it were half reluctantly, before it grips and ends the thing for ever. One frost and the whole face of things will be bare, links snap, patience end, our fine foliage of pretences lie glowing in the mire.

For that we have still to wait a little while. The new

order may have gone far towards shaping itself, but just as in that sort of lantern show that used to be known in the village as the "Dissolving Views," the scene that is going remains upon the mind, traceable and evident, and the newer picture is yet enigmatical long after the lines that are to replace those former ones have grown bright and strong, so that the new England of our children's children is still a riddle to me. The ideas of democracy, of equality, and above all of promiscuous fraternity have certainly never really entered into the English mind. But what *is* coming into it? All this book, I hope, will bear a little on that. Our people never formulates; it keeps words for jests and ironies. In the meanwhile the old shapes, the old attitudes remain, subtly changed and changing still, sheltering strange tenants. Bladesover House is now let furnished to Sir Reuben Lichtenstein, and has been since old Lady Drew died; it was my odd experience to visit there, in the house of which my mother had been housekeeper, when my uncle was at the climax of Tono-Bungay. It was curious to notice then the little differences that had come to things with this substitution. To borrow an image from my mineralogical days, these Jews were not so much a new British gentry as "pseudomorphous" after the gentry. They are a very clever people, the Jews, but not clever enough to suppress their cleverness. I wished I could have gone downstairs to savour the tone of the pantry. It would have been very different I know. Hawksnest, over beyond, I noted, had its pseudomorph too; a newspaper proprietor of the type that hustles along with stolen ideas from one loud sink-or-swim enterprise to another, had bought the place outright; Redgrave was in the hands of brewers.

But the people in the villages, so far as I could detect, saw no difference in their world. Two little girls bobbed and an old labourer touched his hat convulsively as I walked through the village. He still thought he knew his place—and mine. I did not know him, but I would have liked dearly to have asked him if he remembered my mother, if either my uncle or old Lichtenstein had been man enough to stand being given away like that.

In that English country-side of my boyhood every

human being had a " place." It belonged to you from your birth like the colour of your eyes, it was inextricably your destiny. Above you were your betters, below you were your inferiors, and there were even an unstable questionable few, cases so disputable that you might, for the rough purposes of every day at least, regard them as your equals. Head and centre of our system was Lady Drew, her " leddyship," shrivelled, garrulous, with a wonderful memory for genealogies and very, very old, and beside her and nearly as old, Miss Somerville, her cousin and companion. These two old souls lived like dried-up kernels in the great shell of Bladesover House, the shell that had once been gaily full of fops, of fine ladies in powder and patches and courtly gentlemen with swords; and when there was no company they spent whole days in the corner parlour just over the housekeeper's room, between reading and slumber and caressing their two pet dogs. When I was a boy I used always to think of these two poor old creatures as superior beings living, like God, somewhere through the ceiling. Occasionally they bumped about a bit and one even heard them overhead, which gave them a greater effect of reality without mitigating their vertical predominance. Sometimes too I saw them. Of course if I came upon them in the park or in the shrubbery (where I was a trespasser) I hid or fled in pious horror, but I was upon due occasion taken into the Presence by request. I remember her " leddyship " then as a thing of black silks and a golden chain, a quavering injunction to me to be a good boy, a very shrunken loose-skinned face and neck, and a ropy hand that trembled a halfcrown into mine. Miss Somerville hovered behind, a paler thing of broken lavender and white and black, with screwed up, sandy-lashed eyes. Her hair was yellow and her colour bright, and when we sat in the housekeeper's room of a winter's night warming our toes and sipping elder wine, her maid would tell us the simple secrets of that belated flush. . . . After my fight with young Garvell I was of course banished, and I never saw those poor old painted goddesses again.

Then there came and went on these floors over our respectful heads, the Company; people I rarely saw, but whose tricks and manners were imitated and discussed by their maids

and valets in the housekeeper's room and the steward's room—so that I had them through a medium at second hand. I gathered that none of the company were really Lady Drew's equals, they were greater and lesser—after the manner of all things in our world. Once I remember there was a Prince, with a real live gentleman in attendance, and that was a little above our customary levels and excited us all, and perhaps raised our expectations unduly. Afterwards, Rabbits, the butler, came into my mother's room downstairs, red with indignation and with tears in his eyes. "Look at *that!*" gasped Rabbits. My mother was speechless with horror. *That* was a sovereign, a mere sovereign, such as you might get from any commoner!

After Company, I remember, came anxious days, for the poor old women upstairs were left tired and cross and vindictive, and in a state of physical and emotional indigestion after their social efforts. . . .

On the lowest fringe of these real Olympians hung the vicarage people, and next to them came those ambiguous beings who are neither quality nor subjects. The vicarage people certainly hold a place by themselves in the typical English scheme; nothing is more remarkable than the progress the Church has made—socially—in the last two hundred years. In the early eighteenth century the vicar was rather under than over the house-steward, and was deemed a fitting match for the housekeeper or any not too morally discredited discard. The eighteenth-century literature is full of his complaints that he might not remain at table to share the pie. He rose above these indignities because of the abundance of younger sons. When I meet the large assumptions of the contemporary cleric, I am apt to think of these things. It is curious to note that to-day that down-trodden, organ-playing creature, the Church of England village Schoolmaster, holds much the same position as the seventeenth-century parson. The doctor in Bladesover ranked below the vicar but above the "vet"; artists and summer visitors squeezed in above or below this point according to their appearance and expenditure; and then in a carefully arranged scale came the tenantry, the butler and housekeeper, the village shopkeeper, the head keeper, the cook, the publican, the second keeper, the blacksmith

(whose status was complicated by his daughter keeping the post-office—and a fine hash she used to make of telegrams too !), the village shopkeeper's eldest son, the first footman, younger sons of the village shopkeeper, his first assistant, and so forth. . . .

All these conceptions and applications of a universal precedence and much else I drank in at Bladesover, as I listened to the talk of valets, ladies'-maids, Rabbits the butler and my mother in the much cupboarded, white-painted, chintz-brightened housekeeper's room where the upper servants assembled, or of footmen and Rabbits and estate men of all sorts among the green baize and Windsor chairs of the pantry—where Rabbits, being above the law, sold beer without a licence or any compunction—or of housemaids and still-room maids in the bleak, matting-carpeted still-room, or of the cook and her kitchen maids and casual friends among the bright copper and hot glow of the kitchens.

Of course their own ranks and places came by implication to these people, and it was with the ranks and places of the Olympians that the talk mainly concerned itself. There was an old peerage and a Crockford together with the books of recipes, the Whitaker's Almanack, the Old Moore's Almanack, and the eighteenth-century dictionary, on the little dresser that broke the cupboards on one side of my mother's room; there was another peerage, with the covers off, in the pantry; there was a new peerage in the billiard-room, and I seem to remember another in the anomalous apartment that held the upper servants' bagatelle board, and in which, after the Hall dinner, they partook of the luxury of sweets. And if you had asked any of those upper servants how such and such a Prince of Battenberg was related to, let us say, Mr. Cunninghame Graham or the Duke of Argyle, you would have been told upon the nail. As a boy, I heard a great deal of that sort of thing, and if to this day I am still a little vague about courtesy titles and the exact application of honorifics, it is, I can assure you, because I hardened my heart, and not from any lack of adequate opportunity of mastering these succulent particulars.

Dominating all these memories is the figure of my mother

—my mother who did not love me because I grew liker my father every day—and who knew with inflexible decision her place and the place of every one in the world—except the place that concealed my father—and in some details mine. Subtle points were put to her. I can see and hear her saying now, "No, Miss Fison, peers of England go in before peers of the United Kingdom, and he is merely a peer of the United Kingdom." She had much exercise in placing people's servants about her tea-table, where the etiquette was very strict. I wonder sometimes if the etiquette of housekeepers' rooms is as strict to-day, and what my mother would have made of a *chauffeur*. . . .

On the whole I am glad that I saw so much as I did of Bladesover—if for no other reason than because seeing it when I did, quite naïvely, believing in it thoroughly, and then coming to analyze it, has enabled me to understand much that would be absolutely incomprehensible in the structure of English society. Bladesover is, I am convinced, the clue to almost all that is distinctively British and perplexing to the foreign inquirer in England and the English-speaking peoples. Grasp firmly that England was all Bladesover two hundred years ago; that it has had Reform Acts indeed, and such-like changes of formula, but no essential revolution since then; that all that is modern and different has come in as a thing intruded or as a gloss upon this predominant formula, either impertinently or apologetically; and you will perceive at once the reasonableness, the necessity, of that snobbishness which is the distinctive quality of English thought. Everybody who is not actually in the shadow of a Bladesover is as it were perpetually seeking after lost orientations. We have never broken with our tradition, never even symbolically hewed it to pieces, as the French did in quivering fact in the Terror. But all the organizing ideas have slackened, the old habitual bonds have relaxed or altogether come undone. And America too, is, as it were, a detached, outlying part of that estate which has expanded in queer ways. George Washington, Esquire, was of the gentlefolk, and he came near being a King. It was Plutarch, you know, and nothing intrinsically American, that prevented George Washington being a King. . . .

§ 4

I hated teatime in the housekeeper's room more than anything else at Bladesover. And more particularly I hated it when Mrs. Mackridge and Mrs. Booch and Mrs. Latude-Fernay were staying in the house. They were, all three of them, pensioned-off servants. Old friends of Lady Drew's had rewarded them posthumously for a prolonged devotion to their minor comforts, and Mrs. Booch was also trustee for a favourite Skye terrier. Every year Lady Drew gave them an invitation—a reward and encouragement of virtue with especial reference to my mother and Miss Fison, the maid. They sat about in black and shiny and flouncey clothing adorned with gimp and beads, eating great quantities of cake, drinking much tea in a stately manner and reverberating remarks.

I remember these women as immense. No doubt they were of negotiable size, but I was only a very little chap and they have assumed nightmare proportions in my mind. They loomed, they bulged, they impended. Mrs. Mackridge was large and dark; there was a marvel about her head, inasmuch as she was bald. She wore a dignified cap, and in front of that upon her brow hair was *painted*. I have never seen the like since. She had been maid to the widow of Sir Roderick Blenderhasset Impey, some sort of governor or such-like portent in the East Indies, and from her remains—in Mrs. Mackridge—I judge Lady Impey was a very stupendous and crushing creature indeed. Lady Impey had been of the Juno type, haughty, unapproachable, given to irony and a caustic wit. Mrs. Mackridge had no wit, but she had acquired the caustic voice and gestures along with the old satins and trimmings of the great lady. When she told you it was a fine morning, she seemed also to be telling you you were a fool and a low fool to boot; when she was spoken to, she had a way of acknowledging your poor tinkle of utterance with a voluminous, scornful " Haw ! " that made you want to burn her alive. She also had a way of saying " Indade ! " with a droop of the eyelids.

Mrs. Booch was a smaller woman, brown haired, with queer little curls on either side of her face, large blue eyes,

and a small set of stereotyped remarks that constituted her entire mental range. Mrs. Latude-Fernay has left, oddly enough, no memory at all except her name and the effect of a green-grey silk dress, all set with gold and blue buttons. I fancy she was a large blond. Then there was Miss Fison, the maid who served both Lady Drew and Miss Somerville, and at the end of the table opposite my mother, sat Rabbits the butler. Rabbits, for a butler, was an unassuming man, and at tea he was not as you know butlers, but in a morning coat and a black tie with blue spots. Still, he was large, with side whiskers, even if his clean-shaven mouth was weak and little. I sat among these people on a high, hard, early Georgian chair, trying to exist, like a feeble seedling amidst great rocks, and my mother sat with an eye upon me, resolute to suppress the slightest manifestation of vitality. It was hard on me, but perhaps it was also hard upon these rather over-fed, ageing, pretending people, that my youthful restlessness and rebellious unbelieving eyes should be thrust in among their dignities.

Tea lasted for nearly three-quarters of an hour, and I sat it out perforce; and day after day the talk was exactly the same.

"Sugar, Mrs. Mackridge?" my mother used to ask. "Sugar, Mrs. Latude-Fernay?"

The word "sugar" would stir the mind of Mrs. Mackridge. "They say," she would begin, issuing her proclamation—at least half her sentences began "they say"—"sugar is fatt-an-ing, nowadays. Many of the best people do not take it now at all."

"Not with their tea, ma'am," said Rabbits, intelligently.

"Not with anaything," said Mrs. Mackridge, with an air of crushing repartee, and drank.

"What won't they say next?" said Miss Fison.

"They do say such things!" said Mrs. Booch.

"They say," said Mrs. Mackridge, inflexibly, "the doctors are not recomm-an-ding it now."

MY MOTHER: "No, ma'am?"

MRS. MACKRIDGE: "No, ma'am."

Then, to the table at large: "Poor Sir Roderick, before he died, consumed great quan-ta-ties of sugar. I have sometimes fancied it may have hastened his end."

This ended the first skirmish. A certain gloom of manner

and a pause was considered due to the sacred memory of Sir Roderick.

"George," said my mother, "don't kick the chair!"

Then, perhaps, Mrs. Booch would produce a favourite piece from her repertoire. "The evenings are drawing out nicely," she would say, or if the season was decadent, "How the evenings draw in!" It was an invaluable remark to her; I do not know how she would have got along without it.

My mother, who sat with her back to the window, would always consider it due to Mrs. Booch to turn about and regard the evening in the act of elongation or contraction, whichever phase it might be.

A brisk discussion of how long we were to the longest or shortest day would ensue, and die away at last exhausted.

Mrs. Mackridge, perhaps, would reopen. She had many intelligent habits; among others she read the paper—*The Morning Post*. The other ladies would at times tackle that sheet, but only to read the births, marriages, and deaths on the front page. It was, of course, the old *Morning Post* that cost threepence, not the brisk coruscating young thing of to-day. "They say," she would open, "that Lord Tweedums is to go to Canada."

"Ah!" said Mr. Rabbits; "dew they?"

"Isn't he," said my mother, "the Earl of Slumgold's cousin?" She knew he was; it was an entirely irrelevant and unnecessary remark, but still, something to say.

"The same, ma'am," said Mrs. Mackridge. "They say he was extremelay popular in New South Wales. They looked up to him greatlay. I knew him, ma'am, as a young man. A very nice pleasant young fella."

Interlude of respect.

"'Is predecessor," said Rabbits, who had acquired from some clerical model a precise emphatic articulation without acquiring at the same time the aspirates that would have graced it, "got into trouble at Sydney."

"Haw!" said Mrs. Mackridge, scornfully, "so I am tawled."

"'E came to Templemorton after 'e came back, and I remember them talking 'im over after 'e'd gone again."

"Haw?" said Mrs. Mackridge, interrogatively.

" 'Is fuss was quotin' poetry, ma'am. 'E said—what was it 'e said ?—' They lef' their country for their country's good,' which in some way was took to remind them of their being originally convic's, though now reformed. Every one I 'eard speak, agreed it was takless of 'im."

" Sir Roderick used to say," said Mrs. Mackridge, " that the First Thing "—here Mrs. Mackridge paused and looked dreadfully at me—" and the Second Thing "—here she fixed me again—" and the Third Thing "—now I was released—" needed in a colonial governor is Tact." She became aware of my doubts again, and added predominantly, " It has always struck me that that was a Singularly True Remark."

I resolved that if ever I found this polypus of Tact growing up in my soul, I would tear it out by the roots, throw it forth and stamp on it.

" They're queer people—colonials," said Rabbits, " very queer. When I was at Templemorton I see something ov 'em. Queer fellows, some of 'em. Very respectful of course, free with their money in a spasammy sort of way, but—— Some of 'em, I must confess, make me nervous. They have an eye on you. They watch you—as you wait. They let themselves appear to be lookin' at you. . . ."

My mother said nothing in that discussion. The word " colonies " always upset her. She was afraid, I think, that if she turned her mind in that direction my errant father might suddenly and shockingly be discovered, no doubt conspicuously bigamic and altogether offensive and revolutionary. She did not want to rediscover my father at all.

It is curious that when I was a little listening boy I had such an idea of our colonies that I jeered in my heart at Mrs. Mackridge's colonial ascendancy. These brave emancipated sunburnt English of the open, I thought, suffer these aristocratic invaders as a quaint anachronism, but as for being gratified—— !

I don't jeer now. I'm not so sure.

§ 5

It is a little difficult to explain why I did not come to do what was the natural thing for any one in my circumstances

to do, and take my world for granted. A certain innate scepticism, I think, explains it—and a certain inaptitude for sympathetic assimilation. My father, I believe, was a sceptic; my mother was certainly a hard woman.

I was an only child, and to this day I do not know whether my father is living or dead. He fled my mother's virtues before my distincter memories began. He left no traces in his flight, and she, in her indignation, destroyed every vestige that she could of him. Never a photograph nor a scrap of his handwriting have I seen; and it was, I know, only the accepted code of virtue and discretion that prevented her destroying her marriage certificate and me, and so making a clean sweep of her matrimonial humiliation. I suppose I must inherit something of the moral stupidity that could enable her to make a holocaust of every little personal thing she had of him. There must have been presents made by him as a lover, for examlpe—books with kindly inscriptions, letters perhaps, a flattened flower, a ring, or suchlike gage. She kept her wedding-ring of course, but all the others she destroyed. She never told me his christian name or indeed spoke a word to me of him, though at times I came near daring to ask her; and what I have of him—it isn't much—I got from his brother, my hero, my Uncle Ponderevo. She wore her ring; her marriage certificate she kept in a sealed envelope in the very bottom of her largest trunk, and me she sustained at a private school among the Kentish hills. You must not think I was always at Bladesover—even in my holidays. If at the time these came round, Lady Drew was vexed by recent Company, or for any other reason wished to take it out of my mother, then she used to ignore the customary reminder my mother gave her, and I "stayed on" at the school.

But such occasions were rare, and I suppose that between ten and fourteen I averaged fifty days a year at Bladesover.

Don't imagine I deny that was a fine thing for me. Bladesover, in absorbing the whole country-side, had not altogether missed greatness. The Bladesover system has at least done one good thing for England, it has abolished the peasant habit of mind. If many of us still live and breathe pantry and housekeeper's room, we are quit of the dream of living by economizing parasitically on hens and

pigs. . . . About that park there were some elements of a liberal education; there was a great space of greensward not given over to manure and food grubbing; there was mystery; there was matter for the imagination. It was still a park of deer. I saw something of the life of these dappled creatures; heard the belling of stags, came upon young fawns among the bracken, found bones, skulls, and antlers in lonely places. There were corners that gave a gleam of meaning to the word forest, glimpses of unstudied natural splendour. There was a slope of bluebells in the broken sunlight under the newly green beeches in the west wood that is now precious sapphire in my memory; it was the first time that I knowingly met Beauty.

And in the house there were books. The rubbish old Lady Drew read I never saw; stuff of the Maria Monk type, I have since gathered, had a fascination for her; but back in the past there had been a Drew of intellectual enterprise, Sir Cuthbert, the son of Sir Matthew who built the house; and thrust away, neglected and despised, in an old room upstairs, were books and treasures of his that my mother let me rout among during a spell of wintry wet. Sitting under a dormer window on a shelf above great stores of tea and spices, I became familiar with much of Hogarth in a big portfolio, with Raphael—there was a great book of engravings from the stanzas of Raphael in the Vatican—and with most of the capitals of Europe as they had looked about 1780, by means of several big iron-moulded books of views. There was also a broad eighteenth-century atlas with huge wandering maps that instructed me mightily. It had splendid adornments about each map title; Holland showed a fisherman and his boat; Russia a Cossack; Japan, remarkable people attired in pagodas—I say it deliberately, "pagodas." There were Terrae Incognitae in every continent then, Poland, Sarmatia, lands since lost; and many a voyage I made with a blunted pin about that large, incorrect and dignified world. The books in that little old closet had been banished, I suppose, from the saloon during the Victorian revival of good taste and emasculated orthodoxy, but my mother had no suspicion of their character. So I read and understood the good sound rhetoric of Tom Paine's "Rights of Man," and his "Common Sense,"

excellent books, once praised by bishops and since sedulously lied about. Gulliver was there unexpurgated, strong meat for a boy perhaps, but not too strong I hold—I have never regretted that I escaped niceness in these affairs. The satire of Traldragdubh made my blood boil as it was meant to do, but I hated Swift for the Houyhnhnms and never quite liked a horse afterwards. Then I remember also a translation of Voltaire's " Candide," and " Rasselas "; and, vast book though it was, I really believe I read, in a muzzy sort of way of course, from end to end, and even with some reference now and then to the Atlas, Gibbon—in twelve volumes.

These readings whetted my taste for more, and surreptitiously I raided the bookcases in the big saloon. I got through quite a number of books before my sacrilegious temerity was discovered by Ann, the old head-housemaid. I remember that among others I tried a translation of Plato's " Republic " then, and found extraordinarily little interest in it; I was much too young for that; but " Vathek " —" Vathek " was glorious stuff. That kicking affair ! When everybody *had* to kick !

The thought of " Vathek " always brings back with it my boyish memory of the big saloon at Bladesover.

It was a huge long room with many windows opening upon the park, and each window—there were a dozen or more reaching from the floor up—had its elaborate silk or satin curtains, heavily fringed, a canopy (is it ?) above, its complex white shutters folding into the deep thickness of the wall. At either end of that great still place was an immense marble chimney-piece; the end by the bookcase showed the wolf and Romulus and Remus, with Homer and Virgil for supporters; the design of the other end I have forgotten. Frederick, Prince of Wales, swaggered flatly over the one, twice life-size, but mellowed by the surface gleam of oil; and over the other was an equally colossal group of departed Drews as sylvan deities, scantily clad, against a storm-rent sky. Down the centre of the elaborate ceiling were three chandeliers, each bearing some hundreds of dangling glass lustres, and over the interminable carpet—it impressed me as about as big as Sarmatia in the store-room Atlas—were islands and archipelagoes of chintz-

covered chairs and couches, tables, great Sèvres vases on pedestals, a bronze man and horse. Somewhere in this wilderness one came, I remember, upon a big harp beside a lyre-shaped music-stand, and a grand piano. . . .

The book-borrowing raid was one of extraordinary dash and danger. One came down the main service stairs—that was legal, and illegality began in a little landing when, very cautiously, one went through a red baize door. A little passage led to the hall, and here one reconnoitred for Ann, the old head-housemaid—the younger housemaids were friendly and did not count. Ann located, came a dash across the open space at the foot of that great staircase that has never been properly descended since powder went out of fashion, and so to the saloon door. A beast of an oscillating Chinaman in china, as large as life, grimaced and quivered to one's lightest steps. That door was the perilous place; it was double, with the thickness of the wall between, so that one could not listen beforehand for the whisk of the feather-brush on the other side. Oddly rat-like, is it not, this darting into enormous places in pursuit of the abandoned crumbs of thought?

And I found Langhorne's "Plutarch" too, I remember, on those shelves. It seems queer to me now to think that I acquired pride and self-respect, the idea of a state and the germ of public spirit, in such a furtive fashion; queer, too, that it should rest with an old Greek, dead these eighteen hundred years, to teach me that.

§ 6

The school I went to was the sort of school the Bladesover system permitted. The public schools that had come into existence in the brief glow of the Renascence had been taken possession of by the ruling class; the lower classes were not supposed to stand in need of schools, and our middle stratum got the school it deserved, private schools, schools any unqualified pretender was free to establish. Mine was kept by a man who had had the energy to get himself a College of Preceptors diploma, and considering how cheap his charges were, I will readily admit the place might have been worse. The building was a dingy yellow-brick resi-

dence outside the village, with the schoolroom as an outbuilding of lath and plaster.

I do not remember that my school-days were unhappy—indeed, I recall a good lot of fine mixed fun in them—but I cannot without grave risk of misinterpretation declare that we were at all nice and refined. We fought much, not sound formal fighting, but " scrapping " of a sincere and murderous kind, into which one might bring one's boots—it made us tough at any rate—and several of us were the sons of London publicans, who distinguished " scraps " where one meant to hurt from ordered pugilism, practising both arts, and having, moreover, precocious linguistic gifts. Our cricket-field was bald about the wickets, and we played without style and disputed with the umpire; and the teaching was chiefly in the hands of a lout of nineteen, who wore ready-made clothes and taught despicably. The headmaster and proprietor taught us arithmetic, algebra, and Euclid, and to the older boys even trigonometry, himself; he had a strong mathematical bias, and I think now that by the standard of a British public school he did rather well by us.

We had one inestimable privilege at that school, and that was spiritual neglect. We dealt with one another with the forcible simplicity of natural boys; we " cheeked," and " punched " and " clouted "; we thought ourselves Red Indians and cowboys and such-like honourable things, and not young English gentlemen; we never felt the strain of " Onward, Christian soldiers," nor were swayed by any premature piety in the cold oak pew of our Sunday devotions. All that was good. We spent our rare pennies in the uncensored reading matter of the village dame's shop, on the *Boys of England* and honest penny dreadfuls—ripping stuff, stuff that anticipated Haggard and Stevenson, badly printed and queerly illustrated, and very very good for us. On our half-holidays we were allowed the unusual freedom of rambling in twos and threes wide and far about the land, talking experimentally, dreaming wildly. There was much in those walks! To this day the landscape of the Kentish weald, with its low broad distances, its hop gardens and golden stretches of wheat, its oasts and square church towers, its background of downland and hangers, has for

me a faint sense of adventure added to the pleasure of its beauty. We smoked on occasion, but nobody put us up to the proper " boyish " things to do; we never " robbed an orchard " for example, though there were orchards all about us, we thought stealing was sinful; we stole incidental apples and turnips and strawberries from the fields indeed, but in a criminal inglorious fashion, and afterwards we were ashamed. We had our days of adventure, but they were natural accidents, our own adventures. There was one hot day when several of us, walking out towards Maidstone, were incited by the devil to despise ginger beer, and we fuddled ourselves dreadfully with ale; and a time when our young minds were infected to the pitch of buying pistols, by the legend of the Wild West. Young Roots from Highbury, came back with a revolver and cartridges, and we went off six strong to live a free wild life one holiday afternoon. We fired our first shot deep in the old flint mine at Chiselstead, and nearly burst our ear-drums; then we fired in a primrose-studded wood by Pickthorn Green, and I gave a false alarm of " keeper," and we fled in disorder for a mile. After which Roots suddenly shot at a pheasant in the high-road by Chiselstead, and then young Barker told lies about the severity of the game laws and made Roots sore afraid, and we hid the pistol in a dry ditch outside the school field. A day or so after we got it again, and ignoring a certain fouling and rusting of the barrel, tried for a rabbit at three hundred yards. Young Roots blew a molehill at twenty paces into a dust cloud, burnt his fingers, and scorched his face; and the weapon having once displayed this strange disposition to flame upon the shooter, was not subsequently fired.

One main source of excitement for us was " cheeking " people in vans and carts upon the Goudhurst road; and getting myself into a monstrous white mess in the chalk pits beyond the village, and catching yellow jaundice as a sequel to bathing stark naked with three other Adamites, old Ewart leading that function, in the rivulet across Hickson's meadows, are among my *memorabilia*. Those free imaginative afternoons ! how much they were for us ! how much they did for us ! All streams came from the then undiscovered " sources of the Nile " in those days, all

thickets were Indian jungles, and our best game, I say it with pride, I invented. I got it out of the Bladesover saloon. We found a wood where "Trespassing" was forbidden, and did the "Retreat of the Ten Thousand" through it from end to end, cutting our way bravely through a host of nettle beds that barred our path, and not forgetting to weep and kneel when at last we emerged within sight of the High Road Sea. So we have burst at times, weeping and rejoicing, upon startled wayfarers. Usually I took the part of that distinguished general Xenōphon—and please note the quantity of the ō. I have all my classical names like that,—Socrates rhymes with Bates for me, and except when the bleak eye of some scholar warns me of his standards of judgment, I use those dear old mispronunciations still. The little splash into Latin made during my days as a chemist washed off nothing of the habit. Well,—if I met those great gentlemen of the past with their accents carelessly adjusted I did at least meet them alive, as an equal, and in a living tongue. Altogether my school might easily have been worse for me, and among other good things it gave me a friend who has lasted my life out.

This was Ewart, who is now a monumental artist at Woking, after many vicissitudes. Dear chap, how he did stick out of his clothes, to be sure! He was a long-limbed lout, ridiculously tall beside my more youthful compactness, and, except that there was no black moustache under his nose blob, he had the same round knobby face he has to-day, the same bright and active hazel brown eyes, the stare, the meditative moment, the insinuating reply. Surely no boy ever played the fool as Bob Ewart used to play it, no boy had a readier knack of mantling the world with wonder. Commonness vanished before Ewart, at his expository touch all things became memorable and rare. From him I first heard tell of love, but only after its barbs were already sticking in my heart. He was, I know now, the bastard of that great improvident artist, Rickmann Ewart; he brought the light of a lax world that at least had not turned its back upon beauty, into the growing fermentation of my mind.

I won his heart by a version of Vathek, and after that we were inseparable yarning friends. We merged our

intellectual stock so completely that I wonder sometimes how much I did not become Ewart, how much Ewart is not vicariously and derivatively me. . . .

§ 7

And then when I had newly passed my fourteenth birthday, came my tragic disgrace.

It was in my midsummer holidays that the thing happened, and it was through the Honourable Beatrice Normandy. She had "come into my life," as they say, before I was twelve.

She descended unexpectedly into a peaceful interlude that followed the annual going of those Three Great Women. She came into the old nursery upstairs, and every day she had tea with us in the housekeeper's room. She was eight, and she came with a nurse called Nannie; and to begin with, I did not like her at all.

Nobody liked this irruption into the downstairs rooms; the two "gave trouble,"—a dire offence; Nannie's sense of duty to her charge led to requests and demands that took my mother's breath away. Eggs at unusual times, the reboiling of milk, the rejection of an excellent milk pudding —not negotiated respectfully, but dictated as of right. Nannie was a dark, long-featured, taciturn woman in a grey dress; she had a furtive inflexibility of manner that finally dismayed and crushed and overcame. She conveyed she was "under orders"—like a Greek tragedy. She was that strange product of the old time, a devoted, trusted servant; she had, as it were, banked all her pride and will with the greater, more powerful people who employed her, in return for a life-long security of servitude—the bargain was none the less binding for being implicit. Finally they were to pension her, and she would die the hated treasure of a boarding-house. She had built up in herself an enormous habit of reference to these upstairs people, she had curbed down all discordant murmurings of her soul, her very instincts were perverted or surrendered. She was sexless, her personal pride was all transferred, she mothered another woman's child with a hard, joyless devotion that was at last entirely compatible with a stoical separation. She

treated us all as things that counted for nothing save to fetch and carry for her charge. But the Honourable Beatrice could condescend.

The queer chances of later years come between me and a distinctly separated memory of that childish face. When I think of Beatrice, I think of her as I came to know her at a later time, when at last I came to know her so well that indeed now I could draw her, and show a hundred little delicate things you would miss in looking at her. But even then I remember how I noted the infinite delicacy of her childish skin and the fine eyebrow, finer than the finest feather that ever one felt on the breast of a bird. She was one of those elfin, rather precocious little girls, quick coloured, with dark hair, naturally curling dusky hair that was sometimes astray over her eyes, and eyes that were sometimes impishly dark, and sometimes a clear brown-yellow. And from the very outset, after a most cursory attention to Rabbits, she decided that the only really interesting thing at the tea-table was myself.

The elders talked in their formal dull way—telling Nannie the trite old things about the park and the village that they told every one, and Beatrice watched me across the table with a pitiless little curiosity that made me uncomfortable.

"Nannie," she said, pointing, and Nannie left a question of my mother's disregarded to attend to her; "is he a servant boy?"

"S-s-sh," said Nannie. "He's Master Ponderevo."

"Is he a servant boy?" repeated Beatrice.

"He's a schoolboy," said my mother.

"Then may I talk to him, Nannie?"

Nannie surveyed me with brutal inhumanity. "You mustn't talk too much," she said to her charge, and cut cake into fingers for her. "No," she added decisively, as Beatrice made to speak.

Beatrice became malignant. Her eyes explored me with unjustifiable hostility. "He's got dirty hands," she said, stabbing at the forbidden fruit. "And there's a fray to his collar."

Then she gave herself up to cake with an appearance of entire forgetfulness of me that filled me with hate and a

passionate desire to compel her to admire me. . . . And the next day before tea, I did for the first time in my life, freely, without command or any compulsion, wash my hands.

So our acquaintance began, and presently was deepened by a whim of hers. She had a cold and was kept indoors, and confronted Nannie suddenly with the alternative of being hopelessly naughty, which in her case involved a generous amount of screaming unsuitable for the ears of an elderly, shaky, rich aunt, or having me up to the nursery to play with her all the afternoon. Nannie came downstairs and borrowed me in a careworn manner, and I was handed over to the little creature as if I was some large variety of kitten. I had never had anything to do with a little girl before. I thought she was more beautiful and wonderful and bright than anything else could possibly be in life, and she found me the gentlest of slaves—though at the same time, as I made evident, fairly strong. And Nannie was amazed to find the afternoon slip cheerfully and rapidly away. She praised my manners to Lady Drew and to my mother, who said she was glad to hear well of me, and after that I played with Beatrice several times. The toys she had remain in my memory still as great splendid things, gigantic to all my previous experience of toys, and we even went to the great doll's house on the nursery landing to play discreetly with that, the great doll's house that the Prince Regent had given Sir Harry Drew's first-born (who died at five), that was a not ineffectual model of Bladesover itself, and contained eighty-five dolls and had cost hundreds of pounds. I played under imperious direction with that toy of glory.

I went back to school when that holiday was over, dreaming of beautiful things, and got Ewart to talk to me of love; and I made a great story out of the doll's house, a story that, taken over into Ewart's hands, speedily grew to an island doll's city all our own.

One of the dolls, I privately decided, was like Beatrice.

One other holiday there was when I saw something of her—oddly enough my memory of that second holiday in which she played a part is vague—and then came a gap of a year, and then my disgrace.

§ 8

Now I sit down to write my story and tell over again things in their order, I find for the first time how inconsecutive and irrational a thing the memory can be. One recalls acts and cannot recall motives; one recalls quite vividly moments that stand out inexplicably—things adrift, joining on to nothing, leading nowhere. I think I must have seen Beatrice and her half-brother quite a number of times in my last holiday at Bladesover, but I really cannot recall more than a little of the quality of the circumstances. That great crisis of my boyhood stands out very vividly as an effect, as a sort of cardinal thing for me, but when I look for details—particularly details that led up to the crisis—I cannot find them in any developing order at all. This half-brother, Archie Garvell, was a new factor in the affair. I remember him clearly as a fair-haired, supercilious-looking, weedily-lank boy, much taller than I, but I should imagine very little heavier, and that we hated each other by a sort of instinct from the beginning; and yet I cannot remember my first meeting with him at all.

Looking back into these past things—it is like rummaging in a neglected attic that has experienced the attentions of some whimsical robber—I cannot even account for the presence of these children at Bladesover. They were, I know, among the innumerable cousins of Lady Drew, and according to the theories of downstairs, candidates for the ultimate possession of Bladesover. If they were, their candidature was unsuccessful. But that great place, with all its faded splendour, its fine furniture, its large traditions, was entirely at the old lady's disposition; and I am inclined to think it is true that she used this fact to torment and dominate a number of eligible people. Lord Osprey was among the number of these, and she showed these hospitalities to his motherless child and step-child, partly, no doubt, because he was poor, but quite as much, I nowadays imagine, in the dim hope of finding some affectionate or imaginative outcome of contact with them. Nannie had dropped out of the world this second time, and Beatrice was in the charge of an extremely amiable and ineffectual poor army-class young woman whose name I never knew. They

were, I think, two remarkably ill-managed and enterprising children. I seem to remember, too, that it was understood that I was not a fit companion for them, and that our meetings had to be as unostentatious as possible. It was Beatrice who insisted upon our meeting.

I am certain I knew quite a lot about love at fourteen, and that I was quite as much in love with Beatrice then as any impassioned adult could be, and that Beatrice was, in her way, in love with me. It is part of the decent and useful pretences of our world that children of the age at which we were, think nothing, feel nothing, know nothing of love. It is wonderful what people the English are for keeping up pretences. But indeed I cannot avoid telling that Beatrice and I talked of love and kissed and embraced one another.

I recall something of one talk under the overhanging bushes of the shrubbery—I on the park side of the stone wall, and the lady of my worship a little inelegantly astride thereon. Inelegantly do I say? You should have seen the sweet imp as I remember her. Just her poise on the wall comes suddenly clear before me, and behind her the light various branches of the bushes of the shrubbery that my feet might not profane, and far away and high behind her, dim and stately, the cornice of the great façade of Bladesover rose against the dappled sky. Our talk must have been serious and business-like, for we were discussing my social position.

"I don't love Archie," she had said, *apropos* of nothing; and then in a whisper, leaning forward with the hair about her face, "I love *you!*"

But she had been a little pressing to have it clear that I was not and could not be a servant.

"You'll never be a servant—ever!"

I swore that very readily, and it is a vow I have kept by nature.

"What will you be?" said she.

I ran my mind hastily over the professions.

"Will you be a soldier?" she asked.

"And be bawled at by duffers? No fear!" said I. "Leave that to the plough-boys."

"But an officer?"

"I don't know," I said, evading a shameful difficulty. "I'd rather go into the navy."

"Wouldn't you like to fight?"

"I'd like to fight," I said. "But a common soldier—it's no honour to have to be told to fight and to be looked down upon while you do it, and how could I be an officer?"

"Couldn't you be?" she said, and looked at me doubtfully; and the spaces of the social system opened between us.

Then, as became a male of spirit, I took upon myself to brag and lie my way through this trouble. I said I was a poor man, and poor men went into the navy; that I "knew" mathematics, which no army officer did; and I claimed Nelson for an exemplar, and spoke very highly of my outlook upon blue water. "He loved Lady Hamilton," I said, "although she *was* a lady—and I will love you"

We were somewhere near that when the egregious governess became audible, calling "Beeee-âtrice! Beeee-e-e-âtrice!"

"Snifty beast!" said my lady, and tried to get on with the conversation; but that governess made things impossible.

"Come here!" said my lady suddenly, holding out a grubby hand; and I went very close to her, and she put her little head down upon the wall until her black fog of hair tickled my cheek.

"You are my humble, faithful lover?" she demanded in a whisper, her warm flushed face near touching mine, and her eyes very dark and lustrous.

"I am your humble, faithful lover," I whispered back.

And she put her arm about my head and put out her lips, and we kissed, and boy though I was, I was all atremble. So we two kissed for the first time.

"*Beeee-e-e*-â-trice!"—fearfully close.

My lady had vanished, with one wild kick of her black-stockinged leg. A moment after, I heard her sustaining the reproaches of her governess, and explaining her failure to answer with an admirable lucidity and disingenuousness.

I felt it was unnecessary for me to be seen just then, and I vanished guiltily round the corner into the West Wood, and so to love-dreams and single-handed play, wandering

along one of those meandering bracken valleys that varied Bladesover park. And that day and for many days that kiss upon my lips was a seal, and by night the seed of dreams.

Then I remember an expedition we made—she, I, and her half-brother—into those West Woods—they two were supposed to be playing in the shrubbery—and how we were Indians there, and made a wigwam out of a pile of beech logs, and how we stalked deer, crept near and watched rabbits feeding in a glade, and almost got a squirrel. It was play seasoned with plentiful disputing between me and young Garvell, for each firmly insisted upon the leading *rôles*, and only my wider reading—I had read ten stories to his one—gave me the ascendancy over him. Also I scored over him by knowing how to find the eagle in a bracken stem. And somehow—I don't remember what led to it at all—I and Beatrice, two hot and ruffled creatures, crept in among the tall bracken and hid from him. The great fronds rose above us, five feet or more, and as I had learnt how to wriggle through that undergrowth with the minimum of betrayal by tossing greenery above, I led the way. The ground under bracken is beautifully clear and faintly scented in warm weather; the stems come up black and then green; if you crawl flat, it is a tropical forest in miniature. I led the way and Beatrice crawled behind, and then as the green of the further glade opened before us, stopped. She crawled up to me, her hot little face came close to mine; once more she looked and breathed close to me, and suddenly she flung her arm about my neck and dragged me to earth beside her, and kissed me and kissed me again. We kissed, we embraced and kissed again, all without a word; we desisted, we stared and hesitated—then in a suddenly damped mood and a little perplexed at ourselves, crawled out, to be presently run down and caught in the tamest way by Archie.

That comes back very clearly to me, and other vague memories—I know old Hall and his gun, out shooting at jackdaws, came into our common experiences, but I don't remember how; and then at last, abruptly, our fight in the Warren stands out. The Warren, like most places in England that have that name, was not particularly a warren,

it was a long slope of thorns and beeches through which a path ran, and made an alternative route to the downhill carriage road between Bladesover and Ropedean. I don't know how we three got there, but I have an uncertain fancy it was connected with a visit paid by the governess to the Ropedean vicarage people. But suddenly Archie and I, in discussing a game, fell into a dispute for Beatrice. I had made him the fairest offer; I was to be a Spanish nobleman, she was to be my wife, and he was to be a tribe of Indians trying to carry her off. It seems to me a fairly attractive offer to a boy to be a whole tribe of Indians with a chance of such a booty. But Archie suddenly took offence.

"No," he said; "we can't have that!"

"Can't have what?"

"You can't be a gentleman, because you aren't. And you can't play Beatrice is your wife. It's—it's impertinent."

"But——" I said, and looked at her.

Some earlier grudge in the day's affair must have been in Archie's mind. "We let you play with us," said Archie; "but we can't have things like that."

"What rot!" said Beatrice. "He can if he likes."

But he carried his point. I let him carry it, and only began to grow angry three or four minutes later. Then we were still discussing play and disputing about another game. Nothing seemed right for all of us.

"We don't want you to play with us at all," said Archie.

"Yes, we do," said Beatrice.

"He drops his aitches like anything."

"No, E doesn't," said I, in the heat of the moment.

"There you go!" he cried. "E, he says. E! E! E!"

He pointed a finger at me. He had struck to the heart of my shame. I made the only possible reply by a rush at him. "Hello!" he cried, at my blackavised attack. He dropped back into an attitude that had some style in it, parried my blow, got back at my cheek, and laughed with surprise and relief at his own success. Whereupon I became a thing of murderous rage. He could box as well or better than I—he had yet to realize I knew anything of that at all—but I had fought once or twice to a finish with bare fists, I was used to inflicting and enduring savage hurting, and I

doubt if he had ever fought. I hadn't fought ten seconds before I felt this softness in him, realized all that quality of modern upper-class England that never goes to the quick; that hedges about rules and those petty points of honour that are the ultimate comminution of honour, that claims credit for things demonstrably half done. He seemed to think that first hit of his and one or two others were going to matter, that I ought to give in when presently my lip bled and dripped blood upon my clothes. So before we had been at it a minute he had ceased to be aggressive except in momentary spurts, and I was knocking him about almost as I wanted to do, and demanding breathlessly and fiercely, after our school manner, whether he had had enough, not knowing that by his high code and his soft training it was equally impossible for him to either buck-up and beat me, or give in.

I have a very distinct impression of Beatrice dancing about us during the affair in a state of unladylike appreciation, but I was too preoccupied to hear much of what she was saying. But she certainly backed us both, and I am inclined to think now—it may be the disillusionment of my ripened years—whichever she thought was winning.

Then young Garvell, giving way before my slogging, stumbled and fell over a big flint, and I, still following the tradition of my class and school, promptly flung myself on him to finish him. We were busy with each other on the ground when we became aware of a dreadful interruption.

"Shut up, you *fool!*" said Archie.

"Oh, Lady Drew!" I heard Beatrice cry. "They're fighting! They're fighting something awful!"

I looked over my shoulder. Archie's wish to get up became irresistible, and my resolve to go on with him vanished altogether.

I became aware of the two old ladies, presences of black and purple silk and fur and shining dark things; they had walked up through the Warren, while the horses took the hill easily, and so had come upon us. Beatrice had gone to them at once with an air of taking refuge, and stood beside and a little behind them. We both rose dejectedly. The two old ladies were evidently quite dreadfully shocked, and

peering at us with their poor old eyes; and never had I seen such a tremblement in Lady Drew's lorgnettes.

"You've never been fighting?" said Lady Drew. "You have been fighting."

"It wasn't proper fighting," snapped Archie, with accusing eyes on me.

"It's Mrs. Ponderevo's George!" said Miss Somerville, so adding a conviction for ingratitude to my evident sacrilege.

"How could he *dare?*" cried Lady Drew, becoming very awful.

"He broke the rules," said Archie, sobbing for breath. "I slipped, and—he hit me while I was down. He knelt on me."

"How could you *dare?*" said Lady Drew.

I produced an experienced handkerchief rolled up into a tight ball, and wiped the blood from my chin, but I offered no explanation of my daring. Among other things that prevented that, I was too short of breath.

"He didn't fight fair," sobbed Archie. . . .

Beatrice, from behind the old ladies, regarded me intently and without hostility. I am inclined to think the modification of my face through the damage to my lip interested her. It became dimly apparent to my confused intelligence that I must not say these two had been playing with me. That would not be after the rules of their game. I resolved in this difficult situation upon a sulky silence, and to take whatever consequences might follow.

§ 9

The powers of justice in Bladesover made an extraordinary mess of my case.

I have regretfully to admit that the Honourable Beatrice Normandy did, at the age of ten, betray me, abandon me, and lie most abominably about me. She was, as a matter of fact, panic-stricken about me, conscience-stricken too; she bolted from the very thought of my being her affianced lover and so forth, from the faintest memory of kissing; she was indeed altogether disgraceful and human in her betrayal. She and her half-brother lied in perfect concord, and I was presented as a wanton assailant of my social betters.

They were waiting about in the Warren, when I came up and spoke to them, etc.

On the whole, I now perceive Lady Drew's decisions were, in the light of the evidence, reasonable and merciful.

They were conveyed to me by my mother, who was, I really believe, even more shocked by the grossness of my social insubordination than Lady Drew. She dilated on her ladyship's kindnesses to me, on the effrontery and wickedness of my procedure, and so came at last to the terms of my penance. "You must go up to young Mr. Garvell, and beg his pardon."

"I won't beg his pardon," I said, speaking for the first time.

My mother paused, incredulous.

I folded my arms on her table-cloth, and delivered my wicked little ultimatum. "I won't beg his pardon nohow," I said. "See?"

"Then you will have to go off to your uncle Frapp at Chatham."

"I don't care where I have to go or what I have to do, I won't beg his pardon," I said.

And I didn't.

After that I was one against the world. Perhaps in my mother's heart there lurked some pity for me, but she did not show it. She took the side of the young gentleman; she tried hard, she tried very hard, to make me say I was sorry I had struck him. Sorry!

I couldn't explain.

So I went into exile in the dog-cart to Redwood station, with Jukes the coachman, coldly silent, driving me, and all my personal belongings in a small American-cloth portmanteau behind.

I felt I had much to embitter me; the game had not the beginnings of fairness by any standards I knew. . . . But the thing that embittered me most was that the Honourable Beatrice Normandy should have repudiated and fled from me as though I was some sort of leper, and not even have taken a chance or so, to give me a good-bye. She might have done that anyhow! Supposing I had told on her! But the son of a servant counts as a servant. She had forgotten and now remembered. . . .

I solaced myself with some extraordinary dream of coming back to Bladesover, stern, powerful, after the fashion of Coriolanus. I do not recall the details, but I have no doubt I displayed great magnanimity. . . .

Well, anyhow I never said I was sorry for pounding young Garvell, and I am not sorry to this day.

CHAPTER II

Of my Launch into the World and the last I saw of Bladesover.

§ 1

When I was thus banished from Bladesover House, as it was then thought for good and all, I was sent by my mother in a vindictive spirit, first to her cousin Nicodemus Frapp, and then, as a fully indentured apprentice, to my uncle Ponderevo.

I ran away from the care of my cousin Nicodemus back to Bladesover House.

My cousin Nicodemus Frapp was a baker in a back street—a slum rather—just off that miserable narrow mean high-road that threads those exquisite beads, Rochester and Chatham. He was, I must admit, a shock to me, much dominated by a young, plump, prolific, malingering wife; a bent, slow-moving, unwilling dark man, with flour in his hair and eyelashes, in the lines of his face and the seams of his coat. I've never had a chance to correct my early impression of him, and he still remains an almost dreadful memory, a sort of caricature of incompetent simplicity. As I remember him, indeed, he presented the servile tradition perfected. He had no pride in his person, fine clothes and dressing up wasn't " for the likes of " him, so that he got his wife, who was no artist at it, to cut his black hair at irregular intervals, and let his nails become disagreeable to the fastidious eye ; he had no pride in his business nor any initiative, his only virtues were not doing certain things and hard work. " Your uncle," said my mother—all grown-up cousins were uncles by courtesy among the Victorian middle class—" isn't much to look at or talk

to, but he's a Good Hard-Working Man." There was a sort of base honourableness about toil, however needless, in that system of inversion. Another point of honour was to rise at or before dawn, and then laboriously muddle about. It was very distinctly impressed on my mind that the Good Hard-Working Man would have thought it " fal-lallish " to own a pocket-handkerchief. Poor old Frapp—dirty and crushed by-product of Bladesover's magnificence ! He made no fight against the world at all; he was floundering in small debts that were not so small but that finally they overwhelmed him; whenever there was occasion for any exertion his wife fell back upon pains and her " condition," and God sent them many children, most of whom died, and so, by their coming and going, gave a double exercise in the virtues of submission.

Resignation to God's will was the common device of these people in the face of every duty and every emergency. There were no books in the house, I doubt if either of them had retained the capacity for reading consecutively for more than a minute or so, and it was with amazement that day after day, over and above stale bread, one beheld food and again more food amidst the litter that held permanent session on the living-room table.

One might have doubted if either of them felt discomfort in this dusky darkness of existence, if it was not that they did visibly seek consolation. They sought this and found it of a Sunday, not in strong drink and raving, but in imaginary draughts of blood. They met with twenty or thirty other darkened and unclean people, all dressed in dingy colours that would not show the dirt, in a little brick-built chapel equipped with a spavined roarer of a harmonium, and there solaced their minds on the thought that all that was fair and free in life, all that struggled, all that planned and made, all pride and beauty and honour, all fine and enjoyable things, were irrevocably damned to everlasting torments. They were the self-appointed confidants of God's mockery of His own creation. So at any rate they stick in my mind. Vaguer, and yet hardly less agreeable than this cosmic jest, this coming " Yah, clever ! " and general serving out and " showing up " of the lucky, the bold, and the cheerful, was their own predestination to Glory.

"There is a Fountain, filled with Blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's Veins,"

so they sang. I hear the drone and wheeze of that hymn now. I hated them with the bitter uncharitable condemnation of boyhood, and a twinge of that hate comes back to me. As I write the words, the sounds and then the scene return, these obscure, undignified people, a fat woman with asthma, an old Welsh milk-seller with a tumour on his bald head, who was the intellectual leader of the sect, a huge-voiced haberdasher with a big black beard, a white-faced, extraordinarily pregnant woman, his wife, a spectacled rate collector with a bent back. . . . I hear the talk about souls, the strange battered old phrases that were coined ages ago in the seaports of the sun-dry Levant, of balm of Gilead and manna in the desert, of gourds that give shade and water in a thirsty land; I recall again the way in which at the conclusion of the service the talk remained pious in form but became medical in substance, and how the women got together for obstetric whisperings. I, as a boy, did not matter, and might overhear. . . .

If Bladesover is my key for the explanation of England, I think my invincible persuasion that I understand Russia was engendered by the circle of Uncle Frapp.

I slept in a dingy-sheeted bed with the two elder survivors of Frapp fecundity, and spent my weekdays in helping in the laborious disorder of the shop and bakehouse, in incidental deliveries of bread and so forth, and in parrying the probings of my uncle into my relations with the Blood, and his confidential explanations that ten shillings a week —which was what my mother paid him—was not enough to cover my accommodation. He was very anxious to keep that, but also he wanted more. There were neither books nor any seat nor corner in that house where reading was possible, no newspaper ever brought the clash of worldly things into its heavenward seclusion; horror of it all grew in me daily, and whenever I could I escaped into the streets and tramped about Chatham. The news shops appealed to me particularly. One saw there smudgy illustrated sheets, the *Police News* in particular, in which vilely drawn pictures brought home to the dullest intelligence an interminable succession of squalid crimes, women

murdered and put into boxes, buried under floors, old men bludgeoned at midnight by robbers, people thrust suddenly out of trains, happy lovers shot, vitrioled and so forth by rivals. I got my first glimpse of the life of pleasure in foully drawn pictures of " police raids " on this and that. Interspersed with these sheets were others in which Sloper, the urban John Bull, had his fling with gin bottle and obese umbrella, or the kindly, empty faces of the Royal Family appeared and reappeared, visiting this, opening that, getting married, getting offspring, lying in state, doing everything but anything, a wonderful, good-meaning, impenetrable race apart. . . .

I have never revisited Chatham; the impression it has left on my mind is one of squalid compression, unlit by any gleam of a maturer charity. All its effects arranged themselves as antithetical to the Bladesover effects. They confirmed and intensified all that Bladesover suggested. Bladesover declared itself to be the land, to be essentially England; I have already told how its airy spaciousness, its wide dignity, seemed to thrust village, church, and vicarage into corners, into a secondary and conditional significance. Here one gathered the corollary of that. Since the whole wide country of Kent was made up of contiguous Bladesovers and for the gentlefolk, the surplus of population, all who were not good tenants nor good labourers, Church of England, submissive and respectful, were necessarily thrust together, jostled out of sight, to fester as they might in this place that had the colours and even the smells of a well-packed dustbin. They should be grateful even for that; that, one felt, was the theory of it all.

And I loafed about this wilderness of crowded dinginess, with young, receptive, wide-open eyes, and through the blessing (or curse) of some fairy godmother of mine, asking and asking again : " But after all, *why*—? "

I wandered up through Rochester once, and had a glimpse of the Stour valley above the town, all horrible with cement works and foully smoking chimneys and rows of workmen's cottages, minute, ugly, uncomfortable, and grimy. So I had my first intimation of how industrialism must live in a landlord's land. I spent some hours, too, in the streets that give upon the river, drawn by the spell of

the sea. But I saw barges and ships stripped of magic and mostly devoted to cement, ice, timber and coal. The sailors looked to me gross and slovenly men, and the shipping struck me as clumsy, ugly, old, and dirty. I discovered that most sails don't fit the ships that hoist them, and that there may be as pitiful and squalid a display of poverty with a vessel as with a man. When I saw colliers unloading, watched the workers in the hold filling up silly little sacks and the succession of blackened, half-naked men that ran to and fro with these along a plank over a thirty-foot drop into filth and mud, I was first seized with admiration of their courage and toughness, and then, "But after all, *why*—?" and the stupid ugliness of all this waste of muscle and endurance came home to me. Among other things it obviously wasted and deteriorated the coal. . . . And I had imagined great things of the sea! . . .

Well, anyhow, for a time that vocation was stilled.

But such impressions came into my leisure, and of that I had no excess. Most of my time was spent doing things for Uncle Frapp, and my evenings and nights perforce in the company of the two eldest of my cousins. One was errand boy at an oil shop and fervently pious, and of him I saw nothing until the evening except at meals; the other was enjoying the midsummer holidays without any great elation, a singularly thin and abject, stunted creature he was, whose chief liveliness was to pretend to be a monkey, and who I am now convinced had some secret disease that drained his vitality away. If I met him now I should think him a pitiful little creature and be extremely sorry for him. Then I felt only a wondering aversion. He sniffed horribly, he was tired out by a couple of miles of loafing, he never started any conversation, and he seemed to prefer his own company to mine. His mother, poor woman, said he was the "thoughtful one."

Serious trouble came suddenly out of a conversation we held in bed one night. Some particularly pious phrase of my elder cousin's irritated me extremely, and I avowed outright my entire disbelief in the whole scheme of revealed religion. I had never said a word about my doubts to any one before, except to Ewart, who had first evolved them. I had never settled my doubts until at this moment when I

spoke. But it came to me then that the whole scheme of salvation of the Frapps was not simply doubtful but impossible. I fired this discovery out into the darkness with the greatest promptitude.

My abrupt denials certainly scared my cousins amazingly. At first they could not understand what I was saying, and when they did I fully believe they expected an instant answer in thunderbolts and flames. They gave me more room in the bed forthwith, and then the elder sat up and expressed his sense of my awfulness. I was already a little frightened at my temerity, but when he asked me categorically to unsay what I had said, what could I do but confirm my repudiation?

"There's no hell," I said, "and no eternal punishment. No God would be such a fool as that."

My elder cousin cried aloud in horror, and the younger lay scared but listening.

"Then you mean," said my eldest cousin, when at last he could bring himself to argue, "you might do just as you liked?"

"If you were cad enough," said I.

Our little voices went on interminably, and at one stage my cousin got out of bed and made his brother do likewise, and knelt in the night dimness and prayed at me. That I found trying, but I held out valiantly. "Forgive him," said my cousin, "he knows not what he sayeth."

"You can pray if you like," I said, "but if you're going to cheek me in your prayers I draw the line."

The last I remember of that great discussion was my cousin deploring the fact that he "should ever sleep in the same bed with an Infidel!"

The next day he astonished me by telling the whole business to his father. This was quite outside all my codes. Uncle Nicodemus sprang it upon me at the midday meal.

"You been sayin' queer things, George," he said abruptly. "You better mind what you're saying."

"What did he say, father?" said Mrs. Frapp.

"Things I couldn' repeat," said he.

"What things?" I asked hotly.

"Ask *'im*," said my uncle, pointing with his knife to his informant, and making me realize the nature of my

offence. My aunt looked at the witness. "Not——?" she framed a question.

"Wuss," said my uncle. "Blarsphemy."

My aunt couldn't touch another mouthful. I was already a little troubled in my conscience by my daring, and now I began to feel the black enormity of the course upon which I had embarked.

"I was only talking sense," I said.

I had a still more dreadful moment when presently I met my cousin in the brick alley behind the yard, that led back to his grocer's shop.

"You sneak!" I said, and smacked his face hard forthwith. "Now then," said I.

He started back, astonished and alarmed. His eyes met mine, and I saw a sudden gleam of resolution. He turned his other cheek to me.

"'It it," he said; "'it it. *I'll* forgive you."

I felt I had never encountered a more detestable way of evading a licking. I shoved him against the wall and left him there, forgiving me, and went back into the house.

"You better not speak to your cousins, George," said my aunt, "till you're in a better state of mind."

I became an outcast forthwith. At supper that night a gloomy silence was broken by my cousin saying, "'E 'it me for telling you, and I turned the other cheek, muvver."

"'E's got the evil one be'ind 'im now, a ridin' on 'is back," said my aunt, to the grave discomfort of the eldest girl, who sat beside me.

After supper my uncle, in a few ill-chosen words, prayed me to repent before I slept.

"Suppose you was took in your sleep, George," he said; "where'd you be then? You just think of that, me boy." By this time I was thoroughly miserable and frightened, and this suggestion unnerved me dreadfully, but I kept up an impenitent front. "To wake in 'ell," said uncle Nicodemus, in gentle tones. "You don't want to wake in 'ell, George, burnin' and screamin' for ever, do you? You wouldn't like that?"

He tried very hard to get me to "jest 'ave a look at the bake'ouse fire" before I retired. "It might move you," he said.

I was awake longest that night. My cousins slept the sleep of faith on either side of me. I decided I would whisper my prayers, and stopped midway because I was ashamed, and perhaps also because I had an idea one didn't square God like that.

"No," I said, with a sudden confidence, "damn me if you're coward enough. . . . But you're not. . . . No! You couldn't be."

I woke my cousins up with emphatic digs, and told them as much, triumphantly. and went very peacefully to sleep with my act of faith accomplished.

I slept not only through that night, but for all my nights since then. So far as any fear of Divine injustice goes, I sleep soundly, and shall, I know, to the end of things. That declaration was an epoch in my spiritual life.

§ 2

But I didn't expect to have the whole meeting on Sunday turned on to me.

It was. It all comes back to me, that convergence of attention, even the faint leathery smell of its atmosphere returns, and the coarse feel of my aunt's black dress beside me in contact with my hand. I see again the old Welsh milkman "wrestling" with me—they all wrestled with me, by prayer or exhortation. And I was holding out stoutly, though convinced now by the contagion of their universal conviction that by doing so I was certainly and hopelessly damned. I felt that they were right, that God was probably like them, and that on the whole it didn't matter. And to simplify the business thoroughly, I had declared I didn't believe anything at all. They confuted me by texts from Scripture, which I now perceive was an illegitimate method of reply. When I got home, still impenitent and eternally lost and secretly very lonely and miserable and alarmed, Uncle Nicodemus docked my Sunday pudding.

One person only spoke to me like a human being on that day of wrath, and that was the younger Frapp. He came up to me in the afternoon while I was confined upstairs with a Bible and my own thoughts.

"'Ello," he said, and fretted about.

"D'you mean to say there isn't—no one," he said, funking the word.

"No one?"

"No one watching yer—always."

"Why should there be?" I asked.

"You can't help thoughts," said my cousin, "any'ow. . . . You mean——" He stopped hovering. "I s'pose I oughtn't to be talking to you."

He hesitated and flitted away with a guilty back glance over his shoulder. . . .

The following week made life quite intolerable for me; these people forced me at last into an Atheism that terrified me. When I learnt that next Sunday the wrestling was to be resumed, my courage failed me altogether.

I happened upon a map of Kent in a stationer's window on Saturday, and that set me thinking of one form of release. I studied it intently for half an hour perhaps, on Saturday night, got a route list of villages well fixed in my memory, and got up and started for Bladesover about five on Sunday morning while my two bed-mates were still fast asleep.

§ 3

I remember something, but not so much of it as I should like to recall, of my long tramp to Bladesover House. The distance from Chatham is almost exactly seventeen miles, and it took me until nearly one. It was very interesting, and I do not think I was over-fatigued, though I got rather pinched by one boot.

The morning must have been very clear, because I remember that near Itchinstow Hall I looked back and saw the estuary of the Thames, that river that has since played so large a part in my life. But at the time I did not know it was the Thames, I thought this great expanse of mud flats and water was the sea, which I had never yet seen nearly. And out upon it stood ships, sailing ships and a steamer or so, going up to London or down out into the great seas of the world. I stood for a long time watching these and thinking whether after all I should not have done better to have run away to sea.

The nearer I drew to Bladesover, the more doubtful I grew of the quality of my reception, and the more I regretted that alternative. I suppose it was the dirty clumsiness of the shipping I had seen nearly, that put me out of mind of that. I took a short cut through the Warren across the corner of the main park to intercept the people from the church. I wanted to avoid meeting anyone before I met my mother, and so I went to a place where the path passed between banks, and without exactly hiding, stood up among the bushes. This place, among other advantages, eliminated any chance of seeing Lady Drew, who would drive round by the carriage road.

Standing up to waylay in this fashion, I had a queer feeling of brigandage, as though I was some intrusive sort of bandit among these orderly things. It is the first time I remember having that outlaw feeling distinctly, a feeling that has played a large part in my subsequent life. I felt there existed no place for me—that I had to drive myself in.

Presently, down the hill, the servants appeared, straggling by twos and threes, first some of the garden people and the butler's wife with them, then the two laundry maids, odd inseparable old creatures, then the first footman talking to the butler's little girl, and at last, walking grave and breathless beside old Ann and Miss Fison, the black figure of my mother.

My boyish mind suggested the adoption of a playful form of appearance. "Coo-ee, mother!" said I, coming out against the sky, "Coo-ee!"

My mother looked up, went very white, and put her hand to her bosom. . . .

I suppose there was a fearful fuss about me. And of course I was quite unable to explain my reappearance. But I held out stoutly, "I won't go back to Chatham; I'll drown myself first." The next day my mother carried me off to Wimblehurst, took me fiercely and aggressively to an uncle I had never heard of before, near though the place was to us. She gave me no words as to what was to happen, and I was too subdued by her manifest wrath and humiliation at my last misdemeanour to demand information. I don't for one moment think Lady Drew was "nice" about

me. The finality of my banishment was endorsed and underlined and stamped home. I wished very much now that I had run away to sea, in spite of the coaly dust and squalor Rochester had revealed to me. Perhaps overseas one came to different lands.

§ 4

I do not remember much of my journey to Wimblehurst with my mother except the image of her as sitting bolt upright, as rather disdaining the third-class carriage in which we travelled, and how she looked away from me out of the window when she spoke of my uncle. "I have not seen your uncle," she said, "since he was a boy. . . ." She added grudgingly, "Then he was supposed to be clever."

She took little interest in such qualities as cleverness.

"He married about three years ago, and set up for himself in Wimblehurst. . . . So I suppose she had some money."

She mused on scenes she had long dismissed from her mind. "Teddy," she said at last in the tone of one who has been feeling in the dark and finds. "He was called Teddy . . . about your age. . . . Now he must be twenty-six or seven."

I thought of my uncle as Teddy directly I saw him; there was something in his personal appearance that in the light of that memory phrased itself at once as Teddiness—a certain Teddidity. To describe it in any other terms is more difficult. It is nimbleness without grace, and alertness without intelligence. He whisked out of his shop upon the pavement, a short figure in grey and wearing grey carpet slippers; one had a sense of a young fattish face behind gilt glasses, wiry hair that stuck up and forward over the forehead, an irregular nose that had its aquiline moments, and that the body betrayed an equatorial laxity, an incipient "bow window" as the image goes. He jerked out of the shop, came to a stand on the pavement outside, regarded something in the window with infinite appreciation, stroked his chin, and, as abruptly, shot sideways into the door again, charging through it as it were behind an extended hand.

"That must be him," said my mother, catching at her breath.

We came past the window whose contents I was presently to know by heart, a very ordinary chemist's window except that there was a frictional electrical machine, an air-pump, and two or three tripods and retorts replacing the customary blue, yellow, and red bottles above. There was a plaster of Paris horse to indicate veterinary medicines among these breakables, and below were scent packets and diffusers and sponges and soda-water syphons and such-like things. Only in the middle there was a rubricated card very neatly painted by hand, with these words—

Buy Ponderevo's Cough Linctus *Now*.

NOW!

WHY?

Twopence Cheaper than in Winter.

You Store Apples! why not the Medicine

You are Bound to Need?

in which appeal I was to recognize presently my uncle's distinctive note.

My uncle's face appeared above a card of infants' comforters in the glass pane of the door. I perceived his eyes were brown, and that his glasses creased his nose. It was manifest he did not know us from Adam. A stare of scrutiny allowed an expression of commercial deference to appear in front of it, and my uncle flung open the door.

"You don't know me?" panted my mother.

My uncle would not own he did not, but his curiosity was manifest. My mother sat down on one of the little chairs before the soap and patent medicine-piled counter, and her lips opened and closed.

"A glass of water, madam," said my uncle, waved his hand in a sort of curve, and shot away.

My mother drank the water and spoke. "That boy," she said, "takes after his father. He grows more like him every day, . . . and so I have brought him to you."

"His father, madam?"

"George."

For a moment the chemist was still at a loss. He stood behind the counter with the glass my mother had returned to him in his hand. Then comprehension grew.

"By Gosh!" he said. "Lord!" he cried. His glasses fell off. He disappeared, replacing them, behind a pile of boxed-up bottles of blood mixture. "Eleven thousand virgins!" I heard him cry. The glass was banged down. "O-ri-ental Gums!"

He shot away out of the shop through some masked door. One heard his voice. "Susan! Susan!"

Then he reappeared with an extended hand. "Well, how *are* you?" he said. "I was never so surprised in my life. Fancy! . . . *You!*"

He shook my mother's impassive hand and then mine very warmly, holding his glasses on with his left forefinger.

"Come right in!" he cried—"come right in! Better late than never!" and led the way into the parlour behind the shop.

After Bladesover that apartment struck me as stuffy and petty, but it was very comfortable in comparison with the Frapp living-room. It had a faint, disintegrating smell of meals about it, and my most immediate impression was of the remarkable fact that something was hung about or wrapped round or draped over everything. There was bright-patterned muslin round the gas-bracket in the middle of the room, round the mirror over the mantel, stuff with ball fringe along the mantel and casing in the fireplace,—I first saw ball-fringe here—and even the lamp on the little bureau wore a shade like a large muslin hat. The table-cloth had ball-fringe, and so had the window curtains, and the carpet was a bed of roses. There were little cupboards on either side of the fireplace, and in the recesses, ill-made shelves packed with books, and enriched with pinked American cloth. There was a dictionary lying face downward on the table, and the open bureau was littered with foolscap paper and the evidences of recently abandoned toil. My eye caught

"The Ponderevo Patent Flat, a Machine you can Live in," written in large firm letters. My uncle opened a little door like a cupboard door in the corner of this room, and revealed the narrowest twist of staircase I had ever set eyes upon. "Susan!" he bawled again. "Wantje. Some one to see you. Surprisin'."

There came an inaudible reply, and a sudden loud bump over our heads as of some article of domestic utility pettishly flung aside, then the cautious steps of some one descending the twist, and then my aunt appeared in the doorway with her hand upon the jamb.

"It's Aunt Ponderevo," cried my uncle. "George's wife—and she's brought over her son!" His eye roved about the room. He darted to the bureau with a sudden impulse, and turned the sheet about the patent flat face down. Then he waved his glasses at us, "*You* know, Susan, my elder brother George. I told you about 'im lots of times."

He fretted across to the hearthrug and took up a position there, replaced his glasses and coughed.

My aunt Susan seemed to be taking it in. She was then rather a pretty slender woman of twenty-three or four, I suppose, and I remember being struck by the blueness of her eyes and the clear freshness of her complexion. She had little features, a button nose, a pretty chin, and a long graceful neck that stuck out of her pale blue cotton morning dress. There was a look of half-assumed perplexity on her face, a little quizzical wrinkle of the brow that suggested a faintly amused attempt to follow my uncle's mental operations, a vain attempt and a certain hopelessness that had in succession become habitual. She seemed to be saying, "Oh Lord! What's he giving me *this* time?" And as I came to know her better I detected, as a complication of her effort of apprehension, a subsidiary riddle to "What's he giving me?" and that was—to borrow a phrase from my schoolboy language—"Is it keeps?" She looked at my mother and me, and back to her husband again.

"You know," he said. "George!"

"Well," she said to my mother, descending the last three steps of the staircase and holding out her hand, "you're welcome. Though it's a surprise. . . . I can't

ask you to *have* anything, I'm afraid, for there isn't anything in the house." She smiled, and looked at her husband banteringly. "Unless he makes up something with his old chemicals, which he's quite equal to doing."

My mother shook hands stiffly, and told me to kiss my aunt. . . .

"Well, let's all sit down," said my uncle, suddenly whistling through his clenched teeth, and briskly rubbing his hands together. He put up a chair for my mother, raised the blind of the little window, lowered it again, and returned to his hearthrug. "I'm sure," he said, as one who decides, "I'm very glad to see you."

§ 5

As they talked I gave my attention pretty exclusively to my uncle.

I noted him in great detail. I remember now his partially unbuttoned waistcoat, as though something had occurred to distract him as he did it up, and a little cut upon his chin. I liked a certain humour in his eyes. I watched too, with the fascination these things have for an observant boy, the play of his lips—they were a little oblique, and there was something "slipshod," if one may strain a word so far, about his mouth so that he lisped and sibilated ever and again—and the coming and going of a curious expression, triumphant in quality it was, upon his face as he talked. He fingered his glasses, which did not seem to fit his nose, fretted with things in his waistcoat-pockets or put his hands behind him, looked over our heads, and ever and again rose to his toes and dropped back on his heels. He had a way of drawing air in at times through his teeth that gave a whispering zest to his speech. It's a sound I can only represent as a soft Zzzz.

He did most of the talking. My mother repeated what she had already said in the shop, "I have brought George over to you," and then desisted for a time from the real business in hand. "You find this a comfortable house?" she asked; and this being affirmed: "It looks—very convenient. . . . Not too big to be a trouble—no. You like Wimblehurst, I suppose?"

My uncle retorted with some inquiries about the great people of Bladesover, and my mother answered in the character of a personal friend of Lady Drew's. The talk hung for a time, and then my uncle embarked upon a dissertation upon Wimblehurst.

"This place," he began, "isn't of course quite the place I ought to be in."

My mother nodded as though she had expected that.

"It gives me no Scope," he went on. "It's dead-and-alive. Nothing happens."

"He's always wanting something to happen," said my aunt Susan. "Some day he'll get a shower of things and they'll be too much for him."

"Not they," said my uncle, buoyantly.

"Do you find business—slack?" asked my mother.

"Oh! one rubs along. But there's no Development—no Growth. They just come along here and buy pills when they want 'em—and a horseball or such. They've got to be ill before there's a prescription. That sort they are. You can't get 'em to launch out, you can't get 'em to take up anything new. F'rinstance, I've been trying lately—induce them to buy their medicines in advance, and in larger quantities. But they won't look at it! Then I tried to float a little notion of mine, sort of an insurance scheme for colds; you pay so much a week, and when you've got a cold you get a bottle of Cough Linctus so long as you can produce a substantial sniff. See? But Lord! they've no capacity for ideas, they don't catch on; no Jump about the place, no Life! Live!—they trickle, and what one has to do here is to trickle too—Zzzz."

"Ah!" said my mother.

"It doesn't suit me," said my uncle. "I'm the cascading sort."

"George was that," said my mother after a pondering moment.

My aunt Susan took up the parable with an affectionate glance at her husband.

"He's always trying to make his old business jump," she said. "Always putting fresh cards in the window, or getting up to something. You'd hardly believe. It makes *me* jump sometimes."

"But it does no good," said my uncle.

"It does no good," said his wife. "It's not his *miloo*. . ."

Presently they came upon a wide pause.

From the beginning of their conversation there had been the promise of this pause, and I pricked my ears. I knew perfectly what was bound to come; they were going to talk of my father. I was enormously strengthened in my persuasion when I found my mother's eye resting thoughtfully upon me in the silence, and then my uncle looked at me and then my aunt. I struggled unavailingly to produce an expression of meek stupidity.

"I think," said my uncle, "that George will find it more amusing to have a turn in the market-place than to sit here talking with us. There's a pair of stocks there, George—very interesting. Old-fashioned stocks."

"I don't mind sitting here," I said.

My uncle rose and in the most friendly way led me through the shop. He stood on his doorstep and jerked amiable directions to me.

"Ain't it sleepy, George, eh? There's the butcher's dog over there, asleep in the road—half an hour from midday! If the last Trump sounded I don't believe it would wake. Nobody would wake! The chaps up there in the churchyard—they'd just turn over and say; 'Naar—you don't catch us, you don't! See?' . . . Well, you'll find the stocks just round that corner."

He watched me out of sight.

So I never heard what they said about my father after all.

§ 6

When I returned, my uncle had in some remarkable way become larger and central. "Tha'chu, George?" he cried, when the shop-door bell sounded. "Come right through"; and I found him, as it were, in the chairman's place before the draped grate.

The three of them regarded me.

"We have been talking of making you a chemist, George," said my uncle.

My mother looked at me. "I had hoped," she said,

" that Lady Drew would have done something for him——" She stopped.

" In what way ? " said my uncle.

" She might have spoken to some one, got him into something, perhaps. . . ." She had the servant's invincible persuasion that all good things are done by patronage.

" He is not the sort of boy for whom things are done," she added, dismissing these dreams. " He doesn't accommodate himself. When he thinks Lady Drew wishes a thing, he seems not to wish it. Towards Mr. Redgrave too he has been—disrespectful—he is like his father."

" Who's Mr. Redgrave ? "

" The Vicar."

" A bit independent ? " said my uncle, briskly.

" Disobedient," said my mother. " He has no idea of his place. He seems to think he can get on by slighting people and flouting them. He'll learn perhaps before it is too late."

My uncle stroked his cut chin and regarded me. " Have you learnt any Latin ? " he asked abruptly.

I said I had not.

" He'll have to learn a little Latin," he explained to my mother, " to qualify. H'm. He could go down to the chap at the grammar school here—it's just been routed into existence again by the Charity Commissioners—and have lessons."

" What, me learn Latin ! " I cried, with emotion.

" A little," he said.

" I've always wanted——" I said, and "*Latin !*"

I had long been obsessed by the idea that having no Latin was a disadvantage in the world, and Archie Garvell had driven the point of this pretty earnestly home. The literature I had read at Bladesover had all tended that way. Latin had had a quality of emancipation for me that I find it difficult to convey. And suddenly, when I had supposed all learning was at an end for me, I heard this !

" It's no good to you, of course," said my uncle, " except to pass exams with, but there you are ! "

" You'll have to learn Latin because you have to learn Latin," said my mother, " not because you *want* to. And

afterwards you will have to learn all sorts of other things. . . ."

The idea that I was to go on learning, that to read and master the contents of books was still to be justifiable as a duty, overwhelmed all other facts. I had had it rather clear in my mind for some weeks that all that kind of opportunity might close to me for ever. I began to take a lively interest in this new project.

"Then shall I live here?" I asked, "with you, and study . . . as well as work in the shop? . . ."

"That's the way of it," said my uncle.

I parted from my mother that day in a dream, so sudden and important was this new aspect of things to me. I was to learn Latin! Now that the humiliation of my failure at Bladesover was past for her, now that she had a little got over her first intense repugnance at this resort to my uncle and contrived something that seemed like a possible provision for my future, the tenderness natural to a parting far more significant than any of our previous partings crept into her manner.

She sat in the train to return, I remember, and I stood at the open door of her compartment, and neither of us knew how soon we should cease for ever to be a trouble to one another.

"You must be a good boy, George," she said. "You must learn. . . . And you mustn't set yourself up against those who are above you and better than you. . . . Or envy them."

"No, mother," I said.

I promised carelessly. Her eyes were fixed upon mine. I was wondering whether I could by any means begin Latin that night.

Something touched her heart then, some thought, some memory; perhaps some premonition. . . . The solitary porter began slamming carriage doors.

"George," she said hastily, almost shamefully, "kiss me!"

I stepped up into her compartment as she bent forward. She caught me in her arms quite eagerly, she pressed me to her—a strange thing for her to do. I perceived her eyes were extraordinarily bright, and then this brightness burst along the lower lids and rolled down her cheeks.

For the first and last time in my life I saw my mother's tears. Then she had gone, leaving me discomforted, and perplexed, forgetting for a time even that I was to learn Latin, thinking of my mother as of something new and strange.

The thing recurred though I sought to dismiss it; it stuck itself into my memory against the day of fuller understanding. Poor proud, habitual, sternly narrow soul! poor difficult and misunderstanding son! it was the first time that ever it dawned upon me that my mother also might perhaps feel.

§ 7

My mother died suddenly, and it was thought by Lady Drew, inconsiderately, the following spring. Her ladyship instantly fled to Folkestone with Miss Somerville and Fison, until the funeral should be over and my mother's successor installed.

My uncle took me over to the funeral. I remember there was a sort of prolonged crisis in the days preceding this, because, directly he heard of my loss, he had sent a pair of check trousers to the Judkins people in London to be dyed black, and they did not come back in time. He became very excited on the third day, and sent a number of increasingly fiery telegrams without any result whatever, and succumbed next morning with a very ill grace to my aunt Susan's insistence upon the resources of his dress-suit. In my memory those black legs of his, in a particularly thin and shiny black cloth—for evidently his dress-suit dated from adolescent and slenderer days—straddle like the Colossus of Rhodes over my approach to my mother's funeral. Moreover, I was inconvenienced and distracted by a silk hat he had bought me, my first silk hat, much ennobled, as his was also, by a deep mourning band.

I remember, but rather indistinctly, my mother's white-panelled housekeeper's room and the touch of oddness about it that she was not there, and the various familiar faces made strange by black, and I seem to recall the exaggerated self-consciousness that arose out of their focussed attention. No doubt the sense of the new silk hat

came and went and came again in my emotional chaos. Then something comes out clear and sorrowful, rises out clear and sheer from among all these rather base and inconsequent things, and once again I walk before all the other mourners close behind her coffin as it is carried along the churchyard path to her grave, with the old vicar's slow voice saying regretfully and unconvincingly above me, triumphant solemn things.

"I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

Never die! The day was a high and glorious morning in spring, and all the trees were budding and bursting into green. Everywhere there were blossoms and flowers; the pear trees and cherry trees in the sexton's garden were sunlit snow, there were nodding daffodils and early tulips in the graveyard beds, great multitudes of daisies, and everywhere the birds seemed singing. And in the middle was the brown coffin end, tilting on men's shoulders, and half occluded by the vicar's Oxford hood.

And so we came to my mother's waiting grave. . . .

For a time I was very observant, watching the coffin lowered, hearing the words of the ritual. It seemed a very curious business altogether.

Suddenly as the service drew to its end, I felt something had still to be said which had not been said, realized that she had withdrawn in silence, neither forgiving me nor hearing from me—those now lost assurances. Suddenly I knew I had not understood. Suddenly I saw her tenderly; remembered not so much tender or kindly things of her as her crossed wishes and the ways in which I had thwarted her. Surprisingly I realized that behind all her hardness and severity she had loved me, that I was the only thing she had ever loved, and that until this moment I had never loved her. And now she was there and deaf and blind to me, pitifully defeated in her designs for me, covered from me so that she could not know. . . .

I dug my nails into the palms of my hands, I set my teeth, but tears blinded me, sobs would have choked me had speech been required of me. The old vicar read on, there came a mumbled response—and so on to the end. I wept as it

were internally, and only when we had come out of the churchyard could I think and speak calmly again.

Stamped across this memory are the little black figures of my uncle and Rabbits, telling Avebury the sexton and undertaker that " it had all passed off very well—very well indeed."

§ 8

That is the last I shall tell of Bladesover. The drop-scene falls on that, and it comes no more as an actual presence into this novel. I did indeed go back there once again, but under circumstances quite immaterial to my story. But in a sense Bladesover has never left me; it is, as I said at the outset, one of those dominant explanatory impressions that make the frame-work of my mind. Bladesover illuminates England; it has become all that is spacious, dignified, pretentious, and truly conservative in English life. It is my social datum. That is why I have drawn it here on so large a scale.

When I came back at last to the real Bladesover on an inconsequent visit, everything was far smaller than I could have supposed possible. It was as though everything had shivered and shrivelled a little at the Lichtenstein touch. The harp was still in the saloon, but there was a different grand piano with a painted lid and a metrostyle pianola, and an extraordinary quantity of artistic litter and *bric-à-brac* scattered about. There was the trail of the Bond Street showroom over it all. The furniture was still under chintz, but it wasn't the same sort of chintz, although it pretended to be, and the lustre-dangling chandeliers had passed away. Lady Lichtenstein's books replaced the brown volumes I had browsed among—they were mostly presentation copies of contemporary novels and the *National Review* and the *Empire Review*, and the *Nineteenth Century and After* jostled current books on the tables—English new books in gaudy catchpenny " artistic " covers, French and Italian novels in yellow, German art handbooks of almost incredible ugliness. There were abundant evidences that her ladyship was playing with the Keltic renascence, and a great number of ugly cats made of china—she " collected "

china and stoneware cats—stood about everywhere—in all colours, in all kinds of deliberately comic, highly glazed distortion. . . .

It is nonsense to pretend that finance makes any better aristocrats than rent. Nothing can make an aristocrat but pride, knowledge, training, and the sword. These people were no improvement on the Drews, none whatever. There was no effect of a beneficial replacement of passive unintelligent people by active intelligent ones. One felt that a smaller but more enterprising and intensely undignified variety of stupidity had replaced the large dulness of the old gentry, and that was all. Bladesover, I thought, had undergone just the same change between the 'seventies and the new century that had overtaken the dear old *Times*, and Heaven knows how much more of the decorous British fabric. These Lichtensteins and their like seem to have no promise in them at all of any fresh vitality for the kingdom. I do not believe in their intelligence or their power—they have nothing new about them at all, nothing creative nor rejuvenescent, no more than a disorderly instinct of acquisition; and the prevalence of them and their kind is but a phase in the broad slow decay of the great social organism of England. They could not have made Bladesover, they cannot replace it; they just happen to break out over it—saprophytically.

Well,—that was my last impression of Bladesover.

CHAPTER III

The Wimblehurst Apprenticeship

§ 1

So far as I can remember now, except for that one emotional phase by the graveside, I passed through all these experiences rather callously. I had already, with the facility of youth, changed my world, ceased to think at all of the old school routine, and put Bladesover aside for digestion at a later stage. I took up my new world in Wimblehurst with the chemist's shop as its hub, set to work at Latin and materia medica, and concentrated upon the present with all my heart. Wimblehurst is an exceptionally quiet and grey Sussex town, rare among south of England towns in being largely built of stone. I found something very agreeable and picturesque in its clean cobbled streets, its odd turnings and abrupt corners, and in the pleasant park that crowds up one side of the town. The whole place is under the Eastry dominion, and it was the Eastry influence and dignity that kept its railway station a mile and three-quarters away. Eastry House is so close that it dominates the whole; one goes across the market-place (with its old lock-up and stocks), past the great pre-Reformation church, a fine grey shell, like some empty skull from which the life has fled, and there at once are the huge wrought-iron gates, and one peeps through them to see the façade of this place, very white and large and fine, down a long avenue of yews. Eastry was far greater than Bladesover, and an altogether completer example of the eighteenth-century system. It ruled not two villages but a borough, that had sent its sons and cousins to parliament almost as a matter of right so long

as its franchise endured. Every one was in the system, every one—except my uncle. He stood out and complained.

My uncle was the first real breach I found in the great front of Bladesovery the world had presented me, for Chatham was not so much a breach as a confirmation. But my uncle had no respect for Bladesover and Eastry—none whatever. He did not believe in them. He was blind even to what they were. He propounded strange phrases about them, he exfoliated and wagged about novel and incredible ideas.

"This place," said my uncle, surveying it from his open doorway in the dignified stillness of a summer afternoon, "wants Waking Up!"

I was sorting up patent medicines in the corner.

"I'd like to let a dozen young Americans loose into it," said my uncle. "Then we'd see."

I made a tick against Mother Shipton's Sleeping Syrup. We had cleared our forward stock.

"Things must be happening *somewhere*, George," he broke out in a querulously rising note as he came back into the little shop. He fiddled with the piled dummy boxes of fancy soap and scent and so forth that adorned the end of the counter, then turned about petulantly, stuck his hands deeply into his pockets and withdrew one to scratch his head. "I must do *something*," he said. "I can't stand it."

"I must invent something. And shove it. . . . I could.

"Or a play. There's a deal of money in a play, George. What would you think of me writing a play—eh? . . . There's all sorts of things to be done.

"Or the stog-igschange."

He fell into that meditative whistling of his.

"Sac-ramental wine!" he swore, "this isn't the world—it's Cold Mutton Fat! That's what Wimblehurst is! Cold Mutton Fat!—dead and stiff! And I'm buried in it up to the arm-pits. Nothing ever happens, nobody wants things to happen 'scept me! Up in London, George, things happen. America! I wish to Heaven, George, I'd been born American—where things hum.

"What can one *do* here? How can one grow? While we're sleepin' here with our Capital oozing away—into

Lord Eastry's pockets for rent—men are up there. . . ." He indicated London as remotely over the top of the dispensing counter, and then as a scene of great activity by a whirl of the hand and a wink and a meaning smile at me.

"What sort of things do they do?" I asked.

"Rush about," he said. "Do things! Somethin' glorious. There's cover gambling. Ever heard of that, George?" He drew the air in through his teeth. "You put down a hundred, say, and buy ten thousand pounds' worth. See? That's a cover of one per cent. Things go up one, you sell, realize cent. per cent.; down, whiff, it's gone! Try again! Cent. per cent., George, every day. Men are made or done for in an hour. And the shoutin'! Zzzz. . . . Well, that's one way, George. Then another way—there's Corners!"

"They're rather big things, aren't they?" I ventured.

"Oh, if you go in for wheat or steel—yes. But suppose you tackled a little thing, George. Just some leetle thing that only needed a few thousands. Drugs, for example. Shoved all you had into it—staked your liver on it, so to speak. Take a drug—take ipecac, for example. Take a lot of ipecac. Take all there is! See? There you are! There aren't unlimited supplies of ipecacuanha—can't be!—and it's a thing people *must* have. Then quinine again! You watch your chance, wait for a tropical war breaking out, let's say, and collar all the quinine. Where *are* they? Must have quinine, you know. Eh? Zzzz.

"Lord! there's no end of things—no end of *little* things. Dill-water—all the suff'ring babes yowling for it. Eucalyptus again—cascara—witch hazel—menthol—all the toothache things. Then there's antiseptics, and curare, cocaine. . . ."

"Rather a nuisance to the doctors," I reflected.

"They got to look out for themselves. By Jove, yes. They'll do you if they can, and you do them. Like brigands. That makes it romantic. That's the Romance of Commerce, George. You're in the mountains there! Think of having all the quinine in the world, and some millionaire's pampud wife gone ill with malaria, eh? That's a squeeze, George, eh? Eh? Millionaire on his motor car outside, offering

you any price you liked. That 'ud wake up Wimblehurst. . . . Lord! You haven't an Idea down here. Not an idea. Zzzz."

He passed into a rapt dream, from which escaped such fragments as: "Fifty per cent. advance, Sir; security—to-morrow. Zzzz."

The idea of cornering a drug struck upon my mind then as a sort of irresponsible monkey trick that no one would ever be permitted to do in reality. It was the sort of nonsense one would talk to make Ewart laugh and set him going on to still odder possibilities. I thought it was part of my uncle's way of talking. But I've learnt differently since. The whole trend of modern money-making is to foresee something that will presently be needed and put it out of reach, and then to haggle yourself wealthy. You buy up land upon which people will presently want to build houses, you secure rights that will bar vitally important developments, and so on, and so on. Of course the naïve intelligence of a boy does not grasp the subtler developments of human inadequacy. He begins life with a disposition to believe in the wisdom of grown-up people, he does not realize how casual and disingenuous has been the development of law and custom, and he thinks that somewhere in the state there is a power as irresistible as a head master's to check mischievous and foolish enterprises of every sort. I will confess that when my uncle talked of cornering quinine, I had a clear impression that any one who contrived to do that would pretty certainly go to jail. Now I know that any one who could really bring it off would be much more likely to go to the House of Lords!

My uncle ranged over the gilt labels of his bottles and drawers for a while, dreaming of corners in this and that. But at last he reverted to Wimblehurst again.

"You got to be in London when these things are in hand. Down here——!

"Jee-rusalem!" he cried. "Why did I plant myself here? Everything's done. The game's over. Here's Lord Eastry, and he's got everything, except what his lawyers get, and before you get any more change this way you'll have to dynamite him—and them. *He* doesn't want anything more to happen. Why should he? Any

change 'ud be a loss to him. He wants everything to burble along and burble along and go on as it's going for the next ten thousand years, Eastry after Eastry, one parson down another come, one grocer dead, get another! Any one with any ideas better go away. They *have* gone away! Look at all these blessed people in this place! Look at 'em! All fast asleep, doing their business out of habit—in a sort of dream. Stuffed men would do just as well—just. They've all shook down into their places. *They* don't want anything to happen either. They're all broken in. There you are! Only what are they all alive for? . . .

"Why can't they get a clockwork chemist?"

He concluded as he often concluded these talks. "I must invent something—that's about what I must do. Zzzz. Some convenience. Something people want. . . . Strike out. . . . You can't think, George, of anything everybody wants and hasn't got? I mean something you could turn out retail under a shilling, say? Well, *you* think, whenever you haven't got anything better to do. See?"

§ 2

So I remember my uncle in that first phase, young, but already a little fat, restless, fretful, garrulous, putting in my fermenting head all sorts of discrepant ideas. Certainly he was educational. . . .

For me the years at Wimblehurst were years of pretty active growth. Most of my leisure and much of my time in the shop I spent in study. I speedily mastered the modicum of Latin necessary for my qualifying examinations, and—a little assisted by the Government Science and Art Department classes that were held in the Grammar School—went on with my mathematics. There were classes in physics, in chemistry, in mathematics and machine drawing, and I took up all these subjects with considerable avidity. Exercise I got chiefly in the form of walks. There was some cricket in the summer and football in the winter sustained by young men's clubs that levied a parasitic blackmail on the big people and the sitting member, but I was never very keen at these games. I

didn't find any very close companions among the youths of Wimblehurst. They struck me, after my Cockney schoolmates, as loutish and slow, servile and furtive, spiteful and mean. *We* used to swagger, but these countrymen dragged their feet and hated an equal who didn't; we talked loud, but you only got the real thoughts of Wimblehurst in a knowing undertone behind its hand. And even then they weren't much in the way of thoughts.

No, I didn't like those young countrymen, and I'm no believer in the English country-side under the Bladesover system as a breeding-ground for honourable men. One hears a frightful lot of nonsense about the Rural Exodus and the degeneration wrought by town life upon our population. To my mind, the English townsman even in the slums is infinitely better spiritually, more courageous, more imaginative and cleaner, than his agricultural cousin. I've seen them both when they didn't think they were being observed, and I know. There was something about my Wimblehurst companions that disgusted me. It's hard to define. Heaven knows that at that cockney boarding school at Goudhurst we were coarse enough, the Wimblehurst youngsters had neither words nor courage for the sort of thing we used to do—for our bad language, for example; but, on the other hand, they displayed a sort of sluggish, real lewdness—lewdness is the word—a baseness of attitude. Whatever we exiled urbans did at Goudhurst was touched with something, however coarse, of romantic imagination. We had read the *Boys of England*, and told each other stories. In the English country-side there are no books at all, no songs, no drama, no valiant sin even; all these things have never come or they were taken away and hidden generations ago, and the imagination aborts and bestializes. That, I think, is where the real difference against the English rural man lies. It is because I know this that I do not share in the common repinings because our country-side is being depopulated, because our population is passing through the furnace of the towns. They starve, they suffer no doubt, but they come out of it hardened, they come out of it with souls. . . .

Of an evening the Wimblehurst blade, shiny-faced from a wash and with some loud finery, a coloured waistcoat or

a vivid tie, would betake himself to the Eastry Arms billiard-room, or to the bar-parlour of some minor pub where nap could be played. One soon sickened of his slow knowingness, the cunning observation of his deadened eyes, his idea of a "good story," always, always told in undertones, poor dirty worm! his shrewd elaborate manœuvres for some petty advantage, a drink to the good or suchlike deal. There rises before my eyes as I write, young Hopley Dodd, the son of the Wimblehurst auctioneer, the pride of Wimblehurst, its finest flower, with his fur waistcoat and his bulldog pipe, his riding-breeches—he had no horse—and his gaiters, as he used to sit, leaning forward and watching the billiard-table from under the brim of his artfully tilted hat. A half-dozen phrases constituted his conversation: "Hard lines!" he used to say, and "Good baazness," in a bass bleat. Moreover, he had a long slow whistle that was esteemed the very cream of humorous comment. Night after night he was there. . . .

Also, you know, he would not understand that *I* could play billiards, and regarded every stroke I made as a fluke. For a beginner I didn't play so badly, I thought. I'm not so sure now; that was my opinion at the time. But young Dodd's scepticism and the "good baazness" finally cured me of my disposition to frequent the Eastry Arms, and so these noises had their value in my world.

I made no friends among the young men of the place at all, and though I was entering upon adolescence I have no love-affair to tell of here. Not that I was not waking up to that aspect of life in my middle teens. I did, indeed, in various slightly informal ways scrape acquaintance with casual Wimblehurst girls; with a little dressmaker's apprentice I got upon shyly speaking terms, and a pupil teacher in the National School went further and was "talked about" in connection with me; but I was not by any means touched by any reality of passion for either of these young people; love—love as yet came to me only in my dreams. I only kissed these girls once or twice. They rather disconcerted than developed those dreams. They were so clearly not "it." I shall have much to say of love in this story, but I may break it to the reader now that it is my *rôle* to be a rather ineffectual lover. Desire I know

well enough—indeed, too well; but love I have been shy of. In all my early enterprises in the war of the sexes, I was torn between the urgency of the body and a habit of romantic fantasy that wanted every phase of the adventure to be generous and beautiful. And I had a curiously haunting memory of Beatrice, of her kisses in the bracken and her kiss upon the wall, that somehow pitched the standard too high for Wimblehurst's opportunities. I will not deny I did in a boyish way attempt a shy, rude adventure or so in love-making at Wimblehurst; but through these various influences, I didn't bring things off to any extent at all. I left behind me no devastating memories, no splendid reputation. I came away at last, still inexperienced and a little thwarted, with only a natural growth of interest and desire in sexual things.

If I fell in love with any one in Wimblehurst it was with my aunt. She treated me with a kindliness that was only half maternal—she petted my books, she knew about my certificates, she made fun of me in a way that stirred my heart to her. Quite unconsciously I grew fond of her. . . .

My adolescent years at Wimblehurst were on the whole laborious, uneventful years that began in short jackets and left me in many ways nearly a man, years so uneventful that the Calculus of Variations is associated with one winter, and an examination in Physics for Science and Art Department Honours marks an epoch. Many divergent impulses stirred within me, but the master impulse was a grave young disposition to work and learn, and thereby in some not very clearly defined way get out of the Wimblehurst world into which I had fallen. I wrote with some frequency to Ewart, self-conscious, but, as I remember them, not unintelligent letters, dated in Latin and with lapses into Latin quotation that roused Ewart to parody. There was something about me in those days more than a little priggish. But it was, to do myself justice, something more than the petty pride of learning. I had a very grave sense of discipline and preparation that I am not ashamed at all to remember. I was serious. More serious than I am at the present time. More serious, indeed, than any adult seems to be. I was capable then of efforts—of nobilities. . . . They are beyond me now. I

don't see why, at forty, I shouldn't confess I respect my own youth. I had dropped being a boy quite abruptly. I thought I was presently to go out into a larger and quite important world and do significant things there. I thought I was destined to do something definite to a world that had a definite purpose. I did not understand then, as I do now, that life was to consist largely in the world's doing things to me. Young people never do seem to understand that aspect of things. And, as I say, among my educational influences my uncle, all unsuspected, played a leading part, and perhaps among other things gave my discontent with Wimblehurst, my desire to get away from that clean and picturesque emptiness, a form and expression that helped to emphasize it. In a way that definition made me patient. "Presently I shall get to London," I said, echoing him.

I remember him now as talking, always talking, in those days. He talked to me of theology, he talked of politics, of the wonders of science and the marvels of art, of the passions and the affections, of the immortality of the soul and the peculiar actions of drugs; but predominantly and constantly he talked of getting on, of enterprises, of inventions and great fortunes, of Rothschilds, silver kings, Vanderbilts, Goulds, flotations, realizations and the marvellous ways of Chance with men—in all localities, that is to say, that are not absolutely sunken to the level of Cold Mutton Fat.

When I think of those early talks, I figure him always in one of three positions. Either we were in the dispensing lair behind a high barrier, he pounding up stuff in a mortar perhaps, and I rolling pill-stuff into long rolls and cutting it up with a sort of broad, fluted knife, or he stood looking out of the shop door against the case of sponges and spray-diffusers, while I surveyed him from behind the counter, or he leant against the little drawers behind the counter, and I hovered dusting in front. The thought of those early days brings back to my nostrils the faint smell of scent that was always in the air, marbled now with streaks of this drug and now of that, and to my eyes the rows of jejune glass bottles with gold labels, mirror-reflected, that stood behind him. My aunt, I remember, used sometimes to come into the shop in a state of aggressive sprightliness,

a sort of connubial ragging expedition, and get much fun over the abbreviated Latinity of those gilt inscriptions. "Ol Amjig, George," she would read derisively, "and he pretends it's almond oil! Snap!—and that's mustard. Did you *Ever*, George?

"Look at him, George, looking dignified. I'd like to put an old label on to *him* round the middle like his bottles are, with Ol Pondo on it. That's Latin for Impostor, George—*must* be. He'd look lovely with a stopper."

"*You* want a stopper," said my uncle, projecting his face. . . .

My aunt, dear soul, was in those days quite thin and slender, with a delicate rosebud complexion and a disposition to connubial badinage, to a sort of gentle skylarking. There was a silvery ghost of lisping in her speech. She was a great humorist, and as the constraint of my presence at meals wore off, I became more and more aware of a filmy but extensive net of nonsense she had woven about her domestic relations until it had become the reality of her life. She affected a derisive attitude to the world at large, and applied the epithet "old" to more things than I have ever heard linked to it before or since. "Here's the old newspaper," she used to say to my uncle. "Now don't go and get it in the butter, you silly old Sardine!"

"What's the day of the week, Susan?" my uncle would ask.

"Old Monday, Sossidge," she would say, and add, "I got all my Old Washing to do. Don't I *know* it!" . . .

She had evidently been the wit and joy of a large circle of schoolfellows, and this style had become a second nature with her. It made her very delightful to me in that quiet place. Her customary walk even had a sort of hello! in it. Her chief preoccupation in life was, I believe, to make my uncle laugh, and when by some new nickname, some new quaintness or absurdity, she achieved that end, she was, behind a mask of sober amazement, the happiest woman on earth. My uncle's laugh when it did come, I must admit, was, as Baedeker says, "rewarding." It began with gusty blowings and snortings, and opened into a clear "Ha ha!" but in its fullest development it included, in those youthful days, falling about anyhow and doubling

up tightly, and whackings of the stomach, and tears and cries of anguish. I never in my life heard my uncle laugh to his maximum except at her, he was commonly too much in earnest for that, and he didn't laugh much at all, to my knowledge, after those early years. Also she threw things at him to an enormous extent in her resolve to keep things lively in spite of Wimblehurst; sponges out of stock she threw, cushions, balls of paper, clean washing, bread; and once up the yard when they thought that I and the errand boy and the diminutive maid of all work were safely out of the way, she smashed a boxful of eight-ounce bottles I had left to drain, assaulting my uncle with a new soft broom. Sometimes she would shy things at me—but not often. There seemed always laughter round and about her—all three of us would share hysterics at times—and on one occasion the two of them came home from church shockingly ashamed of themselves, because of a storm of mirth during the sermon. The vicar, it seems, had tried to blow his nose with a black glove as well as the customary pocket-handkerchief. And afterwards she had picked up her own glove by the finger, and looking innocently but intently sideways, had suddenly by this simple expedient exploded my uncle altogether. We had it all over again at dinner.

"But it shows you," cried my uncle, suddenly becoming grave, "what Wimblehurst is, to have us all laughing at a little thing like that! We weren't the only ones that giggled. Not by any means! And, Lord! it *was* funny!"

Socially, my uncle and aunt were almost completely isolated. In places like Wimblehurst the tradesmen's wives always are isolated socially, all of them, unless they have a sister or a bosom friend among the other wives, but the husbands met in various bar-parlours or in the billiard-room of the Eastry Arms. But my uncle, for the most part, spent his evenings at home. When first he arrived in Wimblehurst I think he had spread his effect of abounding ideas and enterprise rather too aggressively; and Wimblehurst, after a temporary subjugation, had rebelled and done its best to make a butt of him. His appearance in a public-house led to a pause in any conversation that was going on.

"Come to tell us about everything, Mr. Pond'revo?" some one would say politely.

"You wait," my uncle used to answer, disconcerted, and sulk for the rest of his visit.

Or some one with an immense air of innocence would remark to the world generally, "They're talkin' of rebuildin' Wimblehurst all over again, I'm told. Anybody heard anything of it? Going to make it a reg'lar smart-goin', enterprisin' place—kind of Crystal Pallas."

"Earthquake and a pestilence before you get *that*," my uncle would mutter, to the infinite delight of every one, and add something inaudible about "Cold Mutton Fat." . . .

§ 3

We were torn apart by a financial accident to my uncle of which I did not at first grasp the full bearings. He had developed what I regarded as an innocent intellectual recreation which he called stock-market meteorology. I think he got the idea from the use of curves in the graphic presentation of associated variations that he saw me plotting. He secured some of my squared paper and, having cast about for a time, decided to trace the rise and fall of certain mines and railways. "There's something in this, George," he said, and I little dreamt that among other things that were in it, was the whole of his spare money and most of what my mother had left to him in trust for me.

"It's as plain as can be," he said. "See, here's one system of waves and here's another! These are prices for Union Pacifics—extending over a month. Now next week, mark my words, they'll be down one whole point. We're getting near the steep part of the curve again. See? It's absolutely scientific. It's verifiable. Well, and apply it! You buy in the hollow and sell on the crest, and —there you are!"

I was so convinced of the triviality of this amusement that to find at last that he had taken it in the most disastrous earnest overwhelmed me.

He took me for a long walk to break it to me, over the hills towards Yare and across the great gorse commons by Hazelbrow.

"There are ups and downs in life, George," he said—halfway across that great open space, and paused against the sky. . . . "I left out one factor in the Union Pacific analysis."

"*Did* you?" I said, struck by the sudden change in his voice. "But you don't mean——?"

I stopped and turned on him in the narrow sandy rut of pathway, and he stopped likewise.

"I do, George. I *do* mean. It's bust me! I'm a bankrupt here and now."

"Then——?"

"The shop's bust too. I shall have to get out of that."

"And me?"

"Oh, you!—*you're* all right. You can transfer your apprenticeship, and—er—well, I'm not the sort of man to be careless with trust funds, you can be sure. I kept that aspect in mind. There's some of it left, George—trust me!—quite a decent little sum."

"But you and aunt?"

"It isn't *quite* the way we meant to leave Wimblehurst, George; but we shall have to go. Sale; all the things shoved about and ticketed—lot a hundred and one. Ugh! . . . It's been a larky little house in some ways. The first we had. Furnishing—a spree in its way. . . . Very happy. . . ." His face winced at some memory. "Let's go on, George," he said shortly, near choking, I could see.

I turned my back on him, and did not look round again for a little while.

"That's how it is, you see, George," I heard him after a time.

When we were back in the high-road again he came alongside, and for a time we walked in silence.

"Don't say anything home yet," he said presently. "Fortunes of War. I got to pick the proper time with Susan—else she'll get depressed. Not that she isn't a first-rate brick whatever comes along."

"All right," I said, "I'll be careful"; and it seemed to me for the time altogether too selfish to bother him with any further inquiries about his responsibility as my trustee. He gave a little sigh of relief at my note of assent, and was

presently talking quite cheerfully of his plans. . . . But he had, I remember, one lapse into moodiness that came and went suddenly. "Those others!" he said, as though the thought had stung him for the first time.

"What others?" I asked.

"Damn them!" said he.

"But what others?"

"All those damned stick-in-the-mud-and-die-slowly tradespeople: Ruck, the butcher, Marbel, the grocer. Snape! Gord! George, *how* they'll grin!" . . .

I thought him over in the next few weeks, and I remember now in great detail the last walk we had together before he handed over the shop and me to his successor. For he had the good luck to sell his business, "lock, stock, and barrel"—in which expression I found myself and my indentures included. The horrors of a sale by auction of the furniture even were avoided.

I remember that either coming or going on that occasion, Ruck, the butcher, stood in his doorway and regarded us with a grin that showed his long teeth.

"You half-witted hog!" said my uncle. "You grinning hyaena"; and then, "Pleasant day, Mr. Ruck."

"Goin' to make your fortun' in London, than?" said Mr. Ruck, with slow enjoyment.

That last excursion took us along the causeway to Beeching, and so up the downs and round almost as far as Steadhurst, home. My moods, as we went, made a mingled web. By this time I had really grasped the fact that my uncle had, in plain English, robbed me; the little accumulations of my mother, six hundred pounds and more, that would have educated me and started me in business, had been eaten into and was mostly gone into the unexpected hollow that ought to have been a crest of the Union Pacific curve, and of the remainder he still gave no account. I was too young and inexperienced to insist on this or know how to get it, but the thought of it all made streaks of decidedly black anger in that scheme of interwoven feelings. And you know, I was also acutely sorry for him—almost as sorry as I was for my aunt Susan. Even then I had quite found him out. I knew him to be weaker than myself; his incurable, irresponsible childish-

ness was as clear to me then as it was on his deathbed, his redeeming and excusing imaginative silliness. Through some odd mental twist, perhaps, I was disposed to exonerate him even at the cost of blaming my poor old mother who had left things in his untrustworthy hands.

I should have forgiven him altogether, I believe, if he had been in any manner apologetic to me; but he wasn't that. He kept reassuring me in a way I found irritating. Mostly, however, his solicitude was for Aunt Susan and himself.

"It's these Crises, George," he said, "try Character. Your aunt's come out well, my boy."

He made meditative noises for a space.

"Had her cry, of course"—the thing had been only too painfully evident to me in her eyes and swollen face—"who wouldn't? But now—buoyant again! . . . She's a Corker.

"We'll be sorry to leave the little house, of course. It's a bit like Adam and Eve, you know. Lord! what a chap old Milton was!

> "'The world was all before them, where to choose
> Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.'

It sounds, George. . . . Providence their guide! . . . Well—thank goodness there's no imeedgit prospect of either Cain or Abel!

"After all, it won't be so bad up there. Not the scenery, perhaps, or the air we get here, but—*Life!* We've got very comfortable little rooms, very comfortable considering, and I shall rise. We're not done yet, we're not beaten; don't think that, George. I shall pay twenty shillings in the pound before I've done—you mark my words, George,—twenty-five to you. . . . I got this situation within twenty-four hours—others offered. It's an important firm—one of the best in London. I looked to that. I might have got four or five shillings a week more—elsewhere. Quarters I could name. But I said to them plainly, wages to go on with, but opportunity's my game—development. We understood each other."

He threw out his chest, and the little round eyes behind his glasses rested valiantly on imaginary employers.

We would go on in silence for a space while he revised and restated that encounter. Then he would break out abruptly with some banal phrase.

"The Battle of Life, George, my boy," he would cry, or "Ups and Downs!"

He ignored or waived the poor little attempts I made to ascertain my own position. "That's all right," he would say; or, "Leave all that to me. *I'll* look after them." And he would drift away towards the philosophy and moral of the situation. What was I to do?

"Never put all your resources into one chance, George; that's the lesson I draw from this. Have forces in reserve. It was a hundred to one, George, that I was right—a hundred to one. I worked it out afterwards. And here we are spiked on the off-chance. If I'd have only kept back a little, I'd have had it on U.P. next day, like a shot, and come out on the rise. There you are!"

His thoughts took a graver turn.

"It's when you bump up against Chance like this, George, that you feel the need of religion. Your hard and fast scientific men—your Spencers and Huxleys—they don't understand that. I do. I've thought of it a lot lately—in bed and about. I was thinking of it this morning while I shaved. It's not irreverent for me to say it, I hope—but God comes in on the off-chance, George. See? Don't you be too cocksure of anything, good or bad. That's what I make out of it. I could have sworn. Well, do you think I—particular as I am—would have touched those Union Pacifics with trust-money at all, if I hadn't thought it a thoroughly good thing—good without spot or blemish? . . . And it was bad!

"It's a lesson to me. You start in to get a hundred per cent. and you come out with that. It means, in a way, a reproof for pride. I've thought of that, George—in the Night Watches. I was thinking this morning when I was shaving, that that's where the good of it all comes in. At bottom I'm a mystic in these affairs. You calculate you're going to do this or that, but at bottom who knows at all *what* he's doing? When you most think you're doing things, they're being done right over your head. *You're* being done—in a sense. Take a hundred-to-one chance,

or one to a hundred—what does it matter? You're being Led."

It's odd that I heard this at the time with unutterable contempt, and now that I recall it—well, I ask myself, what have I got better?

"I wish," said I, becoming for a moment outrageous, "*you* were being Led to give me some account of my money, uncle."

"Not without a bit of paper to figure on, George, I can't. But you trust me about that, never fear. You trust me."

And in the end I had to.

I think the bankruptcy hit my aunt pretty hard. There was, so far as I can remember now, a complete cessation of all those cheerful outbreaks of elasticity—no more sky-larking in the shop nor scampering about the house. But there was no fuss that I saw, and only little signs in her complexion of the fits of weeping that must have taken her. She didn't cry at the end, though to me her face with its strain of self-possession was more pathetic than any weeping. "Well," she said to me as she came through the shop to the cab, "Here's old orf, George! Orf to Mome number two! Good-bye!" And she took me in her arms and kissed me and pressed me to her. Then she dived straight for the cab before I could answer her.

My uncle followed, and he seemed to me a trifle too valiant and confident in his bearing for reality. He was unusually white in the face. He spoke to his successor at the counter. "Here we go!" he said. "One down, the other up. You'll find it a quiet little business so long as you run it on quiet lines—a nice, quiet little business. There's nothing more? No? Well, if you want to know anything write to me. I'll always explain fully. Anything—business, place, or people. You'll find Pil. Antibil. a little overstocked, by-the-by. I found it soothed my mind the day before yesterday making 'em, and I made 'em all day. Thousands! And where's George? Ah! there you are! I'll write to you, George, *fully*, about all that affair. Fully!"

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wide-open blue eyes and her little face intent on the shop that had combined for her all the charms of a big doll's house and a little home of her very own. "Good-bye!" she said to it and to me. Our eyes met for a moment—perplexed. My uncle bustled out and gave a few totally unnecessary directions to the cabman and got in beside her. "All right?" asked the driver. "Right," said I; and he woke up the horse with a flick of his whip. My aunt's eyes surveyed me again. "Stick to your old science and things, George, and write and tell me when they make you a Professor," she said cheerfully.

She stared at me for a second longer with eyes growing wider and brighter and a smile that had become fixed, glanced again at the bright little shop still saying "Ponderevo" with all the emphasis of its fascia, and then flopped back hastily out of sight of me into the recesses of the cab. Then it had gone from before me, and I beheld Mr. Snape the hairdresser inside his shop regarding its departure with a quiet satisfaction and exchanging smiles and significant headshakes with Mr. Marbel.

§ 4

I was left, I say, as part of the lock, stock, and barrel, at Wimblehurst with my new master, a Mr. Mantell; who plays no part in the progress of this story except in so far as he effaced my uncle's traces. So soon as the freshness of this new personality faded, I began to find Wimblehurst not only a dull but a lonely place, and to miss my aunt Susan immensely. The advertisements of the summer terms for Cough Linctus were removed; the bottles of coloured water—red, green, and yellow—restored to their places; the horse announcing veterinary medicine, which my uncle, sizzling all the while, had coloured in careful portraiture of a Goodwood favourite, rewhitened; and I turned myself even more resolutely than before to Latin (until the passing of my preliminary examination enabled me to drop that), and then to mathematics and science.

There were classes in Electricity and Magnetism at the Grammar School. I took a little "elementary" prize in

that in my first year and a medal in my third; and in Chemistry and Human Physiology and Sound, Light and Heat, I did well. There was also a lighter, more discursive subject called Physiography, in which one ranged among the sciences and encountered Geology as a process of evolution from Eozoon to Eastry House, and Astronomy as a record of celestial movements of the most austere and invariable integrity. I learnt out of badly-written, condensed little text-books, and with the minimum of experiment, but still I learnt. Only thirty years ago it was, and I remember I learnt of the electric light as an expensive, impracticable toy, the telephone as a curiosity, electric traction as a practical absurdity. There was no argon, no radium, no phagocytes—at least to my knowledge, and aluminium was a dear infrequent metal. The fastest ships in the world went then at nineteen knots, and no one but a lunatic here and there ever thought it possible that men might fly.

Many things have happened since then, but the last glance I had of Wimblehurst two years ago remarked no change whatever in its pleasant tranquillity. They had not even built any fresh houses—at least not actually in the town, though about the station there had been some building. But it was a good place to do work in, for all its quiescence. I was soon beyond the small requirements of the Pharmaceutical Society's examination, and as they do not permit candidates to sit for that until one and twenty, I was presently filling up my time and preventing my studies becoming too desultory by making an attack upon the London University degree of Bachelor of Science, which impressed me then as a very splendid but almost impossible achievement. The degree in mathematics and chemistry appealed to me as particularly congenial—albeit giddily inaccessible. I set to work. I had presently to arrange a holiday and go to London to matriculate, and so it was I came upon my aunt and uncle again. In many ways that visit marked an epoch. It was my first impression of London at all. I was then nineteen, and by a conspiracy of chances my nearest approach to that human wilderness had been my brief visit to Chatham. Chatham too had been my largest town. So that I got London at

last with an exceptional freshness of effect, as the sudden revelation of a whole unsuspected other side to life.

I came to it on a dull and smoky day by the South-Eastern Railway, and our train was half an hour late, stopping and going on and stopping again. I marked beyond Chislehurst the growing multitude of villas, and so came stage by stage through multiplying houses and diminishing interspaces of market garden and dingy grass to regions of interlacing railway lines, big factories, gasometers and wide reeking swamps of dingy little homes, more of them and more and more. The number of these and their dinginess and poverty increased, and here rose a great public-house and here a Board School and here a gaunt factory; and away to the east there loomed for a time a queer incongruous forest of masts and spars. The congestion of houses intensified and piled up presently into tenements; I marvelled more and more at this boundless world of dingy people; whiffs of industrial smell, of leather, of brewing, drifted into the carriage, the sky darkened, I rumbled thunderously over bridges, van-crowded streets, peered down on and crossed the Thames with an abrupt eclat of sound. I got an effect of tall warehouses, of grey water, barge crowded, of broad banks of indescribable mud, and then I was in Cannon Street Station —a monstrous dirty cavern with trains packed across its vast floor and more porters standing along the platform than I had ever seen in my life before. I alighted with my portmanteau and struggled along, realizing for the first time just how small and weak I could still upon occasion feel. In this world, I felt, an Honours medal in Electricity and Magnetism counted for nothing at all.

Afterwards I drove in a cab down a cañon of rushing street between high warehouses, and peeped up astonished at the blackened greys of Saint Paul's. The traffic of Cheapside—it was mostly in horse omnibuses in those days—seemed stupendous, its roar was stupendous; I wondered where the money came from to employ so many cabs, what industry could support the endless jostling stream of silk-hatted, frock-coated, hurrying men. Down a turning I found the Temperance Hotel Mr. Mantell had recommended to me. The porter in a green uniform who

took over my portmanteau, seemed, I thought, to despise me a good deal.

§ 5

Matriculation kept me for four full days, and then came an afternoon to spare, and I sought out Tottenham Court Road through a perplexing network of various and crowded streets. But this London was vast! it was endless! it seemed the whole world had changed into packed frontages and hoardings and street spaces. I got there at last and made inquiries, and I found my uncle behind the counter of the pharmacy he managed, an establishment that did not impress me as doing a particularly high-class trade. "Lord!" he said at the sight of me, "I was wanting something to happen!"

He greeted me warmly. I had grown taller, and he I thought had grown shorter and smaller and rounder, but otherwise he was unchanged. He struck me as being rather shabby, and the silk hat he produced and put on, when, after mysterious negotiations in the back premises, he achieved his freedom to accompany me, was past its first youth; but he was as buoyant and confident as ever.

"Come to ask me about all *that?*" he cried. "I've never written yet."

"Oh! among other things," said I with a sudden regrettable politeness, and waived the topic of his trusteeship to ask after my aunt Susan.

"We'll have her out of it," he said suddenly; "we'll go somewhere. We don't get you in London every day."

"It's my first visit," I said; "I've never seen London before"; and that made him ask me what I thought of it, and the rest of the talk was London, London, to the exclusion of all smaller topics. He took me up the Hampstead Road almost to the Cobden statue, plunged into some back streets to the left, and came at last to a blistered front door that responded to his latch-key, one of a long series of blistered front doors with fanlights and apartment cards above. We found ourselves in a drab-coloured passage that was not only narrow and dirty but desolatingly empty, and then he opened a door and revealed my aunt

sitting at the window with a little sewing-machine on a bamboo occasional table before her, and "work"—a plum-coloured walking dress, I judged, at its most analytical stage—scattered over the rest of the apartment.

At the first glance I judged my aunt was plumper than she had been, but her complexion was just as fresh and her China blue eye as bright as in the old days.

"London," she said, didn't "get blacks" on her.

She still "cheeked" my uncle, I was pleased to find. "What are you old Poking in for at *this* time,—*Gubbitt?*" she said when he appeared, and she still looked with a practised eye for the facetious side of things. When she saw me behind him, she gave a little cry and stood up radiant. Then she became grave.

I was surprised at my own emotion in seeing her. She held me at arm's length for a moment, a hand on each shoulder, and looked at me with a sort of glad scrutiny. She seemed to hesitate, and then pecked a little kiss off my cheek.

"You're a man, George," she said, as she released me, and continued to look at me for a while.

Their *ménage* was one of a very common type in London. They occupied what is called the dining-room floor of a small house, and they had the use of a little inconvenient kitchen in the basement that had once been a scullery. The two rooms, bedroom behind and living-room in front, were separated by folding doors that were never now thrown back, and indeed, in the presence of a visitor, not used at all. There was of course no bathroom or anything of that sort available, and there was no water supply except to the kitchen below. My aunt did all the domestic work, though she could have afforded to pay for help if the build of the place had not rendered that inconvenient to the pitch of impossibility. There was no sort of help available except that of indoor servants, for whom she had no accommodation. The furniture was their own; it was partly second-hand, but on the whole it seemed cheerful to my eye, and my aunt's bias for cheap, gay-figured muslin had found ample scope. In many ways I should think it must have been an extremely inconvenient and cramped sort of home, but at the time I took it, as I was taking everything, as

being there and in the nature of things. I did not see the oddness of solvent decent people living in a habitation so clearly neither designed nor adapted for their needs, so wasteful of labour and so devoid of beauty as this was, and it is only now as I describe this that I find myself thinking of the essential absurdity of an intelligent community living in such makeshift homes. It strikes me now as the next thing to wearing second-hand clothes.

You see it was a natural growth, part of that system to which Bladesover, I hold, is the key. There are wide regions of London, miles of streets of houses, that appear to have been originally designed for prosperous middle-class homes of the early Victorian type. There must have been a perfect fury of such building in the 'thirties, 'forties, and 'fifties. Street after street must have been rushed into being, Camden Town way, Pentonville way, Brompton way, West Kensington way, in the Victoria region and all over the minor suburbs of the south side. I am doubtful if many of these houses had any long use as the residences of single families, if from the very first almost their tenants did not makeshift and take lodgers and sublet. They were built with basements, in which their servants worked and lived—servants of a more submissive and troglodytic generation who did not mind stairs—the dining-room (with folding doors) was a little above the ground-level, and in that the wholesome boiled and roast with damp boiled potatoes and then pie to follow, was consumed, and the numerous family read and worked in the evening, and above was the drawing-room (also with folding doors), where the infrequent callers were received. That was the vision at which those industrious builders aimed. Even while these houses were being run up, the threads upon the loom of fate were shaping to abolish altogether the type of household that would have fitted them. Means of transit were developing to carry the moderately prosperous middle-class families out of London; education and factory employment were whittling away at the supply of rough, hard-working, obedient girls who would stand the subterranean drudgery of these places; new classes of hard-up middle-class people such as my uncle, employees of various types, were coming into

existence, for whom no homes were provided. None of these classes have ideas of what they ought to be, or fit in any legitimate way into the Bladesover theory that dominates our minds. It was nobody's concern to see them housed under civilized conditions, and the beautiful laws of supply and demand had free play. They had to squeeze in. The landlords came out financially intact from their blundering enterprise. More and more these houses fell into the hands of married artisans or struggling widows or old servants with savings, who became responsible for the quarterly rent and tried to sweat a living by sub-letting furnished or unfurnished apartments.

I remember now that a poor grey-haired old woman, who had an air of having been roused from a nap in the dust-bin, came out into the area and looked up at us as we three went out from the front door to "see London" under my uncle's direction. She was the sub-letting occupier, she squeezed out a precarious living by taking the house whole and sub-letting it in detail, and she made her food and got the shelter of an attic above and a basement below by the transaction. And if she didn't chance to "let" steadily, out she went to pauperdom and some other poor sordid old adventurer tried in her place. . . .

It is a foolish community that can house whole classes, useful and helpful, honest and loyal classes, in such squalidly unsuitable dwellings. It is by no means the social economy it seems, to use up old women's savings and inexperience in order to meet the landlord's demands. But any one who doubts this thing is going on right up to to-day need only spend an afternoon in hunting for lodgings in any of the regions of London I have named.

But where has my story got to? My uncle, I say, decided I must be shown London, and out we three went as soon as my aunt had got her hat on, to catch all that was left of the day.

§ 6

It pleased my uncle extremely to find I had never seen London before. He took possession of the metropolis forthwith. "London, George," he said, "takes a lot of under-

standing. It's a great place. Immense. The richest town in the world, the biggest port, the greatest manufacturing town, the Imperial city—the centre of civilization, the heart of the world! See those sandwich men down there! That third one's hat! Fair treat! You don't see poverty like that in Wimblehurst, George! And many of them high Oxford honour men too. Brought down by drink! It's a wonderful place, George—a whirlpool, a maelstrom! whirls you up and whirls you down."

I have a very confused memory of that afternoon's inspection of London. My uncle took us to and fro showing us over his London, talking erratically, following a route of his own. Sometimes we were walking, sometimes we were on the tops of great staggering horse omnibuses in a heaving jumble of traffic, and at one point we had tea in an Aërated Bread Shop. But I remember very distinctly how we passed down Park Lane under an overcast sky, and how my uncle pointed out the house of this child of good fortune and that with succulent appreciation.

I remember, too, that as he talked I would find my aunt watching my face as if to check the soundness of his talk by my expression.

"Been in love yet, George?" she asked suddenly, over a bun in the tea-shop.

"Too busy, aunt," I told her.

She bit her bun extensively, and gesticulated with the remnant to indicate that she had more to say.

"How are *you* going to make your fortune?" she said so soon as she could speak again. "You haven't told us that."

"'Lectricity," said my uncle, taking breath after a deep draught of tea.

"If I make it at all," I said. "For my part I think I shall be satisfied with something less than a fortune."

"We're going to make ours—suddenly," she said. "So *he* old says." She jerked her head at my uncle. "He won't tell me when—so I can't get anything ready. But it's coming. Going to ride in our carriage and have a garden. Garden—like a bishop's."

She finished her bun and twiddled crumbs from her

fingers. "I shall be glad of the garden," she said. "It's going to be a real big one with rosaries and things. Fountains in it. Pampas grass. Hothouses."

"You'll get it all right," said my uncle, who had reddened a little.

"Grey horses in the carriage, George," she said. "It's nice to think about when one's dull. And dinners in restaurants often and often. And theatres—in the stalls. And money and money and money."

"You may joke," said my uncle, and hummed for a moment.

"Just as though an old Porpoise like him would ever make money," she said, turning her eyes upon his profile with a sudden lapse to affection. "He'll just porpoise about."

"I'll do something," said my uncle, "you bet! Zzzz!" and rapped with a shilling on the marble table.

"When you do you'll have to buy me a new pair of gloves," she said, "anyhow. That finger's past mending. Look! you Cabbage—you." And she held the split under his nose, and pulled a face of comical fierceness.

My uncle smiled at these sallies at the time, but afterwards, when I went back with him to the Pharmacy—the low-class business grew brisker in the evening and they kept open late—he reverted to it in a low expository tone. "Your aunt's a bit impatient, George. She gets at me. It's only natural. . . . A woman doesn't understand how long it takes to build up a position. No. . . . In certain directions now—I am—quietly—building up a position. Now here. . . . I get this room. I have my three assistants. Zzzz. It's a position that, judged by the criterion of immeedjit income, isn't perhaps so good as I deserve, but strategically—yes. It's what I want. I make my plans. I rally my attack."

"What plans," I said, "are you making?"

"Well, George, there's one thing you can rely upon. I'm doing nothing in a hurry. I turn over this idea and that, and I don't talk—indiscreetly. There's—— No! I don't think I can tell you that. And yet, why *not?*"

He got up and closed the door into the shop. "I've told no one," he remarked, as he sat down again. "I owe you something."

His face flushed slightly, he leant forward over the little table towards me.

"Listen!" he said.

I listened.

"Tono-Bungay," said my uncle very slowly and distinctly.

I thought he was asking me to hear some remote, strange noise. "I don't hear anything," I said reluctantly to his expectant face.

He smiled undefeated. "Try again," he said, and repeated, "Tono-Bungay."

"Oh, *that!*" I said.

"Eh?" said he.

"But what is it?"

"Ah!" said my uncle, rejoicing and expanding. "What *is* it? That's what you got to ask? What *won't* it be?" He dug me violently in what he supposed to be my ribs. "George," he cried—"George, watch this place! There's more to follow."

And that was all I could get from him.

That, I believe, was the very first time that the words Tono-Bungay were heard on earth—unless my uncle indulged in monologues in his chamber—a highly probable thing. Its utterance certainly did not seem to me at the time to mark any sort of epoch, and had I been told this word was the Open Sesame to whatever pride and pleasure the grimy front of London hid from us that evening, I should have laughed aloud.

"Coming now to business," I said after a pause, and with a chill sense of effort; and I opened the question of his trust.

My uncle sighed, and leant back in his chair. "I wish I could make all this business as clear to you as it is to me," he said. "However—— Go on! Say what you have to say."

§ 7

After I left my uncle that evening I gave way to a feeling of profound depression. My uncle and aunt seemed to me to be leading—I have already used the word too

often but I must use it again—*dingy* lives. They seemed to be adrift in a limitless crowd of dingy people, wearing shabby clothes, living uncomfortably in shabby second-hand houses, going to and fro on pavements that had always a thin veneer of greasy, slippery mud, under grey skies that showed no gleam of hope of anything for them but dinginess until they died. It seemed absolutely clear to me that my mother's little savings had been swallowed up and that my own prospect was all too certainly to drop into and be swallowed up sooner or later by this dingy London ocean. The London that was to be an adventurous escape from the slumber of Wimblehurst, had vanished from my dreams. I saw my uncle pointing to the houses in Park Lane and showing a frayed shirt-cuff as he did so. I heard my aunt; "I'm to ride in my carriage then. So he old says."

My feelings towards my uncle were extraordinarily mixed. I was intensely sorry not only for my aunt Susan but for him—for it seemed indisputable that as they were living then so they must go on—and at the same time I was angry with the garrulous vanity and silliness that had clipped all my chance of independent study, and imprisoned her in those grey apartments. When I got back to Wimblehurst I allowed myself to write him a boyishly sarcastic and sincerely bitter letter. He never replied. Then, believing it to be the only way of escape for me, I set myself far more grimly and resolutely to my studies than I had ever done before. After a time I wrote to him in more moderate terms, and he answered me evasively. And then I tried to dismiss him from my mind and went on working.

Yes, that first raid upon London under the moist and chilly depression of January had an immense effect upon me. It was for me an epoch-making disappointment. I had thought of London as a large, free, welcoming, adventurous place, and I saw it slovenly and harsh and irresponsive.

I did not realize at all what human things might be found behind those grey frontages, what weakness that whole forbidding façade might presently confess. It is the constant error of youth to over-estimate the Will

in things. I did not see that the dirt, the discouragement, the discomfort of London could be due simply to the fact that London was a witless old giantess of a town, too slack and stupid to keep herself clean and maintain a brave face to the world. No! I suffered from the sort of illusion that burnt witches in the seventeenth century. I endued her grubby disorder with a sinister and magnificent quality of intention.

And my uncle's gestures and promises filled me with doubt and a sort of fear for him. He seemed to me a lost little creature, too silly to be silent, in a vast implacable condemnation. I was full of pity and a sort of tenderness for my aunt Susan, who was doomed to follow his erratic fortunes mocked by his grandiloquent promises. . . .

I was to learn better. But I worked with the terror of the grim underside of London in my soul during all my last year at Wimblehurst.

END OF BOOK I

BOOK THE SECOND

THE RISE OF TONO-BUNGAY

CHAPTER I

How I became a London Student, and went Astray

§ 1

I came to live in London, as I shall tell you, when I was nearly twenty-two. Wimblehurst dwindles in perspective, is now in this book a little place far off, Bladesover no more than a small pinkish speck of frontage among the distant Kentish hills; the scene broadens out, becomes multitudinous and limitless, full of the sense of vast irrelevant movement. I do not remember my second coming to London as I do my first, nor my early impressions, save that an October memory of softened amber sunshine stands out, amber sunshine falling on grey house fronts, I know not where. That, and a sense of a large tranquillity. . . .

I could fill a book, I think, with a more or less imaginary account of how I came to apprehend London, how first in one aspect and then in another it grew in my mind. Each day my accumulating impressions were added to and qualified and brought into relationship with new ones, they fused inseparably with others that were purely personal and accidental. I find myself with a certain comprehensive perception of London, complex indeed, incurably indistinct in places and yet in some way a whole that began with my first visit and is still being mellowed and enriched.

London!

At first, no doubt, it was a chaos of streets and people and buildings and reasonless going to and fro. I do not remember that I ever struggled very steadily to understand it, or explored it with any but a personal and adventurous intention. Yet in time there has grown up in me a kind of

theory of London; I do think I see lines of an ordered structure out of which it has grown, detected a process that is something more than a confusion of casual accidents, though indeed it may be no more than a process of disease.

I said at the outset of my first book that I find in Bladesover the clue to all England. Well, I certainly imagine it is the clue to the structure of London. There have been no revolutions, no deliberate restatements or abandonments of opinion in England since the days of the fine gentry, since 1688 or thereabouts, the days when Bladesover was built; there have been changes, dissolving forces, replacing forces, if you will; but then it was that the broad lines of the English system set firmly. And as I have gone to and fro in London, in certain regions constantly the thought has recurred, this is Bladesover House, this answers to Bladesover House. The fine gentry may have gone; they have indeed largely gone, I think; rich merchants may have replaced them, financial adventurers or what not. That does not matter; the shape is still Bladesover.

I am most reminded of Bladesover and Eastry by all those regions round about the West End parks, for example, estate parks, each more or less in relation to a palace or group of great houses. The roads and back ways of Mayfair and all about St. James's again, albeit perhaps of a later growth in point of time, were of the very spirit and architectural texture of the Bladesover passages and yards; they had the same smells, the space, the large cleanness, and always going to and fro there one met unmistakable Olympians, and even more unmistakable valets, butlers, footmen in mufti. There were moments when I seemed to glimpse down areas the white panelling, the very chintz of my mother's room again.

I could trace out now on a map what I would call the Great-House region; passing south-westward into Belgravia, becoming diffused and sporadic westward, finding its last systematic outbreak round and about Regent's Park. The Duke of Devonshire's place in Piccadilly, in all its insolent ugliness, pleases me particularly, it is the quintessence of the thing; Apsley House is all in the manner of my theory; Park Lane has its quite typical mansions, and they run along the border of the Green Park and St.

James's. And I struck out a truth one day in Cromwell Road quite suddenly, as I looked over the Natural History Museum; " By Jove ! " said I, " but this is the little assemblage of cases of stuffed birds and animals upon the Bladesover staircase grown enormous, and yonder, as the corresponding thing to the Bladesover curios and porcelain, is the Art Museum, and there in the little observatories in Exhibition Road is old Sir Cuthbert's Gregorian telescope that I hunted out in the storeroom and put together." And diving into the Art Museum under this inspiration, I came to a little reading-room and found, as I had inferred, old brown books !

It was really a good piece of social comparative anatomy I did that day; all these museums and libraries that are dotted over London between Piccadilly and West Kensington, and indeed the museum and library movement throughout the world, sprang from the elegant leisure of the gentlemen of taste. Theirs were the first libraries, the first houses of culture; by my rat-like raids into the Bladesover saloon I became, as it were, the last dwindled representative of such a man of letters as Swift. But now these things have escaped out of the Great House altogether, and taken on a strange independent life of their own.

It is this idea of escaping parts from the seventeenth-century system of Bladesover, of proliferating and overgrowing elements from the Estates, that to this day seems to me the best explanation, not simply of London, but of all England. England is a country of great Renascence landed gentlefolk who have been unconsciously outgrown and overgrown. The proper shops for Bladesover custom were still to be found in Regent Street and Bond Street in my early London days—in those days they had been but lightly touched by the American profaning hand—and in Piccadilly. I found the doctor's house of the country village or country town up and down Harley Street, multiplied but not otherwise different, and the family solicitor (by the hundred) further eastward in the abandoned houses of a previous generation of gentlepeople, and down in Westminster, behind Palladian fronts, the public offices sheltered in large Bladesoverish rooms and looked out on St. James's Park. The Parliament Houses

of lords and gentlemen, the parliament house that was horrified when merchants and brewers came thrusting into it a hundred years ago, stood out upon its terrace gathering the whole system together into a head.

And the more I have paralleled these things with my Bladesover-Eastry model, the more evident it has become to me that the balance is not the same, and the more evident is the presence of great new forces, blind forces of invasion, of growth. The railway termini on the north side of London have been kept as remote as Eastry had kept the railway-station from Wimblehurst, they stop on the very outskirts of the estates, but from the south, the South Eastern Railway had butted its great stupid rusty iron head of Charing Cross station—that great head that came smashing down in 1905—clean across the river, between Somerset House and Whitehall. The south side had no protecting estates. Factory chimneys smoke right over against Westminster with an air of carelessly not having permission, and the whole effect of industrial London and of all London east of Temple Bar and of the huge dingy immensity of London port, is to me of something disproportionately large, something morbidly expanded, without plan or intention, dark and sinister toward the clean clear social assurance of the West End. And south of this central London, south-east, south-west, far west, north-west, all round the northern hills, are similar disproportionate growths, endless streets of undistinguished houses, undistinguished industries, shabby families, second-rate shops, inexplicable people who in a once fashionable phrase do not "exist." All these aspects have suggested to my mind at times, do suggest to this day, the unorganized abundant substance of some tumorous growth-process, a process which indeed bursts all the outlines of the affected carcass and protrudes such masses as ignoble comfortable Croydon, as tragic impoverished West Ham. To this day I ask myself will those masses ever become structural, will they indeed shape into anything new whatever, or is that cancerous image their true and ultimate diagnosis? . . .

Moreover, together with this hypertrophy there is an immigration of elements that have never understood and never will understand the great tradition, wedges of foreign

settlement embedded in the heart of this yeasty English expansion. One day I remember wandering eastward out of pure curiosity—it must have been in my early student days—and discovering a shabbily bright foreign quarter, shops displaying Hebrew placards and weird unfamiliar commodities, and a concourse of bright-eyed, eagle-nosed people talking some incomprehensible gibberish between the shops and the barrows. And soon I became quite familiar with the devious, vicious, dirtily-pleasant exoticism of Soho. I found those crowded streets a vast relief from the dull grey exterior of Brompton where I lodged and lived my daily life. In Soho, indeed, I got my first inkling of the factor of replacement that is so important in both the English and the American process.

Even in the West End, in Mayfair and the squares about Pall Mall, Ewart was presently to remind me the face of the old aristocratic dignity was fairer than its substance; here were actors and actresses, here moneylenders and Jews, here bold financial adventurers, and I thought of my uncle's frayed cuff as he pointed out this house in Park Lane and that. That was so and so's who made a corner in borax, and that palace belonged to that hero among modern adventurers, Barmentrude, who used to be an I.D.B.,—an illicit diamond buyer that is to say. A city of Bladesovers, the capital of a kingdom of Bladesovers, all much shaken and many altogether in decay, parasitically occupied, insidiously replaced by alien, unsympathetic and irresponsible elements;—and withal ruling an adventitious and miscellaneous empire of a quarter of this daedal earth. Complex laws, intricate social necessities, disturbing insatiable suggestions, followed from this. Such was the world into which I had come, into which I had in some way to thrust myself and fit my problem, my temptations, my efforts, my patriotic instinct, all my moral instincts, my physical appetites, my dreams and my vanity.

London! I came up to it, young and without advisers, rather priggish, rather dangerously open-minded and very open-eyed, and with something—it is I think the common gift of imaginative youth, and I claim it unblushingly—fine in me, finer than the world and seeking fine responses. I did not want simply to live or simply to live happily or

well, I wanted to serve and do and make—with some nobility. It was in me. It is in half the youth of the world.

§ 2

I had come to London as a scholar. I had taken the Vincent Bradley scholarship of the Pharmaceutical Society, but I threw this up when I found that my work of the Science and Art Department in mathematics, physics and chemistry had given me one of the minor Technical Board Scholarships at the Consolidated Technical Schools at South Kensington. This latter was in mechanics and metallurgy; and I hesitated between the two. The Vincent Bradley gave me £70 a year and quite the best start-off a pharmaceutical chemist could have; the South Kensington thing was worth about twenty-two shillings a week, and the prospects it opened were vague. But it meant far more scientific work than the former, and I was still under the impulse of that great intellectual appetite that is part of the adolescence of men of my type. Moreover, it seemed to lead towards engineering, in which I imagined—I imagine to this day—my particular use is to be found. I took its greater uncertainty as a fair risk. I came up very keen, not doubting that the really hard and steady industry that had carried me through Wimblehurst would go on still in the new surroundings.

Only from the very first it didn't. . . .

When I look back now at my Wimblehurst days, I still find myself surprised at the amount of steady grinding study, of strenuous self-discipline that I maintained throughout my apprenticeship. In many ways I think that time was the most honourable period in my life. I wish I could say with a certain mind that my motives in working so well were large and honourable too. To a certain extent they were so; there was a fine sincere curiosity, a desire for the strength and power of scientific knowledge and a passion for intellectual exercise; but I do not think those forces alone would have kept me at it so grimly and closely if Wimblehurst had not been so dull, so limited and so observant. Directly I came into the London atmosphere,

tasting freedom, tasting irresponsibility and the pull of new forces altogether, my discipline fell from me like a garment. Wimblehurst to a youngster in my position offered no temptations worth counting, no interests to conflict with study, no vices—such vices as it offered were coarsely stripped of any imaginative glamour—dull drunkenness, clumsy leering, shameful lust, no social intercourse even to waste one's time, and on the other hand it would minister greatly to the self-esteem of a conspicuously industrious student. One was marked as "clever," one played up to the part, and one's little accomplishment stood out finely in one's private reckoning against the sunlit small ignorance of that agreeable place. One went with an intent rush across the market square, one took one's exercise with as dramatic a sense of an ordered day as an Oxford don, one burnt the midnight oil quite consciously at the rare, respectful, benighted passer-by. And one stood out finely in the local paper with one's unapproachable yearly harvest of certificates. Thus I was not only a genuinely keen student, but also a little of a prig and poseur in those days—and the latter kept the former at it, as London made clear. Moreover, Wimblehurst had given me no outlet in any other direction.

But I did not realize all this when I came to London, did not perceive how the change of atmosphere began at once to warp and distribute my energies. In the first place I became invisible. If I idled for a day, no one except my fellow-students (who evidently had no awe for me) remarked it. No one saw my midnight taper; no one pointed me out as I crossed the street as an astonishing intellectual phenomenon. In the next place I became inconsiderable. In Wimblehurst I felt I stood for Science; nobody there seemed to have so much as I and to have it so fully and completely. In London I walked ignorant in an immensity, and it was clear that among my fellow-students from the midlands and the north I was ill-equipped and under-trained. With the utmost exertion I should only take a secondary position among them. And finally, in the third place, I was distracted by voluminous new interests; London took hold of me, and Science, which had been the universe, shrank back to

the dimensions of tiresome little formulæ compacted in a book. I came to London in late September, and it was a very different London from that great greyly-overcast, smoke-stained house-wilderness of my first impressions. I reached it by Victoria and not by Cannon Street, and its centre was now in Exhibition Road. It shone, pale amber, blue-grey and tenderly spacious and fine under the clear autumnal skies, a London of hugely handsome buildings and vistas and distances, a London of gardens and labyrinthine tall museums, of old trees and remote palaces and artificial waters. I lodged near by in West Brompton at a house in a little square.

So London faced me the second time, making me forget altogether for a while the grey, drizzling city visage that had first looked upon me. I settled down and went to and fro to my lectures and laboratory; in the beginning I worked hard, and only slowly did the curiosity that presently possessed me to know more of this huge urban province arise, the desire to find something beyond mechanism that I could serve, some use other than learning. With this was a growing sense of loneliness, a desire for adventure and intercourse. I found myself in the evenings poring over a map of London I had bought, instead of copying out lecture notes—and on Sundays I made explorations, taking omnibus rides east and west and north and south, and so enlarging and broadening the sense of great swarming hinterlands of humanity with whom I had no dealings, of whom I knew nothing. . . .

The whole illimitable place teemed with suggestions of indefinite and sometimes outrageous possibility, of hidden but magnificent meanings.

It wasn't simply that I received a vast impression of space and multitude and opportunity; intimate things also were suddenly dragged from neglected, veiled and darkened corners into an acute vividness of perception. Close at hand in the big Art Museum I came for the first time upon the beauty of nudity, which I had hitherto held to be a shameful secret, flaunted and gloried in; I was made aware of beauty as not only permissible but desirable and frequent, and of a thousand hitherto unsuspected rich aspects of life. One night in a real rapture, I walked round the upper

gallery of the Albert Hall and listened for the first time to great music, I believe now that it was a rendering of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. . . .

My apprehension of spaces and places was reinforced by a quickened apprehension of persons. A constant stream of people passed by me, eyes met and challenged mine and passed—more and more I wanted them to stay—if I went eastward towards Piccadilly, women who seemed then to my boyish inexperience softly splendid and alluring, murmured to me as they passed. Extraordinarily life unveiled. The very hoardings clamoured strangely at one's senses and curiosities. One bought pamphlets and papers full of strange and daring ideas transcending one's boldest; in the parks one heard men discussing the very existence of God, denying the rights of property, debating a hundred things that one dared not think about in Wimblehurst. And after the ordinary overcast day, after dull mornings, came twilight, and London lit up and became a thing of white and yellow and red jewels of light and wonderful floods of golden illumination and stupendous and unfathomable shadows—and there were no longer any mean or shabby people—but a great mysterious movement of unaccountable beings. . . .

Always I was coming on the queerest new aspects. Late one Saturday night I found myself one of a great slow-moving crowd between the blazing shops and the flaring barrows in the Harrow Road; I got into conversation with two bold-eyed girls, bought them boxes of chocolate, made the acquaintance of father and mother and various younger brothers and sisters, sat in a public house hilariously with them all, standing and being stood drinks, and left them in the small hours at the door of "home," never to see them again. And once I was accosted on the outskirts of a Salvation Army meeting in one of the parks by a silk-hatted young man of eager and serious discourse, who argued against scepticism with me, invited me home to tea into a clean and cheerful family of brothers and sisters and friends, and there I spent the evening singing hymns to the harmonium (which reminded me of half-forgotten Chatham) and wishing all the sisters were not so obviously engaged. . . .

Then on the remote hill of this boundless city-world, I found Ewart.

§ 3

How well I remember the first morning, a bright Sunday morning in early October, when I raided in upon Ewart! I found my old schoolfellow in bed in a room over an oil-shop in a back street at the foot of Highgate Hill. His landlady, a pleasant, dirty young woman with soft brown eyes, brought down his message for me to come up; and up I went. The room presented itself as ample and interesting in detail and shabby with a quite commendable shabbiness. I had an impression of brown walls—they were papered with brown paper—of a long shelf along one side of the room with dusty plaster casts and a small cheap lay figure of a horse, of a table and something of grey wax partially covered with a cloth, and of scattered drawings. There was a gas stove in one corner and some enamelled ware that had been used for overnight cooking. The oilcloth on the floor was streaked with a peculiar white dust. Ewart himself was not in the first instance visible, but only a fourfold canvas screen at the end of the room from which shouts proceeded of "Come on!" then his wiry black hair, very much rumpled, and a staring red-brown eye and his stump of a nose came round the edge of this at a height of about three feet from the ground. "It's old Ponderevo!" he said, "the Early Bird! And he's caught the worm! By Jove, but it's cold this morning! Come round here and sit on the bed!"

I walked round, wrung his hand, and we surveyed one another.

He was lying on a small wooden fold-up bed, the scanty covering of which was supplemented by an overcoat and an elderly but still cheerful pair of check trousers, and he was wearing pyjamas of a virulent pink and green. His neck seemed longer and more stringy than it had been even in our schooldays, and his upper lip had a wiry black moustache. The rest of his ruddy, knobby countenance, his erratic hair and his general hairy leanness had not even—to my perceptions—grown.

"By Jove!" he said, "you've got quite decent-looking, Ponderevo! What do you think of me?"

"You're all right. What are you doing here?"

"Art, my son—sculpture! And incidentally——" He hesitated. "I ply a trade. Will you hand me that pipe and those smoking things? So! You can't make coffee, eh? Well, try your hand. Cast down this screen—no—fold it up and so we'll go into the other room. I'll keep in bed all the same. The fire's a gas stove. Yes. Don't make it bang too loud as you light it—I can't stand it this morning. You won't smoke? . . . Well, it does me good to see you again, Ponderevo. Tell me what you're doing, and how you're getting on."

He directed me in the service of his simple hospitality, and presently I came back to his bed and sat down and smiled at him there, smoking comfortably with his hands under his head, surveying me.

"How's Life's Morning, Ponderevo? By Jove, it must be nearly six years since we met! We've got moustaches. We've fleshed ourselves a bit, eh? And you——?"

I felt a pipe was becoming after all, and that lit, I gave him a favourable sketch of my career.

"Science! And you've worked like that! While I've been potting round doing odd jobs for stonemasons and people, and trying to get to sculpture. I've a sort of feeling that the chisel—— I began with painting, Ponderevo, and found I was colour-blind, colour-blind enough to stop it. I've drawn about and thought about—thought more particularly. I give myself three days a week as an art student, and the rest of the time—I've a sort of trade that keeps me. And we're still in the beginning of things, young men starting. Do you remember the old times at Goudhurst, our doll's-house island, the Retreat of the Ten Thousand, Young Holmes and the rabbits, eh? It's surprising, if you think of it, to find we are still young. And we used to talk of what we would be, and we used to talk of love! I suppose you know all about that now, Ponderevo."

I flushed and hesitated on some vague foolish lie. "No," I said, a little ashamed of the truth. "Do you? I've been too busy."

"I'm just beginning—just as we were then. Things happen——"

He sucked at his pipe for a space and stared at the plaster cast of a flayed hand that hung on the wall.

"The fact is, Ponderevo, I'm beginning to find life a most extraordinary queer set-out; the things that pull one, the things that don't. The wants—— This business of sex. It's a net. No end to it, no way out of it, no sense in it. There are times when women take possession of me, when my mind is like a painted ceiling at Hampton Court with the pride of the flesh sprawling all over it. *Why?* . . . And then again sometimes when I have to encounter a woman, I am overwhelmed by a terror of tantalizing boredom—I fly, I hide, I do anything. You've got your scientific explanations perhaps; what's Nature and the universe up to in that matter?"

"It's her way, I gather, of securing the continuity of the species."

"But it doesn't," said Ewart. "That's just it! No. I have succumbed to—dissipation—down the hill there. Euston Road way. And it was damned ugly and mean, and I hate having done it. And the continuity of the species—lord! . . . And why does Nature make a man so infernally ready for drinks? There's no sense in that anyhow." He had sat up in bed, to put this question with the greater earnestness. "And why has she given me a most violent desire towards sculpture and an equally violent desire to leave off work directly I begin it, eh? . . . Let's have some more coffee. I put it you, those things puzzle me, Ponderevo. They dishearten me. They keep me in bed."

He had an air of having saved up these difficulties for me for some time. He sat with his chin almost touching his knees, sucking at his pipe.

"That's what I mean," he went on, "when I say life is getting on to me as extraordinary queer. I don't see my game, nor why I was invited. And I don't make anything of the world outside either. What do *you* make of it?"

"London," I began. "It's—so enormous!"

"Isn't it! And it's all up to nothing. You find chaps keeping grocers' shops—why the *devil*, Ponderevo, do they

keep grocers' shops? They all do it very carefully, very steadily, very meanly. You find people running about and doing the most remarkable things—being policemen, for example, and burglars. They go about these businesses quite gravely and earnestly. I—somehow—can't go about mine. Is there any sense in it at all—anywhere?"

"There must be sense in it," I said. "We're young."

"We're young—yes. But one must inquire. The grocer's a grocer because, I suppose, he sees he comes in there. Feels that on the whole it amounts to a call. . . . But the bother is I don't see where I come in at all. Do you?"

"Where *you* come in?"

"No, where *you* come in."

"Not exactly, yet," I said. "I want to do some good in the world—something—something effectual, before I die. I have a sort of idea my scientific work—— I don't know."

"Yes," he mused. "And I've got a sort of idea my sculpture,—but *how* it is to come in and *why*,—I've no idea at all." He hugged his knees for a space. "That's what puzzles me, Ponderevo, no end."

He became animated. "If you will look in that cupboard," he said, "you will find an old respectable-looking roll on a plate and a knife somewhere and a gallipot containing butter. You give them me and I'll make my breakfast, and then if you don't mind watching me paddle about at my simple toilet I'll get up. Then we'll go for a walk and talk about this affair of life further. And about Art and Literature and anything else that crops up on the way. . . . Yes, that's the gallipot. Cockroach got in it? Chuck him out—damned interloper. . . ."

So in the first five minutes of our talk, as I seem to remember it now, old Ewart struck the note that ran through all that morning's intercourse. . . .

To me it was a most memorable talk because it opened out quite new horizons of thought. I'd been working rather close and out of touch with Ewart's free gesticulating way. He was pessimistic that day and sceptical to the very roots of things. He made me feel clearly, what I had not felt at all before, the general adventurousness of life, particularly of life at the stage we had reached, and also the

absence of definite objects, of any concerted purpose in the lives that were going on all round us. He made me feel, too, how ready I was to take up commonplace assumptions. Just as I had always imagined that somewhere in social arrangements there was certainly a Head-Master who would intervene if one went too far, so I had always had a sort of implicit belief that in our England there were somewhere people who understood what we were all, as a nation, about. That crumpled into his pit of doubt and vanished. He brought out, sharply cut and certain, the immense effect of purposelessness in London that I was already indistinctly feeling. We found ourselves at last returning through Highgate Cemetery and Waterlow Park—and Ewart was talking.

"Look at it there," he said, stopping and pointing to the great vale of London spreading far and wide. "It's like a sea—and we swim in it. And at last down we go, and then up we come—washed up here." He swung his arm to the long slopes about us, tombs and headstones in long perspectives, in limitless rows. "We're young, Ponderevo, but sooner or later our whitened memories will wash up on one of these beaches, on some such beach as this. George Ponderevo, F.R.S., Sidney Ewart, R.I.P. Look at the rows of 'em!"

He paused. "Do you see that hand? The hand, I mean, pointing upward, on the top of a blunted obelisk. Yes. Well, that's what I do for a living—when I'm not thinking, or drinking, or prowling, or making love, or pretending I'm trying to be a sculptor without either the money or the morals for a model. See? And I do those hearts afire and those pensive angel guardians with the palm of peace. Damned well I do 'em and damned cheap! I'm a sweated victim, Ponderevo. . ."

That was the way of it, anyhow. I drank deep of talk that day, we went into theology, into philosophy; I had my first glimpse of socialism. I felt as though I had been silent in a silence since I and he had parted. At the thought of socialism Ewart's moods changed for a time to a sort of energy. "After all, all this confounded vagueness *might* be altered. If you could get men to work together. . . ."

It was a good talk that rambled through all the universe.

I thought I was giving my mind refreshment, but indeed it was dissipation. All sorts of ideas, even now, carry me back as it were to a fountain-head, to Waterlow Park and my resuscitated Ewart. There stretches away south of us long garden slopes and white gravestones and the wide expanse of London, and somewhere in the picture is a red old wall, sun-warmed, and a great blaze of Michaelmas daisies set off with late golden sunflowers and a drift of mottled, blood-red, fallen leaves. It was with me that day as though I had lifted my head suddenly out of dull and immediate things and looked at life altogether. . . . But it played the very devil with the copying up of my arrears of notes to which I had vowed the latter half of that day.

After that reunion Ewart and I met much and talked much, and in our subsequent encounters his monologue was interrupted and I took my share. He had exercised me so greatly that I lay awake at nights thinking him over, and discoursed and answered him in my head as I went in the morning to the College. I am by nature a doer and only by the way a critic ; his philosophical assertion of the incalculable vagueness of life which fitted his natural indolence roused my more irritable and energetic nature to active protests. " It's all so pointless," I said, " because people are slack and because it's in the ebb of an age. But you're a socialist. Well, let's bring that about ! And there's a purpose. There you are ! "

Ewart gave me all my first conceptions of socialism; in a little while I was an enthusiastic socialist and he was a passive resister to the practical exposition of the theories he had taught me. " We must join some organization," I said. " We ought to do things. . . . We ought to go and speak at street corners. People don't know." You must figure me a rather ill-dressed young man in a state of great earnestness, standing up in that shabby studio of his and saying these things, perhaps with some gesticulations, and Ewart with a clay-smudged face, dressed perhaps in a flannel shirt and trousers, with a pipe in his mouth, squatting philosophically at a table, working at some chunk of clay that never got beyond suggestion.

" I wonder why one doesn't want to," he said. . . .

It was only very slowly I came to gauge Ewart's real

position in the scheme of things, to understand how deliberate and complete was this detachment of his from the moral condemnation and responsibilities that played so fine a part in his talk. His was essentially the nature of an artistic appreciator; he could find interest and beauty in endless aspects of things that I marked as evil, or at least as not negotiable; and the impulse I had towards self-deception, to sustained and consistent self-devotion, disturbed and detached and pointless as it was at that time, he had indeed a sort of admiration for but no sympathy. Like many fantastic and ample talkers he was at bottom secretive, and he gave me a series of little shocks of discovery throughout our intercourse. The first of these came in the realization that he quite seriously meant to do nothing in the world at all towards reforming the evils he laid bare in so easy and dexterous a manner. The next came in the sudden appearance of a person called "Milly"—I've forgotten her surname—whom I found in his room one evening, simply attired in a blue wrap—the rest of her costume behind the screen—smoking cigarettes and sharing a flagon of an amazingly cheap and self-assertive grocer's wine Ewart affected, called "Canary Sack." "Hullo!" said Ewart, as I came in. "This is Milly, you know. She's been being a model—she *is* a model really. . . . (Keep calm, Ponderevo!) Have some sack?"

Milly was a woman of thirty perhaps, with a broad, rather pretty face, a placid disposition, a bad accent and delightful blonde hair that waved off her head with an irrepressible variety of charm; and whenever Ewart spoke she beamed at him. Ewart was always sketching this hair of hers and embarking upon clay statuettes of her that were never finished. She was, I know now, a woman of the streets, whom Ewart had picked up in the most casual manner, and who had fallen in love with him, but my inexperience in those days was too great for me to place her then, and Ewart offered no elucidations. She came to him, he went to her, they took holidays together in the country when certainly she sustained her fair share of their expenditure. I suspect him now even of taking money from her. Odd old Ewart! It was a relationship so alien to my orderly conceptions of honour, to what I could imagine

any friend of mine doing, that I really hardly saw it with it there under my nose. But I see it and I think I understand it now. . . .

Before I fully grasped the discursive manner in which Ewart was committed to his particular way in life, I did, I say, as the broad constructive ideas of socialism took hold of me, try to get him to work with me in some definite fashion as a socialist.

"We ought to join on to other socialists," I said. "They've got something."

"Let's go and look at some first."

After some pains we discovered the office of the Fabian Society, lurking in a cellar in Clement's Inn; and we went and interviewed a rather discouraging secretary who stood astraddle in front of a fire and questioned us severely and seemed to doubt the integrity of our intentions profoundly. He advised us to attend the next open meeting in Clifford's Inn and gave us the necessary data. We both contrived to get to the affair, and heard a discursive gritty paper on Trusts and one of the most inconclusive discussions you can imagine. Three-quarters of the speakers seemed under some jocular obession which took the form of pretending to be conceited. It was a sort of family joke and as strangers to the family we did not like it. . . . As we came out through the narrow passage from Clifford's Inn to the Strand, Ewart suddenly pitched upon a wizened, spectacled little man in a vast felt hat and a large orange tie.

"How many members are there in this Fabian Society of yours?" he asked.

The little man became at once defensive in his manner.

"About seven hundred," he said; "perhaps eight."

"Like—like the ones here?"

The little man gave a nervous self-satisfied laugh. "I suppose they're up to sample," he said.

The little man dropped out of existence and we emerged upon the Strand. Ewart twisted his arm into a queerly eloquent gesture that gathered up all the tall façades of the banks, the business places, the projecting clock and towers of the Law Courts, the advertisements, the luminous signs, into one social immensity, into a capitalistic system gigantic and invincible.

"These socialists have no sense of proportion," he said. "What can you expect of them?"

§ 4

Ewart, as the embodiment of talk, was certainly a leading factor in my conspicuous failure to go on studying. Social theory in its first crude form of Democratic Socialism gripped my intelligence more and more powerfully. I argued in the laboratory with the man who shared my bench until we quarrelled and did not speak. And also I fell in love.

The ferment of sex had been creeping into my being like a slowly advancing tide through all my Wimblehurst days, the stimulus of London was like the rising of a wind out of a sea that brings the waves in fast and high. Ewart had his share in that. More and more acutely and unmistakably did my perception of beauty in form and sound, my desire for adventure, my desire for intercourse, converge on this central and commanding business of the individual life. I had to get me a mate.

I began to fall in love faintly with girls I passed in the street, with women who sat before me in trains, with girl fellow-students, with ladies in passing carriages, with loiterers at the corners, with neat-handed waitresses in shops and tea-rooms, with pictures even of girls and women. On my rare visits to the theatre I always became exalted, and found the actresses and even the spectators about me mysterious, attractive, creatures of deep interest and desire. I had a stronger and stronger sense that among these glancing, passing multitudes there was somewhere one who was for me. And in spite of every antagonistic force in the world, there was something in my very marrow that insisted: "Stop! Look at this one! Think of her! Won't she do? This signifies—this before all things signifies! Stop! Why are you hurrying by? This may be the predestined person—before all others."

It is odd that I can't remember when first I saw Marion, who became my wife—whom I was to make wretched, who was to make me wretched, who was to pluck that fine

generalized possibility of love out of my early manhood and make it a personal conflict. I became aware of her as one of a number of interesting attractive figures that moved about in my world, that glanced back at my eyes, that flitted by with a kind of averted watchfulness. I would meet her coming through the Art Museum, which was my short cut to the Brompton Road, or see her sitting, reading as I thought, in one of the bays of the Education Library. But really, as I found out afterwards, she never read. She used to come there to eat a bun in quiet. She was a very gracefully-moving figure of a girl then, very plainly dressed, with dark brown hair I remember, in a knot low on her neck behind that confessed the pretty roundness of her head and harmonized with the admirable lines of ears and cheek, the grave serenity of mouth and brow.

She stood out among the other girls very distinctly because they dressed more than she did, struck emphatic notes of colour, startled one by novelties in hats and bows and things. I've always hated the rustle, the disconcerting colour boundaries, the smart unnatural angles of women's clothes. Her plain black dress gave her a starkness. . . .

I do remember, though, how one afternoon I discovered the peculiar appeal of her form for me. I had been restless with my work and had finally slipped out of the Laboratory and come over to the Art Museum to lounge among the pictures. I came upon her in an odd corner of the Sheepshanks gallery intently copying something from a picture that hung high. I had just been in the gallery of casts from the antique, my mind was all alive with my newly awakened sense of line, and there she stood with face upturned, her body drooping forward from the hips just a little—memorably graceful—feminine.

After that I know I sought to see her, felt a distinctive emotion at her presence, began to imagine things about her. I no longer thought of generalized womanhood or of this casual person or that. I thought of her.

An accident brought us together. I found myself one Monday morning in an omnibus staggering westward from Victoria—I was returning from a Sunday I'd spent at Wimblehurst in response to a unique freak of hospitality on the part of Mr. Mantell. She was the sole other inside

passenger. And when the time came to pay her fare, she became an extremely scared, disconcerted and fumbling young woman; she had left her purse at home.

Luckily I had some money.

She looked at me with startled, troubled brown eyes; she permitted my proffered payment to the conductor with a certain ungraciousness that seemed a part of her shyness, and then as she rose to go, she thanked me with an obvious affectation of ease.

"Thank you so much," she said in a pleasant soft voice; and then less gracefully, "Awfully kind of you, you know."

I fancy I made polite noises. But just then I wasn't disposed to be critical. I was full of the sense of her presence, her arm was stretched out over me as she moved past me, the gracious slenderness of her body was near me. The words we used didn't seem very greatly to matter. I had vague ideas of getting out with her—and I didn't.

That encounter, I have no doubt, exercised me enormously. I lay awake at night rehearsing it, and wondering about the next phase of our relationship. That took the form of the return of my twopence. I was in the Science Library, digging something out of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, when she appeared beside me and placed on the open page an evidently premeditated thin envelope, bulgingly confessing the coins within.

"It was so very kind of you," she said, "the other day. I don't know what I should have done, Mr. ——"

I supplied my name. "I knew," I said, "you were a student here."

"Not exactly a student. I——"

"Well, anyhow, I knew you were here frequently. And I'm a student myself at the Consolidated Technical Schools."

I plunged into autobiography and questionings, and so entangled her in a conversation that got a quality of intimacy through the fact that, out of deference to our fellow-readers, we were obliged to speak in undertones. And I have no doubt that in substance it was singularly banal. Indeed I have an impression that all our early conversations were incredibly banal. We met several times in a manner half-

accidental, half-furtive and wholly awkward. Mentally I didn't take hold of her. I never did take hold of her mentally. Her talk, I now know all too clearly, was shallow, pretentious, evasive. Only—even to this day—I don't remember it as in any way vulgar. She was, I could see quite clearly, anxious to overstate or conceal her real social status, a little desirous to be taken for a student in the art school and a little ashamed that she wasn't. She came to the museum to " copy things," and this, I gathered, had something to do with some way of partially earning her living that I wasn't to inquire into. I told her things about myself, vain things that I felt might appeal to her, but that I learnt long afterwards made her think me " conceited." We talked of books, but there she was very much on her guard and secretive, and rather more freely of pictures. She " liked " pictures. I think from the outset I appreciated and did not for a moment resent that hers was a commonplace mind, that she was the unconscious custodian of something that had gripped my most intimate instinct, that she embodied the hope of a possibility, was the careless proprietor of a physical quality that had turned my head like strong wine. I felt I had to stick to our acquaintance, flat as it was. Presently we should get through these irrelevant exterior things, and come to the reality of love beneath.

I saw her in dreams released, as it were, from herself, beautiful, worshipful, glowing. And sometimes when we were together, we would come on silences through sheer lack of matter, and then my eyes would feast on her and the silence seemed like the drawing back of a curtain—her superficial self. Odd, I confess. Odd, particularly, the enormous hold of certain things about her upon me, a certain slight rounded duskiness of skin, a certain perfection of modelling in her lips, her brow, a certain fine flow about the shoulders. She wasn't indeed beautiful to many people—these things are beyond explaining. She had manifest defects of form and feature, and they didn't matter at all. Her complexion was bad, but I don't think it would have mattered if it had been positively unwholesome. I had extraordinarily limited, extraordinarily painful, desires. I longed intolerably to kiss her lips.

§ 5

The affair was immensely serious and commanding to me. I don't remember that in these earlier phases I had any thought of turning back at all. It was clear to me that she regarded me with an eye entirely more critical than I had for her, that she didn't like my scholarly untidiness, my want of even the most commonplace style. "Why do you wear collars like that?" she said, and sent me in pursuit of gentlemanly neckwear. I remember when she invited me a little abruptly one day to come to tea at her home on the following Sunday and meet her father and mother and aunt, that I immediately doubted whether my hitherto unsuspected best clothes would create the impression she desired me to make on her belongings. I put off the encounter until the Sunday after, to get myself in order. I had a morning coat made and I bought a silk hat, and had my reward in the first glance of admiration she ever gave me. I wonder how many of my sex are as preposterous. I was, you see, abandoning all my beliefs—all my conventions unasked. I was forgetting myself—immensely. And there was a conscious shame in it all. Never a word did I breathe to Ewart—to any living soul—of what was going on.

Her father and mother and aunt struck me as the dismalest of people, and her home in Walham Green was chiefly notable for its black and amber tapestry carpets and curtains and table-cloths, and the age and irrelevance of its books, mostly books with faded gilt on the covers. The windows were fortified against the intrusive eye by cheap lace curtains and an "art pot" upon an unstable octagonal table. Several framed Art School drawings of Marion's, bearing official South Kensington marks of approval, adorned the room, and there was a black and gilt piano with a hymn-book on the top of it. There were draped mirrors over all the mantels, and above the side-board in the dining-room in which we sat at tea was a portrait of her father, villainously truthful after the manner of such works. I couldn't see a trace of the beauty I found in her in either parent, yet she somehow contrived to be like them both.

These people pretended in a way that reminded me of the Three Great Women in my mother's room, but they had not nearly so much social knowledge and did not do it nearly so well. Also, I remarked, they did it with an eye on Marion. They had wanted to thank me, they said, for the kindness to their daughter in the matter of the 'bus fare, and so accounted for anything unusual in their invitation. They posed as simple gentle-folk, a little hostile to the rush and gadding-about of London, preferring a secluded and unpretentious quiet.

When Marion got out the white table-cloth from the sideboard-drawer for tea, a card bearing the word "APARTMENTS" fell to the floor. I picked it up and gave it to her before I realized from her quickened colour that I should not have seen it; that probably it had been removed from the window in honour of my coming.

Her father spoke once in a large remote way of the claims of business engagements, and it was only long afterwards I realized that he was a supernumerary clerk in the Walham Green Gas Works and otherwise a useful man at home. He was a large, loose, fattish man with unintelligent brown eyes magnified by spectacles; he wore an ill-fitting frock-coat and a paper collar, and he showed me, as his great treasure and interest, a large Bible which he had grangerized with photographs of pictures. Also he cultivated the little garden-yard behind the house, and he had a small greenhouse with tomatoes. "I wish I 'ad 'eat," he said. "One can do such a lot with 'eat. But I suppose you can't 'ave everything you want in this world."

Both he and Marion's mother treated her with a deference that struck me as the most natural thing in the world. Her own manner changed, became more authoritative and watchful, her shyness disappeared. She had taken a line of her own I gathered, draped the mirror, got the second-hand piano, and broken her parents in. Her mother must once have been a pretty woman; she had regular features and Marion's hair without its lustre, but she was thin and careworn. The aunt, Miss Ramboat, was a large, abnormally shy person very like her brother, and I don't recall anything she said on this occasion.

To begin with there was a good deal of tension—Marion

was frightfully nervous and every one was under the necessity of behaving in a mysteriously unreal fashion until I plunged, became talkative and made a certain ease and interest. I told them of the schools, of my lodgings, of Wimblehurst and my apprenticeship days. "There's a lot of this Science about nowadays," Mr. Ramboat reflected; "but I sometimes wonder a bit what good it is?"

I was young enough to be led into what he called "a bit of a discussion," which Marion truncated before our voices became unduly raised. "I dare say," she said, "there's much to be said on both sides."

I remember Marion's mother asked me what church I attended, and that I replied evasively. After tea there was music and we sang hymns. I doubted if I had a voice when this was proposed, but that was held to be a trivial objection, and I found sitting close beside the sweep of hair from Marion's brow had many compensations. I discovered her mother sitting in the horsehair armchair and regarding us sentimentally. I went for a walk with Marion towards Putney Bridge, and then there was more singing and a supper of cold bacon and pie, after which Mr. Ramboat and I smoked. During that walk, I remember, she told me the import of her sketchings and copyings in the museum. A cousin of a friend of hers whom she spoke of as Smithie, had developed an original business in a sort of tea-gown garment which she called a Persian robe, a plain sort of wrap with a gaily embroidered yoke, and Marion went there and worked in the busy times. In the times that weren't busy she designed novelties in yokes by an assiduous use of eyes and note-book in the museum, and went home and traced out the captured forms on the foundation material. "I don't get much," said Marion, "but it's interesting, and in the busy times we work all day. Of course the workgirls are dreadfully common, but we don't say much to them. And Smithie talks enough for ten."

I quite understood the workgirls were dreadfully common. I don't remember that Walham Green *ménage* and the quality of these people, nor the light they threw on Marion, detracted in the slightest degree at that time from the

intent resolve that held me to make her mine. I didn't like them. But I took them as part of the affair. Indeed, on the whole, I think they threw her up by an effect of contrast; she was so obviously controlling them, so consciously superior to them.

More and more of my time did I give to this passion that possessed me. I began to think chiefly of ways of pleasing Marion, of acts of devotion, of treats, of sumptuous presents for her, of appeals she would understand. If at times she was manifestly unintelligent, if her ignorance became indisputable, I told myself her simple instincts were worth all the education and intelligence in the world. And to this day I think I wasn't altogether wrong about her. There was, I still recognize, something fine about her, something simple and high, that flickered in and out of her ignorance and commonness and limitations like the tongue from the mouth of a snake. . . .

One night I was privileged to meet her and bring her home from an entertainment at the Birkbeck Institute. We came back on the underground railway and we travelled first-class—that being the highest class available. We were alone in the carriage, and for the first time I ventured to put my arm about her.

"You mustn't," she said feebly.

"I love you," I whispered suddenly with my heart beating wildly, drew her to me, drew all her beauty to me, and kissed her cool and unresisting lips.

"Love me?" she said, struggling away from me. "Don't!" and then, as the train ran into a station, "You must tell no one. . . I don't know. . . . You shouldn't have done that. . . ."

Then two other people got in with us and terminated my wooing for a time.

When we found ourselves alone together, walking towards Battersea, she had decided to be offended. I parted from her unforgiven and terribly distressed.

When we met again, she told me I must never do "that" again.

I had dreamt that to kiss her lips was ultimate satisfaction. But it was indeed only the beginning of desires. I told her my one ambition was to marry her.

"But," she said, "you're not in a position—— What's the good of talking like that?"

I stared at her. "I mean to," I said.

"You can't," she answered. "It will be years——"

"But I love you," I insisted.

I stood not a yard from the sweet lips I had kissed; I stood within arm's length of the inanimate beauty I desired to quicken, and I saw opening between us a gulf of years, toil, waiting, disappointments and an immense uncertainty.

"I love you," I said. "Don't you love me?"

She looked at me in the face with grave irresponsive eyes.

"I don't know," she said. "I *like* you, of course. . . . One has to be sensible. . . ."

I can remember now my sense of frustration by her unresilient reply. I should have perceived then that for her my ardour had no quickening fire. But how was I to know? I had let myself come to want her, my imagination endowed her with infinite possibilities. I wanted her, and wanted her, stupidly and instinctively. . . .

"But," I said; "Love——!"

"One has to be sensible," she replied. "I like going about with you. Can't we keep as we are?"

§ 6

Well, you begin to understand my breakdown now. I have been copious enough with these apologia. My work got more and more spiritless, my behaviour degenerated, my punctuality declined; I was more and more outclassed in the steady grind by my fellow-students. Such supplies of moral energy as I still had at command shaped now in the direction of serving Marion rather than science.

I fell away dreadfully, more and more I shirked and skulked; the humped men from the north, the pale men with thin, clenched minds, the intent, hard-breathing students I found against me, fell at last from keen rivalry to moral contempt. Even a girl got above me upon one of the lists. Then indeed I made it a point of honour to show by my public disregard of every rule that I really did not even pretend to try. . . .

So one day I found myself sitting in a mood of considerable

astonishment in Kensington Gardens, reflecting on a recent heated interview with the school Registrar in which I had displayed more spirit than sense. I was astonished chiefly at my stupendous falling away from all the militant ideals of unflinching study I had brought up from Wimblehurst. I had displayed myself, as the Registrar put it, " an unmitigated rotter." My failure to get marks in the written examination had only been equalled by the insufficiency of my practical work.

" I ask you," the Registrar had said, " what will become of you when your scholarship runs out ? "

It certainly was an interesting question. What *was* going to become of me ?

It was clear there would be nothing for me in the schools as I had once dared to hope; there seemed, indeed, scarcely anything in the world except an ill-paid assistantship in some provincial organized Science School or grammar school. I knew that for that sort of work, without a degree or any qualification, one earned hardly a bare living and had little leisure to struggle up to anything better. If only I had even as little as fifty pounds I might hold out in London and take my B.Sc. degree, and quadruple my chances ! My bitterness against my uncle returned at the thought. After all, he had some of my money still, or ought to have. Why shouldn't I act within my rights, threaten to " take proceedings " ? I meditated for a space on the idea, and then returned to the Science Library and wrote him a very considerable and occasionally pungent letter.

That letter to my uncle was the nadir of my failure. Its remarkable consequences which ended my student days altogether, I will tell in the next chapter.

I say " my failure." Yet there are times when I can even doubt whether that period was a failure at all, when I become defensively critical of those exacting courses I did not follow, the encyclopædic process of scientific exhaustion from which I was distracted. My mind was not inactive, even if it fed on forbidden food. I did not learn what my professors and demonstrators had resolved I should learn, but I learnt many things. My mind learnt to swing wide and to swing by itself.

After all, those other fellows who took high places in the College examinations and were the professor's model boys, haven't done so amazingly. Some are professors themselves, some technical experts; not one can show things done such as I, following my own interest, have achieved. For I have built boats that smack across the water like whiplashes, no one ever dreamt of such boats until I built them; and I have surprised three secrets that are more than technical discoveries, in the unexpected hiding-places of Nature. I have come nearer flying than any man has done. Could I have done as much if I had had a turn for obeying those rather mediocre professors at the college who proposed to train my mind? If I had been *trained* in research—that ridiculous contradiction in terms—should I have done more than produce additions to the existing store of little papers with blunted conclusions, of which there are already too many? I see no sense in mock modesty upon this matter. Even by the standards of worldly success I am, by the side of my fellow-students, no failure. I had my F.R.S. by the time I was thirty-seven, and if I am not very wealthy, poverty is as far from me as the Spanish Inquisition. Suppose I had stamped down on the head of my wandering curiosity, locked my imagination in a box just when it wanted to grow out to things, worked by so-and-so's excellent method and so-and-so's indications, where should I be now? . . .

I may be all wrong in this. It may be I should be a far more efficient man than I am if I had cut off all those divergent expenditures of energy, plugged up my curiosity about society with some currently acceptable rubbish or other, abandoned Ewart, evaded Marion instead of pursuing her, concentrated. But I don't believe it!

However, I certainly believed it completely and was filled with remorse on that afternoon when I sat dejectedly in Kensington Gardens and reviewed, in the light of the Registrar's pertinent questions, my first two years in London.

CHAPTER II

The Dawn comes, and my Uncle appears in a New Silk Hat

§ 1

Throughout my student days I had not seen my uncle. I refrained from going to him in spite of an occasional regret that in this way I estranged myself from my aunt Susan, and I maintained a sulky attitude of mind towards him. And I don't think that once in all that time I gave a thought to that mystic word of his that was to alter all the world for us. Yet I had not altogether forgotten it. It was with a touch of memory, dim transient perplexity if no more—why did this thing seem in some way personal ?—that I read a new inscription upon the hoardings ;

> THE SECRET OF VIGOUR,
>
> TONO-BUNGAY.

That was all. It was simple and yet in some way arresting. I found myself repeating the word after I had passed, it roused one's attention like the sound of distant guns. " Tono "—what's that ? and deep, rich, unhurrying; —" *Bun*—gay ! "

Then came my uncle's amazing telegram, his answer to my hostile note : " *Come to me at once you are wanted three hundred a year certain tono-bungay.*"

" By Jove ! " I cried, " of course ! "

" It's something——. A patent-medicine ! I wonder what he wants with me ? "

In his Napoleonic way my uncle had omitted to give an address. His telegram had been handed in at Farringdon Road, and after complex meditations I replied to Ponderevo, Farringdon Road, trusting to the rarity of our surname to reach him.

"Where are you?" I asked.

His reply came promptly:

"192A, Raggett Street, E.C."

The next day I took an unsanctioned holiday after the morning's lecture. I discovered my uncle in a wonderfully new silk hat—oh, a splendid hat! with a rolling brim that went beyond the common fashion. It was decidedly too big for him—that was its only fault. It was stuck on the back of his head, and he was in a white waistcoat and shirt sleeves. He welcomed me with a forgetfulness of my bitter satire and my hostile abstinence that was almost divine. His glasses fell off at the sight of me. His round inexpressive eyes shone brightly. He held out his plump short hand.

"Here we are, George! What did I tell you? Needn't whisper it now, my boy. Shout it—*loud!* Spread it about! Tell every one! Tono—Tono,—TONO-BUNGAY!"

Raggett Street, you must understand, was a thoroughfare over which someone had distributed large quantities of cabbage stumps and leaves. It opened out of the upper end of Farringdon Street, and 192A was a shop with the plate-glass front coloured chocolate, on which several of the same bills I had read upon the hoardings had been stuck. The floor was covered by street mud that had been brought in on dirty boots, and three energetic young men of the hooligan type, in neck-wraps and caps, were packing wooden cases with papered-up bottles, amidst much straw and confusion. The counter was littered with these same swathed bottles, of a pattern then novel but now amazingly familiar in the world, the blue paper with the coruscating figure of a genially nude giant, and the printed directions of how under practically all circumstances to take Tono-Bungay. Beyond the counter on one side opened a staircase down which I seem to remember a girl descending with a further consignment of bottles, and the rest of the background was a high partition, also chocolate, with "Temporary Laboratory" inscribed upon it in white letters, and

over a door that pierced it, "Office." Here I rapped, inaudible amid much hammering, and then entered unanswered to find my uncle, dressed as I have described, one hand gripping a sheaf of letters, and the other scratching his head as he dictated to one of three toiling typewriter girls. Behind him was a further partition and a door inscribed "ABSOLUTELY PRIVATE—NO ADMISSION," thereon. This partition was of wood painted the universal chocolate, up to about eight feet from the ground and then of glass. Through the glass I saw dimly a crowded suggestion of crucibles and glass retorts, and—by Jove!—yes!—the dear old Wimblehurst air-pump still! It gave me quite a little thrill—that air-pump! And beside it was the electrical machine—but something—some serious trouble—had happened to that. All these were evidently placed on a shelf just at the level to show.

"Come right into the sanctum," said my uncle, after he had finished something about "esteemed consideration," and whisked me through the door into a room that quite amazingly failed to verify the promise of that apparatus. It was papered with dingy wall-paper that had peeled in places; it contained a fire-place, an easy-chair with a cushion, a table on which stood two or three big bottles, a number of cigar-boxes on the mantel, a whiskey Tantalus and a row of soda syphons. He shut the door after me carefully.

"Well, here we are!" he said. "Going strong! Have a whiskey, George? No!—Wise man! Neither will I! You see me at it! At it—hard!"

"Hard at what?"

"Read it," and he thrust into my hand a label—that label that has now become one of the most familiar objects of the chemist's shop, the greenish-blue rather old-fashioned bordering, the legend, the name in good black type, very clear, and the strong man all set about with lightning flashes above the double column of skilful lies in red—the label of Tono-Bungay. "It's afloat," he said, as I stood puzzling at this. "It's afloat. I'm afloat!" And suddenly he burst out singing in that throaty tenor of his—

> "I'm afloat, I'm afloat on the fierce flowing tide,
> The ocean's my home and my bark is my bride!"

"Ripping song that is, George. Not so much a bark as a solution, but still—it does! Here we are at it! By-the-by! Half a mo'! I've thought of a thing." He whisked out, leaving me to examine this nuclear spot at leisure, while his voice became dictatorial without. The den struck me as in its large grey dirty way quite unprecedented and extraordinary. The bottles were all labelled simply A, B, C, and so forth, and that dear old apparatus above, seen from this side, was even more patently "on the shelf" than when it had been used to impress Wimblehurst. I saw nothing for it but to sit down in the chair and await my uncle's explanations. I remarked a frock-coat with satin lapels behind the door; there was a dignified umbrella in the corner and a clothes-brush and a hat-brush stood on a side-table. My uncle returned in five minutes looking at his watch—a gold watch—"Gettin' lunch-time, George," he said. "You'd better come and have lunch with me!"

"How's Aunt Susan?" I asked.

"Exuberant. Never saw her so larky. This has bucked her up something wonderful—all this."

"All what?"

"Tono-Bungay."

"What *is* Tono-Bungay?" I asked.

My uncle hesitated. "Tell you after lunch, George," he said. "Come along!" and having locked up the sanctum after himself, led the way along a narrow dirty pavement, lined with barrows and swept at times by avalanche-like porters bearing burthens to vans, to Farringdon Street. He hailed a passing cab superbly, and the cabman was infinitely respectful. "Schäfers'," he said, and off we went side by side—and with me more and more amazed at all these things—to Schäfers' Hotel, the second of the two big places with huge lace curtain-covered windows, near the corner of Blackfriars Bridge.

I will confess I felt a magic change in our relative proportions as the two colossal, pale-blue-and-red liveried porters of Schäfers' held open the inner doors for us with a respectful salutation that in some manner they seemed to confine wholly to my uncle. Instead of being about four inches taller, I felt at least the same size as he, and very much slenderer. Still more respectful waiters relieved him of

the new hat and the dignified umbrella, and took his orders for our lunch. He gave them with a fine assurance.

He nodded to several of the waiters.

"They know me, George, already," he said. "Point me out. Live place! Eye for coming men!"

The detailed business of the lunch engaged our attention for a while, and then I leant across my plate. "And *now*?" said I.

"It's the secret of vigour. Didn't you read that label?"

"Yes, but——"

"It's selling like hot cakes."

"And what is it?" I pressed.

"Well," said my uncle, and then leant forward and spoke softly under cover of his hand, "It's nothing more or less than . . ."

(But here an unfortunate scruple intervenes. After all, Tono-Bungay is still a marketable commodity and in the hands of purchasers, who bought it from—among other vendors—me. No! I am afraid I cannot give it away.)

"You see," said my uncle in a slow confidential whisper, with eyes very wide and a creased forehead, "it's nice because of the" (here he mentioned a flavouring matter and an aromatic spirit), "it's stimulating because of" (here he mentioned two very vivid tonics, one with a marked action on the kidney). "And the" (here he mentioned two other ingredients) "makes it pretty intoxicating. Cocks their tails. Then there's" (but I touch on the essential secret). "And there you are. I got it out of an old book of recipes—all except the" (here he mentioned the more virulent substance, the one that assails the kidneys), "which is my idea. Modern touch! There you are!"

He reverted to the direction of our lunch.

Presently he was leading the way to the lounge—a sumptuous place in red morocco and yellow glazed crockery, with incredible vistas of settees and sofas and things, and there I found myself grouped with him in two excessively upholstered chairs with an earthenware Moorish table between us bearing coffee and Benedictine, and I was tasting the delights of a tenpenny cigar. My uncle smoked a similar cigar in an habituated manner, and he looked energetic and knowing and luxurious and most unexpectedly

a little bounder, round the end of it. It was just a trivial flaw upon our swagger, perhaps, that we both were clear our cigars had to be "mild." He got obliquely across the spaces of his great armchair so as to incline confidentially to my ear, he curled up his little legs, and I, in my longer way, adopted a corresponding receptive obliquity. I felt that we should strike an unbiassed observer as a couple of very deep and wily and developing and repulsive persons.

"I want to let you into this"—puff—"George," said my uncle round the end of his cigar. "For many reasons."

His voice grew lower and more cunning. He made explanations that to my inexperience did not completely explain. I retain an impression of a long credit and a share with a firm of wholesale chemists, of a credit and a prospective share with some pirate printers, of a third share for a leading magazine and newspaper proprietor.

"I played 'em off one against the other," said my uncle. I took his point in an instant. He had gone to each of them in turn and said the others had come in.

"I put up four hundred pounds," said my uncle, "myself and my all. And you know——"

He assumed a brisk confidence. "I hadn't five hundred pence. At least——"

For a moment he really was just a little embarrassed. "I *did*," he said, "produce capital. You see, there was that trust affair of yours—I ought I suppose—in strict legality—to have put that straight first. Zzzz. . . .

"It was a bold thing to do," said my uncle, shifting the venue from the region of honour to the region of courage. And then with a characteristic outburst of piety, "Thank God it's all come right!

"And now, I suppose, you ask where do *you* come in? Well, fact is I've always believed in you, George. You've got—it's a sort of dismal grit. Bark your shins, rouse you, and you'll go! You'd rush any position you had a mind to rush. I know a bit about character, George—trust me. You've got——" He clenched his hands and thrust them out suddenly, and at the same time said, with explosive violence, "Wooosh! Yes. You have! The way you put away that Latin at Wimblehurst; I've never forgotten it. Wo-oo-oo-osh! Your science and all that! Wo-oo-

oo-osh! I know my limitations. There's things I can do, and" (he spoke in a whisper, as though this was the first hint of his life's secret) "there's things I can't. Well, I can create this business, but I can't make it go. I'm too voluminous—I'm a boiler-over, not a simmering stick-at-it. *You* keep on *hotting up and hotting up.* Papin's digester. That's you, steady and long and piling up,—then, wo-oo-oo-oo-osh. Come in and stiffen these niggers. Teach them that wo-oo-oo-osh. There you are! That's what I'm after. You! Nobody else believes you're more than a boy. Come right in with me and be a man. Eh, George? Think of the fun of it—a thing on the go—a Real Live Thing! Wooshing it up! Making it buzz and spin! Whoo-oo-oo."—He made alluring expanding circles in the air with his hand. "Eh?"

His proposal, sinking to confidential undertones again, took more definite shape. I was to give all my time and energy to developing and organizing. "You shan't write a single advertisement, or give a single assurance," he declared. "I can do all that." And the telegram was no flourish; I was to have three hundred a year. Three hundred a year. ("That's nothing," said my uncle, "the thing to freeze on to, when the time comes, is your tenth of the vendor's share.")

Three hundred a year certain, anyhow! It was an enormous income to me. For a moment I was altogether staggered. Could there be that much money in the whole concern? I looked about me at the sumptuous furniture of Schäfers' Hotel. No doubt there were many such incomes.

My head was spinning with unwonted Benedictine and Burgundy.

"Let me go back and look at the game again," I said. "Let me see upstairs and round about."

I did.

"What do you think of it all?" my uncle asked at last.

"Well, for one thing," I said, "why don't you have those girls working in a decently ventilated room? Apart from any other consideration, they'd work twice as briskly. And they ought to cover the corks before labelling round the bottle——"

"Why?" said my uncle.

"Because—they sometimes make a mucker of the cork job, and then the label's wasted."

"Come and change it, George," said my uncle, with sudden fervour. "Come here and make a machine of it. You can. Make it all slick, and then make it woosh. I know you can. Oh! I know you can."

§ 2

I seem to remember very quick changes of mind after that lunch. The muzzy exaltation of the unaccustomed stimulants gave way very rapidly to a mood of pellucid and impartial clairvoyance which is one of my habitual mental states. It is intermittent; it leaves me for weeks together, I know, but back it comes at last like justice on circuit, and calls up all my impressions, all my illusions, all my wilful and passionate proceedings. We came downstairs again into that inner room which pretended to be a scientific laboratory through its high glass lights, and indeed was a lurking place. My uncle pressed a cigarette on me, and I took it and stood before the empty fireplace while he propped his umbrella in the corner, deposited the new silk hat that was a little too big for him on the table, blew copiously and produced a second cigar.

It came into my head that he had shrunken very much in size since the Wimblehurst days, that the cannon ball he had swallowed was rather more evident and shameless than it had been, his skin less fresh and the nose between his glasses, which still didn't quite fit, much redder. And just then he seemed much laxer in his muscles and not quite as alertly quick in his movements. But he evidently wasn't aware of the degenerative nature of his changes as he sat there, looking suddenly quite little under my eyes.

"Well, George!" he said, quite happily unconscious of my silent criticism, "what do you think of it all?"

"Well," I said; "in the first place—it's a damned swindle!"

"Tut! tut!" said my uncle. "It's as straight as—— It's fair trading!"

"So much the worse for trading," I said.

"It's the sort of thing everybody does. After all, there's no harm in the stuff—and it may do good. It might do a lot of good—giving people confidence, f'rinstance, against an epidemic. See? Why not? I don't see where your swindle comes in."

"H'm," I said. "It's a thing you either see or don't see."

"I'd like to know what sort of trading isn't a swindle in its way. Everybody who does a large advertised trade is selling something common on the strength of saying it's uncommon. Look at Chickson—they made him a baronet. Look at Lord Radmore, who did it on lying about the alkali in soap! Rippin' ads those were of his too!"

"You don't mean to say you think doing this stuff up in bottles and swearing it's the quintessence of strength and making poor devils buy it at that, is straight?"

"Why not, George? How do we know it mayn't be the quintessence to them so far as they're concerned?"

"Oh!" I said, and shrugged my shoulders.

"There's Faith. You put Faith in 'em. . . . I grant our labels are a bit emphatic. Christian Science, really. No good setting people against the medicine. Tell me a solitary trade nowadays that hasn't to be—emphatic. It's the modern way! Everybody understands it—everybody allows for it."

"But the world would be no worse and rather better, if all this stuff of yours was run down a conduit into the Thames."

"Don't see that, George, at all. 'Mong other things, all our people would be out of work. Unemployed! I grant you Tono-Bungay *may* be—not *quite* so good a find for the world as Peruvian bark, but the point is, George—it *makes trade!* And the world lives on trade. Commerce! A romantic exchange of commodities and property. Romance. 'Magination. See? You must look at these things in a broad light. Look at the wood—and forget the trees! And hang it, George! We got to do these things! There's no way unless you do. What do *you* mean to do—anyhow?"

"There's ways of living," I said, "without either fraud or lying."

"You're a bit stiff, George. There's no fraud in this affair, I'll bet my hat! But what do you propose to do? Go as chemist to some one who *is* running a business, and draw a salary without a share like I offer you. Much sense in that! It comes out of the swindle—as you call it—just the same."

"Some businesses are straight and quiet, anyhow; supply a sound article that is really needed, don't shout advertisements."

"No, George. There you're behind the times. The last of that sort was sold up 'bout five years ago."

"Well, there's scientific research."

"And who pays for that? Who put up that big City and Guilds place at South Kensington? Enterprising business men! They fancy they'll have a bit of science going on, they want a handy Expert ever and again, and there you are! And what do you get for research when you've done it? Just a bare living and no outlook. They just keep you to make discoveries, and if they fancy they'll use 'em they do."

"One can teach."

"How much a year, George? How much a year? I suppose you must respect Carlyle! Well,—you take Carlyle's test—solvency. (Lord! what a book that French Revolution of his is!) See what the world pays teachers and discoverers and what it pays business men! That shows the ones it really wants. There's a justice in these big things, George, over and above the apparent injustice. I tell you it wants trade. It's Trade that makes the world go round! Argosies! Venice! Empire!"

My uncle suddenly rose to his feet.

"You think it over, George. You think it over! And come up on Sunday to the new place—we got rooms in Gower Street now—and see your aunt. She's often asked for you, George—often and often, and thrown it up at me about that bit of property—though I've always said and always will, that twenty-five shillings in the pound is what I'll pay you and interest up to the nail. And think it over. It isn't me I ask you to help. It's yourself. It's your aunt Susan. It's the whole concern. It's the commerce of your country. And we want you badly. I tell you

straight, I know my limitations. You could take this place, you could make it go ! I can see you at it—looking rather sour. Woosh is the word, George."

And he smiled endearingly.

"I got to dictate a letter," he said, ending the smile, and vanished into the outer room.

§ 3

I didn't succumb without a struggle to my uncle's allurements. Indeed, I held out for a week while I contemplated life and my prospects. It was a crowded and muddled contemplation. It invaded even my sleep.

My interview with the Registrar, my talk with my uncle, my abrupt discovery of the hopeless futility of my passion for Marion, had combined to bring me to a sense of crisis. What was I going to do with life ?

I remember certain phases of my indecisions very well.

I remember going home from our talk. I went down Farringdon Street to the Embankment because I thought to go home by Holborn and Oxford Street would be too crowded for thinking. . . . That piece of Embankment from Blackfriars to Westminster still reminds me of that momentous hesitation.

You know, from first to last, I saw the business with my eyes open, I saw its ethical and moral values quite clearly. Never for a moment do I remember myself faltering from my persuasion that the sale of Tono-Bungay was a thoroughly dishonest proceeding. The stuff was, I perceived, a mischievous trash, slightly stimulating, aromatic and attractive, likely to become a bad habit and train people in the habitual use of stronger tonics and insidiously dangerous to people with defective kidneys. It would cost about sevenpence the large bottle to make, including bottling, and we were to sell it at half a crown plus the cost of the patent medicine stamp. A thing that I will confess deterred me from the outset far more than the sense of dishonesty in this affair, was the supreme silliness of the whole concern. I still clung to the idea that the world of men was or should be a sane and just organization, and the idea that I should set myself gravely, just at the fine spring-

time of my life, to developing a monstrous bottling and packing warehouse, bottling rubbish for the consumption of foolish, credulous and depressed people had in it a touch of insanity. My early beliefs still clung to me. I felt assured that somewhere there must be a hitch in the fine prospect of ease and wealth under such conditions; that somewhere, a little overgrown perhaps, but still traceable, lay a neglected, wasted path of use and honour for me.

My inclination to refuse the whole thing increased rather than diminished at first as I went along the Embankment. In my uncle's presence there had been a sort of glamour that had prevented an outright refusal. It was a revival of affection for him I felt in his presence I think, in part, and in part an instinctive feeling that I must consider him as my host. But much more was it a curious persuasion he had the knack of inspiring—a persuasion not so much of his integrity and capacity as of the reciprocal and yielding foolishness of the world. One felt that he was silly and wild, but in some way silly and wild after the fashion of the universe. After all, one must live somehow. I astonished him and myself by temporizing.

"No," said I, "I'll think it over!"

And as I went along the Embankment, the first effect was all against my uncle. He shrank—for a little while he continued to shrink—in perspective until he was only a very small shabby little man in a dirty back street, sending off a few hundred bottles of rubbish to foolish buyers. The great buildings on the right of us, the Inns and the School Board place—as it was then—Somerset House, the big hotels, the great bridges, Westminster's outlines ahead, had an effect of grey largeness that reduced him to the proportions of a busy blackbeetle in a crack in the floor.

And then my eye caught the advertisements on the south side of "Sorber's Food," of "Cracknell's Ferric Wine," very bright and prosperous signs, illuminated at night, and I realized how astonishingly they looked at home there, how evidently part they were in the whole thing.

I saw a man come charging out of Palace Yard—the policeman touched his helmet to him—with a hat and a bearing astonishingly like my uncle's. After all,—didn't Cracknell himself sit in the House? . . .

Tono-Bungay shouted at me from a hoarding near Adelphi Terrace, I saw it afar off near Carfax Street, it cried out again upon me in Kensington High Street and burst into a perfect clamour, six or seven times I saw it as I drew near my diggings. It certainly had an air of being something more than a dream. . . .

Yes, I thought it over—thoroughly enough. . . . Trade rules the world. Wealth rather than trade! The thing was true, and true too was my uncle's proposition that the quickest way to get wealth is to sell the cheapest thing possible in the dearest bottle. He was frightfully right after all. *Pecunia non olet*,—a Roman emperor said that. Perhaps my great heroes in Plutarch were no more than such men, fine now only because they are distant; perhaps after all this Socialism to which I had been drawn was only a foolish dream, only the more foolish because all its promises were conditionally true. Morris and these others played with it wittingly; it gave a zest, a touch of substance to their æsthetic pleasures. Never would there be good faith enough to bring such things about. They knew it; every one except a few young fools, knew it. As I crossed the corner of St. James's Park wrapped in thought, I dodged back just in time to escape a prancing pair of greys. A stout, common-looking woman, very magnificently dressed, regarded me from the carriage with a scornful eye. "No doubt," thought I, "a pill-vendor's wife. . . ."

Running through all my thoughts, surging out like a refrain, was my uncle's master-stroke, his admirable touch of praise; "Make it all slick—and then make it Woosh. I know you can! Oh! I *know* you can!"

§ 4

Ewart as a moral influence was unsatisfactory. I had made up my mind to put the whole thing before him, partly to see how he took it, and partly to hear how it sounded when it was said. I asked him to come and eat with me in an Italian place near Panton Street where one could get a curious, interesting, glutting sort of dinner for eighteenpence. He came with a disconcerting black-eye that he wouldn't explain. "Not so much a black-eye," he said,

" as the aftermath of a purple patch. . . . What's your difficulty ? "

" I'll tell you with the salad," I said.

But as a matter of fact I didn't tell him. I threw out that I was doubtful whether I ought to go into trade, or stick to teaching in view of my deepening socialist proclivities; and he, warming with the unaccustomed generosity of a sixteen-penny Chianti, ran on from that without any further inquiry as to my trouble.

His utterances roved wide and loose.

" The reality of life, my dear Ponderevo," I remember him saying very impressively and punctuating with the nut-crackers as he spoke, " is Chromatic Conflict . . . and Form. Get hold of that and let all these other questions go. The Socialist will tell you one sort of colour and shape is right, the Individualist another. What does it all amount to ? What *does* it all amount to ? *Nothing !* I have no advice to give any one, none,—except to avoid regrets. Be yourself,—seek after such beautiful things as your own sense determines to be beautiful. And don't mind the headache in the morning. . . . For what, after all, *is* a morning, Ponderevo ? It isn't like the upper part of a day ! "

He paused impressively.

" What Rot ! " I cried, after a confused attempt to apprehend him.

" Isn't it ! And it's my bedrock wisdom in the matter ! Take it or leave it, my dear George; take it or leave it." . . . He put down the nut-crackers out of my reach and lugged a greasy-looking note-book from his pocket. " I'm going to steal this mustard pot," he said.

I made noises of remonstrance.

" Only as a matter of design. I've got to do an old beast's tomb. Wholesale grocer. I'll put it on his corners, —four mustard pots. I dare say he'd be glad of a mustard plaster now to cool him, poor devil, where he is. But anyhow,—here goes ! "

§ 5

It came to me in the small hours that the real moral touchstone for this great doubting of mind was Marion.

I lay composing statements of my problem and imagined myself delivering them to her—and she, goddess-like and beautiful, giving her fine, simply-worded judgment.

"You see, it's just to give one's self over to the Capitalistic System," I imagined myself saying in good socialist jargon; "it's surrendering all one's beliefs. We *may* succeed, we *may* grow rich, but where would the satisfaction be?"

Then she would say, "No! That wouldn't be right."

"But the alternative is to wait!"

Then suddenly she would become a goddess. She would turn upon me frankly and nobly, with shining eyes, with arms held out. "No," she would say, "we love one another. Nothing ignoble shall ever touch us. We love one another. Why wait to tell each other that, dear? What does it matter that we are poor and may keep poor?" . . .

But indeed the conversation didn't go at all in that direction. At the sight of her my nocturnal eloquence became preposterous and all the moral values altered altogether. I had waited for her outside the door of the Persian-robe establishment in Kensington High Street and walked home with her thence. I remember how she emerged into the warm evening light, and that she wore a brown straw hat that made her, for once, not only beautiful but pretty.

"I like that hat," I said by way of opening; and she smiled her rare delightful smile at me.

"I love you," I said in an undertone, as we jostled closer on the pavement.

She shook her head forbiddingly, but she still smiled. Then—

"Be sensible!"

The High Street pavement is too narrow and crowded for conversation, and we were some way westward before we spoke again.

"Look here," I said; "I want you, Marion. Don't you understand? I want you."

"Now!" she cried warningly.

I do not know if the reader will understand how a passionate love, an immense admiration and desire, can be shot with a gleam of positive hatred. Such a gleam there was in me at the serene self-complacency of that "*Now!*"

It vanished almost before I felt it. I found no warning in it of the antagonisms latent between us.

"Marion," I said, "this isn't a trifling matter to me. I love you. I would die to get you. . . . Don't you care?"

"But what is the good?"

"You don't care!" I cried. "You don't care a rap!"

"You know I care," she answered. "If I didn't—— If I didn't like you very much, should I let you come and meet me—go about with you?"

"Well then," I said, "promise to marry me!"

"If I do, what difference will it make?"

We were separated by two men carrying a ladder who drove between us unawares.

"Marion," I asked when we got together again. "I tell you I want you to marry me."

"We can't."

"Why not?"

"We can't marry—in the street."

"We could take our chance!"

"I wish you wouldn't go on talking like this. What *is* the good?"

She suddenly gave way to gloom. "It's no good marrying," she said. "One's only miserable. I've seen other girls. When one's alone one has a little pocket-money anyhow, one can go about a little. But think of being married and no money, and perhaps children—you can't be sure. . . ."

She poured out this concentrated philosophy of her class and type in jerky uncompleted sentences, with knitted brows, with discontented eyes towards the westward glow—forgetful, it seemed, for a moment even of me.

"Look here, Marion," I said abruptly, "what would you marry on?"

"What *is* the good?" she began.

"Would you marry on three hundred a year?"

She looked at me for a moment. "That's six pounds a week," she said. "One could manage on that,—easily. Smithie's brother—— No, he only gets two hundred and fifty. He married a typewriting girl."

"Will you marry me if I get three hundred a year?"

She looked at me again, with a curious gleam of hope.

"*If!*" she said.

I held out my hand and looked her in the eyes. "It's a bargain," I said.

She hesitated and touched my hand for an instant. "It's silly," she remarked as she did so. "It means really we're——" She paused.

"Yes," said I.

"Engaged. You'll have to wait years. What good can it do you?"

"Not so many years," I answered.

For a moment she brooded.

Then she glanced at me with a smile, half-sweet, half-wistful, that has stuck in my memory for ever.

"I like you," she said. "I shall like to be engaged to you."

And, faint on the threshold of hearing, I caught her ventured "dear!" It's odd that in writing this down my memory passes over all that intervened and I feel it all again, and once again I'm Marion's boyish lover taking great joy in such rare and little things.

§ 6

At last I went to the address my uncle had given me in Gower Street, and found my aunt Susan waiting tea for him.

Directly I came into the room I appreciated the change in outlook that the achievement of Tono-Bungay had made almost as vividly as when I saw my uncle's new hat. The furniture of the room struck upon my eyes as almost stately. The chairs and sofa were covered with chintz which gave it a dim remote flavour of Bladesover; the mantel, the cornice, the gas pendant were larger and finer than the sort of thing I had grown accustomed to in London. And I was shown in by a real housemaid with real tails to her cap, and great quantities of reddish hair. There was my aunt too, looking bright and pretty, in a blue-patterned tea-wrap with bows that seemed to me the quintessence of fashion. She was sitting in a chair by the open window with quite a pile of yellow-labelled books on the occasional table beside her. Before the large, paper-decorated fireplace stood a three-tiered cake-stand displaying assorted cakes, and a

tray with all the tea equipage except the teapot, was on the large central table. The carpet was thick, and a spice of adventure was given it by a number of dyed sheep-skin mats.

"Hel-*lo!*" said my aunt as I appeared. "It's George!"

"Shall I serve the tea now, Mem?" said the real housemaid, surveying our greetings coldly.

"Not till Mr. Ponderevo comes, Meggie," said my aunt, and grimaced with extraordinary swiftness and virulence as the housemaid turned her back.

"Meggie, she calls herself," said my aunt as the door closed, and left me to infer a certain want of sympathy.

"You're looking very jolly, aunt," said I.

"What do you think of all this old Business he's got?" asked my aunt.

"Seems a promising thing," I said.

"I suppose there is a business somewhere?"

"Haven't you seen it?"

"'Fraid I'd say something *at* it, George, if I did. So he won't let me. It came on quite suddenly. Brooding he was and writing letters and sizzling something awful—like a chestnut going to pop. Then he come home one day saying Tono-Bungay till I thought he was clean off his onion, and singing—what was it?"

"'I'm afloat, I'm afloat,'" I guessed.

"The very thing. You've heard him. And saying our fortunes were made. Took me out to the Ho'born Restaurant, George,—dinner, and we had champagne, stuff that blows up the back of your nose and makes you go *So*, and he said at last he'd got things worthy of me—and we moved here next day. It's a swell house, George. Three pounds a week for the rooms. And he says the Business 'll stand it."

She looked at me doubtfully.

"Either do that or smash," I said profoundly.

We discussed the question for a moment mutely with our eyes. My aunt slapped the pile of books from Mudie's.

"I've been having such a Go of reading, George. You never did!"

"What do you think of the business?" I asked.

"Well, they've let him have money," she said, and thought and raised her eyebrows.

" It's been a time," she went on. " The flapping about ! Me sidding doing nothing and him on the go like a rocket. He's done wonders. But he wants you, George—he wants you. Sometimes he's full of hope—talks of when we're going to have a carriage and be in society—makes it seem so natural and topsy-turvy, I hardly know whether my old heels aren't up here listening to him, and my old head on the floor. . . . Then he gets depressed. Says he wants restraint. Says he can make a splash but can't keep on. Says if you don't come in everything will smash—— But you *are* coming in ? "

She paused and looked at me.

" Well——"

" You don't say you won't come in ! "

" But look here, aunt," I said, " do you understand quite ? . . . It's a quack medicine. It's trash."

" There's no law against selling quack medicine that I know of," said my aunt. She thought for a minute and became unusually grave. " It's our only chance, George," she said. " If it doesn't go . . ."

There came the slamming of a door, and a loud bellowing from the next apartment through the folding doors. " Here—er Shee *Rulk* lies *Poo* Tom Bo—oling."

" Silly old Concertina ! Hark at him, George ! " She raised her voice. " Don't sing that, you old Walrus, you ! Sing ' I'm afloat ! ' "

One leaf of the folding doors opened and my uncle appeared.

" Hullo, George ! Come along at last ? Gossome tea-cake, Susan ? "

" Thought it over, George ? " he said abruptly.

" Yes," said I.

" Coming in ? "

I paused for a last moment and nodded yes.

" Ah ! " he cried. " Why couldn't you say that a week ago ? "

" I've had false ideas about the world," I said. . . . " Oh ! they don't matter now ! Yes, I'll come, I'll take my chance with you, I won't hesitate again."

And I didn't. I stuck to that resolution for seven long years.

CHAPTER III

How we made Tono-Bungay hum

§ 1

So I made my peace with my uncle and we set out upon this bright enterprise of selling slightly injurious rubbish at one-and-three-halfpence and two-and-nine a bottle, including the Government stamp. We made Tono-Bungay hum! It brought us wealth, influence, respect, the confidence of endless people. All that my uncle promised me proved truth and understatement; Tono-Bungay carried me to freedoms and powers that no life of scientific research, no passionate service of humanity could ever have given me. . . .

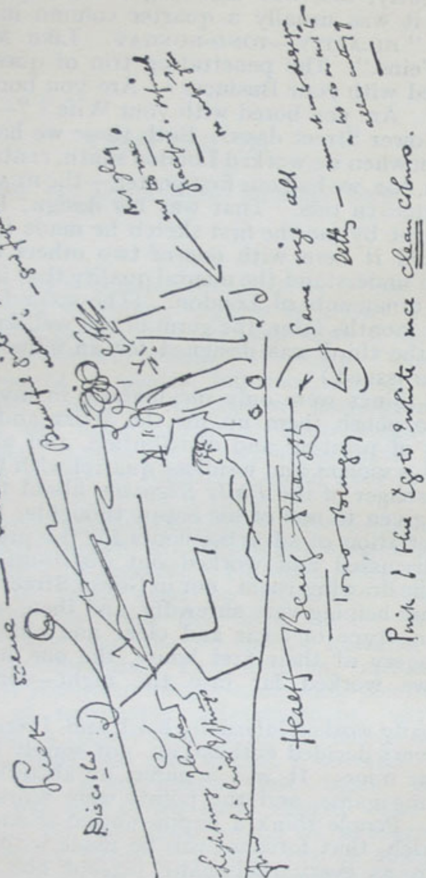
It was my uncle's genius that did it. No doubt he needed me,—I was, I will admit, his indispensable right hand; but his was the brain to conceive. He wrote every advertisement; some of them even he sketched. You must remember that his were the days before the *Times* took to enterprise and the vociferous hawking of that antiquated *Encyclopædia*. That alluring, button-holeing, let-me-just-tell-you-quite-soberly-something-you-ought-to-know style of newspaper advertisement, with every now and then a convulsive jump of some attractive phrase into capitals, was then almost a novelty. "Many people who are MODERATELY well think they are QUITE well," was one of his early efforts. The jerks in capitals were, "DO NOT NEED DRUGS OR MEDICINE," and "SIMPLY A PROPER REGIMEN TO GET YOU IN TONE." One was warned against the chemist or druggist who pushed "much advertised nostrums" on one's attention. That trash did more harm than good. The thing needed was regimen—and Tono-Bungay!

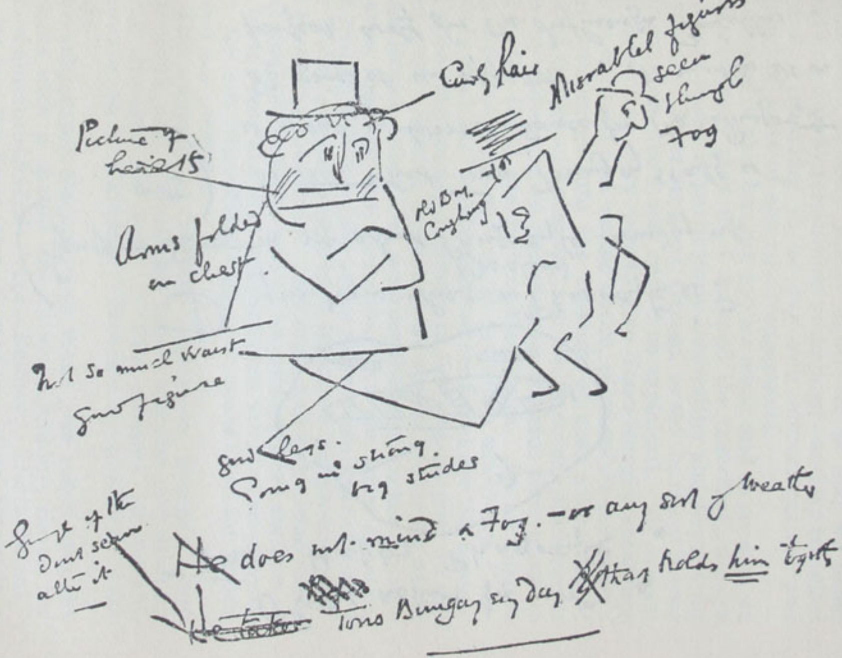
Very early, too, was that bright little quarter column, at least it was usually a quarter column in the evening papers; "HILARITY—TONO-BUNGAY. Like Mountain Air in the Veins." The penetrating trio of questions: "Are you bored with your Business? Are you bored with your Dinner? Are you bored with your Wife?"—that too was in our Gower Street days. Both these we had in our first campaign when we worked London south, central, and west; and then, too, we had our first poster,—the HEALTH, BEAUTY, AND STRENGTH one. That was his design; I happen still to have got by me the first sketch he made for it. I have reproduced it here with one or two others to enable the reader to understand the mental quality that initiated these familiar ornaments of London. (The second one is about eighteen months later, the germ of the well-known "Fog" poster; the third was designed for an influenza epidemic, but never issued.)

These things were only incidentally in my department. I had to polish them up for the artist and arrange the business of printing and distribution, and after my uncle had had a violent and needless quarrel with the advertisement manager of the *Daily Regulator* about the amount of display given to one of his happy thoughts, I also took up the negotiation of advertisements for the press.

We discussed and worked out distribution together—first in the drawing-room oor in Gower Street with my aunt sometimes helping very shrewdly, and then, with a steadily improving type of cigar and older and older whiskey, in his snuggery at their first house, the one in Beckenham. Often we worked far into the night—sometimes until dawn.

We really worked infernally hard, and, I recall, we worked with a very decided enthusiasm, not simply on my uncle's part, but mine. It was a game, an absurd but absurdly interesting game, and the points were scored in cases of bottles. People think a happy notion is enough to make a man rich, that fortunes can be made without toil. It's a dream, as every millionaire (except one or two lucky gamblers) can testify; I doubt if J. D. Rockefeller in the early days of Standard Oil, worked harder than we did. We worked far into the night—and we also worked all day.


Sketch
Tono Bungay
Same size all
Pink & blue Eyes & white nice clean colours.


Curly hair
Miserable figure
seen through
Fog
Arms folded
on chest
Not so much waist
Good figure
Good legs.
Going on strong.
big strides
does not mind a Fog. — or any sort of weather
Bungay every day
holds him together

Oliver asking for more.
The Happy Phagocyte.

Do you know what a Phagocyte is?
(George — Stick in sort about Phagocytes winding up (be clear) with). So that what Tono Bungay really is is a sort of Worster Sauce for the Phagocyte. It gives it an appetite. It makes it a perfect wolf for the Influenza Bacillus.

We made a rule to be always dropping in at the factory unannounced to keep things right—for at first we could afford no properly responsible underlings—and we travelled London, pretending to be our own representatives and making all sorts of special arrangements.

But none of this was my special work, and as soon as we could get other men in, I dropped the travelling, though my uncle found it particularly interesting and kept it up for years. "Does me good, George, to see the chaps behind their counters like I was once," he explained. My special and distinctive duty was to give Tono-Bungay substance and an outward and visible bottle, to translate my uncle's great imaginings into the creation of case after case of labelled bottles of nonsense, and the punctual discharge of them by railway, road and steamer towards their ultimate goal in the Great Stomach of the People. By all modern standards the business was, as my uncle would say, "absolutely *bonâ fide*." We sold our stuff and got the money, and spent the money honestly in lies and clamour to sell more stuff. Section by section we spread it over the whole of the British Isles; first working the middle-class London suburbs, then the outer suburbs, then the home counties, then going (with new bills and a more pious style of "ad") into Wales, a great field always for a new patent-medicine, and then into Lancashire. My uncle had in his inner office a big map of England, and as we took up fresh sections of the local press and our consignments invaded new areas, flags for advertisements and pink underlines for orders showed our progress.

"The romance of modern commerce, George!" my uncle would say, rubbing his hands together and drawing in air through his teeth. "The romance of modern commerce, eh? Conquest. Province by province. Like sogers."

We subjugated England and Wales; we rolled over the Cheviots with a special adaptation containing eleven per cent. of absolute alcohol; "Tono-Bungay. Thistle Brand." We also had the Fog poster adapted to a kilted Briton in a misty Highland scene.

Under the shadow of our great leading line we were presently taking subsidiary specialities into action; "Tono-

Bungay Hair Stimulant" was our first supplement. Then came "Concentrated Tono-Bungay" for the eyes. That didn't go, but we had a considerable success with the hair Stimulant. We broached the subject, I remember, in a little catechism beginning: "Why does the hair fall out? Because the follicles are fagged. What are the follicles? . . . ." So it went on to the climax that the Hair Stimulant contained all "The essential principles of that most reviving tonic, Tono-Bungay, together with an emollient and nutritious oil derived from crude Neat's Foot Oil by a process of refinement, separation and deodorization. . . . It will be manifest to any one of scientific attainments that in Neat's Foot Oil derived from the hoofs and horns of beasts, we must necessarily have a *natural* skin and hair lubricant."

And we also did admirable things with our next subsidiaries, "Tono-Bungay Lozenges," and "Tono-Bungay Chocolate." These we urged upon the public for their extraordinary nutritive and recuperative value in cases of fatigue and strain. We gave them posters and illustrated advertisements showing climbers hanging from marvellously vertical cliffs, cyclist champions upon the track, mounted messengers engaged in Aix-to-Ghent rides, soldiers lying out in action under a hot sun. "You can GO for twenty-four hours," we declared, "on Tono-Bungay Chocolate." We didn't say whether you could return on the same commodity. We also showed a dreadfully barristerish barrister, wig, side-whiskers, teeth, a horribly life-like portrait of all existing barristers, talking at a table, and beneath, this legend: "A Four Hours' Speech on Tono-Bungay Lozenges, and as fresh as when he began." That brought in regiments of school-teachers, revivalist ministers, politicians and the like. I really do believe there was an element of "kick" in the strychnine in these lozenges, especially in those made according to our earlier formula. For we altered all our formulæ—invariably weakening them enormously as sales got ahead.

In a little while—so it seems to me now—we were employing travellers and opening up Great Britain at the rate of a hundred square miles a day. All the organization throughout was sketched in a crude, entangled, half-inspired fashion by my uncle, and all of it had to be worked out

into a practicable scheme of quantities and expenditure by me. We had a lot of trouble finding our travellers; in the end at least half of them were Irish-Americans, a wonderful breed for selling medicine. We had still more trouble over our factory manager, because of the secrets of the inner room, and in the end we got a very capable woman, Mrs. Hampton Diggs, who had formerly managed a large millinery workroom, whom we could trust to keep everything in good working order without finding out anything that wasn't put exactly under her loyal and energetic nose. She conceived a high opinion of Tono-Bungay and took it in all forms and large quantities so long as I knew her. It didn't seen to do her any harm. And she kept the girls going quite wonderfully.

My uncle's last addition to the Tono-Bungay group was the Tono-Bungay Mouthwash. The reader has probably read a hundred times that inspiring inquiry of his, " You are Young Yet, but are you sure Nothing has Aged your Gums ? "

And after that we took over the agency for three or four good American lines that worked in with our own, and could be handled with it; Texan Embrocation, and " 23— to clear the system " were the chief. . . .

I set down these bare facts. To me they are all linked with the figure of my uncle. In some of the old seventeenth and early eighteenth century prayer-books at Bladesover there used to be illustrations with long scrolls coming out of the mouths of the wood-cut figures. I wish I could write all this last chapter on a scroll coming out of the head of my uncle, show it all the time as unfolding and pouring out from a short, fattening, small-legged man with stiff cropped hair, disobedient glasses on a perky little nose, and a round stare behind them. I wish I could show you him breathing hard and a little through his nose as his pen scrabbled out some absurd inspiration for a poster or a picture page, and make you hear his voice, charged with solemn import like the voice of a squeaky prophet, saying, " George ! list'n ! I got an ideer. I got a notion, George ! "

I should put myself into the same picture. Best setting for us, I think, would be the Beckenham snuggery, because there we worked hardest. It would be the lamplit room

of the early nineties, and the clock upon the mantel would indicate midnight or later. We would be sitting on either side of the fire, I with a pipe, my uncle with cigar or cigarette. There would be glasses standing inside the brass fender. Our expressions would be very grave. My uncle used to sit right back in his armchair; his toes always turned in when he was sitting down and his legs had a way of looking curved, as though they hadn't bones or joints but were stuffed with sawdust.

"George, whad'yer think of T.-B. for sea-sickness?" he would say.

"No good that I can imagine."

"Oom! No harm *trying*, George. We can but try."

I would suck my pipe. "Hard to get at. Unless we sold our stuff specially at the docks. Might do a special at Cook's office, or in the Continental Bradshaw."

"It 'ud give 'em confidence, George."

He would Zzzz, with his glasses reflecting the red of the glowing coals.

"No good hiding our light under a Bushel," he would remark. . . .

I never really determined whether my uncle regarded Tono-Bungay as a fraud, or whether he didn't come to believe in it in a kind of way by the mere reiteration of his own assertions. I think that his average attitude was one of kindly, almost parental, toleration. I remember saying on one occasion, "But you don't suppose this stuff ever did a human being the slightest good at all?" and how his face assumed a look of protest, as of one reproving harshness and dogmatism.

"You've a hard nature, George," he said. "You're too ready to run things down. How can one *tell?* How can one venture to *tell?* . . ."

I suppose any creative and developing game would have interested me in those years. At any rate, I know I put as much zeal into this Tono-Bungay as any young lieutenant could have done who suddenly found himself in command of a ship. It was extraordinarily interesting to me to figure out the advantage accruing from this shortening of the process or that, and to weigh it against the capital cost of the alteration. I made a sort of machine for sticking

on the labels, that I patented; to this day there is a little trickle of royalties to me from that. I also contrived to have our mixture made concentrated, got the bottles, which all came sliding down a guarded slant-way, nearly filled with distilled water at one tap, and dripped our magic ingredients in at the next. This was an immense economy of space for the inner sanctum. For the bottling we needed special taps, and these, too, I invented and patented.

We had a sort of endless band of bottles sliding along an inclined glass trough made slippery with running water. At one end a girl held them up to the light, put aside any that were imperfect and placed the others in the trough; the filling was automatic; at the other end a girl slipped in the cork and drove it home with a little mallet. Each tank, the little one for the vivifying ingredients and the big one for distilled water, had a level indicator, and inside I had a float arrangement that stopped the slide whenever either had sunk too low. Another girl stood ready with my machine to label the corked bottles and hand them to the three packers, who slipped them into their outer papers and put them, with a pad of corrugated paper between each pair, into a little groove from which they could be made to slide neatly into position in our standard packing-case. It sounds wild, I know, but I believe I was the first man in the city of London to pack patent medicines through the side of the packing-case, to discover there was a better way in than by the lid. Our cases packed themselves, practically; had only to be put into position on a little wheeled tray and when full pulled to the lift that dropped them to the men downstairs, who padded up the free space and nailed on top and side. Our girls, moreover, packed with corrugated paper and matchbox-wood partitions when everybody else was using expensive young men to pack through the top of the box with straw, many breakages and much waste and confusion.

§ 2

As I look back at them now, those energetic years seem all compacted to a year or so; from the days of our first

hazardous beginning in Farringdon Street with barely a thousand pounds' worth of stuff or credit all told—and that got by something perilously like snatching—to the days when my uncle went to the public on behalf of himself and me (one-tenth share) and our silent partners, the drug wholesalers and the printing people and the owner of that group of magazines and newspapers, to ask with honest confidence for £150,000. Those silent partners were remarkably sorry, I know, that they had not taken larger shares and given us longer credit when the subscriptions came pouring in. My uncle had a clear half to play with (including the one-tenth understood to be mine).

£150,000—think of it !—for the goodwill in a string of lies and a trade in bottles of mitigated water ! Do you realize the madness of the world that sanctions such a thing? Perhaps you don't. At times use and wont certainly blinded me. If it had not been for Ewart, I don't think I should have had an inkling of the wonderfulness of this development of my fortunes; I should have grown accustomed to it, fallen in with all its delusions as completely as my uncle presently did. He was immensely proud of the flotation. "They've never been given such value," he said, "for a dozen years." But Ewart, with his gesticulating hairy hands and bony wrists, is single-handed chorus to all this as it plays itself over again in my memory, and he kept my fundamental absurdity illuminated for me during all this astonishing time.

"It's just on all fours with the rest of things," he remarked; "only more so. You needn't think you're anything out of the way."

I remember one disquisition very distinctly. It was just after Ewart had been to Paris on a mysterious expedition to "rough in" some work for a rising American sculptor. This young man had a commission for an allegorical figure of Truth (draped, of course) for his State Capitol, and he needed help. Ewart had returned with his hair cut *en brosse* and with his costume completely translated into French. He wore, I remember, a bicycling suit of purplish-brown, baggy beyond imagining—the only creditable thing about it was that it had evidently not been made for him—a voluminous black tie, a decadent

soft felt hat and several French expletives of a sinister description. "Silly clothes, aren't they?" he said at the sight of my startled eye. "I don't know why I got 'm. They seemed all right over there." He had come down to our Raggett Street place to discuss a benevolent project of mine for a poster by him, and he scattered remarkable discourse over the heads (I hope it was over the heads) of our bottlers.

"What I like about it all, Ponderevo, is its poetry. . . . That's where we get the pull of the animals. No animal would ever run a factory like this. Think! . . . One remembers the Beaver, of course. He might very possibly bottle things, but would he stick a label round 'em and sell 'em? The Beaver is a dreamy fool I'll admit, him and his dams, but after all, there's a sort of protection about 'em, a kind of muddy practicality! They prevent things getting at him. And it's not your poetry only. It's the poetry of the customer too. Poet answering to poet—soul to soul. Health, Strength and Beauty—in a bottle—the magic philtre! Like a fairy tale. . . .

"Think of the people to whom your bottles of footle go! (I'm calling it footle, Ponderevo, out of praise," he said in parenthesis.)

"Think of the little clerks and jaded women and overworked people. People overstrained with wanting to do, people overstrained with wanting to be. . . . People, in fact, overstrained. . . . The real trouble of life, Ponderevo, isn't that we exist—that's a vulgar error; the real trouble is that we *don't* really exist and we want to. That's what this—in the highest sense—muck stands for! The hunger to be—for once—really alive—to the finger tips! . . .

"Nobody wants to do and be the things people are—nobody. *You* don't want to preside over this—this bottling, *I* don't want to wear these beastly clothes and be led about by you, nobody wants to keep on sticking labels on silly bottles at so many farthings a gross. That isn't existing! That's—sus—*substratum*. None of us want to be what we are, or to do what we do. Except as a sort of basis. What do we want? *You* know. *I* know. Nobody confesses. What we all want to be is something perpetually

young and beautiful—young Joves—young Joves, Ponderevo "—his voice became loud, harsh and declamatory—" pursuing coy half-willing nymphs through everlasting forests . . ."

There was a just-perceptible listening hang in the work about us.

" Come downstairs," I interrupted, " we can talk better there."

" I can talk better here," he answered.

He was just going on, but fortunately the implacable face of Mrs. Hampton Diggs appeared down the aisle of bottling machines.

" All right," he said, " I'll come." . . .

In the little sanctum below, my uncle was taking a digestive pause after his lunch and by no means alert. His presence sent Ewart back to the theme of modern commerce, over the excellent cigar my uncle gave him. He behaved with the elaborate deference due to a business magnate from an unknown man.

" What I was pointing out to your nephew, sir," said Ewart, putting both elbows on the table, " was the poetry of commerce. He doesn't, you know, seem to see it at all."

My uncle nodded brightly. " Whad I tell 'im," he said round his cigar.

" You are artists. You and I, sir, can talk, if you will permit me, as one artist to another. It's advertisement has—done it. Advertisement has revolutionized trade and industry; it is going to revolutionize the world. The old merchant used to tote about commodities; the new one creates values. Doesn't need to tote. He takes something that isn't worth anything—or something that isn't particularly worth anything, and he makes it worth something. He takes mustard that is just like anybody else's mustard, and he goes about saying, shouting, singing, chalking on walls, writing inside people's books, putting it everywhere, ' Smith's Mustard is the Best.' And behold it *is* the Best ! "

" True," said my uncle, chubbily and with a dreamy sense of mysticism; " true ! "

" It's just like an artist, he takes a lump of white marble

on the verge of a lime-kiln, he chips it about, he makes—he makes a monument to himself—and others—a monument the world will not willingly let die. Talking of mustard, sir, I was at Clapham Junction the other day, and all the banks are overgrown with horseradish that's got loose from a garden somewhere. You know what horseradish is—grows like wildfire—spreads—spreads. I stood at the end of the platform looking at the stuff and thinking about it. 'Like fame,' I thought, 'Rank and wild where it isn't wanted. Why don't the really good things in life grow like horseradish?' I thought. My mind went off in a peculiar way it does from that to the idea that mustard costs a penny a tin—I bought some the other day for a ham I had. It came into my head that it would be ripping good business to use horseradish to adulterate mustard. I had a sort of idea that I could plunge into business on that, get rich and come back to my own proper monumental art again. And then I said, 'But *why* adulterate? I don't like the idea of adulteration.'"

"Shabby," said my uncle, nodding his head. "Bound to get found out!"

"And totally unnecessary too! Why not do up a mixture—three-quarters pounded horseradish and a quarter mustard—give it a fancy name—and sell it at twice the mustard price. See? I very nearly started the business straight away, only something happened. My train came along."

"Jolly good ideer," said my uncle. He looked at me. "That really *is* an ideer, George," he said.

"Take shavin's, again! You know that poem of Longfellow's, sir, that sounds exactly like the first declension. What is it?—'man's a maker men say!'"

My uncle nodded and gurgled some quotation that died away.

"Jolly good poem, George," he said in an aside to me.

"Well, it's about a carpenter and a poetic Victorian child, you know, and some shavin's. The child made no end out of the shavin's. So might you. Powder 'em. They might be anything. Soak 'em in jipper,—Xylotobacco! Powder 'em and get a little tar and turpentinous smell in,—wood-packing for hot baths—a Certain Cure

for the Scourge of Influenza ! There's all these patent grain foods,—what Americans call cereals. I believe I'm right, sir, in saying they're sawdust."

"No!" said my uncle, removing his cigar; "as far as I can find out it's really grain,—spoilt grain. . . . I've been going into that."

"Well, there you are!" said Ewart. "Say it's spoilt grain. It carried out my case just as well. Your modern commerce is no more buying and selling than—sculpture. It's mercy—it's salvation. It's rescue work! It takes all sorts of fallen commodities by the hand and raises them. Cana isn't in it. You turn water—into Tono-Bungay."

"Tono-Bungay's all right," said my uncle, suddenly grave. "We aren't talking of Tono-Bungay."

"Your nephew, sir, is hard; he wants everything to go to a sort of predestinated end; he's a Calvinist of Commerce. Offer him a dustbin full of stuff; he calls it refuse—passes by on the other side. Now *you*, sir—you'd make cinders respect themselves."

My uncle regarded him dubiously for a moment. But there was a touch of appreciation in his eye.

"Might make 'em into a sort of sanitary brick," he reflected over his cigar end.

"Or a friable biscuit. Why *not?* You might advertise: 'Why are Birds so Bright? Because they digest their food perfectly! Why do they digest their food so perfectly? Because they have a gizzard! Why hasn't man a gizzard? Because he can buy Ponderevo's Ashpit Triturating, Friable Biscuit—Which is Better.'"

He delivered the last words in a shout with his hairy hand flourished in the air. . . .

"Damn clever fellow," said my uncle, after he had gone. "I know a man when I see one. He'll do. Bit drunk, I should say. But that only makes some chaps brighter. If he *wants* to do that poster, he can. Zzzz. That ideer of his about the horseradish. There's something in that, George. I'm going to think over that. . . ."

I may say at once that my poster project came to nothing in the end, though Ewart devoted an interesting week to the matter. He let his unfortunate disposition to irony run away with him. He produced a picture of two Beavers

with a subtle likeness, he said, to myself and my uncle—the likeness to my uncle certainly wasn't half bad—and they were bottling rows and rows of Tono-Bungay, with the legend "Modern Commerce." It certainly wouldn't have sold a case, though he urged it on me one cheerful evening on the ground that it would "arouse curiosity." In addition he produced a quite shocking study of my uncle, excessively and needlessly nude, but, so far as I was able to judge, an admirable likeness, engaged in feats of strength of a Gargantuan type before an audience of deboshed and shattered ladies. The legend, "Health, Beauty, Strength" below, gave a needed point to his parody. This he hung up in the studio over the oil shop, with a flap of brown paper by way of a curtain over it to accentuate its libellous offence.

CHAPTER IV

MARION

§ 1

As I look back on those days in which we built up the great Tono-Bungay property out of human hope and a credit for bottles and rent and printing, I see any life as it were arranged in two parallel columns of unequal width, a wider, more diffused, eventful and various one which continually broadens out, the business side of my life, and a narrow, darker and darkling one shot ever and again with a gleam of happiness, my home life with Marion. For of course I married Marion.

I didn't, as a matter of fact, marry her until a year after Tono-Bungay was thoroughly afloat, and then only after conflicts and discussions of a quite strenuous sort. By that time I was twenty-four. It seems the next thing to childhood now. We were both in certain directions unusually ignorant and simple; we were temperamentally antagonistic, and we hadn't—I don't think we were capable of—an idea in common. She was young and extraordinarily conventional—she seemed never to have an idea of her own but always the idea of her class—and I was young and sceptical, enterprising and passionate; the two links that held us together were the intense appeal her physical beauty had for me, and her appreciation of her importance in my thoughts. There can be no doubt of my passion for her. In her I had discovered woman desired. The nights I have lain awake on account of her, writhing, biting my wrists in a fever of longing! . . .

I have told how I got myself a silk hat and black coat to please her on Sunday—to the derision of some of my fellow-students who chanced to meet me—and how we became engaged. But that was only the beginning of our differences.

To her that meant the beginning of a not unpleasant little secrecy, an occasional use of verbal endearments, perhaps even kisses. It was something to go on indefinitely, interfering in no way with her gossiping spells of work at Smithie's. To me it was a pledge to come together into the utmost intimacy of soul and body so soon as we could contrive it. . . .

I don't know if it will strike the reader that I am setting out to discuss the queer unwise love relationship and my bungle of a marriage with excessive solemnity. But to me it seems to reach out to vastly wider issues than our little personal affair. I've thought over my life. In these last few years I've tried to get at least a little wisdom out of it. And in particular I've thought over this part of my life. I'm enormously impressed by the ignorant, unguided way in which we two entangled ourselves with each other. It seems to me the queerest thing in all this network of misunderstandings and misstatements and faulty and ramshackle conventions which makes up our social order as the individual meets it, that we should have come together so accidentally and so blindly. Because we were no more than samples of the common fate. Love is not only the cardinal fact in the individual life, but the most important concern of the community; after all, the way in which the young people of this generation pair off determines the fate of the nation; all the other affairs of the State are subsidiary to that. And we leave it to flushed and blundering youth to stumble on its own significance, with nothing to guide it but shocked looks and sentimental twaddle and base whisperings and cant-smeared examples.

I have tried to indicate something of my own sexual development in the preceding chapter. Nobody was ever frank and decent with me in this relation, nobody, no book, ever came and said to me thus and thus is the world made and so and so is necessary. Everything came obscurely, indefinitely, perplexingly; and all I knew of law or convention in the matter had the form of threatenings and prohibitions. Except through the furtive, shameful talk of my coevals at Goudhurst and Wimblehurst, I was not even warned against quite horrible dangers. My ideas were made partly of instinct, partly of a romantic imagination, partly woven out of a medley of scraps of suggestion that came to me haphazard. I had read widely and confusedly:

" Vathek," Shelley, Tom Paine, Plutarch, Carlyle, Haeckel, William Morris, the Bible, the *Freethinker*, the *Clarion*, "The Woman Who Did,"—I mention the ingredients that come first to mind. All sorts of ideas were jumbled up in me and never a lucid explanation. But it was evident to me that the world regarded Shelley, for example, as a very heroic as well as beautiful person; and that to defy convention and succumb magnificently to passion was the proper thing to do to gain the respect and affection of all decent people.

And the make-up of Marion's mind in the matter was an equally irrational affair. Her training had been one not simply of silences, but suppressions. An enormous force of suggestion had so shaped her that the intense natural fastidiousness of girlhood had developed into an absolute perversion of instinct. For all that is cardinal in this essential business of life she had one inseparable epithet—" horrid." Without any such training she would have been a shy lover, but now she was an impossible one. For the rest she had derived, I suppose, partly from the sort of fiction she got from the Public Library, and partly from the work-room talk at Smithie's. So far as the former origin went, she had an idea of love as a state of worship and service on the part of the man and of condescension on the part of the woman. There was nothing " horrid " about it in any fiction she had read. The man gave presents, did services, sought to be in every way delightful. The woman " went out " with him, smiled at him, was kissed by him in decorous secrecy, and if he chanced to offend, denied her countenance and presence. Usually she did something " for his good " to him, made him go to church, made him give up smoking or gambling, smartened him up. Quite at the end of the story came a marriage, and after that the interest ceased.

That was the tenor of Marion's fiction; but I think the work-table conversation at Smithie's did something to modify that. At Smithie's it was recognized, I think, that a " fellow " was a possession to be desired; that it was better to be engaged to a fellow than not; that fellows had to be kept—they might be mislaid, they might even be stolen. There was a case of stealing at Smithie's, and many tears.

Smithie I met before we were married, and afterwards

she became a frequent visitor to our house at Ealing. She was a thin, bright-eyed, hawk-nosed girl of thirty odd, with prominent teeth, a high-pitched, eager voice, and a disposition to be urgently smart in her dress. Her hats were startling and various but invariably disconcerting, and she talked in a rapid, nervous flow that was hilarious rather than witty, and broken by little screams of "Oh my *dear!*" and "You never did!" She was the first woman I ever met who used scent. Poor old Smithie! What a harmless, kindly soul she really was, and how heartily I detested her! Out of the profits on the Persian robes she supported a sister's family of three children, she "helped" a worthless brother and overflowed in help even to her work-girls, but that didn't weigh with me in those youthfully-narrow times. It was one of the intense minor irritations of my married life that Smithie's whirlwind chatter seemed to me to have far more influence with Marion than anything I had to say. Before all things I coveted her grip upon Marion's inaccessible mind.

In the work-room at Smithie's, I gathered, they always spoke of me demurely as "A Certain Person." I was rumoured to be dreadfully "clever," and there were doubts—not altogether without justification—of the sweetness of my temper.

§ 2

Well, these general explanations will enable the reader to understand the distressful times we two had together when presently I began to feel on a footing with Marion and to fumble conversationally for the mind and the wonderful passion I felt, obstinately and stupidly, must be in her. I think she thought me the maddest of sane men; "clever," in fact, which at Smithie's was, I suppose, the next thing to insanity, a word intimating incomprehensible and incalculable motives. . . .

She could be shocked at anything, she misunderstood everything, and her weapon was a sulky silence that knitted her brows, spoilt her mouth and robbed her face of beauty. "Well, if we can't agree, I don't see why you should go on talking," she used to say. That would always enrage me beyond measure. Or, "I'm afraid I'm not clever enough to understand that."

Silly little people! I see it all now, but then I was no older than she and I couldn't see anything but that Marion, for some inexplicable reason, wouldn't come alive.

We would contrive semi-surreptitious walks on Sunday, and part speechless with the anger of indefinable offences. Poor Marion! The things I tried to put before her, my fermenting ideas about theology, about Socialism, about æsthetics—the very words appalled her, gave her the faint chill of approaching impropriety, the terror of a very present intellectual impossibility. Then by an enormous effort I would suppress myself for a time and continue a talk that made her happy, about Smithie's brother, about the new girl who had come to the work-room, about the house we would presently live in. But there we differed a little. I wanted to be accessible to St. Paul's or Cannon Street Station, and she had set her mind quite resolutely upon Ealing. . . . It wasn't by any means quarrelling all the time, you understand. She liked me to play the lover "nicely"; she liked the effect of going about—we had lunches, we went to Earl's Court, to Kew, to theatres and concerts, but not often to concerts because, though Marion "liked" music, she didn't like "too much of it," to picture shows—and there was a nonsensical sort of baby-talk I picked up—I forget where now—that became a mighty peacemaker.

Her worst offence for me was an occasional excursion into the Smithie style of dressing, debased West Kensington. For she had no sense at all of her own beauty. She had no comprehension whatever of beauty of the body, and she could slash her beautiful lines to rags with hat-brims and trimmings. Thank Heaven a natural refinement, a natural timidity and her extremely slender purse kept her from the real Smithie efflorescence! Poor simple, beautiful, kindly, limited Marion! Now that I am forty-five, I can look back at her with all my old admiration and none of my old bitterness, with a new affection and not a scrap of passion, and take her part against the equally stupid, drivingly-energetic, sensuous, intellectual sprawl I used to be. I was a young beast for her to have married—a young beast. With her it was my business to understand and control—and I exacted fellowship, passion. . . .

We became engaged, as I have told; we broke it off and joined again. We went through a succession of such phases.

We had no sort of idea what was wrong with us. Presently we were formally engaged. I had a wonderful interview with her father in which he was stupendously grave and *h*-less, wanted to know about my origins and was tolerant (exasperatingly tolerant) because my mother was a servant, and afterwards her mother took to kissing me and I bought a ring. But the speechless aunt, I gathered, didn't approve —having doubts of my religiosity. Whenever we were estranged we could keep apart for days; and to begin with, every such separation was a relief. And then I would want her; a restless longing would come upon me. I would think of the flow of her arms, of the soft gracious bend of her body. I would lie awake or dream of a transfigured Marion of light and fire. It was indeed Dame Nature driving me on to womankind in her stupid, inexorable way; but I thought it was the need of Marion that troubled me. So I always went back to Marion at last and made it up and more or less conceded or ignored whatever thing had parted us, and more and more I urged her to marry me. . . .

In the long run that became a fixed idea. It entangled my will and my pride, I told myself I was not going to be beaten. I hardened to the business. I think, as a matter of fact, my real passion for Marion had waned enormously long before we were married, that she had lived it down by sheer irresponsiveness. When I felt sure of my three hundred a year she stipulated for delay, twelve months' delay, "to see how things would turn out." There were times when she seemed simply an antagonist holding out irritatingly against something I had to settle. Moreover, I began to be greatly distracted by the interest and excitement of Tono-Bungay's success, by the change and movement in things, the going to and fro. I would forget her for days together, and then desire her with an irritating intensity. At last, one Saturday afternoon, after a brooding morning I determined almost savagely that these delays must end.

I went off to the little home at Walham Green, and made Marion come with me to Putney Common. Marion wasn't at home when I got there, and I had to fret for a time and talk to her father, who was just back from his office, he explained, and enjoying himself in his own way in the greenhouse.

"I'm going to ask your daughter to marry me," I said. "I think we've been waiting long enough."

"I don't approve of long engagements either," said her father. "But Marion will have her own way about it, anyhow. Seen this new powdered fertilizer?"

I went in to talk to Mrs. Ramboat. "She'll want time to get her things," said Mrs. Ramboat. . . .

I and Marion sat down together on a little seat under some trees at the top of Putney Hill, and I came to my point abruptly.

"Look here, Marion," I said, "are you going to marry me or are you not?"

She smiled at me. "Well," she said, "we're engaged—aren't we?"

"That can't go on for ever. Will you marry me next week?"

She looked me in the face. "We can't," she said.

"You promised to marry me when I had three hundred a year."

She was silent for a space. "Can't we go on for a time as we are? We *could* marry on three hundred a year. But it means a very little house. There's Smithie's brother. They manage on two hundred and fifty, but that's very little. She says they have a semi-detached house almost on the road, and hardly a bit of garden. And the wall to next-door is so thin, they hear everything. When her baby cries—they rap. And people stand against the railings and talk. . . . Can't we wait? You're doing so well."

An extraordinary bitterness possessed me at this invasion of the stupendous beautiful business of love by sordid necessity. I answered her with immense restraint.

"If," I said, "we could have a double-fronted, detached house—at Ealing, say—with a square patch of lawn in front and a garden behind—and—and a tiled bath-room."

"That would be sixty pounds a year at least."

"Which means five hundred a year. . . . Yes, well, you see I told my uncle I wanted that, and I've got it."

"Got what?"

"Five hundred pounds a year."

"Five hundred pounds!"

I burst into laughter that had more than a taste of bitterness.

"Yes," I said, "really! and *now* what do you think?"

"Yes," she said, a little flushed; "but be sensible! Do you really mean you've got a Rise, all at once, of two hundred a year?"

"To marry on—yes."

She scrutinized me a moment. "You've done this as a surprise!" she said, and laughed at my laughter. She had become radiant, and that made me radiant too.

"Yes," I said, "yes," and laughed no longer bitterly. She clasped her hands and looked me in the eyes.

She was so pleased that I forgot absolutely my disgust of a moment before. I forgot that she had raised her price two hundred pounds a year and that I had bought her at that.

"Come!" I said, standing up; "let's go towards the sunset, dear, and talk about it all. Do you know—this is a most beautiful world, an amazingly beautiful world, and when the sunset falls upon you it makes you into shining gold. No, not gold—into golden glass. . . . Into something better than either glass or gold." . . .

And for all that evening I wooed her and kept her glad. She made me repeat my assurances over again and still doubted a little.

We furnished that double-fronted house from attic—it ran to an attic—to cellar, and created a garden.

"Do you know Pampas Grass?" said Marion. "I love Pampas Grass . . . if there is room."

"You shall have Pampas Grass," I declared.

And there were moments as we went in imagination about that house together, when my whole being cried out to take her in my arms—now. But I refrained. On that aspect of life I touched very lightly in that talk, very lightly because I had had my lessons.

She promised to marry me within two months' time. Shyly, reluctantly, she named a day, and next afternoon, in heat and wrath, we "broke it off" again for the last time. We split upon procedure. I refused flatly to have a normal wedding with wedding cake, white favours, carriages and the rest of it. It dawned upon me suddenly in conversation with her and her mother, that this was implied. I blurted out my objection forthwith, and this time it wasn't any ordinary difference of opinion; it was a "row." I don't remember a quarter of the things we flung

out in that dispute. I remember her mother reiterating in tones of gentle remonstrance : " But George dear, you *must* have a cake—to send round." I think we all reiterated things. I seem to remember a refrain of my own : " marriage is too sacred a thing, too private a thing, for this display." Her father came in and stood behind me against the wall, and her aunt appeared beside the sideboard and stood with folded arms, looking from speaker to speaker, a sternly gratified prophetess. It didn't occur to me then how painful it was to Marion for these people to witness my rebellion.

" But, George," said her father, " what sort of marriage do you want ? You don't want to go to one of those there registary offices ? "

" That's exactly what I'd like to do. Marriage is too private a thing——"

" I shouldn't feel married," said Mrs. Ramboat.

" Look here, Marion," I said; " we are going to be married at a registry office. I don't believe in all these—fripperies and superstitions, and I won't submit to them. I've agreed to all sorts of things to please you."

" What's he agreed to ? " said her father—unheeded.

" I can't marry at a registry office," said Marion, sallow-white.

" Very well," I said. " I'll marry nowhere else."

" I can't marry at a registry office."

" Very well," I said, standing up, white and tense, and it amazed me, but I was also exultant; " then we won't marry at all."

She leant forward over the table, staring blankly at nothing.

" I don't think we'd better," she said in a low tone; " if it's to be like this."

" It's for you to choose," I said. I stood for a moment watching the cloud of sulky offence that veiled her beauty.

" It's for you to choose," I repeated; and regardless of the others, walked to the door, slammed it behind me and so went out of the house.

" That's over," I said to myself in the road, and was full of a desolating sense of relief. . . .

But presently her half-averted face began to haunt me as

she had sat at the table, and her arm and the long droop of her shoulder.

§ 3

The next day I did an unexampled thing. I sent a telegram to my uncle, "*Bad temper not coming to business,*" and set off for Highgate and Ewart. He was actually at work—on a bust of Millie, and seemed very glad for any interruption.

"Ewart, you old Fool," I said, "knock off and come for a day's gossip. I'm rotten. There's a sympathetic sort of lunacy about you. Let's go to Staines and paddle up to Windsor."

"Girl?" said Ewart, putting down a chisel.

"Yes."

That was all I told him of my affair.

"I've got no money," he remarked, to clear up any ambiguity in my invitation.

We got a jar of shandy-gaff, some food, and, on Ewart's suggestion, two Japanese sunshades in Staines; we demanded extra cushions at the boathouse and we spent an enormously soothing day in discourse and meditation, our boat moored in a shady place this side of Windsor. I seem to remember Ewart with a cushion forward, only his heels and sunshade and some black ends of hair showing, a voice and no more, against the shining, smoothly-streaming mirror of the trees and bushes.

"It's not worth it," was the burthen of the voice.

"You'd better get yourself a Millie, Ponderevo, and then you wouldn't feel so upset."

"No," I said decidedly, "that's not my way." . . .

A thread of smoke ascended from Ewart for a while, like smoke from an altar. . . .

"Everything's a muddle, and you think it isn't. Nobody knows where we are—because, as a matter of fact, we aren't anywhere. Are women property—or are they fellow-creatures? Or a sort of proprietary goddesses? They're so obviously fellow-creatures. You believe in the goddess?"

"No," I said, "that's not my idea."

"What is your idea?"

"Well——"

"H'm," said Ewart, in my pause.

"My idea," I said, "is to meet one person who will belong to me—to whom I shall belong—body and soul. No half-gods! Wait till she comes. If she comes at all.... We must come to each other young and pure."

"There's no such thing as a pure person or an impure person. . . . Mixed to begin with."

This was so manifestly true that it silenced me altogether.

"And if you belong to her and she to you, Ponderevo—which end's the head?"

I made no answer except an impatient "Oh!"

For a time we smoked in silence. . . .

"Did I tell you, Ponderevo, of a wonderful discovery I've made?" Ewart began presently.

"No," I said, "what is it?"

"There's no Mrs. Grundy."

"No?"

"No! Practically not. I've just thought all that business out. She's merely an instrument, Ponderevo. She's borne the blame. Grundy's a man. Grundy unmasked. Rather lean and out of sorts. Early middle age. With bunchy black whiskers and a worried eye. Been good so far, and it's fretting him! Moods! . . . There's Grundy in a state of sexual panic, for example,—'For God's sake cover it up! They get together—they get together! It's too exciting! The most dreadful things are happening!' Rushing about—long arms going like a windmill. 'They must be kept apart!' Starts out for an absolute obliteration of everything—absolute separations. One side of the road for men, and the other for women, and a hoarding—without posters—between them. Every boy and girl to be sewn up in a sack and sealed, just the head and hands and feet out until twenty-one. Music abolished, calico garments for the lower animals! Sparrows to be suppressed—ab-so-lutely."

I laughed abruptly.

"Well, that's Mr. Grundy in one mood—and it puts Mrs. Grundy—— She's a much-maligned person, Ponderevo—a rake at heart—and it puts her in a most painful state of fluster—most painful! She's an amenable creature. When Grundy tells her things are shocking, she's shocked—pink and breathless. She goes about trying to conceal her profound sense of guilt behind a haughty expression. . . .

"Grundy meanwhile is in a state of complete whirl-about. Long lean knuckly hands pointing and gesticulating! 'They're still thinking of things—thinking of things! It's dreadful! They get it out of books. I can't imagine where they get it! I must watch! There're people over there whispering! Nobody ought to whisper! There's something suggestive in the mere act! Then, pictures! In the museums—things too dreadful for words. Why can't we have pure art—with the anatomy all wrong and pure and nice—and pure fiction, pure poetry, instead of all this stuff with allusions—allusions? . . . Excuse me! There's something up behind that locked door! The keyhole! In the interests of public morality—yes, Sir, as a pure good man—I insist—*I'll* look—it won't hurt me—I insist on looking—my duty—M,m,m—the keyhole!'"

He kicked his legs about extravagantly, and I laughed again.

"That's Grundy in one mood, Ponderevo. It isn't Mrs. Grundy. That's one of the lies we tell about women. They're too simple. Simple! Women *are* simple! They take on just what men tell 'em. . . ."

Ewart meditated for a space. "Just exactly as it's put to them," he said, and resumed the moods of Mr. Grundy.

"Then you get old Grundy in another mood. Ever caught him nosing, Ponderevo? Mad with the idea of mysterious, unknown, wicked, delicious things. Things that aren't respectable. Wow! Things he mustn't do! . . . Any one who knows about these things, knows there's just as much mystery and deliciousness about Grundy's forbidden things as there is about eating ham. Jolly nice if it's a bright morning and you're well and hungry and having breakfast in the open air. Jolly unattractive if you're off colour. But Grundy's covered it all up and hidden it and put mucky shades and covers over it until he's forgotten it. Begins to fester round it in his mind. Has dreadful struggles with himself about impure thoughts. . . . Then you get Grundy with hot ears,—curious in undertones. Grundy on the loose, Grundy in a hoarse whisper and with furtive eyes and convulsive movements—making things indecent. Evolving—in dense vapours—indecency

"Grundy sins. Oh yes, he's a hypocrite. Sneaks round

a corner and sins ugly. It's Grundy and his dark corners that make vice, vice! We artists—we have no vices. And then he's frantic with repentance. And wants to be cruel to fallen women and decent harmless sculptors of the simple nude—like me—and so back to his panic again."

"Mrs. Grundy, I suppose, doesn't know he sins," I remarked.

"No? I'm not so sure. . . . But, bless her heart! she's a woman. . . . She's a woman.

"Then again you get Grundy with a large greasy smile—like an accident to a butter tub—all over his face, being Liberal Minded—Grundy in his Anti-Puritan moments, 'trying not to see Harm in it'—Grundy the friend of innocent pleasure. He makes you sick with the Harm he's trying not to see in it. . . .

"And that's why everything's wrong, Ponderevo. Grundy, damn him! stands in the light, and we young people can't see. His moods affect us. We catch his gusts of panic, his disease of nosing, his greasiness. We don't know what we may think, what we may say. He does his silly utmost to prevent our reading and seeing the one thing, the one sort of discussion we find—quite naturally and properly—supremely interesting. So we don't adolesce; we blunder up to sex. Dare—dare to look—and he may dirt you for ever! The girls are terror-stricken to silence by his significant whiskers, by the bleary something in his eyes."

Suddenly Ewart, with an almost Jack-in-the-box effect, sat up.

"He's about us everywhere, Ponderevo," he said very solemnly. "Sometimes—sometimes I think he is in—our blood. In *mine*."

He regarded me for my opinion very earnestly, with his pipe in the corner of his mouth.

"You're the remotest cousin he ever had," I said. . . .

I reflected. "Look here, Ewart," I asked, "how would you have things different?"

He wrinkled up his queer face, regarded the water and made his pipe gurgle for a space, thinking deeply.

"There are complications, I admit. We've grown up under the terror of Grundy and that innocent—but docile and—yes—formidable lady, his wife. I don't know how far the complications aren't a disease, a sort of bleaching

under the Grundy shadow. . . . It is possible there are things I have still to learn about women. . . . Man has eaten of the Tree of Knowledge. His innocence is gone. You can't have your cake and eat it. We're in for knowledge; let's have it plain and straight. I should begin, I think, by abolishing the ideas of decency and indecency. . ."

"Grundy would have fits!" I injected.

"Grundy, Ponderevo, would have cold douches—publicly—if the sight was not too painful—three times a day. . . . . But I don't think, mind you, that I should let the sexes run about together. No. The fact behind the sexes—is sex. It's no good humbugging. It trails about—even in the best mixed company. Tugs at your ankle. The men get showing off and quarrelling—and the women. Or they're bored. I suppose the ancestral males have competed for the ancestral females ever since they were both some sort of grubby little reptile. You aren't going to alter that in a thousand years or so. . . . Never should you have a mixed company, never—except with only one man or only one woman. How would that be? . . ."

"Or duets only? . . ."

"How to manage it? Some rule of etiquette, perhaps." . . . He became portentously grave.

Then his long hand went out in weird gestures.

"I seem to see—I seem to see—a sort of City of Women, Ponderevo. Yes. . . . A walled enclosure—good stonemason's work—a city wall, high as the walls of Rome, going about a garden. Dozens of square miles of garden—trees—fountains—arbours—lakes. Lawns on which the women play, avenues in which they gossip, boats. . . . Women like that sort of thing. Any woman who's been to a good eventful girls' school lives on the memory of it for the rest of her life. It's one of the pathetic things about women,—the superiority of school and college to anything they get afterwards. And this city-garden of women will have beautiful places for music, places for beautiful dresses, places for beautiful work. Everything a woman can want. Nurseries. Kindergartens. Schools. And no man—except to do rough work, perhaps—ever comes in. The men live in a world where they can hunt and engineer, invent and mine and manufacture, sail ships, drink deep and practise the arts, and fight——"

"Yes," I said; "but——"

He stilled me with a gesture.

"I'm coming to that. The homes of the women, Ponderevo, will be set in the wall of their city; each woman will have her own particular house and home, furnished after her own heart in her own manner—with a little balcony on the outside wall. Built into the wall—and a little balcony. And there she will go and look out, when the mood takes her, and all round the city there will be a broad road and seats and great shady trees. And men will stroll up and down there when they feel the need of feminine company; when, for instance, they want to talk about their souls or their characters or any of the things that only women will stand. . . . The women will lean over and look at the men and smile and talk to them as they fancy. And each woman will have this; she will have a little silken ladder she can let down if she chooses—if she wants to talk closer."

"The men would still be competing."

"There perhaps—yes. But they'd have to abide by the women's decisions."

I raised one or two difficulties, and for a while we played with this idea.

"Ewart," I said, "this is like Dolls' Island. . . . Suppose," I reflected, "an unsuccessful man laid siege to a balcony and wouldn't let his rival come near it?"

"Move him on," said Ewart, "by a special regulation. As one does organ-grinders. No difficulty about that. And you could forbid it—make it against the etiquette. No life is decent without etiquette. . . . And people obey etiquette sooner than laws. . . ."

"Hm," I said, and was struck by an idea that is remote in the world of a young man. "How about children?" I asked; "in the City? Girls are all very well. But boys for example—grow up."

"Ah!" said Ewart. "Yes. I forgot. They mustn't grow up inside. . . . They'd turn out the boys when they were seven. The father must come with a little pony and a little gun and manly wear, and take the boy away. Then one could come afterwards to one's mother's balcony. . . . It must be fine to have a mother. The father and the son. . . ."

"This is all very pretty in its way," I said at last, "but

it's a dream. Let's come back to reality. What I want to know is, what are you going to do in Brompton, let us say, or Walham Green *now?*"

"Oh! damn it!" he remarked, "Walham Green! What a chap you are, Ponderevo!" and he made an abrupt end to his discourse. He wouldn't even reply to my tentatives for a time. . . .

"While I was talking just now," he remarked presently, "I had a quite different idea."

"What?"

"For a masterpiece. A series. Like the busts of the Cæsars. Only not heads, you know. We don't see the people who do things to us nowadays. . . ."

"How will you do it, then?"

"Hands—a series of hands! The hands of the Twentieth Century. I'll do it. Some day some one will discover it—go there—see what I have done, and what is meant by it."

"See it where?"

"On the tombs. Why not? The Unknown Master of the Highgate Slope! All the little, soft feminine hands, the nervous ugly males, the hands of the flops, and the hands of the snatchers! And Grundy's loose, lean, knuckly affair—Grundy the terror!—the little wrinkles and the thumb! Only it ought to hold all the others together—in a slightly disturbing squeeze. . . . Like Rodin's great Hand—you know the thing!"

§ 4

I forgot how many days intervened between that last breaking off of our engagement and Marion's surrender. But I recall now the sharpness of my emotion, the concentrated spirit of tears and laughter in my throat as I read the words of her unexpected letter—"I have thought over everything, and I was selfish. . . ."

I rushed off to Walham Green that evening to give back all she had given me, to beat her altogether at giving. She was extraordinarily gentle and generous that time, I remember, and when at last I left her, she kissed me very sweetly.

So we were married.

We were married with all the customary incongruities.

I gave—perhaps after a while not altogether ungrudgingly—and what I gave, Marion took, with a manifest satisfaction. After all, I was being sensible. So that we had three livery carriages to the church (one of the pairs of horses matched) and coachmen—with an improvised flavour and very shabby silk hats—bearing white favours on their whips, and my uncle intervened with splendour and insisted upon having a wedding-breakfast sent in from a caterer's in Hammersmith. The table had a great display of chrysanthemums, and there was orange blossom in the significant place and a wonderful cake. We also circulated upwards of a score of wedges of that accompanied by silver-printed cards in which Marion's name of Ramboat was stricken out by an arrow in favour of Ponderevo. We had a little rally of Marion's relations, and several friends and friends' friends from Smithie's appeared in the church and drifted vestryward. I produced my aunt and uncle—a select group of two. The effect in that shabby little house was one of exhilarating congestion. The sideboard, in which lived the table-cloth and the "Apartments" card, was used for a display of the presents, eked out by the unused balance of the silver-printed cards.

Marion wore the white raiment of a bride, white silk and satin, that did not suit her, that made her seem large and strange to me; she obtruded bows and unfamiliar contours. She went through all this strange ritual of an English wedding with a sacramental gravity that I was altogether too young and egotistical to comprehend. It was all extraordinarily central and important to her; it was no more than an offensive, complicated, and disconcerting intrusion of a world I was already beginning to criticize very bitterly, to me. What was all this fuss for? The mere indecent advertisement that I had been passionately in love with Marion! I think, however, that Marion was only very remotely aware of my smouldering exasperation at having in the end behaved "nicely." I had played up to the extent of dressing my part; I had an admirably cut frock-coat, a new silk hat, trousers as light as I could endure them—lighter, in fact—a white waistcoat, light tie, light gloves. Marion, seeing me despondent, had the unusual enterprise to whisper to me that I looked lovely; I knew too well I didn't look myself. I looked like a special coloured supple-

ment to *Men's Wear*, or *The Tailor and Cutter*, Full Dress for Ceremonial Occasions. I had even the disconcerting sensations of an unfamiliar collar. I felt lost—in a strange body, and when I glanced down myself for reassurance, the straight white abdomen, the alien legs confirmed that impression.

My uncle was my best man, and looked like a banker—a little banker—in flower. He wore a white rose in his buttonhole. He wasn't, I think, particularly talkative. At least, I recall very little from him.

"George," he said once or twice, "this is a great occasion for you—a very great occasion."

He spoke a little doubtfully.

You see I had told him nothing about Marion until about a week before the wedding; both he and my aunt had been taken altogether by surprise. They couldn't, as people say, "make it out." My aunt was intensely interested, much more than my uncle; it was then, I think, for the first time that I really saw that she cared for me. She got me alone, I remember, after I had made my announcement. "Now, George," she said, "tell me everything about her. Why didn't you tell me—*me* at least—before?"

I was surprised to find how difficult it was to tell her about Marion. I perplexed her.

"Then is she beautiful?" she asked at last.

"I don't know what you'll think of her," I parried, "I think——"

"Yes?"

"I think she might be the most beautiful person in the world."

"And isn't she? To you?"

"Of course," I said, nodding my head. "Yes. She *is*. . . ."

And while I don't remember anything my uncle said or did at the wedding, I do remember very distinctly certain little things, scrutiny, solicitude, a curious rare flash of intimacy in my aunt's eyes. It dawned on me that I wasn't hiding anything from her at all. She was dressed very smartly, wearing a big plumed hat that made her neck seem longer and slenderer than ever, and when she walked up the aisle with that rolling stride of hers and her eye all on Marion, perplexed into self-forgetfulness, it wasn't

somehow funny. She was, I do believe, giving my marriage more thought than I had done, she was concerned beyond measure at my black rage and Marion's blindness, she was looking with eyes that knew what loving is—for love.

In the vestry she turned away as we signed, and I verily believe she was crying, though to this day I can't say why she should have cried, and she was near crying too when she squeezed my hand at parting—and she never said a word or looked at me, but just squeezed my hand. . . .

If I had not been so grim in spirit, I think I should have found much of my wedding amusing. I remember a lot of ridiculous detail that still declines to be funny, in my memory. The officiating clergyman had a cold, and turned his "n's" to "d's," and he made the most mechanical compliment conceivable about the bride's age when the register was signed. Every bride he had ever married had had it, one knew. And two middle-aged spinsters, cousins of Marion's and dressmakers at Barking, stand out. They wore marvellously bright and gay blouses and dim old skirts, and had an immense respect for Mr. Ramboat. They threw rice; they brought a whole bag with them and gave handfuls away to unknown little boys at the church door and so created a Lilliputian riot, and one had meant to throw a slipper. It was a very worn old silk slipper I know, because she dropped it out of a pocket in the aisle—there was a sort of jumble in the aisle—and I picked it up for her. I don't think she actually threw it, for as we drove away from the church I saw her in a dreadful, and it seemed to me hopeless, struggle with her pocket; and afterwards my eye caught the missile of good fortune lying, it or its fellow, most obviously mislaid, behind the umbrella-stand in the hall. . . .

The whole business was much more absurd, more incoherent, more human than I had anticipated, and I was far too young and serious to let the latter quality atone for its shortcomings. I am so remote from this phase of my youth that I can look back at it all as dispassionately as one looks at a picture—at some wonderful, perfect sort of picture that is inexhaustible; but at the time these things filled me with unspeakable resentment. Now I go round it all, look into its details, generalize about its aspects. I'm interested, for example, to square it with my

Bladesover theory of the British social scheme. Under stress of tradition we were all of us trying in the fermenting chaos of London to carry out the marriage ceremonies of a Bladesover tenant or one of the chubby middling sort of people in some dependent country town. There a marriage is a public function with a public significance. There the church is to a large extent the gathering-place of the community, and your going to be married a thing of importance to every one you pass on the road. It is a change of status that quite legitimately interests the whole neighbourhood. But in London there are no neighbours, nobody knows, nobody cares. An absolute stranger in an office took my notice, and our banns were proclaimed to ears that had never previously heard our names. The clergyman, even, who married us had never seen us before, and didn't in any degree intimate that he wanted to see us again.

Neighbours in London! The Ramboats did not know the names of the people on either side of them. As I waited for Marion before we started off upon our honeymoon flight, Mr. Ramboat, I remember, came and stood beside me and stared out of the window.

"There was a funeral over there yestiday," he said by way of making conversation, and moved his head at the house opposite. "Quite a smart affair it was—with a glass 'earse. . . ."

And our little procession of three carriages with white-favour-adorned horses and drivers went through all the huge, noisy, indifferent traffic like a lost china image in the coal-chute of an ironclad. Nobody made way for us, nobody cared for us; the driver of an omnibus jeered; for a long time we crawled behind an unamiable dust-cart. The irrelevant clatter and tumult gave a queer flavour of indecency to this public coming-together of lovers. We seemed to have obtruded ourselves shamelessly. The crowd that had gathered outside the church would have gathered in the same spirit and with greater alacrity for a street accident. . . .

At Charing Cross—we were going to Hastings—the experienced eye of the guard detected the significance of our unusual costume and he secured us a compartment.

"Well," said I as the train moved out of the station, "*that's* all over!" And I turned to Marion—a little unfamiliar still, in her unfamiliar clothes—and smiled.

She regarded me gravely, timidly.

"You're not cross?" she asked.

"Cross! Why?"

"At having it all proper."

"My dear Marion!" said I, and by way of answer took and kissed her white-gloved, leather-scented hand. . . .

I don't remember much else about the journey, an hour or so it was of undistinguished time—for we were both confused and a little fatigued and Marion had a slight headache and did not want caresses. I fell into a reverie about my aunt, and realized as if it were a new discovery, that I cared for her very greatly. I was acutely sorry I had not told her earlier of my marriage. . . .

But you will not want to hear the history of my honeymoon. I have told all that was needed to serve my present purpose. Thus and thus it was the Will in things had its way with me. Driven by forces I did not understand, diverted altogether from the science, the curiosities and work to which I had once given myself, I fought my way through a tangle of traditions, customs, obstacles and absurdities, enraged myself, limited myself, gave myself to occupations I saw with the clearest vision were dishonourable and vain, and at last achieved the end of purblind Nature, the relentless immediacy of her desire, and held, far short of happiness, Marion weeping and reluctant in my arms.

§ 5

Who can tell the story of the slow estrangement of two married people, the weakening of first this bond and then that of that complex contact? Least of all can one of the two participants. Even now, with an interval of fifteen years to clear it up for me, I still find a mass of impressions of Marion as confused, as discordant, as unsystematic and self-contradictory as life. I think of this thing and love her, of that and hate her—of a hundred aspects in which I can now see her with an unimpassioned sympathy. As I sit here trying to render some vision of this infinitely confused process, I recall moments of hard and fierce estrangement, moments of unclouded intimacy, the passages of transition all forgotten. We talked a little language

together when we were " friends," and I was " Mutney " and she was " Ming," and we kept up such an outward show that till the very end Smithie thought our household the most amiable in the world.

I cannot tell to the full how Marion thwarted me and failed in that life of intimate emotions which is the kernel of love. That life of intimate emotions is made up of little things. A beautiful face differs from an ugly one by a difference of surfaces and proportions that are sometimes almost infinitesimally small. I find myself setting down little things and little things; none of them do more than demonstrate those essential temperamental discords I have already sought to make clear. Some readers will understand—to others I shall seem no more than an unfeeling brute who couldn't make allowances. . . . It's easy to make allowances now; but to be young and ardent and to make allowances, to see one's married life open before one, the life that seemed in its dawn a glory, a garden of roses, a place of deep sweet mysteries and heart throbs and wonderful silences, and to see it a vista of tolerations and baby-talk! A compromise. The least effectual thing in all one's life.

Every love romance I read seemed to mock our dull intercourse, every poem, every beautiful picture reflected upon the uneventful succession of grey hours we had together. I think our real difference was one of æsthetic sensibility.

I do still recall as the worst and most disastrous aspect of all that time, her absolute disregard of her own beauty. It's the pettiest thing to record, I know, but she could wear curl-papers in my presence. It was her idea too, to " wear out " her old clothes and her failures at home when " no one was likely to see her "—" no one " being myself. She allowed me to accumulate a store of ungracious and slovenly memories. . . .

All our conceptions of life differed. I remember how we differed about furniture. We spent three or four days in Tottenham Court Road, and she chose the things she fancied with an inexorable resolution,—sweeping aside my suggestions with —" Oh, *you* want such queer things." She pursued some limited, clearly seen and experienced ideal—that excluded all other possibilities. Over every mantel was a mirror that was draped, our sideboard was wonderfully good and splendid with bevelled glass, we had

lamps on long metal stalks and cosy corners and plants in grog-tubs. Smithie approved it all. There wasn't a place where one could sit and read in the whole house. My books went upon shelves in the dining-room recess. And we had a piano, though Marion's playing was at an elementary level. . . .

You know, it was the cruellest luck for Marion that I, with my restlessness, my scepticism, my constantly developing ideas, had insisted upon marriage with her. She had no faculty of growth or change; she had taken her mould, she had set in the limited ideas of her peculiar class. She preserved her conception of what was right in drawing-room chairs and in marriage ceremonial and in every relation of life with a simple and luminous honesty and conviction, with an immense unimaginative inflexibility—as a tailor-bird builds its nest or a beaver makes its dam.

Let me hasten over this history of disappointments and separation. I might tell of waxings and wanings of love between us, but the whole was waning. Sometimes she would do things for me, make me a tie or a pair of slippers, and fill me with none the less gratitude because the things were absurd. She ran our home and our one servant with a hard, bright efficiency. She was inordinately proud of house and garden. Always, by her lights, she did her duty by me. . . .

Presently the rapid development of Tono-Bungay began to take me into the provinces, and I would be away sometimes for a week together. This she did not like; it left her "dull," she said, but after a time she began to go to Smithie's again and to develop an independence of me. At Smithie's she was now a woman with a position; she had money to spend. She would take Smithie to theatres and out to lunch and talk interminably of the business, and Smithie became a sort of permanent week-ender with us. Also Marion got a spaniel and began to dabble with the minor arts, with poker-work and a Kodak and hyacinths in glasses. She called once on a neighbour. Her parents left Walham Green—her father severed his connection with the gas-works—and came to live in a small house I took for them near us, and they were much with us.

Odd the littleness of the things that exasperate when the fountains of life are embittered! My father-in-law was

perpetually catching me in moody moments and urging me to take to gardening. He irritated me beyond measure.

"You think too much," he would say. "If you was to let in a bit with a spade, you might soon 'ave that garden of yours a Vision of Flowers. That's better than thinking, George."

Or in a tone of exasperation, "I *carn't* think, George, why you don't get a bit of glass 'ere. This sunny corner you c'd do wonders with a bit of glass."

And in the summer time he never came in without performing a sort of conjuring trick in the hall, and taking cucumbers and tomatoes from unexpected points of his person. "All out o' *my* little bit," he'd say in exemplary tones. He left a trail of vegetable produce in the most unusual places, on mantelboards, sideboards, the tops of pictures. Heavens! how the sudden unexpected tomato could annoy me! . . .

It did much to widen our estrangement that Marion and my aunt failed to make friends, became, by a sort of instinct, antagonistic.

My aunt, to begin with, called rather frequently, for she was really anxious to know Marion. At first she would arrive like a whirlwind and pervade the house with an atmosphere of hello! She dressed already with that cheerfully extravagant *abandon* that signalized her accession to fortune, and dressed her best for these visits. She wanted to play the mother to me, I fancy, to tell Marion occult secrets about the way I wore out my boots and how I never could think to put on thicker things in cold weather. But Marion received her with that defensive suspiciousness of the shy person, thinking only of the possible criticism of herself; and my aunt, perceiving this, became nervous and slangy. . . .

"She says such queer things," said Marion once, discussing her. "But I suppose it's witty."

"Yes," I said; "it *is* witty."

"If I said things like she does——"

The queer things my aunt said were nothing to the queer things she didn't say. I remember her in our drawing-room one day, and how she cocked her eye—it's the only expression—at the India-rubber plant in a Doulton-ware pot which Marion had placed on the corner of the piano.

She was on the very verge of speech. Then suddenly she caught my expression, and shrank up like a cat that has been discovered looking at the milk.

Then a wicked impulse took her.

"Didn't say an old word, George," she insisted, looking me full in the eye.

I smiled. "You're a dear," I said, "not to," as Marion came lowering into the room to welcome her. But I felt extraordinarily like a traitor—to the India-rubber plant, I suppose—for all that nothing had been said. . . .

"Your aunt makes Game of people," was Marion's verdict, and, open-mindedly, "I suppose it's all right . . . for her."

Several times we went to the house in Beckenham for lunch, and once or twice to dinner. My aunt did her peculiar best to be friends, but Marion was implacable. She was also, I know, intensely uncomfortable, and she adopted as her social method, an exhausting silence, replying compactly and without giving openings to anything that was said to her.

The gaps between my aunt's visits grew wider and wider. . . .

My married existence became at last like a narrow deep groove in the broad expanse of interests in which I was living. I went about the world; I met a great number of varied personalities; I read endless books in trains as I went to and fro. I developed social relationships at my uncle's house that Marion did not share. The seeds of new ideas poured in upon me and grew in me. Those early and middle years of one's third decade are, I suppose, for a man the years of greatest mental growth. They are restless years and full of vague enterprise.

Each time I returned to Ealing, life there seemed more alien, narrow, and unattractive—and Marion less beautiful and more limited and difficult—until at last she was robbed of every particle of her magic. She gave me always a cooler welcome, I think, until she seemed entirely apathetic. I never asked myself then what heartaches she might hide or what her discontents might be. I would come home hoping nothing, expecting nothing. This was my faded life and I had chosen it. I became more sensitive to the defects I had once disregarded altogether; I began to associate her sallow complexion with her temperamental

insufficiency, and the heavier lines of her mouth and nostril with her moods of discontent. We drifted apart; wider and wider the gap opened. I tired of baby-talk and stereotyped little fondlings; I tired of the latest intelligence from those wonderful workrooms, and showed it all too plainly; we hardly spoke when we were alone together. The mere unreciprocated physical residue of my passion remained—an exasperation between us.

No children came to save us. Marion had acquired at Smithie's a disgust and dread of maternity. All that was the fruition and quintessence of the " horrid " elements in life, a disgusting thing, a last indignity that overtook unwary women. I doubt indeed a little if children would have saved us; we should have differed so fatally about their up-bringing.

Altogether, I remember my life with Marion as a long distress, now hard, now tender. It was in those days that I first became critical of my life and burthened with a sense of error and maladjustment. I would lie awake in the night, asking myself the purpose of things, reviewing my unsatisfying, ungainly home-life, my days spent in rascal enterprise and rubbish-selling, contrasting all I was being and doing with my adolescent ambitions, my Wimblehurst dreams. My circumstances had an air of finality, and I asked myself in vain why I had forced myself into them.

§ 6

The end of our intolerable situation came suddenly and unexpectedly, but in a way that I suppose was almost inevitable. My alienated affections wandered, and I was unfaithful to Marion.

I won't pretend to extenuate the quality of my conduct. I was a young and fairly vigorous man; all my appetite for love had been roused and whetted and none of it had been satisfied by my love affair and my marriage. I had pursued an elusive gleam of beauty to the disregard of all else, and it had failed me. It had faded when I had hoped it would grow brighter. I despaired of life and was embittered. And things happened as I am telling. I don't draw any moral at all in the matter, and as for social remedies, I leave them to the social reformer. I've got to a time of

life when the only theories that interest me are generalizations about realities.

To go to our inner office in Raggett Street I had to walk through a room in which the typists worked. They were the correspondence typists; our books and invoicing had long since overflowed into the premises we had had the luck to secure on either side of us. I was, I must confess, always in a faintly cloudily-emotional way aware of that collection of for the most part round-shouldered femininity, but presently one of the girls detached herself from the others and got a real hold upon my attention. I appreciated her at first as a straight little back, a neater back than any of the others; as a softly rounded neck with a smiling necklace of sham pearls; as chestnut hair very neatly done—and as a side-long glance. Presently as a quickly turned face that looked for me.

My eye would seek her as I went through on business things—I dictated some letters to her and so discovered she had pretty, soft-looking hands with pink nails. Once or twice, meeting casually, we looked one another for the flash of a second in the eyes.

That was all. But it was enough in the mysterious freemasonry of sex to say essential things. We had a secret between us.

One day I came into Raggett Street at lunch time and she was alone, sitting at her desk. She glanced up as I entered, and then became very still, with a downcast face and her hands clenched on the table. I walked right by her to the door of the inner office, stopped, came back and stood over her.

We neither of us spoke for quite a perceptible time. I was trembling violently.

"Is that one of the new typewriters?" I asked at last for the sake of speaking.

She looked up at me without a word, with her face flushed and her eyes alight, and I bent down and kissed her lips. She leant back to put an arm about me, drew my face to her and kissed me again and again. I lifted her and held her in my arms. She gave a little smothered cry to feel herself so held.

Never before had I known the quality of passionate kisses. . . .

Somebody became audible in the shop outside.

We started back from one another with flushed faces and bright and burning eyes.

"We can't talk here," I whispered with a confident intimacy. "Where do you go at five?"

"Along the Embankment to Charing Cross," she answered as intimately. "None of the others go that way. . . ."

"About half-past five?"

"Yes, half-past five. . . ."

The door from the shop opened, and she sat down very quickly.

"I'm glad," I said in a commonplace voice, "that these new typewriters are all right."

I went into the inner office and routed out the paysheet in order to find her name—Effie Rink. And I did no work at all that afternoon. I fretted about that dingy little den like a beast in a cage.

When presently I went out, Effie was working with an extraordinary appearance of calm—and there was no look for me at all. . . .

We met and had our talk that evening, a talk in whispers when there was none to overhear; we came to an understanding. It was strangely unlike any dream of romance I had ever entertained.

§ 7

I came back after a week's absence to my home again—a changed man. I had lived out my first rush of passion for Effie, had come to a contemplation of my position. I had gauged Effie's place in the scheme of things, and parted from her for a time. She was back in her place at Raggett Street after a temporary indisposition. I did not feel in any way penitent or ashamed, I know, as I opened the little cast-iron gate that kept Marion's front garden and Pampas Grass from the wandering dog. Indeed, if anything, I felt as if I had vindicated some right that had been in question. I came back to Marion with no sense of wrong-doing at all—with, indeed, a new friendliness towards her. I don't know how it may be proper to feel on such occasions; that is how I felt.

I found her in our drawing-room, standing beside the tall lamp-stand that half filled the bay as though she had

just turned from watching for me at the window. There was something in her pale face that arrested me. She looked as if she had not been sleeping. She did not come forward to greet me.

"You've come home," she said.

"As I wrote to you."

She stood very still, a dusky figure against the bright window.

"Where have you been?" she asked.

"East Coast," I said easily.

She paused for a moment. "I *know*," she said.

I stared at her. It was the most amazing moment of my life. . . .

"By Jove!" I said at last, "I believe you do!"

"And then you come home to me!"

I walked to the hearthrug and stood quite still there, regarding this new situation.

"I didn't dream," she began. "How could you do such a thing?"

It seemed a long interval before either of us spoke another word.

"Who knows about it?" I asked at last.

"Smithie's brother. They were at Cromer."

"Confound Cromer! Yes!"

"How could you bring yourself——"

I felt a spasm of petulant annoyance at this unexpected catastrophe.

"I should like to wring Smithie's brother's neck," I said. . . .

Marion spoke in dry broken fragments of sentences. "You . . . I'd always thought that anyhow *you* couldn't deceive me. . . . . I suppose all men are horrid —about this."

"It doesn't strike me as horrid. It seems to me the most necessary consequence—and natural thing in the world."

I became aware of some one moving about in the passage, and went and shut the door of the room. Then I walked back to the hearthrug and turned.

"It's rough on you," I said. "But I didn't mean you to know. You've never cared for me. I've had the devil of a time. Why should you mind?"

She sat down in a draped arm-chair. "I *have* cared for you," she said.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I suppose," she said, "*she* cares for you?"

I had no answer.

"Where is she now?"

"Oh! does it matter to you? . . . Look here, Marion! This—this I didn't anticipate. I didn't mean this thing to smash down on you like this. But, you know, something had to happen. I'm sorry—sorry to the bottom of my heart that things should come to this between us. But indeed, I'm taken by surprise. I don't know where I am—I don't know how we got here. Things took me by surprise. I found myself alone with her one day. I kissed her. I went on. It seemed stupid to go back. And besides—why should I have gone back? Why should I? From first to last, I've hardly thought of it as touching you. . . . Damn!"

She scrutinized my face, and pulled at the ball-fringe of the little table beside her.

"To think of it," she said. "I don't believe . . . I can ever touch you again."

We kept a long silence. I was only beginning to realize in the most superficial way the immense catastrophe that had happened between us. Enormous issues had rushed upon us. I felt unprepared and altogether inadequate. I was unreasonably angry. There came a rush of stupid expressions to my mind that my rising sense of the supreme importance of the moment saved me from saying. The gap of silence widened until it threatened to become the vast memorable margin of some one among a thousand trivial possibilities of speech that would fix our relations for ever.

Our little general servant tapped at the door—Marion always liked the servant to tap—and appeared.

"Tea, M'm," she said—and vanished, leaving the door open.

"I will go upstairs," said I, and stopped. "I will go upstairs," I repeated, "and put my bag in the spare room."

We remained motionless and silent for a few seconds.

"Mother is having tea with us to-day," Marion remarked at last, and dropped the worried end of ball-fringe and stood up slowly. . . .

And so, with this immense discussion of our changed relations hanging over us, we presently had tea with the unsuspecting Mrs. Ramboat and the spaniel. Mrs. Ramboat was too well trained in her position to remark upon our sombre preoccupation. She kept a thin trickle of talk going, and told us, I remember, that Mr. Ramboat was "troubled" about his cannas.

"They don't come up and they won't come up. He's been round and had an explanation with the man who sold him the bulbs—and he's very heated and upset."

The spaniel was a great bore, begging and doing small tricks first at one and then at the other of us. Neither of us used his name. You see we had called him Miggles, and made a sort of trio in the baby-talk of Mutney and Miggles and Ming.

§ 8

Then presently we resumed our monstrous, momentous duologue. I can't now make out how long that duologue went on. It spread itself, I know, in heavy fragments over either three days or four. I remember myself grouped with Marion, talking sitting on our bed in her room, talking standing in our dining-room, saying this thing or that. Twice we went for long walks. And we had a long evening alone together, with jaded nerves and hearts that fluctuated between a hard and dreary recognition of facts and, on my part at least, a strange unwonted tenderness. Because in some extraordinary way this crisis had destroyed our mutual apathy and made us feel one another again.

It was a duologue that had discrepant parts, that fell into lumps of talk that failed to join on to their predecessors, that began again at a different level, higher or lower, that assumed new aspects in the intervals and assimilated new considerations. We discussed the fact that we two were no longer lovers; never before had we faced that. It seems a strange thing to write, but as I look back, I see clearly that those several days were the time when Marion and I were closest together, looked for the first and last time faithfully and steadfastly into each other's soul. For those days only, there were no pretences, I made no concessions to her nor she to me; we concealed nothing, exaggerated nothing. We had done with pretending. We had it out

plainly and soberly with each other. Mood followed mood and got its stark expression.

Of course there was quarrelling between us, bitter quarrelling, and we said things to one another—long pent-up things that bruised and crushed and cut. But over it all in my memory now is an effect of deliberate confrontation, and the figure of Marion stands up, pale, melancholy, tear-stained, injured, implacable and dignified.

"You love her?" she asked once, and jerked that doubt into my mind.

I struggled with tangled ideas and emotions. "I don't know what love is. It's all sorts of things—it's made of a dozen strands twisted in a thousand ways."

"But you want her? You want her now—when you think of her?"

"Yes," I reflected. "I want her—right enough."

"And me? Where do I come in?"

"I suppose you come in here."

"Well, but what are you going to do?"

"Do!" I said with the exasperation of the situation growing upon me. "What do you want me to do?"

As I look back on all that time—across a gulf of fifteen active years—I find I see it with an understanding judgment. I see it as if it were the business of some one else——indeed of two other people—intimately known yet judged without passion. I see now that this shock, this sudden immense disillusionment, did in real fact bring out a mind and soul in Marion; that for the first time she emerged from habits, timidities, imitations, phrases and a certain narrow will-impulse, and became a personality.

Her ruling motive at first was, I think, an indignant and outraged pride. This situation must end. She asked me categorically to give up Effie, and I, full of fresh and glowing memories, absolutely refused.

"It's too late, Marion," I said. "It can't be done like that."

"Then we can't very well go on living together," she said. "Can we?"

"Very well," I deliberated, "if you must have it so."

"Well, can we?"

"Can you stay in this house? I mean—if I go away?"

"I don't know. . . . I don't think I could."

"Then—what do you want?"

Slowly we worked our way from point to point, until at last the word "divorce" was before us.

"If we can't live together we ought to be free," said Marion.

"I don't know anything of divorce," I said—"if you mean that. I don't know how it is done. I shall have to ask somebody—or look it up. . . . Perhaps, after all, it is the thing to do. We may as well face it."

We began to talk ourselves into a realization of what our divergent futures might be. I came back on the evening of that day with my questions answered by a solicitor.

"We can't as a matter of fact," I said, "get divorced as things are. Apparently, so far as the law goes, you've got to stand this sort of thing. It's silly—but that is the law. However, it's easy to arrange a divorce. In addition to adultery there must be desertion or cruelty. To establish cruelty I should have to strike you, or something of that sort, before witnesses. That's impossible—but it's simple to desert you—legally. I have to go away from you; that's all. I can go on sending you money—and you bring a suit, what is it?—for Restitution of Conjugal Rights. The Court orders me to return. I disobey. Then you can go on to divorce me. You get a Decree Nisi, and once more the Court tries to make me come back. If we don't make it up within six months and if you don't behave scandalously—the Decree is made absolute. That's the end of the fuss. That's how one gets unmarried. It's easier, you see, to marry than unmarry."

"And then—how do I live? What becomes of me?"

"You'll have an income. They call it alimony. From a third to a half of my present income—more if you like—I don't mind—three hundred a year, say. You've got your old people to keep and you'll need all that."

"And then—then you'll be free?"

"Both of us."

"And all this life you've hated——"

I looked up at her wrung and bitter face. "I haven't hated it," I lied, my voice near breaking with the pain of it all. "Have you?"

§ 9

The perplexing thing about life is the irresoluble complexity of reality, of things and relations alike. Nothing is simple. Every wrong done has a certain justice in it, and every good deed has dregs of evil. As for us, young still, and still without self-knowledge, we sounded a hundred discordant notes in the harsh jangle of that shock. We were furiously angry with each other, tender with each other, callously selfish, generously self-sacrificing.

I remember Marion saying innumerable detached things that didn't hang together one with another, that contradicted one another, that were nevertheless all in their places profoundly true and sincere. I see them now as so many vain experiments in her effort to apprehend the crumpled confusions of our complex moral landslip. Some I found irritating beyond measure. I answered her—sometimes quite abominably.

"Of course," she would say again and again, "my life has been a failure."

"I've besieged you for three years," I would retort, "asking it not to be. You've done as you pleased. If I've turned away at last——"

Or again she would revive all the stresses before our marriage.

"How you must hate me! I made you wait. Well, now—I suppose you have your revenge."

"*Revenge!*" I echoed.

Then she would try over the aspects of our new separated lives.

"I ought to earn my own living," she would insist. "I want to be quite independent. I've always hated London. Perhaps I shall try a poultry farm and bees. You won't mind at first my being a burden. Afterwards——"

"We've settled all that," I said.

"I suppose you will hate me anyhow. . . ."

There were times when she seemed to regard our separation with absolute complacency, when she would plan all sorts of freedoms and characteristic interests.

"I shall go out a lot with Smithie," she said.

And once she said an ugly thing that I did indeed hate her for, that I cannot even now quite forgive her.

"Your aunt will rejoice at all this. She never cared for me. . . ."

Into my memory of these pains and stresses comes the figure of Smithie, full-charged with emotion, so breathless in the presence of the horrid villain of the piece that she could make no articulate sounds. She had long tearful confidences with Marion, I know, sympathetic close clingings. There were moments when only absolute speechlessness prevented her giving me a stupendous "talking to"—I could see it in her eye. The wrong things she would have said! And I recall, too, Mrs. Ramboat's slow awakening to something in the air, the growing expression of solicitude in her eye, only her well-trained fear of Marion keeping her from speech. . . .

And at last through all this welter, like a thing fated and altogether beyond our control, parting came to Marion and me.

I hardened my heart, or I could not have gone. For at the last it came to Marion that she was parting from me for ever. That overbore all other things, and turned our last hour to anguish. She forgot for a time the prospect of moving into a new house, she forgot the outrage on her proprietorship and pride. For the first time in her life she really showed strong emotions in regard to me, for the first time, perhaps, they really came to her. She began to weep slow reluctant tears. I came into her room, and found her asprawl on the bed weeping.

"I didn't know," she cried. "Oh, I didn't understand!"

"I've been a fool. All my life is a wreck!

"I shall be alone! . . . *Mutney!* Mutney, don't leave me! Oh, Mutney! I didn't understand."

I had to harden my heart indeed, for it seemed to me at moments in those last hours together that at last, too late, the longed-for thing had happened and Marion had come alive. A new-born hunger for me lit her eyes.

"Don't leave me!" she said, "don't leave me!" She clung to me; she kissed me with tear-salt lips. . . .

I was promised now and pledged, and I hardened my heart against this impossible dawn. Yet it seems to me that there were moments when it needed but a cry, but one word to have united us again for all our lives. Could we have united again? Would that passage have enlightened us

for ever, or should we have fallen back in a week or so into the old estrangement, the old temperamental opposition?

Of that there is now no telling. Our own resolve carried us on our predestined way. We behaved more and more like separating lovers, parting inexorably, but all the preparations we had set going worked on like a machine, and we made no attempt to stop them. My trunks and boxes went to the station. I packed my bag with Marion standing before me. We were like children who had hurt each other horribly in sheer stupidity, who didn't know now how to remedy it. We belonged to each other immensely—immensely. The cab came to the little iron gate.

"Good-bye!" I said.

"Good-bye."

For a moment we held one another in each other's arms and kissed—incredibly without malice. We heard our little servant in the passage going to open the door. For the last time we pressed ourselves to one another. We were not lovers nor enemies, but two human souls in a frank community of pain. I tore myself from her.

"Go away," I said to the servant, seeing that Marion had followed me down.

I felt her standing behind me as I spoke to the cabman.

I got into the cab, resolutely not looking back, and then as it started jumped up, craned out and looked at the door.

It was wide open, but she had disappeared. . . .

I wonder—I suppose she ran upstairs.

§ 10

So I parted from Marion at an extremity of perturbation and regret, and went, as I had promised and arranged, to Effie who was waiting for me in apartments near Orpington. I remember her upon the station platform, a bright, flitting figure looking along the train for me, and our walk over the fields in the twilight. I had expected an immense sense of relief when at last the stresses of separation were over, but now I found I was beyond measure wretched and perplexed, full of the profoundest persuasion of irreparable error. The dusk and sombre Marion were so alike, her sorrow seemed to be all about me. I had to hold myself to my own plans, to remember that I must keep faith with

Effie, with Effie who had made no terms, exacted no guarantees, but flung herself into my hands.

We went across the evening fields in silence, towards a sky of deepening gold and purple, and Effie was close beside me always, very close, glancing up ever and again at my face.

Certainly she knew I grieved for Marion, that ours was now no joyful reunion. But she showed no resentment and no jealousy. Extraordinarily, she did not compete against Marion. Never once in all our time together did she say an adverse word of Marion. . . .

She set herself presently to dispel the shadow that brooded over me with the same instinctive skill that some women will show with the trouble of a child. She made herself my glad and petty slave and handmaid; she forced me at last to rejoice in her. Yet at the back of it all Marion remained, stupid and tearful and infinitely distressful, so that I was almost intolerably unhappy for her—for her and the dead body of my married love.

It is all, as I tell it now, unaccountable to me. I go back into these remote parts, these rarely visited uplands and lonely tarns of memory, and it seems to me still a strange country. I had thought I might be going to some sensuous paradise with Effie, but desire which fills the universe before its satisfaction, vanishes utterly—like the going of daylight—with achievement. All the facts and forms of life remain darkling and cold. It was an upland of melancholy questionings, a region from which I saw all the world at new angles and in new aspects; I had outflanked passion and romance.

I had come into a condition of vast perplexities. For the first time in my life, at least so it seems to me now in this retrospect, I looked at my existence as a whole.

Since this was nothing, what was I doing? What was I for?

I was going to and fro about Tono-Bungay—the business I had taken up to secure Marion and which held me now in spite of our ultimate separation—and snatching odd week-ends and nights for Orpington, and all the while I struggled with these obstinate interrogations. I used to fall into musing in the trains. I became even a little inaccurate and forgetful about business things. I have the clearest memory of myself sitting thoughtful in the evening sunlight

on a grassy hillside that looked towards Sevenoaks and commanded a wide sweep of country, and that I was thinking out my destiny. I could almost write my thoughts down now, I believe, as they came to me that afternoon. Effie, restless little cockney that she was, rustled and struggled in a hedgerow below, gathering flowers, discovering flowers she had never seen before. I had, I remember, a letter from Marion in my pocket. I had even made some tentatives for return, for a reconciliation; Heaven knows now how I had put it; but her cold, ill-written letter repelled me. I perceived I could never face that old inconclusive dulness of life again, that stagnant disappointment. That, anyhow, wasn't possible. But what was possible? I could see no way of honour or fine living before me at all.

"What am I to do with life?" That was the question that besieged me.

I wondered if all the world was even as I, urged to this by one motive and to that by another, creatures of chance and impulse and unmeaning traditions. Had I indeed to abide by what I had said and done and chosen? Was there nothing for me in honour but to provide for Effie, go back penitent to Marion and keep to my trade in rubbish—or find some fresh one—and so work out the residue of my days? I didn't accept that for a moment. But what else was I to do? I wondered if my case was the case of many men, whether in former ages, too, men had been so guideless, so uncharted, so haphazard in their journey into life. In the Middle Ages, in the old Catholic days, one went to a priest, and he said with all the finality of natural law, this you are and this you must do. I wondered whether even in the Middle Ages I should have accepted that ruling without question. . . .

I remember too very distinctly how Effie came and sat beside me on a little box that was before the casement window of our room.

"Gloomkins," said she.

I smiled and remained head on hand, looking out of the window forgetful of her.

"Did you love your wife so well?" she whispered softly.

"Oh!" I cried, recalled again; "I don't know. I don't understand these things. Life is a thing that hurts, my dear! It hurts without logic or reason. I've blundered!

I didn't understand. Anyhow—there is no need to go hurting you, is there ? "

And I turned about and drew her to me, and kissed her ear. . . .

Yes, I had a very bad time—I still recall. I suffered, I suppose, from a sort of *ennui* of the imagination. I found myself without an object to hold my will together. I sought. I read restlessly and discursively. I tried Ewart and got no help from him. As I regard it all now in this retrospect it seems to me as if in those days of disgust and abandoned aims I discovered myself for the first time. Before that I had seen only the world and things in it, had sought them self-forgetful of all but my impulse. Now I found myself *grouped*, with a system of appetites and satisfactions, with much work to do—and no desire, it seemed, left in me.

There were moments when I thought of suicide. At times my life appeared before me in bleak, relentless light, a series of ignorances, crude blunderings, degradation and cruelty. I had what the old theologians call a " conviction of sin." I sought salvation—not perhaps in the formulæ a Methodist preacher would recognize—but salvation nevertheless.

Men find their salvation nowadays in many ways. Names and forms don't, I think, matter very much, the real need is something that we can hold and that holds one. I have known a man find that determining factor in a dry-plate factory, and another in writing a history of the Manor. So long as it holds one, it does not matter. Many men and women nowadays take up some concrete aspect of socialism or social reform. But socialism for me has always been a little bit too human, too set about with personalities and foolishness. It isn't my line. I don't like things so human. I don't think I'm blind to the fun, the surprises, the jolly little coarsenesses and insufficiency of life, to the " humour of it," as people say, and to adventure, but that isn't the root of the matter with me. There's no humour in my blood. I'm in earnest in warp and woof. I stumble and flounder, but I know that over all these merry immediate things, there are other things that are great and serene, very high, beautiful things—the reality. I haven't got it, but it's there nevertheless. I'm a spiritual guttersnipe in love with unimaginable goddesses. I've never seen the

goddesses nor ever shall—but it takes all the fun out of the mud—and at times I fear it takes all the kindliness too.

But I'm talking of things I can't expect the reader to understand, because I don't half understand them myself. There is something links things for me, a sunset or so, a mood or so, the high air, something there was in Marion's form and colour, something I find and lose in Mantegna's pictures, something in the lines of these boats I make. (You should see X2, my last and best !)

I can't explain myself, I perceive. Perhaps it all comes to this, that I am a hard and morally limited cad with a mind beyond my merits. Naturally I resist that as a complete solution. Anyhow, I had a sense of inexorable need, of distress and insufficiency that was unendurable, and for a time this aeronautical engineering allayed it. . . .

In the end of this particular crisis of which I tell so badly, I idealized Science. I decided that in power and knowledge lay the salvation of my life, the secret that would fill my need; that to these things I would give myself. I emerged at last like a man who has been diving in darkness, clutching at a new resolve for which he has groped desperately and long.

I came into the inner office suddenly one day—it must have been just before the time of Marion's suit for restitution—and sat down before my uncle.

" Look here," I said, " I'm sick of this."

" Hu*llo !* " he answered, and put some papers aside. " What's up, George ? "

" Things are wrong."

" As how ? "

" My life," I said, " it's a mess, an infinite mess."

" She's been a stupid girl, George," he said; " I partly understand. But you're quit of her now, practically, and there's just as good fish in the sea——"

" Oh ! it's not that," I cried. " That's only the part that shows. I'm sick— I'm sick of all this damned rascality."

" Eh ? Eh ? " said my uncle. " *What*—rascality ? "

" Oh, *you* know. I want some *stuff*, man. I want something to hold on to. I shall go amok if I don't get it. I'm a different sort of beast from you. You float in all this bunkum. *I* feel like a man floundering in a universe of soapsuds, up and down, east and west. I can't stand it. I must get my foot on something solid or—I don't know what."

I laughed at the consternation in his face.

"I mean it," I said. "I've been thinking it over. I've made up my mind. It's no good arguing. I shall go in for work—real work. No! this isn't work; it's only laborious cheating. But I've got an idea! It's an old idea—I thought of years ago, but it came back to me. Look here. Why should I fence about with you? I believe the time has come for flying to be possible. Real flying!"

"Flying!"

"Up in the air. Aeronautics! Machine heavier than air. It can be done. And I want to do it."

"Is there money in it, George?"

"I don't know nor care! But that's what I'm going to do."

I stuck to that, and it helped me through the worst time in my life. My uncle, after some half-hearted resistance and a talk with my aunt, behaved like the father of a spoilt son. He fixed up an arrangement that gave me capital to play with, released me from too constant a solicitude for the newer business developments—this was in what I may call the later Moggs period of our enterprises—and I went to work at once with grim intensity. . . .

But I will tell of my soaring and flying machines in the proper place. I've been leaving the story of my uncle altogether too long. I wanted merely to tell how it was I took to this work. I took to these experiments after I had sought something that Marion in some indefinable way had seemed to promise. I toiled and forgot myself for a time, and did many things. Science, too, has been something of an irresponsive mistress since, though I've served her better than I served Marion. But at the time Science, with her order, her inhuman distance, her steely certainties, saved me from despair.

Well, I have still to fly; but incidentally I have invented the lightest engines in the world. . . .

I am trying to tell of all the things that happened to me. It's hard enough simply to get it put down in the remotest degree right. But this is a novel, not a treatise. Don't imagine that I am coming presently to any sort of solution of my difficulties. Here among my drawings and hammerings *now*, I still question unanswering problems. All my life has been at bottom, *seeking*, disbelieving always,

dissatisfied always with the thing seen and the thing believed, seeking something in toil, in force, in danger, something whose name and nature I do not clearly understand, something beautiful, worshipful, enduring, mine profoundly and fundamentally, and the utter redemption of myself; I don't know,—all I can tell is that it is something I have ever failed to find.

§ II

But before I finish this chapter and book altogether and go on with the great adventure of my uncle's career, I may perhaps tell what else remains to tell of Marion and Effie, and then for a time s t my private life behind me.

For a time Marion and I corresponded with some regularity, writing friendly but rather uninforming letters about small business things. The clumsy process of divorce completed itself. She left the house at Ealing and went into the country with her aunt and parents, taking a small farm near Lewes in Sussex. She put up glass, she put in heat for her father, happy man ! and spoke of figs and peaches. The thing seemed to promise well throughout a spring and summer, but the Sussex winter after London was too much for the Ramboats. They got very muddy and dull; Mr. Ramboat killed a cow by improper feeding, and that disheartened them all. A twelvemonth saw the enterprise in difficulties. I had to help her out of this, and then they returned to London and she went into partnership with Smithie at Streatham, and ran a business that was intimated on the firm's stationery as " Robes." The parents and aunt were stowed away in a cottage somewhere. After that the letters became infrequent. But in one I remember a postscript that had a little stab of our old intimacy : " Poor old Miggles is dead."

Nearly eight years slipped by. I grew up. I grew in experience, in capacity, until I was fully a man, busy with many new interests, living on a larger scale in a wider world than I could have dreamt of in my Marion days. Her letters became rare and insignificant. At last came a gap of silence that made me curious. For eighteen months or more I had nothing from Marion save her quarterly receipts through the bank. Then I damned at Smithie, and wrote a card to Marion.

"Dear Marion," I said, "how goes it?"

She astonished me tremendously by telling me she had married again—"a Mr. Wachorn, a leading agent in the paper-pattern trade." But she still wrote on the Ponderevo and Smith (Robes) notepaper, from the Ponderevo and Smith address.

And that, except for a little difference of opinion about the continuance of alimony which gave me some passages of anger, and the use of my name by the firm, which also annoyed me, is the end of Marion's history for me, and she vanishes out of this story. I do not know where she is or what she is doing. I do no know whether she is alive or dead. It seems to me utterly grotesque that two people who have stood so close to one another as she and I should be so separated, but so it is between us.

Effie, too, I have parted from, though I still see her at times. Between us there was never any intention of marriage nor intimacy of soul. She had a sudden fierce hot-blooded passion for me and I for her, but I was not her first lover nor her last. She was in another world from Marion. She had a queer delightful nature; I've no memory of ever seeing her sullen or malicious. She was—indeed she was magnificently eupeptic. That I think was the central secret of her agreeableness, and moreover that she was infinitely kind-hearted. I helped her at last into an opening she coveted, and she amazed me by a sudden display of business capacity. She has now a typewriting bureau in Riffle's Inn, and she runs it with a brisk vigour and considerable success, albeit a certain plumpness has overtaken her. And she still loves her kind. She married a year or so ago a boy half her age—a wretch of a poet, a wretched poet and given to drugs, a thing with lank fair hair always getting into his blue eyes, and limp legs. She did it, she said, because he needed nursing. . . .

But enough of this disaster of my marriage and of my early love affairs; I have told all that is needed for my picture to explain how I came to take up aeroplane experiments and engineering science; let me get back to my essential story, to Tono-Bungay and my uncle's promotions and to the vision of the world these things have given me.

END OF BOOK II

BOOK THE THIRD

THE GREAT DAYS OF TONO-BUNGAY

CHAPTER I

The Hardingham Hotel, and how we became Big People

§ 1

But now that I resume the main line of my story it may be well to describe the personal appearance of my uncle as I remember him during those magnificent years that followed his passage from trade to finance. The little man plumped up very considerably during the creation of the Tono-Bungay property, but with the increasing excitements that followed that first flotation came dyspepsia and a certain flabbiness and falling away. His abdomen—if the reader will pardon my taking his features in the order of their value—had at first a nice full roundness, but afterwards it lost tone, without however losing size. He always went as though he was proud of it and would make as much of it as possible. To the last his movements remained quick and sudden, his short firm legs, as he walked, seemed to twinkle rather than display the scissors-stride of common humanity, and he never seemed to have knees, but instead, a dispersed flexibility of limb.

There was, I seem to remember, a secular intensification of his features, his nose developed character, became aggressive, stuck out at the world more and more; the obliquity of his mouth I think increased. From the face that returns to my memory projects a long cigar that is sometimes cocked jauntily up from the higher corner, that sometimes droops from the lower;—it was as eloquent as a dog's tail, and he removed it only for the more emphatic modes of speech. He assumed a broad black ribbon for his glasses, and wore them more and more askew as time went on. His hair seemed to stiffen with success, but

towards the climax it thinned greatly over the crown and he brushed it hard back over his ears where, however, it stuck out fiercely. It always stuck out fiercely over his forehead, up and forward.

He adopted an urban style of dressing with the onset of Tono-Bungay and rarely abandoned it. He preferred silk hats with ample rich brims, often a trifle large for him by modern ideas, and he wore them at various angles to his axis; his taste in trouserings was towards fairly emphatic stripes and his trouser cut was neat; he liked his frock-coat long and full although that seemed to shorten him. He displayed a number of valuable rings, and I remember one upon his left little finger with a large red stone bearing Gnostic symbols. "Clever chaps, those Gnostics, George," he told me. "Means a lot. Lucky I" He never had any but a black mohair watch-chain. In the country he affected grey and a large grey cloth top-hat, except when motoring; then he would have a brown deer-stalker cap and a fur suit of Esquimaux cut with a sort of boot-end to the trousers. Of an evening he would wear white waistcoats and plain gold studs. He hated diamonds. "Flashy," he said they were. "Might as well wear an income-tax receipt. All very well for Park Lane. Unsold stock. Not my style. Sober financier, George."

So much for his visible presence. For a time it was very familiar to the world, for at the crest of the boom he allowed quite a number of photographs and at least one pencil sketch to be published in the sixpenny papers. . . . His voice declined during those years from his early tenor to a flat rich quality of sound that my knowledge of music is inadequate to describe. His Zzzz-ing inrush of air became less frequent as he ripened, but returned in moments of excitement. Throughout his career, in spite of his increasing and at last astounding opulence, his more intimate habits remained as simple as they had been at Wimblehurst. He would never avail himself of the services of a valet; at the very climax of his greatness his trousers were folded by a housemaid and his shoulders brushed as he left his house or hotel. He became wary about breakfast as life advanced, and at one time talked much of Dr. Haig and uric acid. But for other meals he remained reasonably

omnivorous. He was something of a gastronome, and would eat anything he particularly liked in an audible manner, and perspire upon his forehead. He was a studiously moderate drinker—except when the spirit of some public banquet or some great occasion caught him and bore him beyond his wariness—then he would as it were drink inadvertently and become flushed and talkative—about everything but his business projects.

To make the portrait complete one wants to convey an effect of sudden, quick bursts of movement like the jumps of a Chinese-cracker to indicate that his pose, whatever it is, has been preceded and will be followed by a rush. If I were painting him, I should certainly give him for a background that distressed, uneasy sky that was popular in the eighteenth century, and at a convenient distance a throbbing motor-car, very big and contemporary, a secretary hurrying with papers, and an alert chauffeur.

Such was the figure that created and directed the great property of Tono-Bungay, and from the successful reconstruction of that company passed on to a slow crescendo of magnificent creations and promotions until the whole world of investors marvelled. I have already, I think, mentioned how, long before we offered Tono-Bungay to the public, we took over the English agency of certain American specialities. To this was presently added our exploitation of Moggs' Domestic Soap, and so he took up the Domestic Convenience Campaign that, coupled with his equatorial rotundity and a certain resolute convexity in his bearing, won my uncle his Napoleonic title.

§ 2

It illustrates the romantic element in modern commerce that my uncle met young Moggs at a city dinner—I think it was the Bottle-makers' Company—when both were some way advanced beyond the initial sobriety of the occasion. This was the grandson of the original Moggs, and a very typical instance of an educated, cultivated, degenerate plutocrat. His people had taken him about in his youth like the Ruskins took their John, and fostered a passion for history in him, and the actual management of the Moggs'

industry had devolved upon a cousin and a junior partner. Mr. Moggs, being of a studious and refined disposition, had just decided—after a careful search for a congenial subject in which he would not be constantly reminded of soap—to devote himself to the History of the Thebaid when this cousin died suddenly and precipitated responsibilities upon him. In the frankness of conviviality, Moggs bewailed the uncongenial task thus thrust into his hands, and my uncle offered to lighten his burden by a partnership then and there. They even got to terms—extremely muzzy terms, but terms nevertheless.

Each gentleman wrote the name and address of the other on his cuff, and they separated in a mood of brotherly carelessness, and next morning neither seems to have thought to rescue his shirt from the wash until it was too late. My uncle made a painful struggle—it was one of my business mornings—to recall name and particulars.

"He was an aquarium-faced, long, blond sort of chap, George, with glasses and a genteel accent," he said.

I was puzzled. "Aquarium-faced?"

"You know how they look at you. His stuff was soap, I'm pretty nearly certain. And he had a name. And the thing was the straightest Bit-of-All-Right you ever. I was clear enough to spot that. . . ."

We went out at last with knitted brows, and wandered up into Finsbury seeking a good, well-stocked looking grocer. We called first on a chemist for a pick-me-up for my uncle, and then we found the shop we needed.

"I want," said my uncle, "half a pound of every sort of soap you got. Yes, I want to take them now. . . . Wait a moment, George. . . . Now whassort of soap d'you call *that?*"

At the third repetition of that question the young man said, "Moggs' Domestic."

"Right," said my uncle. "You needn't guess again. Come along, George; let's go to a telephone and get on to Moggs. Oh—the order? Certainly. I confirm it. Send it all—send it all to the Bishop of London; he'll have some good use for it—(First-rate man, George, he is—charities and all that)—and put it down to me—here's a card—Ponderevo—Tono-Bungay."

Then we went on to Moggs and found him in a camel-hair dressing-jacket in a luxurious bed, drinking China tea, and got the shape of everything but the figures fixed by lunch time.

Young Moggs enlarged my mind considerably; he was a sort of thing I hadn't met before; he seemed quite clean and well-informed, and he assured me he never read newspapers nor used soap in any form at all. "Delicate skin," he said.

"No objection to our advertising you wide and free?" said my uncle.

"I draw the line at railway stations," said Moggs, "south-coast cliffs, theatre programmes, books by me and poetry generally—scenery—oh!—and the *Mercure de France*."

"We'll get along," said my uncle.

"So long as you don't annoy me," said Moggs, lighting a cigarette, "you can make me as rich as you like."

We certainly made him no poorer. His was the first firm that was advertised by a circumstantial history; we even got to illustrated magazine articles telling of the quaint past of Moggs. We concocted Moggsiana. Trusting to our partner's preoccupation with the uncommercial aspects of life, we gave graceful histories of Moggs the First, Moggs the Second, Moggs the Third, and Moggs the Fourth. You must, unless you are very young, remember some of them and our admirable block of a Georgian shop window. My uncle bought early nineteenth-century memoirs, soaked himself in the style, and devised stories about old Moggs the First and the Duke of Wellington, George the Third and the soap dealer ("almost certainly old Moggs"). Very soon we had added to the original Moggs' Primrose several varieties of scented and super-fatted, a "special nursery—as used in the household of the Duke of Kent and for the old Queen in Infancy," a plate powder, "the Paragon," and a knife powder. We roped in a good little second-rate black-lead firm, and carried their origins back into the mists of antiquity. It was my uncle's own unaided idea that we should associate that commodity with the Black Prince. He became industriously curious about the

past of black-lead. I remember his button-holeing the president of the Pepys Society.

"I say, is there any black-lead in Pepys? You know—black-lead—for grates! *Or does he pass it over as a matter of course?*"

He became in those days the terror of eminent historians. "Don't want your drum and trumpet history—no fear," he used to say. "Don't want to know who was who's mistress, and why so-and-so devastated such a province; that's bound to be all lies and upsy-down anyhow. Not my affair. Nobody's affair now. Chaps who did it didn't clearly know. . . . What I want to know is, in the middle ages Did they Do Anything for Housemaid's Knee? What did they put in their hot baths after jousting, and was the Black Prince—you know the Black Prince—was he enamelled or painted, or what? I think myself, black-leaded—very likely—like pipe-clay—but *did* they use blacking so early?"

So it came about that in designing and writing those Moggs' Soap Advertisements, that wrought a revolution in that department of literature, my uncle was brought to realize not only the lost history, but also the enormous field for invention and enterprise that lurked among the little articles, the dustpans and mincers, the mousetraps and carpet-sweepers that fringe the shops of the oilman and domestic ironmonger. He was recalled to one of the dreams of his youth, to his conception of the Ponderevo Patent Flat that had been in his mind so early as the days before I went to serve him at Wimblehurst. "The Home, George," he said, "wants straightening up. Silly muddle! Things that get in the way. Got to organize it."

For a time he displayed something like the zeal of a genuine social reformer in relation to these matters.

"We've got to bring the Home Up to Date? That's my idee, George. We got to make a civilized d'mestic machine out of these relics of barbarism. I'm going to hunt up inventors, make a corner in d'mestic idees. Everything. Balls of string that won't dissolve into a tangle, and gum that won't dry into horn. See? Then after conveniences—beauty. Beauty, George! All these new things ought to be made fit to look at, it's your aunt's

idee, that. Beautiful jam-pots! Get one of those new art chaps to design all the things they make ugly now. Patent carpet-sweepers by these green-wood chaps, housemaid's boxes it'll be a pleasure to fall over—rich coloured house-flannels. Zzzz. Pails, f'rinstance. Hang 'em up on the walls like warming-pans. All the polishes and things in such tins—you'll want to cuddle 'em, George! See the notion? 'Sted of all the silly ugly things we got." . . .

We had some magnificent visions; they so affected me that when I passed ironmongers and oil-shops they seemed to me as full of promise as trees in late winter, flushed with the effort to burst into leaf and flower. . . . And really we did do much towards that new brightness these shops display. They were dingy things in the 'eighties compared to what our efforts have made them now, grey quiet displays. . . .

Well, I don't intend to write down here the tortuous financial history of Moggs Limited, which was our first development of Moggs and Sons; nor will I tell very much of how from that we spread ourselves with a larger and larger conception throughout the chandlery and minor ironmongery, how we became agents for this little commodity, partners in that, got a tentacle round the neck of a specialized manufacturer or so, secured a pull upon this or that supply of raw material, and so prepared the way for our second flotation, Domestic Utilities;—"Do Ut," they rendered it in the city. And then came the reconstruction of Tono-Bungay, and then "Household Services" and the Boom!

That sort of development is not to be told in detail in a novel. I have, indeed, told much of it elsewhere. It is to be found set out at length, painfully at length, in my uncle's examination and mine in the bankruptcy proceedings, and in my own various statements after his death. Some people know everything in that story, some know it all too well, most do not want the details, it is the story of a man of imagination among figures, and unless you are prepared to collate columns of pounds, shillings and pence, compare dates and check additions, you will find it very unmeaning and perplexing. And after all, you wouldn't find the early figures so much wrong as *strained*. In the

matter of Moggs and Do Ut, as in the first Tono-Bungay promotion and in its reconstruction, we left the court by city standards without a stain on our characters. The great amalgamation of Household Services was my uncle's first really big-scale enterprise and his first display of bolder methods; for this we bought back Do Ut, Moggs (going strong with a seven per cent. dividend) and acquired Skinnerton's polishes, the Riffleshaw properties and the Runcorn's mincer and coffee-mill business. To that Amalgamation I was really not a party; I left it to my uncle because I was then beginning to get keen upon the soaring experiments I had taken on from the results then to hand of Lilienthal, Pilcher and the Wright brothers. I was developing a glider into a flyer. I meant to apply power to this glider as soon as I could work out one or two residual problems affecting the longitudinal stability. I knew that I had a sufficiently light motor in my own modification of Bridger's light turbine, but I knew too that until I had cured my aeroplane of a tendency demanding constant alertness from me, a tendency to jerk up its nose at unexpected moments and slide back upon me, the application of an engine would be little short of suicide.

But that I will tell about later. The point I was coming to was that I did not realize until after the crash how recklessly my uncle had kept his promise of paying a dividend of over eight per cent. on the ordinary shares of that hugely over-capitalized enterprise, Household Services.

I drifted out of business affairs into my research much more than either I or my uncle had contemplated. Finance was much less to my taste than the organization of the Tono-Bungay factory. In the new field of enterprise there was a great deal of bluffing and gambling, of taking chances and concealing material facts—and these are hateful things to the scientific type of mind. It wasn't fear I felt so much as an uneasy inaccuracy. I didn't realize dangers, I simply disliked the sloppy, relaxing quality of this new sort of work. I was at last constantly making excuses not to come up to him in London. The latter part of his business career recedes therefore beyond the circle of my particular life. I lived more or less with him; I talked, I advised, I helped him at times to fight his Sunday

crowd at Crest Hill, but I did not follow nor guide him. From the Do Ut time onward he rushed up the financial world like a bubble in water and left me like some busy water-thing down below in the deeps.

Anyhow, he was an immense success. The public was, I think, particularly attracted by the homely familiarity of his field of work—you never lost sight of your investment they felt, with the name on the house-flannel and shaving-strop—and its allegiance was secured by the Egyptian solidity of his apparent results. Tono-Bungay, after its reconstruction, paid thirteen, Moggs seven, Domestic Utilities had been a safe-looking nine; here was Household Services with eight; on such a showing he had merely to buy and sell Roeburn's Antiseptic fluid, Razor soaks and Bath crystals in three weeks to clear twenty thousand pounds. I do think that as a matter of fact Roeburn's was good value at the price at which he gave it to the public at least until it was strained by ill-conceived advertisement. It was a period of expansion and confidence; much money was seeking investment and "Industrials" were the fashion. Prices were rising all round. There remained little more for my uncle to do, therefore, in his climb to the high unstable crest of Financial Greatness but, as he said, to "grasp the cosmic oyster, George, while it gaped," which being translated meant for him to buy respectable businesses confidently and courageously at the vendor's estimate, add thirty or forty thousand to the price and sell them again. His sole difficulty indeed was the tactful management of the load of shares that each of these transactions left upon his hands. But I thought so little of these later things that I never fully appreciated the peculiar inconveniences of that until it was too late to help him.

§ 3

When I think of my uncle near the days of his Great Boom and in connection with the actualities of his enterprises, I think of him as I used to see him in the suite of rooms he occupied in the Hardingham Hotel, seated at a great old oak writing-table, smoking, drinking, and

incoherently busy ; that was his typical financial aspect—our evenings, our mornings, our holidays, our motor-car expeditions, Lady Grove and Crest Hill belong to an altogether different set of memories.

These rooms in the Hardingham were a string of apartments along one handsome thick-carpeted corridor. All the doors upon the corridor were locked except the first ; and my uncle's bedroom, breakfast-room and private sanctum were the least accessible and served by an entrance from the adjacent passage, which he also used at times as a means of escape from importunate callers. The most external room was a general waiting-room and very business-like in quality; it had one or two uneasy sofas, a number of chairs, a green baize table, and a collection of the very best Moggs and Tono posters; and the plush carpets normal to the Hardingham had been replaced by a grey-green cork linoleum. Here I would always find a remarkable miscellany of people, presided over by a peculiarly faithful and ferocious-looking commissionaire, Ropper, who guarded the door that led a step nearer my uncle. Usually there would be a parson or so, one or two widows; hairy, eye-glassy, middle-aged gentlemen, some of them looking singularly like Edward Ponderevos who hadn't come off, a variety of young and youngish men more or less attractively dressed, some with papers protruding from their pockets, others with their papers decently concealed. And wonderful incidental, frowsy people.

All these persons maintained a practically hopeless siege—sometimes for weeks together ; they had better have stayed at home. Next came a room full of people who had some sort of appointment, and here one would find smart-looking people, brilliantly dressed, nervous women hiding behind magazines, nonconformist divines, clergy in gaiters, real business men, these latter for the most part gentlemen in admirable morning dress who stood up and scrutinized my uncle's taste in water colours manfully and sometimes by the hour together. Young men again were here of various social origins—young Americans, treasonable clerks from other concerns, university young men, keen-looking, most of them, resolute, reserved but on a sort of hair trigger, ready at any moment

to be most voluble, most persuasive. This room had a window too, looking out into the hotel courtyard with its fern-set fountains and mosaic pavement, and the young men would stand against this and sometimes even mutter. One day I heard one repeating in an urgent whisper as I passed, " But you don't quite see, Mr. Ponderevo, the full advantages, the *full* advantages——" I met his eye and he was embarrassed.

Then came a room with a couple of secretaries—no typewriters because my uncle hated the clatter—and a casual person or two sitting about, projectors whose projects were being entertained. Here and in a further room nearer the private apartments, my uncle's correspondence underwent an exhaustive process of pruning and digestion before it reached him. Then the two little rooms in which my uncle talked; my magic uncle who had *got* the investing public—to whom all things were possible.

As one came in one would find him squatting with his cigar up and an expression of dubious beatitude upon his face, while some one urged him to grow still richer by this or that.

" Thatju, George ? " he used to say. " Come in. Here's a thing. Tell him—Mister—over again. Have a drink, George ? No ! Wise man ! Liss'n."

I was always ready to listen. All sorts of financial marvels came out of the Hardingham, more particularly during my uncle's last great flurry, but they were nothing to the projects that passed in. It was the little brown and gold room he sat in usually. He had had it redecorated by Bordingly and half a dozen Sussex pictures by Webster hung about it. Latterly he wore a velveteen jacket of a golden-brown colour in this apartment that I think overemphasized its æsthetic intention and he also added some gross Chinese bronzes. . . .

He was on the whole a very happy man throughout all that wildly enterprising time. He made and, as I shall tell in its place, spent great sums of money He was constantly in violent motion, constantly stimulated mentally and physically and rarely tired. About him was an atmosphere of immense deference; much of his waking life was triumphal and all his dreams. I doubt if he had any

dissatisfaction with himself at all until the crash bore him down. Things must have gone very rapidly with him. . . . I think he must have been very happy.

As I sit here writing about all these things, jerking down notes and throwing them aside in my attempt to give some literary form to the tale of our promotions, the marvel of it all comes to me as if it came for the first time, the supreme unreason of it. At the climax of his Boom, my uncle at the most sparing estimate must have possessed in substance and credit about two million pounds' worth of property to set off against his vague colossal liabilities, and from first to last he must have had a controlling influence in the direction of nearly thirty millions. This irrational muddle of a community in which we live gave him that, paid him at that rate for sitting in a room and scheming and telling it lies. For he created nothing, he invented nothing, he economized nothing. I cannot claim that a single one of the great businesses we organized added any real value to human life at all. Several like Tono-Bungay were unmitigated frauds by any honest standard, the giving of nothing coated in advertisements for money. And the things the Hardingham gave out, I repeat, were nothing to the things that came in. I think of the long procession of people who sat down before us and propounded this and that. Now it was a device for selling bread under a fancy name and so escaping the laws as to weight—this was afterwards floated as the Decorticated Health-Bread Company and bumped against the law—now it was a new scheme for still more strident advertisement, now it was a story of unsuspected deposits of minerals, now a cheap and nasty substitute for this or that common necessity, now the treachery of a too well-informed employee, anxious to become our partner. It was all put to us tentatively, persuasively. Sometimes one had a large pink blusterous person trying to carry us off our feet by his pseudo-boyish frankness, now some dyspeptically yellow whisperer, now some earnest, specially dressed youth with an eye-glass and a buttonhole, now some homely-speaking, shrewd Manchester man or some Scotchman eager to be very clear and full. Many came in couples or trios, often in tow of an explanatory solicitor.

Some were white and earnest, some flustered beyond measure at their opportunity. Some of them begged and prayed to be taken up. My uncle chose what he wanted and left the rest. He became very autocratic to these applicants. He felt he could make them, and they felt so too. He had but to say "No!" and they faded out of existence. . . . He had become a sort of vortex to which wealth flowed of its own accord. His possessions increased by heaps; his shares, his leaseholds and mortgages and debentures.

Behind his first-line things he found it necessary at last, and sanctioned by all the precedents, to set up three general trading companies, the London and African Investment Company, the British Traders' Loan Company, and Business Organizations Limited. That was in the culminating time when I had least to do with affairs. I don't say that with any desire to exculpate myself, I admit I was a director of all three, and I will confess I was wilfully incurious in that capacity. Each of these companies ended its financial year solvent by selling great holdings of shares to one or other of its sisters, and paying a dividend out of the proceeds. I sat at the table and agreed. That was our method of equilibrium at the iridescent climax of the bubble. . . .

You perceive now, however, the nature of the services for which this fantastic community gave him unmanageable wealth and power and real respect. It was all a monstrous payment for courageous fiction, a gratuity in return for the one reality of human life—illusion. We gave them a feeling of hope and profit; we sent a tidal wave of water and confidence into their stranded affairs. "We mint Faith, George," said my uncle one day. "That's what we do. And by Jove we got to keep minting! We been making human confidence ever since I drove the first cork of Tono-Bungay."

"Coining" would have been a better word than minting! And yet, you know, in a sense he was right. Civilization is possible only through confidence, so that we can bank our money and go unarmed about the streets. The bank reserve or a policeman keeping order in a jostling multitude of people, are only slightly less impudent bluffs than my uncle's prospectuses. They couldn't for a moment "make

good " if the quarter of what they guarantee was demanded of them. The whole of this modern mercantile investing civilization is indeed such stuff as dreams are made of. A mass of people swelters and toils, great railway systems grow, cities arise to the skies and spread wide and far, mines are opened, factories hum, foundries roar, ships plough the seas, countries are settled; about this busy striving world the rich owners go, controlling all, enjoying all, confident and creating the confidence that draws us all together into a reluctant, nearly unconscious brotherhood. I wonder and plan my engines. The flags flutter, the crowds cheer, the legislatures meet. Yet it seems to me indeed at times that all this present commercial civilization is no more than my poor uncle's career writ large, a swelling, thinning bubble of assurances; that its arithmetic is just as unsound, its dividends as ill-advised, its ultimate aim as vague and forgotten; that it all drifts on, perhaps, to some tremendous parallel to his individual disaster. . . .

Well, so it was we Boomed, and for four years and a half we lived a life of mingled substance and moonshine. Until our particular unsoundness overtook us we went about in the most magnificent of motor-cars upon tangible high-roads, made ourselves conspicuous and stately in splendid houses, ate sumptuously and had a perpetual stream of notes and money trickling into our pockets; hundreds of thousands of men and women respected us, saluted us and gave us toil and honour; I asked, and my work-sheds rose, my aeroplanes swooped out of nothingness to scare the downland pewits; my uncle waved his hand and Lady Grove and all its associations of chivalry and ancient peace were his; waved again, and architects were busy planning the great palace he never finished at Crest Hill and an army of workmen gathered to do his bidding, blue marble came from Canada, and timber from New Zealand; and beneath it all, you know, there was nothing but fictitious values as evanescent as rainbow gold.

§ 4

I pass the Hardingham ever and again and glance aside through the great archway at the fountain and the ferns,