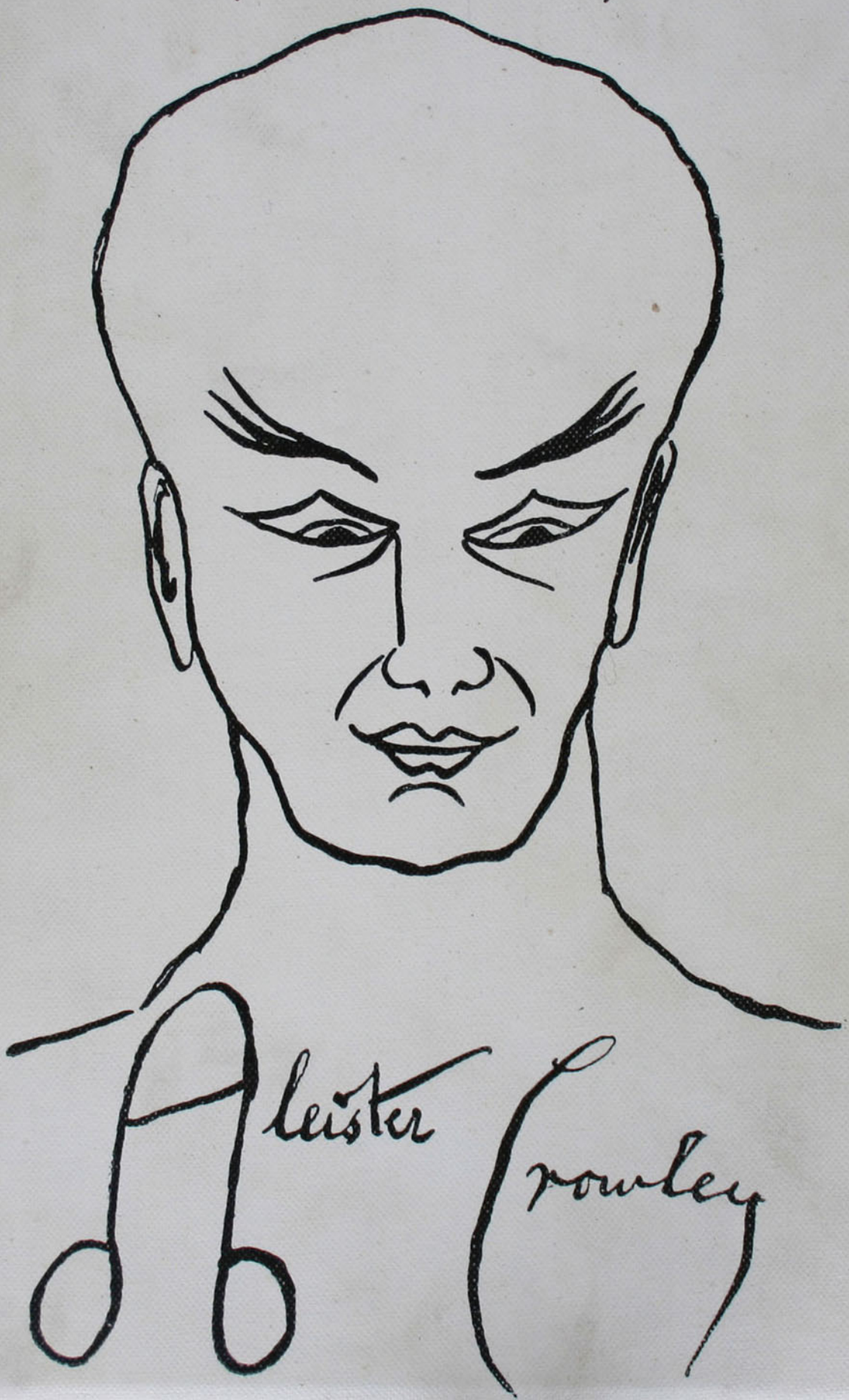
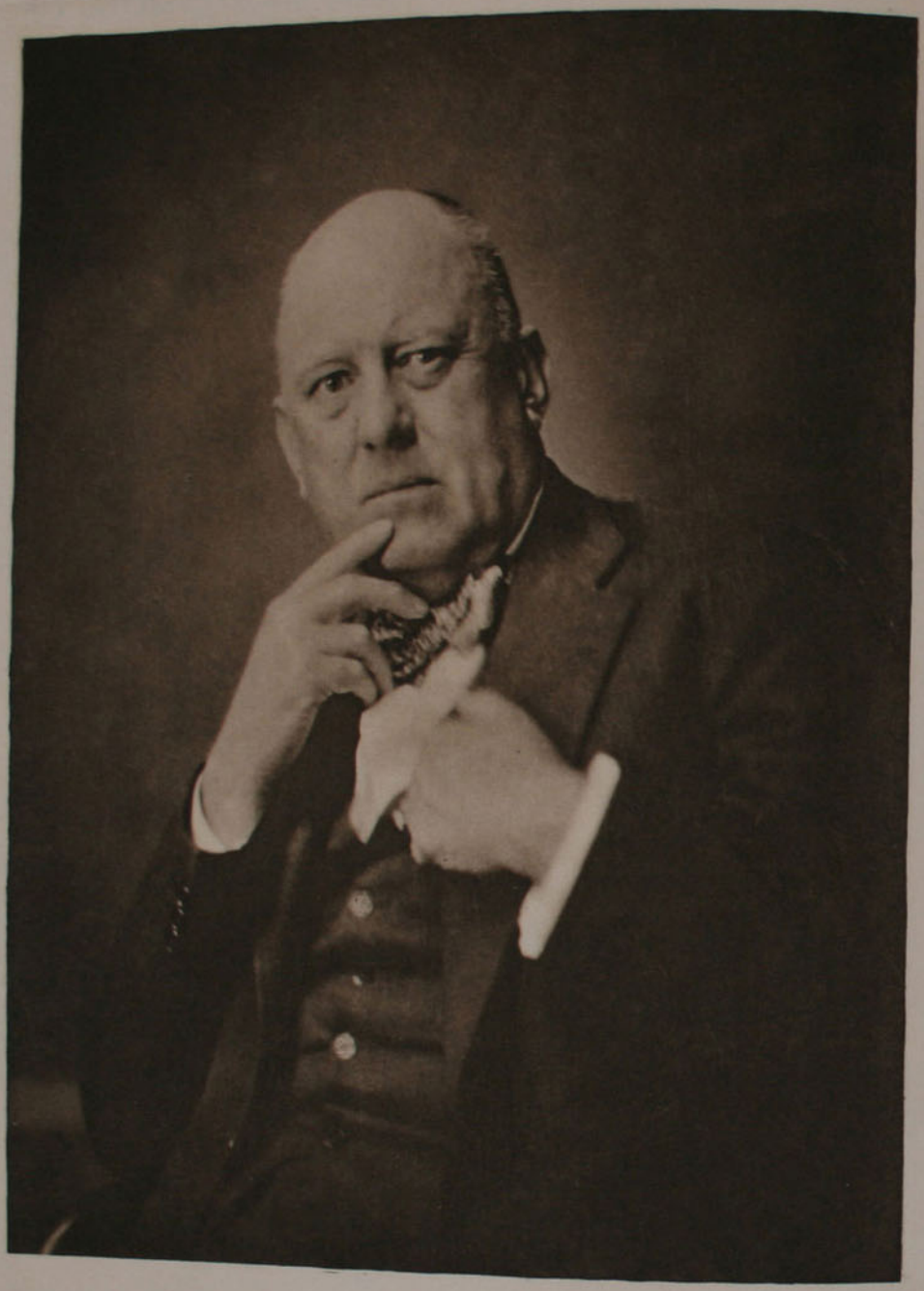
The Confessions of



Aleister Crowley

THE CONFESSIONS OF ALEISTER CROWLEY



THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

An Autohagiography

Subsequently re-Antichristened

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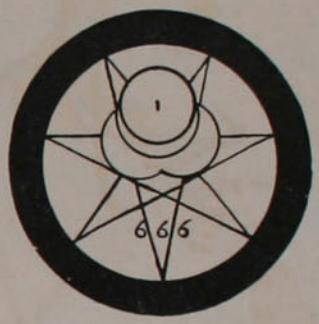

Volume One

London 1929
THE MANDRAKE PRESS
41 Museum Street W.C.1

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"THINGS GAINED ARE GONE, BUT GREAT THINGS DONE ENDURE."—*Swinburne, Atalanta in Calydon.*

"Though sore be my burden,
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
Save only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings
above me or death-worms below."

—*Swinburne, Hertha.*

DEDICATION OF VOLUME ONE

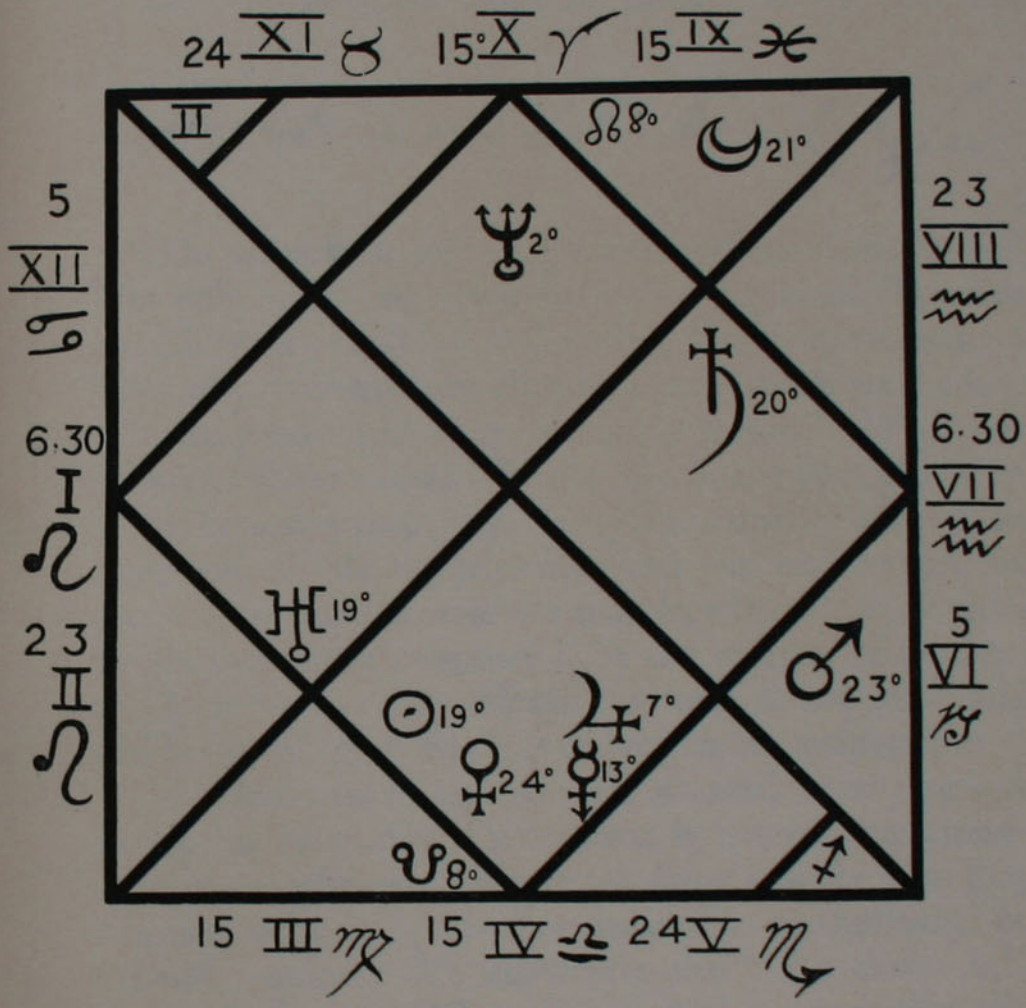
To Three Friends

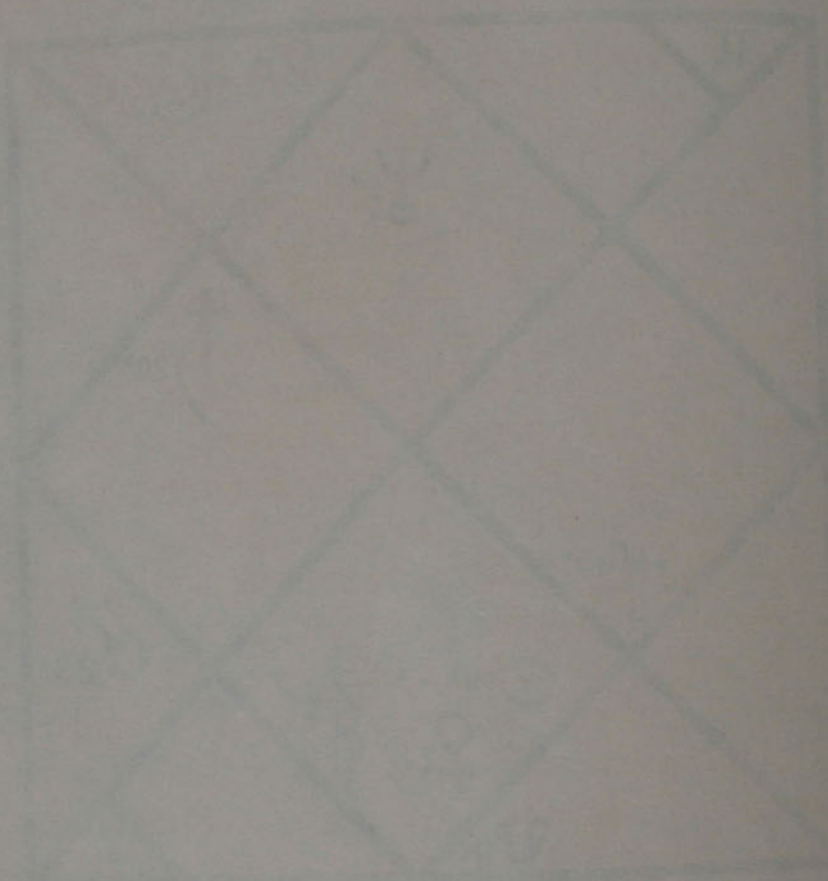
J. W. N. SULLIVAN
who suggested this booklet

AUGUSTUS JOHN
who first gave practical assistance

P. R. STEPHENSEN
who saw the point

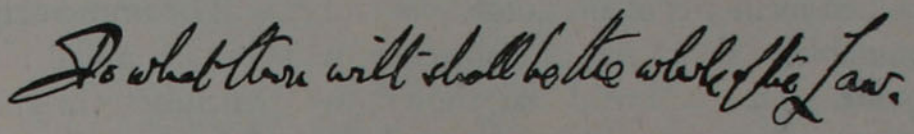
The Figure Genethliacal
of
Edward Alexander Crowley.





PRELUDE

CONCERNING THE ART OF BIOGRAPHY, IN GENERAL, AND THE PECULIAR CONSIDERATIONS APPLICABLE TO THE PRESENT ATTEMPT TO PRACTISE THE SAME UPON ALEISTER CROWLEY



"Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." Not only to this autohagiography—as he amusedly insists on calling it—of Aleister Crowley, but to every form of biography, biology, even chemistry, these words are the key.

"Every man and every woman is a star." What can we know about a star? By the telescope, a faint phantasm of its optical value. By the spectroscope, a hint of its composition. By the telescope, and our mathematics, its course. In this last case we may legitimately argue from the known to the unknown: by our measure of the brief visible curve, we can calculate whence it has come and whither it will go. Experience justifies our assumptions.

Considerations of this sort are essential to any serious attempt at biography. An infant is not—as our grandmothers thought—an arbitrary jest flung into the world by a cynical deity, to be saved or damned as predestination or free-will required. We know now that "that that is is," as the old hermit of Prague that never saw pen and ink very wittily said to a niece of King Gorboduc.

Nothing can ever be created or destroyed; and therefore the "life" of any individual must be comparable to that brief visible curve, and the object of writing it to divine by the proper measurements the remainder of its career.

The writer of any biography must ask, in the deepest sense, Who is he? This question "Who art Thou?" is the first which is put to any candidate for initiation. Also, it is the last. What so-and-so is, did, and suffered: these are merely clues to that great problem. So then the earliest memories of any autohagiographer will be immensely valuable; their very incoherence will be an infallible guide. For, as Freud has shown, we remember (in the main) what we wish to remember, and forget what is painful. There is thus great danger of deception as to the "facts" of the case; but our memories indicate with uncanny accuracy what is our True Will. And, as above made manifest, it is this True Will which shews the nature of our proper motion.

In writing the life of the average man, there is this fundamental difficulty, that the performance is futile and meaningless, even from the standpoint of the matter-of-fact philosopher; there is, that is to say, no artistic unity. In the case of Aleister Crowley no such Boyg appeared on the hillside; for he himself regards his career as a definitely dramatic composition. It comes to a climax on April 8th, 9th, and 10th, 1904 E.V. The slightest incident in the history of the whole universe appears to him as a preparation for that Event; and his subsequent life is merely the aftermath of that crisis.

On the other hand, however, there is the circumstance that his time has been spent in three very distinct manners: the Secret Way of the Initiate, the Path of Poetry and Philosophy, and the Open Sea of Romance and Adventure. It is indeed not unusual to find the first two, or the last two, elements in the molecule of a man: Byron exemplifies this, and Poe that. But it is rare indeed for so strenuous

and out-of-doors a life to be associated with such profound devotion to the arts of the quietist ; and in this particular instance all three careers are so full that posterity might well be excused for surmising that not one but several individuals were combined in a legend, or even for taking the next step and saying : This Aleister Crowley was not a man, or even a number of men ; he is obviously a Solar Myth. Nor could he himself deny such an impeachment too brutally ; for already, before he has attained the prime of life, his name is associated with fables not less fantastic than those which have thrown doubt upon the historicity of the Buddha. It should be the True Will of this book to make plain the truth about the man. Yet here again there is a lion in the way. The truth must be falsehood unless it be the whole truth ; and the whole truth is partly inaccessible, partly unintelligible, partly incredible, and partly unpublishable—that is, in any country where truth in itself is recognised as a dangerous explosive.

A further difficulty is introduced by the nature of the mind, and especially of the memory, of the man himself. We shall come to incidents which show that he is doubtful about clearly remembered circumstances, whether they belong to "real life" or to dreams, and even that he has utterly forgotten things which no normal man could forget. He has, moreover, so completely overcome the illusion of time (in the sense used by the philosophers, from Lao-Tze and Plotinus to Kant and Whitehead) that he often finds it impossible to disentangle events as a sequence. He has so thoroughly referred phenomena to a single standard that they have lost their individual significance, just as when one has understood the word "cat," the letters c a t have lost their own value, and become mere arbitrary

elements of an Idea. Further: on reviewing one's life in perspective the astronomical sequence ceases to be significant. Events rearrange themselves in an order outside time and space, just as in a picture there is no way of distinguishing at what point on the canvas the artist began to paint. Alas! it is impossible to make this a satisfactory book; hurrah! that furnishes the necessary stimulus; it becomes worth while to do it, and by Styx! it shall be done.

o o o o o

It would be absurd to apologise for the form of this book. Excuses are always nauseating. I do not believe for a moment that it would have turned out any better if it had been written in the most favourable circumstances. I mention merely as a matter of general interest the actual difficulties attending the composition.

From the start my position was precarious. I was practically penniless, I had been betrayed in the most shameless and senseless way by practically everyone with whom I was in business relations, I had no means of access to any of the normal conveniences which are considered essential to people engaged in such tasks. On the top of this there sprang up a sudden whirlwind of wanton treachery and brainless persecution, so imbecile yet so violent as to throw even quite sensible people off their base. I ignored this and carried on, but almost immediately both I and one of my principal assistants were stricken down with lingering illness. I carried on. My assistant died. I carried on. His death was the signal for a fresh outburst of venomous falsehoods. I carried on. The agitation resulted in my being exiled from Italy; though no accusation of any kind was, or could be, alleged against me.

That meant that I was torn away from even the most elementary conveniences for writing this book. I carried on. At the moment of writing this paragraph everything in connection with the book is entirely in the air. I am carrying on.

But apart from any of this, I have felt throughout an essential difficulty with regard to the form of the book. The subject is too big to be susceptible of organic structure unless I make a deliberate effort of will and a strict arbitrary selection. It would, as a matter of fact, be easy for me to choose any one of fifty meanings for my life, and illustrate it by carefully chosen facts. Any such method would be open to the criticism which is always ready to devastate any form of idealism. I myself feel that it would be unfair and, what is more, untrue. The alternative has been to make the incidents as full as possible, to state them as they occurred, entirely regardless of any possible bearing upon any possible spiritual significance. This method involves a certain faith in life itself, that it will declare its own meaning, and apportion the relative importance of every set of incidents automatically. In other words, it is to assert the theory that Destiny is a supreme artist, which is notoriously not the case on any accepted definition of art. And yet—a mountain! What a mass of heterogeneous accidents determine its shape! Yet, in the case of a fine mountain, who denies the beauty and even the significance of its form?

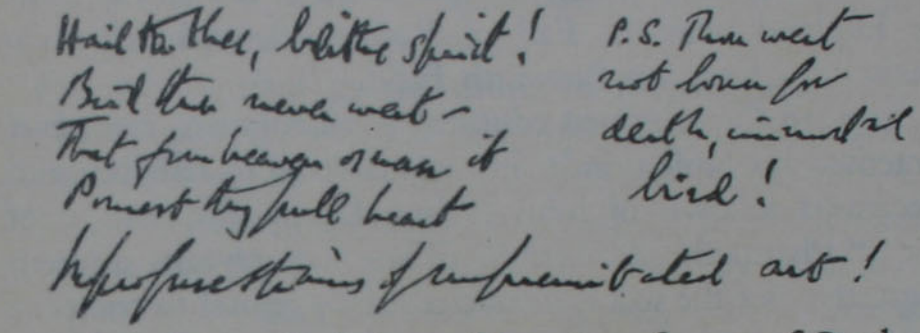
In the later years of my life, as I have attained to some understanding of the unity behind the diverse phenomena of experience, and as the natural restriction of elasticity which comes with age has gained ground, it has become progressively easier to group events about a central purpose.

But this only means that the principle of selection has been changed. In my early years the actual seasons, climates and occupations determined the sections of my life. My spiritual activities fit into those frames, whereas, more recently, the converse is the case. My physical environment fits into my spiritual preoccupation. This change would be sufficient by itself to ensure the theoretical impossibility of editing a life like mine on any consistent principle.

I find myself obliged, for these and many other reasons, to abandon altogether any idea of conceiving an artistic structure for the work, or formulating an artistic purpose. All that I can do is to describe everything that I remember, as best I can, as if it were, in itself, the centre of interest. I must trust Nature so to order matters that, in the multiplicity of the material, the proper proportion will somehow appear automatically, just as in the operations of pure chance or inexorable law a unity ennobled by strength and beautified by harmony arises inscrutably out of the chaotic concatenation of circumstances.

At least one claim may be made; nothing has been invented, nothing suppressed, nothing altered, and nothing "yellowed up." I believe that truth is not only stranger than fiction, but more interesting. And I have no motive for deception, because I don't give a damn for the whole human race—"you're nothing but a pack of cards."

STANZA I



Edward Crowley,* the wealthy scion of a race of Quakers, was the father of a son born at 30, Clarendon Square, Leamington, Warwickshire,† on the 12th day of October,‡ 1875 E.V. between 11 and 12 at night. Leo was just rising at the time, as nearly as can be ascertained.§ The branch of the family of Crowley to which this man belonged has been settled in England since Tudor times: in the days of Bad Queen Bess there was a Bishop Crowley, who wrote epigrams in the style of Martial. One of them—the only one I know—runs thus:

> "The bawds of the stews be all turnèd out:
> But I think they inhabit all England throughout."

(I cannot find the modern book which quotes this as a footnote, and have not been able to trace the original volume.)

The Crowleys are, however, of Celtic origin; the name O'Crowley is common in South-West Ireland, and the Breton family of de Querouaille—which gave England a

* "the younger" (1834-87).

† It has been remarked a strange coincidence that one small county should have given England her two greatest poets—for one must not forget Shakespeare (1550-1616).

‡ Presumably this is Nature's compensation for the Horror which blasted Mankind on that date in 1492.

§ See the Horoscope.

Duchess of Portsmouth—or de Kerval, is of the same stock. Legend will have it that the then head of the family came to England with the Earl of Richmond, and helped to make him King on Bosworth Field.

Edward Crowley was educated as an engineer, but never practised his profession.* He was devoted to religion, and became a follower of John Nelson Darby, the founder of the "Plymouth Brethren." The fact reveals a stern logician; for the sect is characterised by refusal to compromise; it insists on the literal interpretation of the Bible as the exact words of the Holy Ghost.†

He married (in 1874, one may assume) Emily Bertha Bishop, of a Devon and Somerset family. Her father had died, and her brother Tom Bond Bishop had come to London to work in the Civil Service. The important points about the woman are that her school-mates called her "the little Chinese girl," that she painted in water-colour with admirable taste destroyed by academic training, and that her powerful natural instincts were suppressed by religion to the point that she became, after her husband's death a brainless bigot of the most narrow, logical, and inhuman type. Yet there was always a struggle; she was really distressed, almost daily, at finding herself obliged by her religion to perform acts of the most senseless atrocity.

Her firstborn son, the aforesaid, was remarkable from the moment of his arrival. He bore on his body the three most important distinguishing marks of a Buddha. He was tongue-tied, and on the second day of his incarnation a surgeon cut the frænum linguæ. He had also the characteristic membrane, which necessitated an operation for

* His son elicited this fact by questioning; curious, considering the dates.

† On the strength of a text in the book itself: the logic is thus of a peculiar order.

phimosis some three lustres later. Lastly, he had upon the centre of his heart four hairs curling from left to right in the exact form of a Swastika.*

He was baptised by the names of Edward Alexander, the latter being the surname of an old friend of his father's, deeply beloved by him for the holiness of his life—by Plymouth Brethren standards, one may suppose. It seems probable that the boy was deeply impressed by being told, at what age (before 6) does not appear, that Alexander means "helper of men." He is still giving himself passionately to the task, despite the intellectual cynicism inseparable from intelligence after one has reached forty.

But the extraordinary fact connected with this baptismal ceremony is this. As the Plymouth Brethren practise infant baptism by immersion, it must have taken place in the first three months of his life. Yet he has a perfectly clear visual recollection of the scene. It took place in a bath-room on the first floor of the house in which he was born. He remembers the shape of the room, the disposal of its appointments, the little group of "brethren" surrounding him, and the surprise of finding himself, dressed in a long white garment, being suddenly dipped and lifted from the water. He has also a clear auditory remembrance of words spoken solemnly over him; though they meant nothing, he was impressed by the peculiar tone. It is not impossible that this gave him an all but unconquerable dislike for the cold plunge, and at the same time a vivid passion for ceremonial speech. These two qualities have played highly important parts in his development.

This baptism, by the way, though it never worried him,

* There is also a notable tuft of hair upon the forehead, similar to the mound of flesh there situated in the Buddhist legends. And numerous minor marks.

proved a peril to the soul of another. When his wife's conduct compelled him to insist upon her divorcing him—a formality as meaningless as their marriage—and she became insane shortly afterwards, an eminent masochist named Colonel Gormley, R.A.M.C. (dead previously, then, and since) lay in wait for her at the Asylum Gates to marry her. The trouble was that he included among his intellectual lacunæ a devotion to the Romish superstition. He feared damnation if he married a divorceuse dipso-maniac with non-parva-partial dementia. The poor mollusc asked Crowley for details of his baptism. He wrote back that he had been baptised " in the name of the Holy Trinity."

It now appeared that, had these actual words been used, he was a pagan, his marriage void, Lola Zaza a bastard, and his wife a light o' love !

Crowley tried to help the wretched worm ; but, alas, he remembered too well the formula : " I baptise thee Edward Alexander in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." So the gallant Colonel had to fork out for a Dispensation from Rome. Crowley himself squandered a lot of cash in one way or another. But he never fell so far as to waste a farthing on the Three-Card trick, or the Three-God trick.

He has also the clearest visualisation of some of the people who surrounded him in the first six years of his life, which were spent in Leamington and the neighbourhood, which he has never revisited. In particular, there was an orange-coloured old lady named Miss Carey who used to bring him oranges. His first memory of speech is his remark, " Ca'ey, onange,"* this, however, is remembered

* He has never been able to pronounce " R " properly—like a Chinese!

because he was told of it later. But he is in full conscious memory of the dining-room of the house, its furniture and pictures, with their arrangement. He also remembers various country walks, one especially through green fields, in which a perambulator figures. The main street of Leamington, and the Leam with its weir—he has loved weirs ever since—Guy's Cliffe at Warwick, and the Castle with its terrace and the white peacocks: all these are as clear as if he had seen them last week. He recalls no other room in the house except his own bedroom, and that only because he "came to himself" one night to find a fire lighted, a steam kettle going, a strange woman present, an atmosphere of anxiety, and a feeling of fever; for he had an attack of bronchitis.

He remembers his first governess, Miss Arkell, a grey-haired lady with traces of beard upon her large flat face, and a black dress of what he calls bombazine, though to this hour he does not know what bombazine may be, and thinks that the dress was of alpaca or even, it may be, of smooth hard silk.

And he remembers the first indication that his mind was of a logical and scientific order.

Ladies will now kindly skip a page, while I lay the facts before a select audience of lawyers, doctors, and ministers of religion.

The Misses Cowper consisted of Sister Susan and Sister Emma; the one large, rosy, and dry, like an overgrown radish; the other small, pink, and moist, rather like Tenniel's Mock Turtle. Both were Plymouth Sister Old Maids. They were very repulsive to the boy, who has never since liked Calf's head, though partial to similar dishes, or been able to hear the names Susan or Emma without disgust.

One day he said something to his mother which elicited from her the curious anatomical assertion : " Ladies have no legs." Shortly afterwards, when the Misses Cowper were at dinner with the family, he disappeared from his chair. There must have been some slight commotion on deck, leading to the question of his whereabouts. But at that moment a still small voice came from beneath the table : " Mamma ! Mamma ! Sister Susan and Sister Emma are not ladies ! "

This deduction was perfectly genuine : but in the following incident the cynical may perhaps trace the root of a certain sardonic humour. The child was wont to indicate his views, when silence seemed discretion, by facial gestures. Several people were rash enough to tell him not to make grimaces, as he " might be struck like that." He would reply, with an air of enlightenment after long meditation : " So that accounts for it."

All children born into a family whose social and economic conditions are settled are bound to take them for granted as universal. It is only when they meet with incompatible facts that they begin to wonder whether they are suited to their original environment. In this particular case the most trifling incidents of life were necessarily interpreted as part of a prearranged plan, like the beginning of Candide.

The underlying theory of life which was assumed in the household showed itself constantly in practice. It is strange that less than fifty years later, this theory should seem such fantastic folly as to require a detailed account.

The Universe was created by God 4004 B.C. The Bible, authorised version, was literally true, having been dictated by the Holy Ghost himself to scribes incapable of

even clerical errors. King James's translators enjoyed an equal immunity. It was considered unusual—and therefore in doubtful taste—to appeal to the original texts. All other versions were regarded as inferior; the "Revised Version" in particular savoured of heresy. John Nelson Darby, the founder of the Plymouth Brethren, being a very famous Biblical Scholar, had been invited to sit on the Committee, and had refused on the ground that some of the other scholars were Atheists.

The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus was confidently expected to occur at any moment.* So imminent was it that preparations for a distant future—such as signing a lease, or insuring one's life—might be held to imply lack of confidence in the promise, "Behold I come quickly."

A pathetically tragic incident—some years later—illustrates the reality of this absurdity. To modern educated people it must seem unthinkable that so fantastic a superstition could be such a hellish obsession in such recent times and such familiar places.

One fine summer morning, at Redhill, the boy—now 8 or 9—got tired of playing by himself in the garden. He came back to the house. It was strangely still, and he got frightened. By some odd chance everybody was either out or upstairs. But he jumped to the conclusion that "the Lord had come," and that he had been "left behind." It was an understood thing that there was no hope for people in this position. Apart from the Second Advent, it was always possible to be saved up to the very moment of death; but

* Much was made of the two appearances of "Jesus" after the Ascension. In the first, to Stephen, he was standing, in the second, to Paul, seated, at the right hand of God. Ergo, on the first occasion he was still ready to return at once; on the second, he had made up his mind to let things take their course to the bitter end, as per the Apocalypse. No one saw anything funny, or blasphemous, or even futile, in this doctrine!

once the Saints had been called up, the Day of Grace was finally over. Various alarums and excursions would take place as per the Apocalypse, and then would come the millennium, when Satan would be chained for a thousand years and Christ reign for that period over the Jews re-gathered in Jerusalem. The position of these Jews is not quite clear. They were not saved in the same sense as Christians had been, yet they were not damned. The millennium seems to have been thought of as a fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham ; but apparently it had nothing to do with " eternal life." However, even this modified beatitude was not open to Gentiles who had rejected Christ.

The child was consequently very much relieved by the reappearance of some of the inmates of the house whom he could not imagine as having been lost eternally.

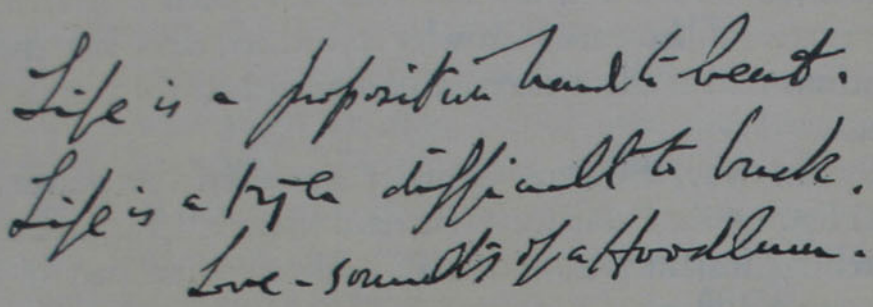
The lot of the saved, even on earth, was painted in the brightest colours. It was held that " all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose." Earthly life was regarded as an ordeal ; this was a wicked world and the best thing that could happen to any one was " to go to be with Christ, which is far better." On the other hand, the unsaved went to the Lake of Fire and Brimstone which burneth for ever and ever. Edward Crowley used to give away tracts to strangers, besides distributing them by thousands through the post ; he was also constantly preaching to vast crowds, all over the country. It was, indeed, the only logical occupation for a humane man who believed that even the noblest and best of mankind were doomed to eternal punishment. One card—a great favourite, as being peculiarly deadly—was headed : " Poor

Anne's Last Words" ; the gist of her remarks appears to have been "lost, lost, lost!" She had been a servant in the house of Edward Crowley the elder, and her dying delirium had made a deep impression upon the son of the house.

By the way, Edward Crowley possessed the power, as per Higgins, the Professor in Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion," of telling instantly from a man's speech what part of the country he lived in. It was his hobby to make walking tours through every part of England, evangelising in every town and village as he passed. He would engage likely strangers in conversation, diagnose and prescribe for their spiritual diseases, inscribe them in his address-books, and correspond and send religious literature for years. At that time religion was the popular fad in England, and few resented his ministrations. His widow continued the sending of tracts, etc., for years after his death.

As a preacher Edward Crowley was magnificently eloquent, speaking as he did from the heart. But, being a gentleman, he could not be a real revivalist, which means manipulating the hysteria of mob-psychology.

STANZA II



If troubles arose in the outer world, they were regarded as the beginning of the fulfilment of the prophecies in Daniel, Matthew, and Revelations. But it was understood implicitly that England was specially favoured by God on account of the breach with Rome. The child, who, at this period, was called by the dreadful name Alick, supposed it to be a law of nature that Queen Victoria would never die and that Consols would never go below par.

Crowley remembers, as if he had seen it yesterday, the dining-room and the ceremony of family prayers after breakfast. He remembers the order in which the family and the servants sat. A chapter of the Bible was read, each person present taking a verse in turn. At four years old he could read perfectly well. The strange thing about this is not so much his precocity as the fact that he was much less interested in the Biblical narratives than in the long Hebrew names. One of his father's favourite sermons was based on the fifth chapter of Genesis ; long as the patriarchs lived, they all died in the end. From this he would argue that his hearers would die too ; they had therefore better lose no time in making sure of Heaven. But the interest of Alick was in the sound of the names them-

selves—Enoch, Arphaxad, Mahaleel. He often wonders whether this curious trait was symptomatic of his subsequent attainments in poetry, or whether it indicates the attraction which the Hebrew Qabalah was to have for him later on.

With regard to the question of Salvation, by the way, the theory of the exclusive Plymouth Brethren was peculiar, and somewhat trying to a logical mind. They held predestination as rigidly as Calvin, yet this nowise interfered with complete freewill. The crux was faith in Christ, apparently more or less intellectual, but, since "the devils also believe and tremble," it had to be supplemented by a voluntary acceptance of Christ as one's personal saviour. This being so, the question arose whether Roman Catholics, Anglicans, or even Nonconformists, could possibly be saved. The general feeling seems to have been that it was impossible for anyone who was once actually saved to be lost, whatever he did.* But it was, of course, beyond human power to determine whether any given individual had or had not found salvation. This, however, was clear: that any teaching or acceptance of false doctrine must be met by excommunication. The leaders of the Brethren were necessarily profound Theologians. There being no authority of any kind, any Brother soever might enunciate any doctrine soever at any time, and this anarchy had already resulted, before the opening of our story, in the division of the Brethren into two great sects: the Open and the Exclusive.

Philip Gosse, the father of Edmund Gosse, was a leader among the Open Brethren, who differed from the

* "Of those that thou gavest me have I lost not one, except the son of perdition." In view of predestination, "those" means all the elect, and not merely the Eleven, as the unenlightened might suppose.

Exclusive Brethren, at first, only by tolerating, at the Lord's table, the presence of "professed Christians" not definitely affiliated to themselves. Edmund Gosse has described his father's attitude in "Father and Son." Much of what he wrote taxes the credulity of the reader. Such narrowness and bigotry as that of Philip Gosse seemed beyond belief. Yet Edward Crowley regarded Philip Gosse as likely to be damned for latitudinarianism! No one who loved the Lord Jesus in his heart could be so careless of his Saviour's honour as to "break bread"* with a man who might be holding unscriptural opinions.

Readers of "Father and Son" will remember the incident of the Christmas Turkey, secretly bought by Mr. Gosse's servants and thrown into the dust-bin by him in the spirit of Moses destroying the Golden Calf. For the Brethren rightly held Christmas to be a Pagan Festival. They sent no Christmas Cards, and destroyed any that might be sent to them by thoughtless or blaspheming "goats." Not to disappoint Alick, who liked turkey, the family had that bird for lunch on the 24th and 26th of December. The idea was to "avoid even the appearance of evil"; there was nothing actually wrong in eating turkey on Christmas Day; for Pagan Idols are merely wood and stone—the work of men's hands. But one must not let others suppose that one is complying with heathen customs.

Another early reminiscence. On February 29th, 1880, Alick was taken to see the dead body of his sister, Grace Mary Elizabeth,† who had only lived five hours. The incident made a curious impression on him. He did not see why he should be disturbed so uselessly. He couldn't

* i.e. sit at the communion-table. † *What* a name!

do any good ; the child was dead ; it was none of his business. This attitude continued through his life. He has never attended any funeral* but that of his father, which he did not mind doing, as he felt himself to be the real centre of interest. But when others have died, though in two cases at least his heart was torn as if by a wild beast, and his life actually blighted for months and years by the catastrophe, he has always turned away from the necrological facts and the customary orgies. It may be that he has a deep-seated innate conviction that the connection of a person with his body is purely symbolic. But there is also the feeling that the fact of death destroys all possible interest ; the disaster is irreparable, it should be forgotten as soon as possible. He would not even join the search party after the Kang Chen Janga accident. What object was there in digging frozen corpses from under an avalanche ? Dead bodies themselves do not repel him ; he is as interested in dissecting-rooms as in anything else. When he met the dead body of Consul Litton, he turned back, knowing the man was dead. But when the corpse was brought to Tengyueh, he assisted unflinchingly at the Inquiry, because in this instance there was an object in ascertaining the cause of death.

One other group of incidents of early childhood. The family went to the West of England for the summer. Alick remembers Monmouth, or rather Monmouth Castle. It is curious that, in the act of remembering this for the purpose of this book, he was obsessed by the idea that there could not be such a place as Monmouth ; the name seemed fantastic. It was confused in his mind with " Monster " and " Mammoth," and it was some hours

* With one notable exception, at which he officiated.

before he could convince himself of its reality. He remembers staying in a farm some distance from the road, and has a very vague impression of becoming acquainted with such animals as ducks and pigs. Much more clearly arises the vision of himself on a pony with people walking each side. He remembers falling off, starting to yell, and being carried up to the house by the frightened governess (or whoever it was) in charge of him. This event had a tragic result. He ought to have been put back on the pony and made to conquer his fears. As it was, he has never been able to feel at home on horseback, though he has ridden thousands of miles, many of them over really dangerous country.

On the other hand—subconscious memory of previous incarnations, or the Eastern soul of him, or the fact that he took to it after he had learned the foolishness of fear?—he was from the first perfectly at home on a camel. And this despite the fact that these animals act like highly-placed officials, and even—if scabby—like Consuls, and look (when old) like English ladies engaged in Good Works. (There is much of the vulture in the type of head.)

One incident connected with this journey is of extraordinary interest as throwing a light on future events. Walking with his father in a field, whose general aspect he remembers perfectly well to this day, his attention was called to a clump of nettles, and he was warned that they would sting him if he touched them. He does not remember what he answered, but whatever it was it elicited from his father the question "Will you take my word for it, or would you rather learn by experience?" He replied, "I would rather learn by experience," and plunged head foremost into the clump.

This summer was marked by two narrow escapes. He remembers being seated beside the driver of some carriage with what seemed to him an extraordinarily tall box, though this impression may mean merely that he was a very small boy. It was going down hill on a road that curved across a steep slope of very green grass. He remembers the grinding of the brakes. Suddenly his father jumped out of the carriage and cried to the driver that a wheel was coming off. The only trace which this left in later life is that he has always disliked riding in unusual vehicles unless himself in control. He became a reckless cyclist and motorist, but he was nervous for a long while with automobiles unless at the wheel.

The last event of this period occurred at a railway station. He remembers its general appearance, and that of the little family group. A porter, staggering under a heavy trunk, slid it suddenly off his back. It missed crushing the boy by a hair's breadth. He does not remember whether he was snatched away, or anything else, except his father's exclamation: "His Guardian Angel was watching over him." It seems possible that this early impression determined his course in later life when he came to take up Magick; for the one document which gripped him was "The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage," in which the essential work is "To obtain the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel."

It is very important to mention that the mind of the child was almost abnormally normal. He showed no tendency to see visions, as even commonplace children often do. The Bible was his only book at this period; but neither the narrative nor the poetry made any deep

impression on him. He was fascinated by the mysteriously prophetic passages, especially those in Revelations. The Christianity in his home was entirely pleasant to him, and yet his sympathies were with the opponents of Heaven. He suspects obscurely that this was partly an instinctive love of terrors. The Elders and the harps seemed tame. He preferred the Dragon, the False Prophet, the Beast and the Scarlet Woman, as being more exciting. He revelled in the descriptions of torment. One may suspect, moreover, a strain of congenital masochism. He liked to imagine himself in agony ; in particular, he liked to identify himself with The Beast whose number is the number of a man, six hundred and three score and six. One can only conjecture that it was the mystery of the number which determined this childish choice.

Many of the memories even of very early childhood seem to be those of a quite adult individual. It is as if the mind and body of the boy were a mere medium being prepared for the expression of a complete soul already in existence. (The word medium is here used in almost exactly the same sense as in spiritualism.) This feeling is very strong ; and implies an unshakeable conviction that the facts are as suggested above. The explanation can hardly fail to imply the existence of an immanent Spirit (the True Self) which uses incarnations, and possibly many other means, from time to time in order to observe the Universe at a particular point of focus, much as a telescope resolves a nebula.

The congenital masochism of which we have spoken demands further investigation. All his life he has been almost unduly sensitive to pain, physical, mental and moral. There is no perversion in him which makes it enjoyable,

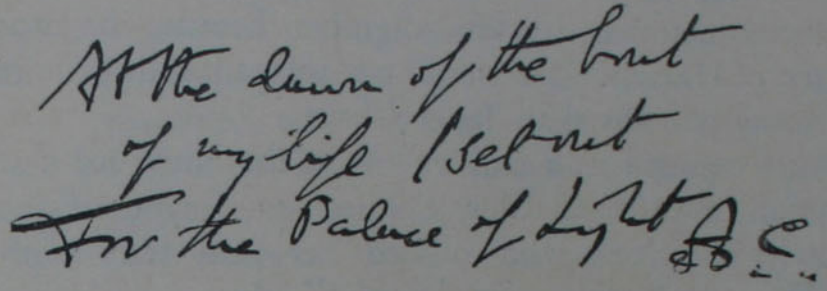
yet the phantasy of desiring to be hurt has persisted in his waking imagination, though it never manifests itself in his dreams. It is probable that these peculiarities are connected with certain curious anatomical facts. While his masculinity is above the normal, both physiologically and as witnessed by his powerful growth of beard, he has certain well-marked feminine characteristics. Not only are his limbs as slight and graceful as a girl's, but his breasts are developed to a quite abnormal degree. There is thus a sort of hermaphroditism in his physical structure; and this is naturally expressed in his mind. But whereas, in most similar cases, the feminine qualities appear at the expense of manhood, in him they are added to a perfectly normal masculine type. The principal effect has been to enable him to understand the psychology of women, to look at any theory with comprehensive and impartial eyes, and to endow him with maternal instincts on spiritual planes. He has thus been able to beat the women he has met at their own game, and emerge from the battle of sex triumphant and scatheless. He has been able to philosophise about Nature from the standpoint of a complete human being; certain phenomena will always be unintelligible to men as such, others, to women as such. He, by being both at once, has been able to formulate a view of existence which combines the positive and the negative, the active and the passive, in a single identical equation. Finally, intensely as the savage male passion to create has inflamed him, it has been modified by the gentleness and conservatism of womanhood. Again and again, in the course of this history, we shall find his actions determined by this dual structure. Similar types have no doubt existed previously, but none such has been studied. Only in the light of

Weininger and Freud* is it possible to select and interpret the phenomena. The present investigation should be of extraordinary ethical value, for it must be a rare circumstance that a subject with such abnormal qualities so clearly marked should have trained himself to intimate self-analysis and kept an almost daily record of his life and work extending over nearly a quarter of a century.†

* That is, for those not initiated into the Magical Tradition and the Holy Qabalah—the Children's table from which Freud and Weininger ate of a few crumbs that fell.

† It should be added that the apparently masochistic stigmata disappeared entirely at puberty; their relics are observable only when he is depressed physically. That is, they are wholly symptoms of physiological malaise.

STANZA III



When Alick was about six years old his father moved from Leamington to Redhill, Surrey. There was some reason connected with a gravel soil and country life. The house was called The Grange. It stood in a large long garden ending in woods which overhung the road between Redhill and Merstham; about a mile, perhaps a little more, from Redhill. Alick lived here till 1886, and his memory of this period is of perpetual happiness. He remembers with the utmost clearness innumerable incidents, and it becomes hard to select those which possess significance. He was taught by tutors; but they have faded, though their lessons have not. He was very thoroughly grounded in geography, history, Latin, and arithmetic. His cousin, Gregor Grant, six years older than himself, was a constant visitor; a somewhat strange indulgence, as Gregor was brought up in Presbyterianism. The lad was very proud of his pedigree. Edward Crowley used to ridicule this, saying, "My family sprang from a gardener who was turned out of the garden for stealing his master's fruit." Edward Crowley would not allow himself to be addressed as "Esquire," or even "Mr." It seems a piece of atavism, for a Crowley had petitioned Charles I to take away the family coat of arms; his successor, however, had

asked Charles II to restore them, which was done. This is evidence of the Satanic pride of the race. Edward Crowley despised worldly dignities because he was a citizen of Heaven. He would not accept favour or honour from any one less than Jesus Christ.

Alick remembers a lady calling at the house for a subscription in aid of Our Soldiers in Egypt. Edward Crowley browbeat and bullied her into tears with a Phillipic on "bibles and brandy." He was, however, bitterly opposed to the Blue Ribbon Army. He said that abstainers were likely to rely on good works to get to Heaven and thus fail to realise their need of Jesus. He preached one Sunday in the town hall, saying, "I would rather preach to a thousand drunkards than a thousand T—totallers." They retorted by accusing him of being connected with "Crowley's Ales." He replied that he had been an abstainer for nineteen years, during which he had shares in a brewery. He had now ceased to abstain for some time, but all his money was invested in a waterworks.*

Besides Gregor Grant, Alick's only playmates were the sons of local Brethren. Aristocratic feeling was extremely strong. The usual boyish play-acting, in which various personalities of the moment, such as Sir Garnet Wolseley and Arabi Pasha, were represented, were complicated in practice by a united attack on what were called cads. Alick especially remembers lying in wait at the end of the wood for children on their way to the National School. They had to cross a barrage of arrows and peas, and ultimately got so scared that they found a roundabout way.

* At Amsterdam. It was a failure at first, the natives objecting to a liquid which lacked taste, smell, and colour.

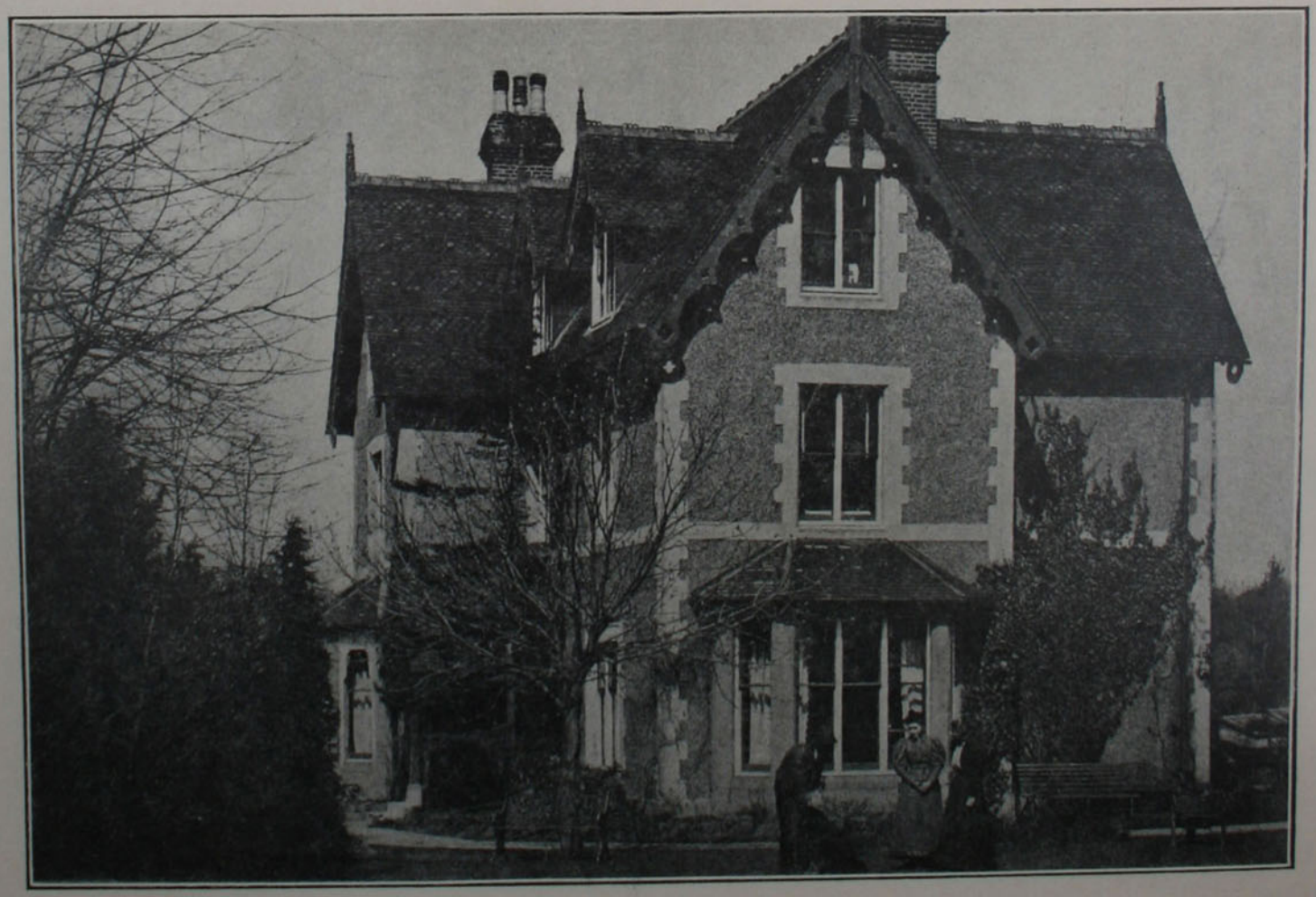
Facing the drive, across the road, was a sand-pit. Alick remembers jumping from the top with an alpenstock and charging a navvy at work in the pit, knocking him down, and bolting home. But he was not always so courageous. He once transfixed, with the same alpenstock, the bandbox of an errand-boy. The boy, however, was an Italian; and pursued the aggressor to The Grange, when of course the elders intervened. But he remembers being very frightened and tearful because of some connection in his mind between Italians and stabbing. Here again is a curious point of psychology. He has no fear of being struck or cut; but the idea of being pierced disturbs his nerve. He has to pull himself together very vigorously even in the matter of a hypodermic syringe.

There has always been something suggesting the oriental —Chinese or ancient Egyptian—in Alick's personal appearance. As his mother at school had been called "the little Chinese girl," so his daughter, Lola Zaza, has the Mongolian physiognomy even more pronounced. His thought follows this indication. He has never been able to sympathise with any European religion or philosophy; and of Jewish or Mohammedan thought he has assimilated only the mysticism of the Qabalists and the Sufis. Even Hindu psychology, thoroughly as he studied it, never satisfied him wholly. As will be seen, Buddhism itself failed to win his devotion. But he found himself instantly at home with the Yi King and the writings of Lao-Tze. Strangely enough, Egyptian symbolism and magical practice made an equal appeal; incompatible as these two systems appear on the surface, the one being atheistic, anarchistic and quietistic, the other theistic, hierarchical, and active. Even at this period the East called

to him. There is one very significant episode. In some history of the Indian Mutiny was the portrait of Nana Sahib, a proud, fierce, cruel, sensual profile. It was his ideal of beauty. He hated to believe that Nana Sahib had been caught and killed. He wanted to find Nana Sahib, to become his ally, share in torturing prisoners, and yet to suffer at his hands. When Gregor Grant was pretending to be Hyder Ali, and himself Tipu Sahib, he once asked his cousin, "Be cruel to me."

The influence of Cousin Gregor at this time was paramount. When Gregor was Rob Roy, Alick was Greumoch, the outlaw's henchman in James Grant's novel. The MacGregors appealed to Alick as being the most royal, wronged, romantic, brave, and solitary of the clans. There can be no doubt that this phantasy played a great part in determining his passionate admiration of the chief of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a Hampshire man named Mathers who inexplicably claimed to be MacGregor of Glenstrae.

The boy's attitude to his parents is one of the most remarkable facts of his early life. His father was his hero and his friend, though, for some reason or other, there was no real conscious intimacy or understanding. He always disliked and despised his mother. There was a physical repulsion, and an intellectual and social scorn. He treated her almost as a servant. It is perhaps on this account that he remembers practically nothing of her during this period. She always antagonised him. He remembers one Sunday when she found him reading "Martin Rattler" and scolded him. Edward Crowley took his part. If the book was good enough to read on any day, why not on Sunday? To Edward Crowley,



THE GRANGE, REDHILL, SURREY

every day was the Lord's Day; Sabbatarianism was Judaism.

When Alick was eight or thereabouts he was taken by his father to his first school. This was a private school at St. Leonards, kept by an old man named Habershon and his two sons, very strict Evangelicals. Edward Crowley wanted to warn his son against the commonest incident of English school life. He took a very wise way. He read to the boy very impressively the story of Noah's intoxication and its results, concluding: "Never let any one touch you there." In this way, the injunction was given without arousing morbid curiosity.

Alick remembers little of his life at this school beyond a vivid visual recollection of the playground with its "giant's stride." He does not remember any of the boys, though the three masters stand out plainly enough. One very extraordinary event remains. In an examination paper, instead of answering some question or other, he pretended to misunderstand it, and wrote an answer worthy of James Joyce. Instead of selling a limited edition at an extravagant price, he was soundly birched. Entirely unrepentant, he began to will Old Habershon's death. Strangely enough, this occurred within a few weeks; and he unhesitatingly took the credit to himself.

The boy's intellect was amazingly precocious. It must have been very shortly after the move to Redhill that a tailor named Hemming came from London to make new clothes for his father. Being a "brother," he was a guest in the house. He offered to teach Alick chess, and succeeded only too well, for he lost every game after the first. The boy recalls the method perfectly. It was to catch a developed bishop by attacking it with pawns. (He

actually invented the Tarrasch Trap in the Ruy Lopez before he ever read a book on chess.) This wrung from his bewildered teacher the exclamation: "Very judicious with his pawns is your son, Mrs. Crowley!"

As a matter of fact, there must have been more than this in it. Alick had assuredly a special aptitude for the game; for he never met his master till one fatal day in 1895, when W. V. Naish, the President of the C.U.Ch.C., took the "fresher" who had beaten him to Peterhouse, the abode of Mr. H. E. Atkins, since seven times Amateur Champion of England, and still a formidable figure in the Masters' Tournament.

It may here be noted that the injudicious youth tried to trap Atkins with a new move invented by himself. It consists of playing K R B Sq, instead of Castles, in the Muzio Gambit, the idea being to allow White to play P Q 4 in reply to Q B 3.

In 1885 Alick was removed from St. Leonards to a school kept by a Plymouth Brother, an ex-clergyman named H. d'Arcy Champney, M.A. It is a little difficult to explain the boy's psychology at this period. It was probably determined by his admiration for his father, the big, strong, hearty leader of men, who swayed thousands by his eloquence. He sincerely wished to follow in those mighty footsteps, and so strove to imitate the great man as best he might. Accordingly, he aimed at being the most devoted follower of Jesus in the school. He was not hypocritical in any sense.

All this strikes one as absolutely natural; what is extraordinary is the sequel.

A letter dating from his early school life at Cambridge.

Dear Papa & Mama,

For my holiday work prize I have got a splendid knife, 2 blades, a saw, a screwdriver, a thing to pull out thorns, another to get stones out of horse's shoes, another I don't know what for, a leather piercer, a gimlet & a corkscrew and name plate. It is nicol plated in some parts, but the handle is ivory. The asphalt* gave way near the middle. We were nearly blown hup by the hoiler† a little while ago, no jokes. We had a ½ holiday given us on Friday. Please send me a little money for fireworks. Send up my bank-book by the 1st please. I am awfully well, thank you ! I have joined a sort of band of chaps, who are with God's blessing, going to try & help others & speak to them about their souls. I will write soon again. Write quick please

Good bye
Yr loving son
Alec

He was thoroughly happy at this school ; the boys liked and admired him ; he made remarkable progress in his studies, and was very proud of his first prize, White's "Selbourne," for coming out top in "Religious Knowledge, Classics, and French."

But to this day he has never read the book ! For certain lines of study he had a profound, instinctive, and ineradicable aversion. Natural History, in any form, is one of these. It is hard to suggest a reason. Did he dislike to analyse beauty ? Did he feel that certain subjects were unimportant,

* i.e. of the "playground."
† Query ? "Oiler," of course, but what was that doing ?

led to nothing that he wanted to explore? However this may be, he used to make up his mind with absolute finality as to whether he would or would not take some particular course. If he would, he panted after it like the hart after the water-brooks; if not, nothing would persuade him to waste an hour on it.

It was while he was at this school that he began to write poetry. He had read none, except "Casabianca," "Excelsior," the doggerel of Sir Walter Scott, and such trash. But he had a genuine love for the simple "Hymns for the little Flock" compiled by the "Brethren." His first taste of real poetry was "Lycidas," set for the Cambridge Local Examination, if his memory serves him aright. He fell in love with it at once, and had it by heart in a few days. But his own earliest effort is more on the lines of the hymnal. Only a few lines remain.

I

Terror, and darkness, and horrid despair!
Agony painted upon the once fair
Brow of the man who refused to give up
The love of the wine-filled, the o'erflowing cup.
"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging."
No wine in death is his torment assuaging.

II

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

Just what the parson had told me when young:
Just what the people in chapel have sung:
"Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging."

. . . . . .

Of this Redhill period there remain also memories of two summers, one in France and Switzerland, the other in the Highlands.

The former has left numerous traces, chiefly of a visual character: the Grand Hotel in Paris, Lucerne and the Lion, William Tell, the Bears at Berne, the Rigi, the Staubbach, Trummelbach, and Giessbach, Basle and the Rhine, the Dance of Death. Two points only concern us: he objected violently to being taken out in the cold morning to see the sunrise from a platform on the Rigi-Kulm, and to illumination of a waterfall by coloured lights. He felt acutely that Nature should be allowed to go her own way, and he his! There was plenty of beauty in the world; why make oneself uncomfortable in order to see an Extra? Also, you can't improve a waterfall by stage-craft!

There is the skeleton of quite a philosophy of life in this.

As to the Scottish Highlands, the boy's mind had been so poisoned by romance that he saw nothing that he can remember. The scenery was merely a setting for silly day-dreams of Roderick Dhu!

Three other episodes of the Redhill period are pertinent; not that they are in themselves very significant, save that two of them exhibit Alick in the character of a normally mischievous boy with some skill in playing upon other people's psychology. But they illustrate the singular environment.

A frequent guest at The Grange was an old gentleman named Sherrall, whose vice was Castor Oil. Edward Crowley was in the habit of holding "Tea Meetings"; a score or so of people would be invited to what is vulgarly known as a blow-out, and when the physical animal was

satisfied, there would be a debauch of spiritual edification. On the mahogany table in the dining-room, extended to its fullest length, would stand two silver urns of tea. Into one of these young Alick emptied Mr. Sherrall's Castor Oil. So far, so good. The point is this, that the people served from that urn were too polite or over-awed either to call the attention of their hostess or to abstain from the accursed beverage. The only precaution necessary was to prevent that lady herself from seeing one of the doctored cups.

A rather similar jest was played at a prayer meeting at the house of a Brother named Nunnerley. Refreshment was offered before the meeting ; and a Sister, named Mrs. Musty, had been marked down on account of her notorious greed. Alick and some fellow conspirators kept on plying her with food after every one else had finished, with the object of delaying the prayer meeting. The woman herself was too stupid to see what was happening, and the Brethren could not be rude enough even to hint their feelings.

This hesitation to act with authority which was part of the general theoretical P.B. objection to priestcraft, on one occasion reached an astounding point in the following circumstances. A Mr. Clapham, the odour of whose beard proclaimed him truthfully a fishmonger, had a wife and a daughter who was engaged to a Mr. Munday. These three had gone on an excursion to Boulogne ; and, by accident or design, the engaged couple missed the boat for Folkestone. It was again a question of avoiding even the appearance of evil, and Mrs. Clapham was expelled from fellowship. It is to be presumed that her husband believed her innocent of all complicity, as *à priori* appears the most

natural hypothesis. In any case, next Sunday morning she took her place with her husband at the Lord's Table. It is almost inconceivable that any gathering of human beings, united to celebrate the supreme sacrament of their creed, should have been destitute of any means of safeguarding common decency. But the fear of the priest was paramount; and the entire meeting waited and fidgeted for over an hour in embarrassed silence. Ultimately, a baker named Banfield got up trembling and inquired timorously: "May I ask Mr. Clapham if it is Mrs. Clapham's intention to break bread this morning?" Mrs. Clapham then bounced out of the room and slammed the door, after which the meeting proceeded as usual.

Bourbonism still survives among some people in England. I remember explaining some action of mine to Gerald Kelly as taken on my lawyer's advice. He answered contemptuously "Lawyers are servants!" The social position of the Lord Chancellor and other legal officers of the Crown meant no more to him than the preponderance of lawyers in the councils of the nation. He stuck to the futile stupidity that any man who used his brains to earn a living was an inferior. This is an extreme case of an exceptionally stupid standpoint, but the psychological root of the attitude permeates English conceptions. The definition of self-respect contains a clause to include pitiless contempt for some other class. In my childhood, Mrs. Clapham—one of whose adventures has been already recorded—once came to the grain in conjugal infelicity. "How could I ever love that man?" she exclaimed; "why, he takes his salt with his knife!" There is nothing to warn a fishmonger's wife that such sublime devotion to etiquette is in any way ridiculous. English society is impregnated from top to

bottom with this spirit. The supreme satisfaction is to be able to despise one's neighbour, and this fact goes far to account for religious intolerance. It is evidently consoling to reflect that the people next door are headed for hell.

Practically all boys are born with the aristocratic spirit.* In most cases they are broken down, partly by bullying, partly by experience. In the case of Alick, he was the only son of a father who was naturally a leader of men. In him, therefore, this spirit grew unchecked. He knew no superior but his father; and though that father ostentatiously avoided assuming authority over the other Brethren, it was, of course, none the less there. The boy seems to have despised from the first the absence of hierarchy among the Brethren, though at the same time they formed the most exclusive body on earth, being the only people that were going to heaven. There is thus an extreme psychological contradiction inherent in the situation. It is improbable that Alick was aware at the time of the real feelings which must have been implanted in him by this environment; but the main result was undoubtedly to stimulate his pride and ambition in a most unwholesome (?) degree. His social and financial position, the obvious envy of his associates, his undoubted personal prowess, physical and intellectual, all combined to make it impossible for him to be satisfied to take any place in the world but the top. The Plymouth Brethren refused to take any part in politics. Among them, the peer and the peasant met theoretically as equals, so that the social system of England was simply ignored. The boy could not aspire to become Prime Minister, or even King; he was already apart from and beyond all that. It will be

* It is purely a question of virility: compare the noble races, Arabs, Pathans, Ghurkas, Japanese, etc., with the "moral" races. Of course, absence of caste determines loss of virility, and *vice versa*.

seen that as soon as he arrived at an age where ambitions are compelled to assume concrete form, his position became extremely difficult. The earth was not big enough to hold him.

In looking back over his life up to May, 1886, he can find little consecution and practically no coherence in his recollections. But from that month onwards there is a change. It is as if the event which occurred at that time created a new faculty in his mind. A new factor had arisen, and its name was Death. He was called home from school in the middle of the term to attend a special prayer-meeting at Redhill. His father had been taken ill. The local doctor had sent him to see Sir James Paget, who had advised an immediate operation for cancer of the tongue. Brethren from far and near had been summoned to help to discover the Lord's Will in the matter. The upshot was that the operation was declined; it was decided to treat the disease by Count Mattei's Electro-Homeopathy, a now discarded system of unusually outrageous quackery. No doctor addicted to this form of swindling being locally available, The Grange was given up and a house called Glenburnie taken at Southampton.

On March 5th, 1887, Edward Crowley died. The course of the disease had been practically painless. Only one point is of interest to our present purpose. On the night of March 5th, the boy—away at school—dreamed that his father was dead. There was no reason for this in the ordinary way, as the reports had been highly optimistic. The boy remembers that the quality of the dream was entirely different from anything that he had known. The news of the death did not arrive in Cambridge till the following morning. The interest of this fact depends on a

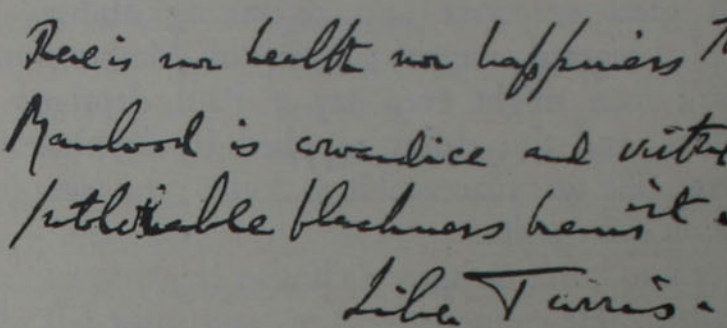
subsequent parallel. During the years that followed, the boy—and the man—dreamed repeatedly that his mother was dead; but on the day of her death he—then 3,000 miles away—had the same dream, save that it differed from the others by possessing this peculiar indescribable but unmistakeable quality that he remembered in connection with the death of his father.

From the moment of the funeral the boy's life entered on an entirely new phase. The change was radical. Within three weeks of his return to school he got into trouble for the first time. He does not remember for what offence,* but only that his punishment was diminished on account of his bereavement. This was the first symptom of a complete reversal of his attitude to life in every respect. It seems obvious that his father's death must have been causally connected with it. But even so, the events remain inexplicable. The conditions of his school-life, for instance, can hardly have altered, yet his reaction to them makes it almost incredible that it was the same boy.

Previous to the death of Edward Crowley, the recollections of his son, however vivid or detailed, appear to him strangely impersonal. In throwing back his mind to that period, he feels, although attention constantly elicits new facts, that he is investigating the behaviour of somebody else. It is only from this point that he begins to think of himself in the first person. From this point, however, he does so; and is able to continue this autohagiography in a more conventional style by speaking of himself as I.

* On revision, he thinks it was "talking on the march," a whispered word to the other half of his scale of the "crocodile."

STANZA IV



I had naturally no idea at the time that the death of my father would make any practical difference to my environment. In most similar cases it probably would not have done so. Most widows naturally remain in the groove.

As things were, I found myself in a totally new environment. My father's religious opinions had tended to alienate him from his family; and the friends whom he had made in his own circle had no interest in visiting my mother. I was thrown into the atmosphere of her family. She moved to London in order to be near her brother, whom till then I had hardly met.

Tom Bond Bishop was a prominent figure in religious and philanthropic circles in London. He held a more or less important position in the Custom House, but had no ambitions connected with the Civil Service. He devoted the whole of his spare time and energy to the propagation of the extraordinarily narrow, ignorant and bigoted Evangelicalism in which he believed. He had founded the Children's Scripture Union and the Children's Special Service Mission. The former dictates to children what passages of the Bible they shall read daily: the latter drags them from their play at the seaside, and hands them over to the ravings of pious undergraduates or hired gospel-

geysers. Within his limits, he was a man of acute intelligence and great executive and organising ability. A Manning plus bigoted sincerity; a Cotton Mather minus imagination; one might even say a Paul deprived of logical ability, and this defect supplied by invulnerable cocksureness. He was inaccessible to doubt; he *knew* that he was *right* on every point.

I once put it to him: suppose a climber roped to another who has fallen. He cannot save him, and must fall also unless he cut the rope. What should he do? My uncle replied, "God would never allow a man to be placed in such a position"!!!! This unreason made him mentally and morally lower than the cattle of the fields. He obeyed blind savage impulses, and took them for the sanctions of the Almighty.

"To the lachrymal glands of a crocodile he added the bowels of compassion of a cast-iron rhinoceros; with the meanness and cruelty of a eunuch he combined the calculating avarice of a Scotch Jew, without the whisky of the one or the sympathetic imagination of the other. Perfidious and hypocritical as the Jesuit of Protestant fable, he was unctuous as Uriah Heep, and for the rest possessed the vices of Joseph Surface and Tartuffe; yet, being without the human weaknesses which make them possible, he was a more virtuous, and therefore a more odious, villain.

"In feature resembling a shaven ape, in figure a dislocated Dachshund, his personal appearance was at the first glance unattractive. But the clothes made by a City tailor lent such general harmony to the whole as to reconcile the observer to the phenomenon observed.

"Of unrivalled cunning, his address was plausible; he concealed his genius under a mask of matchless mediocrity,

and his intellectual force under the cloak of piety. In religion he was an Evangelical, that type of Nonconformist who remains in the Church in the hope of capturing its organisation and its revenues.

"An associate of such creatures of an inscrutable Providence as Coote and Torrey, he surpassed the one in sanctimoniousness, the other in bigotry, though he always thought blackmail too risky, and slander a tactical error."*

No more cruel fanatic, no meaner villain, ever walked this earth. My father, wrong-headed as he was, had humanity and a certain degree of common-sense; he had a logical mind, and never confused spiritual with material issues. He could never have believed, like my uncle, that the cut and colour of "Sunday clothes" could be a matter of importance to the Deity. Having decided that faith and not works was essential to salvation, he could not attach any vital importance to works. With him, the reason for refraining from sin was simply that it showed ingratitude to the Saviour. In the case of the sinner, it was almost a hopeful sign that he should sin thoroughly. He was more likely to reach that conviction of sin which would show him his need of salvation. The material punishment of sin (again) was likely to bring him to his knees. Good works in the sinner were worthless. "All our righteousness is as filthy rags." It was the Devil's favourite trick to induce people to rely on their good character. The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican taught this clearly enough.

I do not know whether my Uncle Tom could have found any arguments against this theory, but in practice he had a horror of what he called sin which was exaggerated almost to the point of insanity. His talents, I may almost

* I quote from an Obituary of him published during his life.

say his genius,* gave him tremendous influence. In his own house he was a ruthless, petty tyrant; and it was into this den of bitter slavery that I was suddenly hurled from my position of fresh air, freedom and heirship.

He lived in London, in what was then called Thistle Grove. The name has since been changed to Drayton Gardens, despite a petition enthusiastically supported by Bishop; the objection was that a Public House in the neighbourhood was called The Drayton Arms. This is typical of my uncle's attitude to life. His sense of Humour. When I called him "Uncle," he would snigger: "Oh my prophetic soul, my uncle!" But the time came when I knew most of Hamlet by heart, and when he next shot off his "joke," I continued the quotation, replying sternly: "Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast!"—I am, in a way, glad to think that at the end of his long and obscene life I was reconciled with him. The very last letter he ever received from me admitted (if a little grudgingly) that his mind was so distorted that he had really no idea how vile a thing he was. I think this must have stirred his sense of shame. At least, I never received any answer.

I suppose that the household at Thistle Grove was as representative of one part of England as could possibly have been imagined. It was nondescript. It was neither upper nor lower middle-class. It had not sufficient individuality even to belong to a category. My grandmother was a particularly charming old lady. She was inexpressibly dignified in her black silks and her lace cap. She had been imported from the country by the exigencies of her son's position in the Civil Service. She was extremely

* He devised a most ingenious method of teaching history by charts, each nation being represented by a river of greater or less breadth as it rose or fell, annexations by tributaries, etc. etc.

lovable ; I never remember hearing a cross word fall from her. She was addicted to the infamous vice of Bezique. It was, of course, impossible to have " The Devil's Picture Books " in a house frequented by the leading lights of Evangelicalism. But my Aunt Ada had painted a pack of cards in which the suits were roses, violets, etc. It was the same game ; but the camouflage satisfied my uncle's conscience. No Pharisee ever scoured the outside of the cup and platter more assiduously than he.

My grandmother was the second wife of her husband ; of the first marriage there were two surviving children ; Anne, a stout and sensual old maid, who always filled me with intense physical repulsion ; she was shiny and greasy with a blob nose and thick wet lips. Every night she tucked a bottle of stout under her arm and took it to bed with her—adding this invariable " joke "—" My baby ! " Even to-day, when people happen to drink stout at a table where I am sitting, I manage instinctively not to see it.

Her brother John had lived for many years in Australia in enjoyment of wealth and civic distinction. His wealth failed when his health broke ; and he returned to England to live with the family. He was a typical hardy out-door man with all the Colonial freedom of thought, speech and manner. He found himself in the power of his half-brother's acrid code. He had to smoke his pipe by stealth, and he was bullied about his soul until his mind gave way. At family prayers he was perpetually being prayed at ; his personality being carefully described lest the Lord should mistake his identity. The description would have suited the average murderer as observed by a singularly uncharitable pacifist.

I am particularly proud of myself for the way I behaved

to him. It was impossible to help liking the simple-minded genial soul of the man. I remember one day at Streatham, after he and my grandmother had come to live with us, that I tried to cheer him up. Shaking all over, he explained to me almost in tears that he was afraid he was "not all right with Christ." I look back almost with incredulity upon myself. It was not I that spoke; I answered him with brusque authority, though I was a peculiarly shy boy not yet sixteen. I told him plainly that the whole thing was nonsense, that Christ was a fable, that there was no such thing as sin, and that he ought to thank his stars that he had lived his whole life away from the hypocritical crew of trembling slaves who believed in such nonsense. Already my Unconscious Self was singing in my ears that terrific climax of Browning's Renan-chorus:

> "Oh dread succession to a dizzy post!
> Sad sway of sceptre whose mere touch appals!
> Ghastly dethronement cursed by those the most
> On whose repugnant brow the crown next falls!"

However, he became melancholy-mad; and died in that condition. I remember writing to my mother and my uncle that they were guilty of "murder most foul as in the best it is; but this most foul, strange, and unnatural."

I lay weight upon this episode because my attitude, as I remember it, seems incompatible with my general spiritual life of the period, as will appear later.

I was genuinely fond of my Aunt Ada. She was womanly in the old-fashioned sense of the word; a purely passive type. Naturally talented though she was, she was both ignorant and bigoted. In her situation, she could not have been anything else. But her opinions did not interfere

with her charity. A woman of infinite kindness. Her health was naturally delicate ; an attack of rheumatic fever had damaged her heart, and she died before her time. The meanness and selfishness of my Uncle Tom were principally responsible. He would not engage a secretary ; he forced her to slave for the Scripture Union, and it killed her.

One anecdote throws a curious light upon my character in these early days, and also reveals her as possessed of a certain sense of humour. Some years before, on the platform at Redhill with my father, I had seen on the bookstall " Across Patagonia," by Lady Florence Dixie. The long name fascinated me ; I begged him to buy it for me, and he did. The name stuck, and I decided to be King of Patagonia. Psycho-analysts will learn with pleasure that the name of my capital was Margaragstagregorstoryaka. " Margar " was derived from Margaret, queen of Henry VI, who was my favourite character in history. This is highly significant, as indicating the type of woman that I have always admired. I want her to be wicked, independent, courageous, ambitious, and so on. I cannot place the " ragstag," but it is probably euphonic. " Gregor " is, of course, my cousin ; " story " is what was then my favourite form of amusement. I cannot place the " yaka," but that again is probably euphonic.

I cannot imagine why, at this very early age, I cultivated a profound aversion to, and contempt for, Queen Victoria. Merely, perhaps, the clean and decent instinct of a child ! I announced my intention of leading the forces of Patagonia against her. One day my Aunt Ada took me to tea at Gunters' ; and an important-looking official document was handed to me. It was Queen Victoria's reply. She was going to blow my capital to pieces, and treat me personally

in a very unpleasant manner. This document was sealed with a label marked with an anchor to suggest naval frightfulness, taken for this purpose from the end of a reel of cotton. But I took the document quite seriously, and was horribly frightened.

The dinginess of my uncle's household, the atmosphere of severe disapproval of the Universe in general, and the utter absence of the spirit of life, combined to make me detest my mother's family. There was, incidentally, a grave complication, for my father's death had increased the religious bigotry of my mother very greatly ; and although she was so fond of her family, she was bound to regard them as very doubtful candidates for heaven. This attitude was naturally inexplicable to a child of such tender years ; and the effect on me was to develop an almost petulant impatience with the whole question of religion. My Aunt Ada was my mother's favourite sister ; yet at her funeral she refused to enter the church during the service, and waited outside in the rain, only rejoining the procession when the corpse repassed those accursèd portals on its way to the cemetery. She stood by the grave while the parson read the service. It was apparently the architectural diabolism to which she most objected.

There was also an objection to the Liturgy, on numerous grounds. It seems incredible, but is true, that the Plymouth Brethren regarded the "Lord's Prayer" as a "vain repetition, as do the heathen." It was forbidden to use it ! ! Jesus had indeed given this prayer as an example of how to pray ; but everyone was expected to make up his own supplications *ex tempore*.

The situation resulted in a very amusing way. Having got to the point of saying : "Evil, be thou my good," I

racked my brains to discover some really abominable crimes to do. In a moment of desperate daring I sneaked one Sunday morning into the church frequented by my Uncle Tom on Streatham Common, prepared, so to speak, to wallow in it. It was one of the most bitter disappointments of my life! I could not detect anything which satisfied my ideals of damnation.

For a year or two after my father's death my mother did not seem able to settle down; and during the holidays we either stayed with Bishop or wandered in hotels and hydros. I think she was afraid of bringing me up in London; but when my uncle moved to Streatham she compromised by taking a house in Polwarth Road. I hated it, because there were bigger houses in the neighbourhood.

I am not quite sure whether I am the most outrageous snob that ever lived, or whether I am not a snob at all. The truth of the matter is, I think, that I will not acquiesce in anything but the very best of its kind. I don't in the least mind going without a thing altogether, but if I have it at all it has got to be A1. England is a very bad place for me. I cannot endure people who are either superior or inferior to others, but only those who, whatever their station in life, are consciously unique and supreme. In the East, especially among Mohammedans, one can make friends with the very coolies; they respect themselves and others. They are gentlemen. But in England the spirit of independence is rare. Men of high rank and position nearly always betray consciousness of inferiority to, and dependence upon, others. Snobbishness, in this sense, is so widely spread that I rarely feel at home, unless with a supreme genius like Augustus John.

Aubrey Tanqueray is typical. He must not forfeit the

esteem of his "little parish," and avoids mortification by shifting from one parish to another. When Paula asks him: "Do you trouble yourself about what servants think?" he answers: "Of course." If one had to worry about one's actions in respect of other people's ideas, one might as well be buried alive in an ant-heap, or married to an ambitious violinist. Whether that man is the Prime Minister, modifying his opinions to catch votes, or a bourgeois in terror lest some harmless act should be misunderstood and outrage some petty convention, that man is an inferior man, and I do not want to have anything to do with him any more than I want to eat canned salmon. Of course the world forces us all to compromise with our environment to some extent, and we only waste our strength if we fight pitched battles for points which are not worth a skirmish. It is only a faddist who refuses to conform with conventions of dress and the like. But our sincerity should be Roman about things that really matter to us. And I am still in doubt, as I write these words, as to how far it is right to employ strategy and diplomacy in order to gain one's point. The great men of the world have stood up and taken their medicine. Bradlaugh and Burton did not lose in the end by being downright. I never approved the super-subtlety of Huxley's campaign against Gladstone; and as for Swinburne, he died outright when he became respectable. Adaptation to one's environment makes for a sort of survival; but after all, the supreme victory is only won by those who prove themselves of so much harder stuff than the rest that no power on earth is able to destroy them. The people who have really made history are the martyrs.

I suppose that there comes to all of us only too often the

feeling which Freud calls the Œdipus Complex. We want to repose, to be at peace with our fellows whom we love, who misunderstand us, and for whose love we are hungry. We want to make terms, we want to surrender. But I have always found that, though I could acquiesce in some such line of conduct, though I could make all preparations for accommodation, yet when it came to the point, I was utterly unable to do the base, irrevocable act. I cannot even do evil that good may come. I abhor Jesuitry. I would rather lose than win by stratagem. The utmost that I have been able to manage is to consent to put forward my principles in a form which will not openly outrage ordinary susceptibilities. But I feel so profoundly the urgency of doing my Will that it is practically impossible for me to write on Shakespeare and the Musical Glasses without introducing the spiritual and moral principles which are the only things in myself that I can identify with myself.

This characteristic is evidently inherited from my father. His integrity was absolute. He lived entirely by his theological convictions. Christ might return at any moment. "Even as the lightning lighteneth out of the East and lighteneth even unto the West, so is the coming of the Son of Man." He would have to give an account of "every idle word." It was a horrifying thought to him that he might be caught by the Second Advent at a moment when he was not actively and intensely engaged on the work which God had sent him into the world to do. This sense of the importance of the lightest act, of the value of every moment, has been a tragically intense factor in my life. I have always grudged the time necessary for eating, sleeping, and dressing. I have invented costumes with the

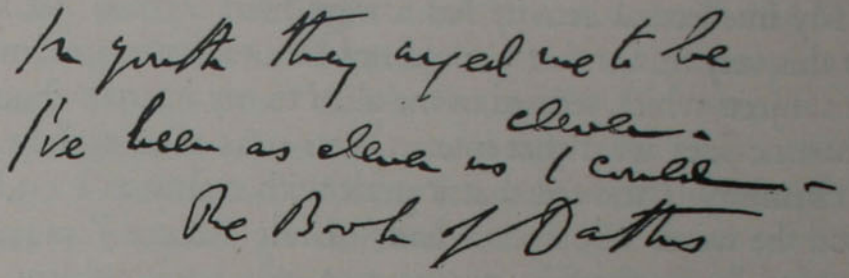
sole object of minimising the waste of time* and the distraction of attention involved. I never wear underclothing. The "magnetism" of men and women has for its physical basis sweat: in health this is sparse and very fragrant. Any defect should be instantly remedied: there is no surer danger sign than foul or unduly profuse perspiration.

This quality determined much of my life at school. I instinctively understood that I did not want academic knowledge as such; but since I was under duress, the best plan for avoiding interruption was to acquit myself well in class and in examination. I had no ambitions; but I invariably set myself to acquire the necessary knowledge with the minimum of exertion. My natural abilities, especially my memory, made this easy. I soon discovered that to distinguish myself in school was in the nature of a conjuror's trick. It is hard to analyse my method or to be sure of the analysis; but I think the essence of the plan was to make certain of the minimum required, and to add a superstructure of one or two abstruse points which I would manage to bring to the notice of the master or the examiner so as to give him the idea that I had prepared myself with unusual thoroughness.

It occurs to me that this confession sounds rather strange, after my previous remarks about integrity. My justification is that I considered schoolmasters as importunate and possibly dangerous beggars. I was not in a position to fight; and I could not afford a good sixpence, so I put them off with a bad one. It was their own fault for plaguing me.

* In Mexico City in 1900 Eckenstein counselled me to turn back the heels of my stockings to facilitate putting them on. I objected to the waste of time involved. This developed into a long argument on the point: he won, but I couldn't believe it, and am yet unconverted.

STANZA V



I found nothing in the school curriculum which interested me. I had no inkling of it at the time, but I was already in the thrall of the search for reality. Mathematics captured my imagination. I was brilliant at arithmetic until the subject degenerated into "Practice," which was a matter for grocers. I might have liked geometry; but the arid method of presentation in Euclid put me off. I was asked to memorise what I did not understand; and, my memory being so good, it refused to be insulted in that manner. Similarly, I could never memorise the ordinary "repetitions" of Greek and Latin poetry. I took to trigonometry with ardour; but became disgusted as soon as I found that my calculations were to be applied to such vulgarities as architecture. The only pure science for me was algebra, and I progressed in that with amazing rapidity. On one occasion, at Malvern, the mathematical master wished to devote the whole hour to the three elder boys, who were going up for some scholarship, and set us juniors to work out quadratic equations. There were sixty-three in the chapter set. At the end of forty minutes I stood up and said: "Please, sir, what shall I do now?" He would not believe that I had worked them correctly, but I had. I seem to have an instinct for appreciating the

relations of pure numbers, and could find factors by intuition.

My intellectual activity has always been intense. It was for this very reason that I could not bear to waste a moment on subjects which seemed to me alien to my interest, though I had no idea what that interest was. As soon as I heard of chemistry, I realised that it dealt with reality as I understood the word. So I soon had "Little Roscoe" practically by heart, though it was not a school subject. I furnished a laboratory in the house at Streatham, and spent all my time and money in making experiments. It may be interesting to mention how my mind worked. I had heard of the petard as a military engine; and I was hoist with it. Roscoe told me that chloride of nitrogen was the most powerful and sensitive explosive known. My idea was to dissolve it in some volatile fluid; one could then leave a bucket of it at the enemy's gate. The fluid would evaporate, and the chloride explode at the first vibration. After several minor misadventures, I collected it over benzine—about a quart—and the whole thing exploded and nearly burnt the house down.

I had also a plan for manufacturing diamonds. By various analogies I came to the conclusion that a true solution of carbon might be made in iron, and I proposed to crystallise it out in the regular way. The apparatus required was, however, hardly within the compass of a boy of fourteen, and my diamonds are still theoretical.

Talking of theory, I came to the conclusion, which at that time was a damnable heresy and a dangerous delusion, that all the elements were modifications of one substance. My main argument was that the atomic weights of cobalt and nickel were practically identical, and the characteristic

colours of their salts suggested to me that they were geometrical isomers like dextrose and lævulose. This is all obvious enough to-day, but I still think that it was not bad for a boy in his 'teens in the early 'nineties, whose only source of information was "Little Roscoe."

An amusing situation arose out of this early devotion to the art of Flamel. In my last term at Malvern a panic-stricken board of governors determined to create a Science Side, and started a chemistry class. With laudable economy they put it in charge of one Mr. Faber, a broken-down Classical Master, possibly in the belief that as he had a German name he knew as much as Ostwald. The result was that I had constantly to correct him in class; and he could do nothing, because the authorities, when consulted, proved to be on my side.

I had thus no difficulty at school as far as lessons were concerned, but in my three years at Champney's I had no lack of trouble; the nature of this can only be understood if I adduce a few facts to indicate the atmosphere. I used to tell people about my school-life, and met with such consistent incredulity that I made a little collection of incidents in the Preface to my "World's Tragedy." I quote the passage as it stands.

A Boyhood in Hell.

The Revd. H. d'Arcy Champney, M.A. of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, had come out of sect.

He had voted at the Parliamentary elections by crossing out the names of the candidates and writing: "I vote for King Jesus."

He had started a school for the Sons of Brethren at 51 Bateman Street, Cambridge. May God bite

into the bones of men the pain of that hell on earth (I have prayed often) that by them it may be sowed with salt, accursed for ever! May the maiden that passes it be barren, and the pregnant woman that beholdeth it abort! May the birds of the air refuse to fly over it! May it stand as a curse, as a fear, as an hate, among men! May the wicked dwell therein! May the light of the Sun be withheld therefrom, and the light of the Moon not lighten it! May it become the home of the shells of the dead, and may the demons of the pit inhabit it! May it be accursed, accursed—accursed for ever and ever!

And still, standing as I stand in the prime of early manhood, free from all the fetters of the body and the mind, do I curse the memory thereof unto the ages.

It was a good enough school from the point of view of examiners, I dare say. Morally and physically, it was an engine of destruction and corruption. I am just going to put down a few facts haphazard as they come to my memory; you may form your own judgment.

1. We were allowed to play Cricket, but not to score runs, lest it should excite the vice of "emulation."

2. Champney told me, a child of not yet twelve years old, that he had never consummated his marriage. (Only the very acute verbal memory which I possess enabled me years after to recall and interpret his meaning. He used a coarser phrase.)

3. We were told that "the Lord had a special care of the school, and brought to light that which was done in darkness," etc., etc. *ad nauseam*. "The instrument was on this occasion so-and-so, who had

nobly come forward," etc., etc. In other words, hypocrisy and sneaking were the only virtues.

Naturally, one of several boys who might be involved in the same offence would take fright and save his skin by sneaking. The informer was always believed implicitly, as against probability, or even possibility, with complete disregard of the testimony of other and independent witnesses.

For instance, a boy named Glascott, with insane taint, told Mr. Champney that he had visited me (12 years old) at my mother's house during the holidays—true so far, he had—and found me lying drunk at the bottom of the stairs. My mother was never asked about this ; nor was I told of it. I was put into " Coventry," i.e. no master nor boy might speak to me, or I to them. I was fed on bread and water ; during playhours I worked in the schoolroom ; during work-hours I walked solitary round and round the playground. I was expected to " confess " the crime of which I was not only innocent, but unaccused.

This punishment, which I believe criminal authorities would consider severe on a poisoner, went on for a term and a half. I was, at last, threatened with expulsion for my refusal to " confess," and so dreadful a picture of the horrors of expulsion did they paint me—the guilty wretch, shunned by his fellows, slinks on through life to a dishonoured grave, etc.—that I actually chose to endure my tortures and to thank my oppressor.

Physically, I broke down. The strain and the misery affected my kidneys ; and I had to leave school

altogether for two years. I should add in fairness that there were other accusations against me, though, as you shall hear, almost equally silly.

I learnt at last, through the intervention of my uncle, in a lucid interval, what I was supposed to have done. I was said to have tried "to corrupt Chamberlain"—not our great patriotic statesman, shifty Joe—but a boy. (I was 12 years old, and quite ignorant of all sexual matters till long after.) Also I had "held a mock prayer meeting." This I remembered. I had strolled up to a group of boys in the playground, who were indeed holding one. As they saw me one said: "Brother Crowley will now lead us in prayer." Brother Crowley was too wary, and walked away. But instead of doing what a wise boy would have done: gone straight to the head, and accused them of forty-six distinct unmentionable crimes, I let things slide. So, fearing that I might go, they hurried off themselves, and told him how that wicked Crowley had tried to lead them away from Jesus.

Worse, I had called Page I a Pharisee. That was true; I had said it. Dreadful of me! And Page I, who "walked very close to Jesus," of course went and told.

Yes, they all walked very close to Jesus—as close as Judas did.

4. A boy named Barton was sentenced to 120 strokes of the cane on his bare shoulders, for some petty theft of which he was presumably innocent.

Superb was the process of trial. It began by an extra long prayer-time, and Joshua's account of the

sin of Achan, impressively read. Next, an hour or two about the Lord's care of the school, the way He brought sin to light. Next, when well worked up, and all our nerves on the jump, who stole what? Silence. Next, the Lord's care in providing a witness—like the witnesses against Naboth! Then the witness and his story, as smooth as a policeman's. Next, sentence. Last, execution, with intervals of prayer!

Champney's physique being impaired, one may suppose by his excessive devotion to Jesus, he arranged to give 60 strokes one day, and 60 the next.

My memory fails—perhaps Barton will one day oblige with his reminiscences—but I fancy the first day came so near killing him that he escaped the second.

I remember one licking I got—on the legs, because flogging the buttocks excites the victim's sensuality!—15 minutes prayer, 15 strokes of the cane, 15 minutes more prayer, 15 more strokes—and more prayer to top it!

5. On Sunday the day was devoted to "religion." Morning prayers and sermon (about 45 Min.). Morning "Meeting" (1½ to 2 hrs.). Open-air preaching on Parker's Piece* (say 1 hour). Bible reading and learning by heart. Reading of the few books "sanctioned for Sunday" (say 2 hours). Prayer-meeting (called voluntary, but to stay away meant that some sneak in the school would accuse you

* Evangelizing was almost all plain terrorism. Besides the torments of hell, there were "judgments." For instance, the Blasphemous Butcher who, begged to get "washed in the Blood of the Lamb," replied: "Right you are, I've got a lamb of my own." *And that very same night his Reason tottered on its throne,* etc.

of something next day), (say 1 hour). Evening prayer and Sermon (say 30 minutes). Preaching of the Gospel in the meeting-room (1½ hours). Ditto on Parker's Piece (say 1 hour). Prayer before retiring (say ½ hour).

6. The "Badgers' Meeting." Every Monday night the school was ranged round the back of the big schoolroom, and the scourings of Barnswell (Cambridge's slum) let in, fed, preached to, and dismissed.

Result, epidemics of ringworm, measles, and mumps.

Oh no! not a result; the Lord's hand was heavy upon us because of some undiscovered sin.

I might go on for a long while, but I will not. I hope there are some people in the world happy enough to think that I am lying, or at least exaggerating. But I pledge my word to the literal truth of all I have said, and there are plenty of witnesses alive to confirm me, or to refute me. I have given throughout the actual names, addresses and other details.

It is impossible to suppose that the character of the school had completely changed between my father's death and my return from the funeral. Yet before that I was completely happy and in sympathy with my surroundings. Not three weeks later, Ishmael was my middle name. I cannot account for it at all satisfactorily. I had been perfectly genuine in my ambition to lead a life of holiness; the idea of intimate communion with "Jesus" was constantly present to my mind. I do not remember any steps in the volte-face. I asked one of the masters one day how it was that Jesus was three days and three nights in the grave,

although crucified on Friday and risen again on Sunday morning. He could not explain, and said that it had never been explained. So I formulated the ambition to become a shining light in Christianity by doing this thing that had never yet been done. This idea, by the way, is very characteristic. I am totally unable to take any interest in doing anything which has been done before. But tell me of an alleged impossibility; and health, wealth, life itself are nothing. I am out to do it. The apparent discrepancy in the Gospel narrative aroused no doubt in my mind as to the literal truth of either of the texts. Indeed, my falling away from grace was not occasioned by any intellectual qualms; I accepted the theology of the Plymouth Brethren. In fact, I could hardly conceive of the existence of people who might doubt it. I simply went over to Satan's side; and to this hour I cannot tell why.

But I found myself as passionately eager to serve my new master as I had been to serve the old. I was anxious to distinguish myself by committing sin. Here again my attitude was extraordinarily subtle. It never occurred to me to steal, or in any other way to infringe the decalogue. Such conduct would have been petty and contemptible. I wanted a supreme spiritual sin; and I had not the smallest idea how to set about it. There was a good deal of morbid curiosity among the saints about "the sin against the Holy Ghost" which "could never be forgiven." Nobody knew what it was. It was even considered rather blasphemous to offer any very positive conjecture on the point. The idea seems to have been that it was something like an ill-natured practical joke on the part of Jesus. This mysterious offence which could never be forgiven might be inadvertently committed by the greatest saint alive, with

the result that he would be bowled out at the very gate of glory. Here was another impossibility to catch my youthful fancy ; I must find out what that sin was, and do it very thoroughly.

For (evidently) my position was exceedingly precarious. I was opposed to an omnipotent God ; and for all I knew to the contrary, He might have predestined me to be saved. No matter how much I disbelieved in Jesus, no matter how many crimes I piled up, He might get me in spite of myself. The only possibility of outwitting Him was to bring Him up against His own pledge that this particular sin should never be forgiven, with a certificate from the recording angel that I had duly done it.

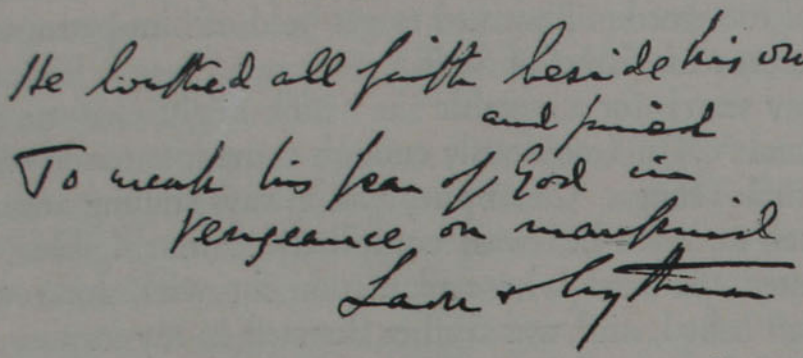
It seems incredible that such insane conclusions should form the basis of practical action in any human being above the level of a Bushman. But they follow logically enough from the blasphemous and superstitious premisses of Christian theology. Besides this, I had never a moment's inclination to take the material world seriously. In the *Apologia pro Vita Sua,* Cardinal Newman tells us, I suspect truthfully, that as a child he wished that The Arabian Nights were true. As we all know, he gratified his ambitions by accepting for reality the Freudian Phantasm of hashed-up Paganism with Semitic sauce which led him to the Hat. But I went further. My senses and my rational judgment created a sub-conscious feeling of uneasiness that supernaturalism might not be true. This insulted my inmost consciousness of myself. But the reply was not to accept the false for the true, but to determine to make it true. I resolved passionately to reach the spiritual causes of phenomena, and to dominate the material world which I detested by their means. I was not content to

believe in a personal devil and serve him, in the ordinary sense of the word. I wanted to get hold of him personally and become his Chief of Staff.

In my search for a suitable sin which might earn me the diabolical V.C., I obviously enough came into touch with the Usual Thing. Champney was always sniffing around it, but—to me—he was completely unintelligible. I frequented the boys whose reputation for wickedness was best established, and was further directed in my inquiry by an intuitive sense of magnetism or appreciation of physiognomy. But the reign of terror was so firmly established in the school that nobody dared tell me outright the nature of this sin, even when the knowledge of it was admitted. Mysterious hints were given; and at last a boy named Gibson told me what action to make, but he did not tell me to what object to apply the process. It seems extraordinary that nature should have afforded me no indication. I nowise connected the organ of reproduction with any voluntary act. I made conjectures dictated by purely intellectual considerations, and carried out experiments based on their results; but they were absolutely ill-directed. I never guessed what organ was in question. The discovery was delayed for years.

My revolt must have manifested itself by actions which were technically not blameworthy. I cannot accuse myself of any overt crime. The battle between myself and the school was conducted on the Magical Plane, so to speak. It was as if I had made wax figures of the most inoffensive sort, that yet were recognised by the spiritual instinct of Champney as idols or instruments of witchcraft. I was punished with absolute injustice and stupidity, yet at the same time the mystical apprehension of Champney made no mistake.

STANZA VI



I must mention the intervention of my Uncle Jonathan in the matter of the Badgers' Meeting, and that of my Uncle Tom in the final eruption.

Jonathan Crowley, my father's elder brother, was the beau ideal of the noble Patrician. He looked like a Roman emperor as we romantically imagine him to have been, not as we see him in most sculpture. The tremendous brow, the eagle eyes, the great hooked arrogant nose, the firm mouth and the indomitable jaw, combined to make him one of the most strikingly handsome men that I have ever seen.

He lived in a stately splendour which had no hint of ostentation. I never knew his first wife, by whom he had two children, Claude and Agnes. Claude was strikingly ugly, so much so as to be attractive, and he had a touch of deformity without being actually a hunchback. The same traits appeared in his mental and moral character. I always thought of him admiringly as Richard III ; but he was merely weak and feeble-minded. Agnes inherited her father's aristocratic haughtiness and a share of his good looks. She was too proud to marry, and the repression preyed on her mind until she developed an *idée fixe*. For the last thirty years of her life she was constantly announcing her

engagement and drawing up marriage contracts, which never came to anything. She was also possessed by the Demon of Litigation, and imagined herself wronged by various members of the family.

My uncle married the governess of the children. This was a lady of a distinguished Saxon family, who could trace her pedigree to the time of Edward the Confessor. Tall, thin, distinguished, and highly educated, she made an admirable châtelaine. Her personality appealed strongly to me, and she took that place in my affections which I could not give to my mother. She became a prominent member of The Primrose League, and it was through her influence with Lord Salisbury and Lord Ritchie that I obtained my nomination for the Diplomatic Service.

My uncle and aunt visited me at Cambridge. I told them about the Badgers' Meeting, not in a spirit of complaint, but rather as Sir Richard Burton might have described his adventures among savages. Uncle Jonathan did not see the matter in that light at all. He made inquiries which confirmed my story; and told Champney point blank that this sort of thing had got to stop. Champney attempted to bluster, but on being threatened with the sanitary authorities, knuckled under. The matter, however, did not stop there. My uncle saw clearly that I was being brutally ill-treated; and he made an application to the Courts which resulted in my being called to see Mr. Justice Stirling in Chambers. I have always been intensely loyal even to my enemies, and (for all I knew) the Judge might send my mother and her brother to prison. So I lied like a little man, and pretended that I was perfectly happy at the school. I do not think that he was entirely fooled by my protestations; and although I was not

made a Ward in Chancery, a promise was exacted that I should go to a Public School and University as soon as I had passed the "Cambridge Local."

Meanwhile, Nature took my part. At the end of the first term of my punishment I was so obviously ill during the holidays that questions were asked, and I complained to my mother of the ill-treatment. Instead of investigating the circumstances, they sent for Champney without saying anything to me. I was taken over to my Uncle Tom's house one evening, and found myself penned in a corner of the room by the fulminating headmaster. The surprise terrified me, and I did not dare to deny anything. But there was still no accusation made against me. Champney did not even tell my mother and Uncle Tom what I was supposed to have done. I was sent back to the school to serve the remainder of my sentence. At the end of that term, however, for some reason whose nature I cannot guess, Uncle Tom decided to come up to Cambridge and make further inquiries. Warned of the visit, Champney put on extra pressure. I must confess or be expelled. I did my utmost to invent satisfactory abominations; but as of course these were not connected in any way with the real accusations, I merely made matters worse. On Uncle Tom's arrival I once more resorted to telling the simple truth, that I had no idea what I had done. This time my uncle lapsed from righteousness to the extent of insisting on knowing what the accusations were. Champney told him. My uncle had sense enough to see that they were all absurd, put down Champney for a lunatic, and took me away from the school. As a matter of fact, within a very short time the insanity of the headmaster became patent, and the school was broken up in consequence.

ÆT. XIV CIRCA

As regards myself, the mischief had been done. I, who had been a happy, healthy, good-natured, popular boy, had learned to endure complete solitude for months at a time. I spoke to no boy, and the masters always addressed me, when necessity compelled them, with sanctimonious horror. The bread and water diet, and the punishment of perpetual walking round the playground during school hours, had broken down my constitution. I was taken to a doctor, who found that I was suffering severely from albuminuria, and predicted that I should never live to come of age. I was put on special diet, and prescribed a course of country life with a tutor. During the next year or two I was constantly travelling round Wales and Scotland, climbing mountains and fishing for trout. I also had one delightful summer at St. Andrew's, where Andrew Kirkaldy taught me to play golf. My health rapidly improved. I was allowed to work a very limited number of hours, but I progressed rapidly, having the undivided attention of my tutors.

These persons, however, were not too satisfactory; they were all my Uncle Tom's nominees; that is, they were of the sawny, anæmic, priggish type, who at the best could boast of minor Cambridge* Colleges. Of course, I considered it my duty to outwit them in every possible way and hunt up some kind of sin.

This uncle, by the way, some years later, contributed what he esteemed a brilliantly witty article to the "Boys' Magazine," the organ of an Evangelical attempt to destroy the manhood of our public schools. It was called "The Two Wicked Kings." These were described as tyrants

* Oxford was *anathema maranatha* to my Uncle Tom. Keble! Manning!! Newman!!! procurers to the Lords of Hell far subtler and more fearful than Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall.

who ruined the lives of boys and enslaved them. Their names were Smo-King and Drin-King. Uncle Tom called my attention to his masterpiece, and I said, with shocked surprise: "But, my dear Uncle, you have forgotten to mention a third, the most dangerous and deadly of all!" He couldn't think who that was. I told him. Now, I ask you, is it not deplorable that so important and accurate an addition to his thesis should not have been accepted with pious glee?

Things went from bad to worse as I grew in moral power. Part of the time I was well enough to go to a day school in Streatham, where I learnt at long last the terrible secret which I had racked my brains to discover for nearly three years. Here was certainly a sin worth sinning, and I applied myself with characteristic vigour to its practice.

As my father had been accustomed to drink wine, I could not see how drinking could be a sin. There was, therefore, no object in doing it. I never touched wine until I got to Trinity, and I have never felt the smallest temptation to excess. My father had, however, not been a smoker, saying that if God had intended men to smoke He would have supplied a chimney at the top of the head.* I had no hesitation, therefore, in making a great point of smoking. I had no thought of connecting the service of the "third King" with the reproduction of the species, and therefore no reason to suppose that my father had ever so far forgotten himself. I spent my whole time trying to enrol myself under the royal banner; but this could only be done by co-operation, and it was some time before I found the means.

* One might surely argue that His most generous device was the adaptation of tobacco to the nerves of taste and smell.

To return to my tutors. Relations were invariably strained. On one occasion the Rev. Fothergill had taken me for the summer to a fishing centre near Lairg called Forsinard. We went fishing one day to a Loch over the moors, and in the course of some argument I threw his rod far into the water. He attacked me with fury, but I got a good hold and threw him after it. I then went off in the boat, but he caught me as I was pushing off, overturned the boat on top of me and tried to drown me. That night the gods still further favoured me, for a village girl named Belle McKay found herself with nothing better to do than to roam with me amid the heather. We returned together quite openly, and Fothergill threw up the sponge. He took me back to London the next morning. Breaking the journey at Carlisle, I repeated my victory with a buxom chambermaid.

But murder is not the only amusement open to pious tutors. The brother of the Dean of Westminster (he subsequently became a missionary and died at Lokoja) had been taught that if he couldn't be good he should be careful. While he was actually in charge of me his conduct was irreproachable, but after giving me up he invited me over to his mother's house at Maze Hill to spend the night, and did his best to live up to the reputation of his cloth. I did not allow him to succeed, not because I could see no sin in it, but because I thought it was a trap to betray me to my family. Just before he left for Africa he invited me again, prayed with me, confessed to his offence, excusing himself on the ground that his elder brother Jack, also a missionary, had led him astray, and asked my pardon. Once again I adopted the attitude of the man of the world, "Tut, tut, my dear fellow, don't mention it," which

annoyed him very much, because he wanted to be taken seriously as the chief of sinners.

One of the principal points about the sin-stupidity is that it flatters the sinner. All insanity depends upon the exacerbation of the Ego. The melancholic hugs the delusion that he has committed the unpardonable sin. Sins grow by repression and by brooding upon their enormity. Few people would go to excess if they were not unwholesomely over-excited about their trivial apishness.

Most people, especially Freud, misunderstand the Freudian position. "The libido of the Unconscious" is really "the True Will of the Inmost Self." The sexual characteristics of the individual are, it is true, symbolic indications of its nature, and, when those are "abnormal," we may suspect that the Self is divided against itself in some way. Experience teaches the Adepts who initiate mankind that when any complex (duality) in the Self is resolved (unity) the Initiate becomes whole. The morbid sexual symptoms (which are merely the complaints of the sick animal) disappear, while the moral and mental consciousness is relieved from its civil war of doubt and self-obsession. The complete man, harmonised, flows freely towards his natural goal.

It will be seen that I had developed enormously in these years. Unfortunately, my misery was so great during this long battle with my tyrants that, while the incidents themselves stand out luminously in focus, I find it very hard to remember the order in which they occurred. There are moreover, curious contradictions in myself against which I seem always to be stumbling. For example, as late as 1894, I think it must be, I find myself writing hymns of

quite acceptable piety. One was published in "The Christian"; it began:

> "I am a blind man on a helmless ship
> Without a compass on a stormy sea.
> I cannot sink, for God will hold me up," etc.

Again, I wrote a poem on the death of my Aunt Ada, which I thought good enough to include in my "Songs of the Spirit," and is entirely irreproachable on the score of piety. It seems as if I possessed a theology of my own which was, to all intents and purposes, Christianity. My Satanism did not interfere with it at all; I was trying to take the view that the Christianity of hypocrisy and cruelty was not true Christianity. I did not hate God or Christ, but merely the God and Christ of the people whom I hated. It was only when the development of my logical faculties supplied the demonstration that the Scriptures support the theology and practice of professing Christians that I was compelled to set myself in opposition to the Bible itself. It does not matter that the literature is sometimes magnificent, and that in isolated passages the philosophy and ethics are admirable. The sum of the matter is that Judaism is a savage, and Christianity a fiendish, superstition.

It is very strange that I should have had no inkling of my tendency to Mysticism and Magick by means of any definite experience. It is true that, from the beginning, I held the transcendental view of the Universe, but there was nothing to back it up in the way of experience. Most children have a touch of poetry, and believe in what I hate to call psychic phenomena, at least to the extent of fancying they see fairies, or being scared of "bugges by

night." But I, although consciously engaged in the battle with "principalities and powers," never had the slightest hallucination of sense or any tendency to imagine things ghostly. I might have had an ambition to see the devil and talk things over with him, but I should have expected such communication to be either perfectly material or perfectly intellectual. I had no idea of *nuances*. When I eventually learnt how to use my astral eyes and ears, there was no confusion; the other world had certain correspondences with our own, but it was perfectly distinct. I seem to have made a very determined effort to prevent the obliteration of my spiritual consciousness of the world beyond the veil by the ink of terrestrial experience. Then again, there are sudden outbreaks of a fully formed personality, in which I spoke with the assurance and authority of a man of fifty on subjects on which I had really no opinion at all in the ordinary sense of the word.

There is one amazing incident; at the age of fourteen as near as I can remember. I must premise that I have always been exceptionally tender-hearted, except to tyrants, for whom I think no tortures bad enough. In particular, I am uniformly kind to animals; no question of cruelty or Sadism arises in the incident which I am about to narrate.

I had been told: "A cat has nine lives." I deduced that it must be practically impossible to kill a cat. As usual, I became full of ambition to perform the feat. (Observe that I took my information unquestioningly *au pied de la lettre*.) Perhaps through some analogy with the story of Hercules and the Hydra, I got it into my head that the nine lives of the cat must be taken more or less simultaneously. I therefore caught a cat, and having administered a large dose of arsenic I chloroformed it,

hanged it above the gas jet, stabbed it, cut its throat, smashed its skull, and, when it had been pretty thoroughly burnt, drowned it and threw it out of the window that the fall might remove the ninth life. In fact, the operation was successful ; I had killed the cat. I remember that all the time I was genuinely sorry for the animal ; I simply forced myself to carry out the experiment in the interests of pure science.

The combination of innocence, ignorance, knowledge, ingenuity, and high moral principle seems extraordinary. It is evident that the insanely immoral superstition in which I had been brought up is responsible for so atrocious an absurdity. Again and again we shall see how the imposition of the anti-natural theory and principles of Christianity upon a peculiarly sane, matter-of-fact, reality-facing genius created a conflict whose solution was expressed on the material plane by some extravagant action. My mind is severely logical ; or, rather, it was so until mystic experience enabled it to shake off its fetters. Logic is responsible for most of the absurd and abominable deeds which have disgraced history. Given Christian premisses, the Inquisition was acting in accordance with the highest humanitarian principles in destroying a man's body to save his soul. The followers of Descartes were right to torture animals, believing them to be automata. Genuine determinists would be justified in committing any crime, since the fact of its occurrence would prove that it was unavoidable. Huxley, in *Evolution and Ethics*, makes out a very poor case against infanticide and race suicide. We are constantly using our judgment to preserve one section of humanity as against another ; we are in fact constantly compelled to do so. As for the future of humanity, the certainty of final

extermination when the planet becomes uninhabitable makes all human endeavour a colossal fatuity.

It is one of the principal theses of this book to show the above statement to be absurd, by offering a Theory of Reality compatible with sanity.

However, that comes later.

STANZA VII

" The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley." Even so cunning a combination of rat and ape as my Uncle Tom made occasional mistakes, and one of these was very fortunate for me. He engaged a tutor named Archibald Douglas, an Oxford man who had purged that offence by having travelled for the Bible Society across Persia. If my uncle had ever heard of George Borrow, he might have saved himself much trouble ; and I might have been driven insane. It was in the spring of '91. I had recovered from a bad attack of whooping-cough. The idea was that we should bicycle down to Torquay, but on reaching Guildford I was too ill to ride further, and we went down by train. Though Douglas called himself a Christian, he proved to be both a man and a gentleman. I presume that poverty had compelled the camouflage. From the moment that we were alone together he produced a complete revolution in my outlook upon life, by showing me for the first time a sane, clean, jolly world worth living in. Smoking and drinking were natural. He warned me of the dangers of excess from the athletic standpoint. He introduced me to racing, billiards, betting, cards, and women. He told me how these things might be enjoyed without damaging oneself or wronging others. He put me up to

all the tricks. He showed me the meaning of honour. I immediately accepted his standpoint, and began to behave like a normal, healthy, human being. The nightmare world of Christianity vanished at the dawn. I fell in with a girl of the theatre in the first ten days at Torquay, and at that touch of human love the detestable mysteries of sex were transformed into joy and beauty. The obsession of sin fell from my shoulders into the sea of oblivion. I had been almost overwhelmed by the appalling responsibility of ensuring my own damnation and helping others to escape from Jesus. I found that the world was, after all, full of delightful damned souls ; of people who accepted Nature as She is, accepted their own place in Nature and enjoyed it, fought mean and despicable things fairly and firmly whenever they met them. It was a period of boundless happiness for me. I had always yearned for the beauty of nature ; my only friends, except animals and occasional strangers, from whom I was carefully protected, had been the skies, the streams, the mountains and the seas. For the first time in my life I was brought into contact with my fellow men and women. For the first time honest friendship, wholesome love, frank, gay and courageous, became possible and actual. I had loved Nature as a refuge from mankind. I now perceived the beauty of the world in conjunction with the beauty of my species. For the first time the sea sparkled, the breezes whispered other songs than those in praise of solitude, the flowers lent their fragrance and their folly to light, laughing girlhood ; the moon, instead of Artemis, was Aphrodite.

" I said, ' she is warmer than Dian

. . . . . .

Come up through the lair of the Lion
With love in her luminous eyes.' "

. . . . . .

It is possible that my own indiscretion may have produced the catastrophe. I may have let my mother know that I was happy by the tone of my letters. In any case, her suspicions were aroused. Uncle Tom appeared upon the scene, got Douglas out of the way by some lie, rifled his belongings, stole his private letters, and dismissed him. But it was too late ; my eyes were opened, and I had become as a god, knowing good and evil. I was in a position to take the initiative. Till then, I could only aim at escaping from the hideous hell of home. Now I had an objective ; now I could attack.

I must explain something of the horror of life in my mother's house. To begin with, I was entirely debarred from the society of boys and girls of my own age, unless they were the children of Brethren. The sect was already moribund, and in addition had split over the Raven heresy. The situation is illustrated by the story which I will quote from the preface to my " World's Tragedy."

> An irreligious man may have moral checks ; a Plymouth Brother has none. He is always ready to excuse the vilest crimes by quoting the appropriate text, and invoking the name of Christ to cover every meanness which may delight his vain and vicious nature.
>
> For the Plymouth Brethren were in themselves an exceptionally detestable crew. The aristocrats who began the movement were, of course, just aristocrats, and their curious system left them so. But they ran a

form of "Early Christian" Spiritual Socialism by having no appointed priest or minister, and they were foolish enough to favour their followers financially.

Thus Mr. Giblets—let us call him—the third-best butcher in the village found (on the one hand) that while at church he was nobody at all, and in chapel but an elder, in the little meeting in the Squire's morning-room he was no less than the minister of God and the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost; just as on the other hand it was only natural that the orders from the Hall should come his way, and leave the first-best butcher lamenting, and the second-best bewildered. So that in my time the sect (though it is only fair to point out that they refused to be described as a sect, since what they had done was not to form a new sect, but to "come out of sect,"—this they maintained in spite of the fact that they were far more exclusive than any other religious body in Europe) was composed of a few of the old guard, my father the last of them all, and the meanest crew of canaille that ever wriggled.

With my father's death the small schisms which had hitherto lopped off a few members every year or two were altogether surpassed by the great Raven heresy, which split the body into two nearly equal halves, and extinguished the last sparks of its importance.

I am going beyond my subject, but I cannot refrain from telling the awful story of the Meeting at Oban.

The Meeting at Oban consisted of a Mr. Cameron and his wife and the bedridden mother of one of the two, I forget which. Now as it is written: "Where-soever two or three are gathered together in my name,

there am I in the midst of them," it was all very well: but two forms a quorum. Jesus will not come for less. This has never been disputed by any doctor of the Brethren. Wigram is clear on the point; if Darby had ever been clear on any point, it would have been on that. Kelly never denied it; even Stuart was sound in this matter, and Stoney himself (though reluctantly) gave his adhesion. To hold a Meeting you must have two persons present. . . .

Well, I need hardly say that Mr. and Mrs. Cameron took opposite sides of the controversy. When the glad wires flashed the message that Mr. Raven in the Meeting at Ealing had deliberately said with slow and weighty emphasis: "He that hath the Son hath eternal life," Mrs. Cameron almost wept for joy. When (the message continued) Major McArthy had risen to his feet and retorted: "He that hath the Son of God hath everlasting life," Mr. Cameron executed a Highland though funereal fling.*

When Mr. Raven, stung to the quick, had shaken his fist at the Major and yelled: "Brother, you're a sinful old man!" Mrs. Cameron "had always known there was something," and invented a ruined governess. But—oh the laughter of her husband when the telegraph brought the Major's retort: "Brother, have you no sin?"—spoken with an accent of mildness which belied the purple of his face.

In short, the Meeting at Oban had split. Mr. Cameron had withdrawn from the Lord's supper!!! It was therefore absolutely necessary for both of them

* The alleged antithesis between these two texts (I cannot perceive it) was actually the basis of the schism. My mother thought that one of them (I forget which) "dishonoured the Lord's person."!

to assure themselves that the bedridden mother was of their way of thinking, or neither could hold the "Morning Meeting"; though I suppose either could preach the Gospel—*morosa voluptas!*

Unhappily, that excellent lady was a hard case. She was quite deaf and very nearly blind; while mentally she had never been remarkable for anything beyond a not unamiable imbecility. However, there was but one thing to be done, to argue her into conviction.

They agreed to take eight-hour shifts; and for all I know, they are arguing still, and neither of the Meetings at Oban can meet!

As it happened, my mother took the minority view. This means that she cut herself off from every single intimate friend. On the strength of a text in one of the epistles, she refused to shake hands with anyone who was teaching false doctrine. The very few remaining were new friends. My associates could therefore be counted on the fingers of one hand, and our only bond of sympathy was a detestation of our tyrants.

My intellectual avidity was enormous, yet I was absolutely cut off from literature. One or two books of Scott and Dickens were permitted. Ballantyne was approved, G. A. Henty winked at rather than openly tolerated. "David Copperfield" was barred because of "Little Em'ly," for she was a naughty girl; besides, Emily was my mother's name, and to read the book might diminish my respect for her. One of my tutors brought down "The Bab Ballads," one of which begins:

"Emily Jane was a nursery maid."

My mother threw the book out of the house, and very nearly threw him after it. Another tutor read "The Ancient Mariner" aloud after dinner one night, and my mother, after delivering a stormy tirade, snatched me from the contamination of his presence. The reason was that when the Ancient Mariner saw the water-snakes playing around the ship, he "blessed them unaware." An outrageously blasphemous act, for snakes are cursed in Genesis!

Here, by the way, is a curious point. These bigots are so inconsistent that I have never been able to follow the working of their minds. There is a great deal of doctrine in "The Ancient Mariner" which outrages every tenet of the Plymouth Brethren, but my mother does not appear to have taken offence at that. My only suggestion is that she detested snakes for Freudian reasons; she had probably met them in dreams, and had therefore good reasons (from her point of view) for identifying them with the devil in his most objectionable form. My mother was naturally a rather sensual type of woman, and there is no doubt that sexual repression had driven her as nearly as possible to the borders of insanity.

My cousin Agnes had a house in Dorset Square. My mother took me to tea there one afternoon. A copy of "Dr. Pascal" was in the room. The word "Zola" caught my mother's eye, and she made a verbal assault of hysterical fury upon her hostess. Both women shouted and screamed at each other simultaneously, amid floods of tears. Needless to say, my mother had never read a line of Zola—the name was simply a red rag to a cow.

This inconsistency, by the way, seems universal. I have known a printer object to set up "We gave them

hell and Tommy," while passing unquestioned all sorts of things to which exception could quite reasonably be taken by narrow-minded imbeciles. The censor habitually passes what I, who am no Puritan, consider nauseating filth, while refusing to license Œdipus Rex, which we are compelled to assimilate at school. The prosecutions against publishers are equally incomprehensible. The country is flooded with the nasty pornography of women writers, while there is an outcry against epoch-making masterpieces of philosophy like Jurgen. The salacious musical comedy goes its libidinous way rejoicing, while Ibsen and Bernard Shaw are on the black list. The fact is, of course, that the Puritan has been turned by sexual repression into a sexual pervert and degenerate, so that he is insane on the subject.

Of course, I could not be prevented entirely from reading. I was kept very short of pocket money, so that I could not even buy books to any extent. But I used to get them now and again, smuggle them into the house inside my clothes, and lock myself into the water-closet to read them. One such book, I remember, was " The Mystery of a Hansom Cab." My mother considered the hansom cab as an engine specially devised by the devil, and any reference to one was considered obscene.

Having given an idea of the atmosphere of home, it should be intelligible that I was prepared to go out of my way to perform any act which might serve as a magical affirmation of my revolt. I was, in fact, restrained from developing my mind in any wholesome manner. I had no opportunity to think of anything but fighting fire with fire.

A new parlour-maid took it into her head to better

herself by getting a stranglehold on the young master. I arranged to meet her on her evening out at a safe distance from Streatham, and we drove in a cab over to Herne Hill, indulging in a mild flirtation on the way. On Sunday morning, however, I brought things to a point. I made an excuse for staying away from the "morning meeting," got the girl into my mother's bedroom, and made my magical affirmation. I had no idea that there was any counterplot, but the girl proceeded to "blow the gaff." She was, of course, instantly flung into the street, but she continued her operations for bettering herself. Uncle Tom intervened, for of course my mother could not discuss such a subject with me at all. I denied the whole affair point blank. My uncle tried to find the cabman, but failed. They scented trouble for somebody, and knew no more than so many Chinamen. He begged me, however, to try to furnish some positive proof of my innocence; and this is where my subtlety came in. I pretended to be in great trepidation. Yes, I could prove it, and yet, how could I? My uncle scented a mystery, and adjourned the examination.

I immediately went out and appealed to the tobacconist on the bridge above Streatham Station to say, if asked, that he remembered my having been in his shop on the Thursday night previous, which was that of the cab drive. He was a good sportsman and naturally anxious to oblige. I went back to my uncle and proposed a deal. I would tell him where I had been, but he must not punish me, for I had been led astray by bad companions. He was only too glad; and I owned up, tremulous and tearful, that I had been in the tobacconist's. He would have doubted a merely innocent alibi. The girl, was, of course, discredited,

and nothing more was heard of the matter. And I had had her on my mother's very bed!

That is the state of affairs which is caused by Puritanism. First we have a charming girl driven to attempt blackmail, next a boy forced to the most unmanly duplicity in order to exercise his natural rights with impunity, and incidentally to wrong a woman for whom he had nothing but the friendliest feelings. As long as sexual relations are complicated by religious, social, and financial considerations, so long will they cause all kinds of cowardly, dishonourable and disgusting behaviour. When war conditions imposed artificial restraint on the sister appetite of hunger, decent citizens began to develop all kinds of loathesome trickery. Men and women will never behave worthily as long as current morality interferes with the legitimate satisfaction of physiological needs. Nature always avenges herself on those who insult her. The individual is not to blame for the crime and insanity which are the explosions consequent on the clogging of the safety valve. The fault lies with the engineer. At the present moment, society is blowing up in larger or smaller spots all over the world, because it has failed to develop a system by which all its members can be adequately nourished without conflict, and the waste products eliminated without discomfort.

On the whole, I was so well guarded that incidents like the above were rare accidents. I had been taught by bitter experience that almost anybody might be a spy, so that the slightest indiscretion in talking to an apparently harmless stranger might result in some disaster. The foundations were laid of an exaggerated shyness which has never left me. I was practically debarred from human

intercourse, even that of the great men of the past. My only consolation was writing poetry.

It is difficult to explain by what means I came to the conclusion that poetry was of paramount importance. There was a sort of family tradition which honoured the poet; but it was as irrational as the rest of their beliefs. I can only imagine it as derived from their having been told at school that the English poets were the glory of humanity, for they certainly knew no poetry beyond "Casabianca" and "We are Seven." I discovered Shakespeare for myself. It happened that in the farmhouse at Forsinard were three old folio volumes. My mother had an edition of Shakespeare; but I had never read it, because it was permitted. At the farmhouse, however, there was nothing else to read. I became fascinated, and spent night after night poring over the pages. (I have always been singularly thorough in anything I take up. My father had a favourite sermon on the word "but"; and I went through the whole Bible, page by page, enclosing this word, wherever it occurred, with an oblong of ink.)

Apart from the few regular pieces for recitation, there was "Paradise Lost." This bored me for the most part as much as it does now, but allowed me to gloat over the figures of Satan and Sin. After all, Milton was a great poet; and the subconscious artistic self of him was therefore bitterly antagonistic to Christianity. Not only is Satan the hero, but the triumphant hero. God's threats have not "come off." It is the forces of Evil, so called, that manifest in strength and beauty of form. The glories of the saints are tinsel. It is impossible to draw goodness with character. On the Christian theory, goodness is, in fact, nothing but absence of character, for it implies complete

submission to God. Satan's original fault is not pride; that is secondary. It springs from the consciousness of separateness. Now of course this is, mystically speaking, sinful, because the Mystic holds that all manifestation is imperfection. Christian theology has not had sufficient logic to see, like its elder sister, Hindoo theology, that any attributes soever must distinguish their possessor from some other possible being. But their instinct has been to go as far in that direction as possible, and consequently the divine characters in Milton are comparatively colourless. Such was the transmutation in the nature of God effected by building a super-structure of Greek philosophy upon the foundation of the savage phantasm of Jehovah. My own attitude in the matter is to be seen in my æsthetic tendencies. I could never tolerate smooth, insipid beauty. The ugliness of decrepitude revolted me; but that of strength absorbed my whole soul. I despised the tame scenery of the Swiss lakes; the ruggedness of barren pinnacles of rock and the gloomy isolation of such lakes as Llyn Idwal appealed to my imagination. Wastwater disappointed me. It did not come up to the level of its poetic reputation. It was only when I got among the crags themselves that I was happy. I demanded to be at grips with death in one way or another. The bourgeois ambition to get through life without unpleasantness seemed to me the lowest vileness, and entirely in keeping with the moral attitude of the heavenly people in "Paradise Lost."

I was allowed to read Tennyson and Longfellow, but it is impossible to class them as poets. The emasculation of all the characters disgusted me beyond measure. Their very sins are suburban.

STANZA VIII

"O Frater Perdurabo, how unworthy
are these sentiments!"
—"Bye want a clip on the jaw?"
The Book of Lies

So when it came to my writing poetry myself, my work fell naturally into three divisions. Firstly, short lyrics modelled on the hymns to which I was accustomed; secondly, parodies, principally of Scottish and English songs; and thirdly, epics based on Sir Walter Scott.* I must have written over a hundred thousand lines. They have all been destroyed; and I am rather sorry for it. While they possessed no merit, their contents would afford a valuable key to my thoughts at the time. The few fragments which escaped destruction were reprinted in my "Oracles." I remember something of their general moral tendency, which was to celebrate the triumph of the revolt of youth and passion against age and propriety. I tried to get effect by using extremes of expression. I remember two lines from an epic, "Lady Ethelreda":

> "Baron Ethelred waxed wroth,
> Frothed he with a frothy froth."

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* One may also trace the influence of R. Haggard. One epic began:

> "In fair Milosis city
> The king he gave decree
> That every maid reputed pretty
> And even esteemed or wise or witty
> To his palace brought should be.
> And all obeyed save one proud Sheikh
> Who hid his only gem Zuleikh."

This, naturally, started all kinds of a fuss. I myself, in some avatar or other, had to butt in and rid the world of the tyrant and score off that proud Sheikh—and corral that gem Zuleikh.

But as I grew a little older I became able to manage my material with more discretion. My mother designed me, of course, to follow in my father's footsteps as an Evangelist, but as I had to take a profession she decided she would like me to be a doctor, on the ground that "doctors have so many opportunities." (Scil. for bringing souls to Jesus. She did not see anything funny in this remark!) So I began to learn a little about Medicine, and produced the following effusion:

A PEEP BEHIND THE SCENES

In the hospital bed she lay
Rotting away!
Cursing by night and cursing by day,
Rotting away!
The lupus is over her face and head,
Filthy and foul and horrid and dread,
And her shrieks they would almost wake the dead;
Rotting away!

In her horrible grave she lay,
Rotting away!
Rotting by night, and rotting by day,
Rotting away!
In the place of her face is a gory hole,
And the worms are gnawing the tissues foul,
And the devil is gloating over her soul,
Rotting away!

Note that the title of this poem is ironical. It is taken from a goody-goody book, popular at that time, which describes the life of travelling barn-stormers, and how the only hope for them was to be converted. But the irony goes somewhat deeper. It was a genuine criticism of the shallow philosophy of optimism which went with the

polite Christianity of the time. I was analysing life in the spirit of Schopenhauer. I couldn't see any sense in pretending that life was not full of horrors. Death and trousers are facts in nature; and merely to avoid reference to them or to invent euphemisms for them does not alter their character. I was reduced to gloating on murder and putrefaction, simply because these things gave the most forcible denial to the assumptions current at home. Paganism is wholesome because it faces the facts of life; but I was not allowed to take a normal view of Nature. In my situation, I could not dismiss the falsities of Christianity with a smile; I was compelled to fight fire with fire, and to oppose their poisoned poultices with poisoned daggers.

Such was the influence of home life. But it was partially interfered with by the more decent current of school life. I have mentioned my school in Streatham. It was there that occurred the last important incident of this period. Being the star chemist of the school, I determined to distinguish myself on the 5th of November, 1891. I procured a ten-pound jar from the grocer's, put two pounds of gunpowder at the bottom, and filled it up with various layers of different coloured "fires." These were all—except for the small ingredients of varied metallic salts—of the same composition: sugar and chlorate of potash. In order to make sure of success, I turned the whole household on to mixing these ingredients, with the result that they were mingled so intimately as to produce what was to all intents and purposes chlorate powder! I pressed this down very powerfully, buried the jar in the playground, stuck a rocket into the top, and lighted it at the critical moment. The rocket had been fixed too

firmly to rise, and the protecting wad of paper burnt through before I could step back. I neither saw nor heard anything. I felt as if a brush of some warm tarry and gritty substance had been passed across my face; and found myself standing on the brink of a hole in the ground of no mean size. I wondered how on earth it could have happened that my experiment had failed. I remember apologising for the failure, and saying that I must go up to the house to wash my face. I discovered that I was being supported on the journey by my private tutor and my mother. Then I found myself in the headmaster's sanctum, receiving first aid. I remember nothing more for some time except the annoyance of being awakened to have my dressings changed. I slept for ninety-six hours with these semi-conscious intervals. My tutor had the sense to wire to Guy's Hospital for Dr. Golding Bird, whose intervention probably saved me from erysipelas and the loss of my sight. In the course of convalescence, over four thousand pieces of gravel and the like were removed from my face; and it was on Christmas Day that I was first allowed to use my eyes for a few minutes. The explosion had been devastating. The windows were smashed for a long way round; and the bottles in the chemist's shop on the railway bridge—a quarter of a mile and more away—rattled, though the passage of trains had no such effect. Strangely enough, I was the only person injured. Throughout I enjoyed the episode; I was the hero, I had made my mark!

The following year I was ready to go to a public school. My Uncle Jonathan wanted me to go to Winchester, as per the family tradition, but my health demanded a more bracing climate, and it was decided that I should go to

Malvern. The school at that time was rising to the height of its glory in athletics. We possessed a brilliant bat in Percy Latham; H. R. and W. L. Foster were sure to distinguish themselves in one way or another, and the youngsters of that famous game-playing family were coming on, ready to take their places when the time came. There was also C. J. Burnup as a promising colt.

In other matters, however, the school had a long way to go. Bullying went on unchecked, the prefects being foremost offenders. As a shy, solitary boy in ill-health, incapable of football, I naturally got more than my share, and this led ultimately to one of the few actions in my life with which I have ever felt inclined to reproach myself. The tone of the school was brutal and imbecile. The authorities had done much to stamp out the practice of "greasing," which consists in spitting as smegmatically as possible either in people's faces or on their backs. It still flourished at our house, Huntingdon's, No. 4, and constituted our only claim to distinction. I do not think we had a single member in either of the Elevens. The prefects were hulking louts, shirking both work and play, and concentrating on obscenity and petty tyranny. It annoyed them particularly that my conduct was irreproachable. They could not cane me without the housemaster's permission. I did not realise how closely I was being watched, but ultimately I committed some trifling breach of discipline during "prep." After the hour was over the prefect in charge gleefully hastened to the housemaster. He found me there already. I got my licking; but there was a fine series of expulsions to balance it. Of course my action was technically indefensible; but after all, I had held my tongue uncomplainingly for months, and it was

only when they appealed to the housemaster to fight their battles that I appealed to him to fight mine.

I may as well emphasise at this moment that I remained amazingly innocent. My study companion was actually the favourite "tart" of the house; so much so, that he thereby added considerably to his income. But though I was aware of these facts, I had no conception whatever of what they implied.

An anecdote illustrates this fact. It was the custom of our Form Master to remit 20 per cent. of any number of lines that might be given one to write if they were delivered before the time appointed. It happened that I was set a number of lines by some other master, and I handed in 80 per cent. with the written remark, "Twenty per cent. deducted as usual for premature delivery." He thought that I was "getting at him," but on investigation I was acquitted; in fact, I had no idea of any ambiguity.

My life at Malvern made little impression on me. For the most part I was lost in my own thought and touched school life as little as I could. I made no real friends. I had no sympathy with the general brutality, and refused to pander to it by making myself the favourite. The following story helps to illustrate my attitude.

Some of the prefects were twitting me with cowardice, and proposed that I should prove my virtue by fighting Smith tertius, a boy much smaller than myself. I refused, observing that if I did not fight him I must pass for a coward, and if I did I should be accused of bullying, and probably be reported for fighting as well.

None of my ambitions were connected with the school. I preferred to daydream of my plans for mountaineering in the holidays and to busy myself with writing poetry. Memory has preserved fragments of two efforts. The first:

"Put not thy trust in princes." 'Tis a speech
Might thee, O Gordon-Cumming, something teach.

It seems absurd that a boy of my age should take an interest in such matters and become so positive a partisan. But I had an ingrained hatred for the Hanoverian usurper and took for granted what I still believe to have been the fact, that the man who cheated was not Gordon-Cumming.

Of the second poem I retain :

Poor lady! whom a wicked jury's hate
In face of facts as iron as the grave
To which they would have doomed thee—bitter fate!
Thee guiltless to the cruel hangman gave.

Shame on the judge who sees but half the facts!
Shame on the nurse who private letters opes!
But never shalt thou be forgot by us,
The pity of thy life's so blasted hopes.

Lady, hope on! All England takes thy part
But a few bigots. Lady, then, take heart.

My sympathy with Mrs. Maybrick nowise argues my belief in her innocence. She was admittedly an adulteress. I asked no further questions. The mere fact thrilled me to the marrow. Adultery being the summit of wickedness, its commission excused everything.

I made no intimate friendships. I did my work sufficiently well to avoid serious punishment, but without ambition. I took no interest in the Shakespeare prize, for which everybody had to enter, and had not read a line of the two plays prescribed, "Romeo and Juliet" and "Richard II." But for some reason or other I got scared

three days before the examination, got excused from games, and worked so hard that I came out sixth in the school. I was able to quote several long passages accurately from memory. With me, it was always a question of the interest which I took in things. I had the makings of a sound classical scholar, but I could not bring myself to memorise Greek and Latin poetry. Stranger still, I could not master the rules of prosody. My most hostile critics admit that my technique and my sense of rhythm are unsurpassed; but the rules of scansion meant nothing to me, because no one explained their connection with the way a poem should be read.

I should have liked school life well enough if it had not been for the bullying and the complete lack of intellectual companionship. I had no interest in games; my athletic ambitions were confined to climbing mountains. But at least there was no Christianity! and what morality there was was rather manly than otherwise. However, I was now old enough to match myself against my private tutors, and found greater freedom with them than at school. I decided to leave, and drew such a picture of the abominations which went on, though I knew nothing about them or even what they were, that my mother refused to let me go back. I told her, she once reminded me, that "if Mr. Huntingdon (the House Master) knew what was going on in the house, it would break his heart." Pure bluff! but the following term I was entered at Tonbridge.

By this time I had acquired a considerable facility in making the best of my advantages. I had in some ways much more experience of life than most boys of my age. My holidays, what with fishing, mountain-climbing, and running after girls, were full of adventures of one kind and

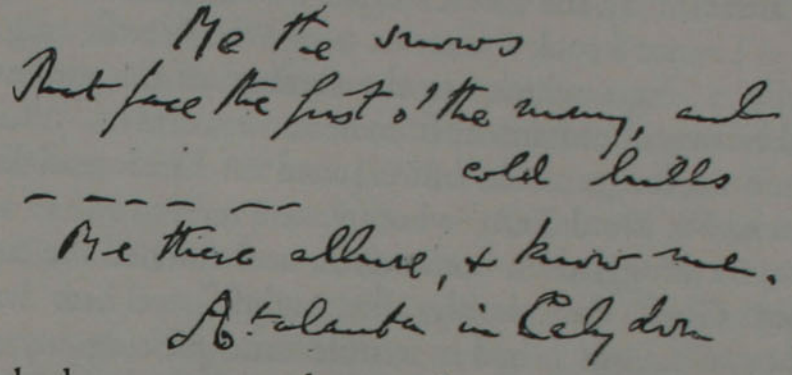
another, in which I was always being thrown on my own resources. By the time I reached Tonbridge I had developed a kind of natural aristocracy. People were already beginning to be afraid of me, and there was no question any longer of bullying. My health must have been very much better. Albuminuria breeds melancholy and destroys physical courage. I had also, no doubt, been subject to constant irritation due to my phimosis, and the operation had relieved me. I was, therefore, more or less ready to fight anybody that annoyed me. And people took good care not to do so.

The atmosphere at Tonbridge was, moreover, much more civilised than at Malvern. To-day it impresses me as having been on the namby-pamby side. There was at that time no trace of the marriage system since introduced, and now said to be flourishing. "Mrs. So-and-So" was almost a term of derision, while now it is exacted by its owner to show that he is not "one of those." My best friend was a brother of C. F. G. Masterman. He was neither a sneak nor a hypocrite; but it gives an idea of the atmosphere.

The glimpse of normal human life afforded by Archibald Douglas had rendered me completely sane as far as my conscious life was concerned. The problem of life was not how to Satanise, as Huysmans would have called it; it was simply to escape from the oppressors and to enjoy the world without any interference of spiritual life of any sort. My happiest moments were when I was alone on the mountains; but there is no evidence that this pleasure in any way derived from Mysticism. The beauty of form and colour, the physical exhilaration of exercise, and the mental stimulation of finding one's way in difficult country,

formed the sole elements of my rapture. So far as I indulged in day-dreams, they were exclusively of a normal sexual type. There was no need to create phantasms of a perverse or unrealisable satisfaction. It is important to emphasise this point, because I have always appeared to my contemporaries as a very extraordinary individual obsessed by fantastic passions. But such were not in any way natural to me. The moment the pressure was relieved every touch of the abnormal was shed off instantly. The impulse to write poetry disappeared almost completely at such periods. I had not even any of the ordinary ambitions of young men. I was content to enjoy sport without wishing to attain eminence in it. It came natural to me to find ways up mountains which looked to me interesting and difficult. But it never occurred to me to match myself against other people. It was from purely æsthetic considerations that I climbed the gullies of Tryfan and Twll-Du. This last climb landed me, as luck would have it, in a controversy which was destined to determine my career in a very remarkable manner.

STANZA IX



It had never occurred to me that rock-climbing, as such, might be a recognised sport. However, my mother and I were at the Sligachan Inn in Skye during the summer of 1892. I talked about my hill rambles with Sir Joseph Lister, who happened to be staying there, and asked him about the Coolins. He was kind enough to suggest to some real climbers who were staying at the hotel to include me in their party the next day, and they were kind enough to take me up Sgurr-nan-Gillean by the Pinnacle Ridge. I found myself up against it; and realised at once that there was something more to be done than scrambling.

I think it was the following summer that I was staying at a farm in Langdale, and heard from the natives of the celebrated twenty-four hours' walk. The idea is to climb the four highest fells, Scafell Pikes, Helvellyn, Skiddaw, and Saddleback, in a day. I conceived a minor ridge-walk, and set out one morning at dawn from Langdale, climbed the Langdale Pikes, and followed the crest of the fells to Scafell Pikes. Then I crossed to Scafell by the Broad Stand; and, seeing the Deep Ghyll pinnacle, climbed that on my way to the summit of Scafell. It was a terrifically hot day over Lingmell and down into the valley to climb the screes of Great Gable. My attention

was attracted by the Great Napes Needle, and I climbed that. Thence I took the easiest way—the Needle ridge, or a gully, I forget which—to the summit of the mountain. I had become almost insane from heat, thirst and exhaustion ; I could no longer walk, but crawled on hands and knees down to Sty Head Tarn, whose waters revived me to some extent. I struggled on homewards, and reached the top of Rossett Ghyll Pass shortly after nightfall. There was a bright moon, but I had a terrible time picking my way down the path. I must have been a little light-headed from exhaustion, and there was a Dantesque quality in the long climb among the blinding white patches of light and the jetty shadows. At the bottom of the pass I met a small rescue party who had just started out to look for me, and reached home about eleven o'clock. It was, in its way, a remarkable performance for a boy.

Another incident is less heroic but more amusing. My tutor had invited his sister to stay a few days at the farm at Langdale. One day I took her up the Langdale Pikes, and found a quite decent bit of scrambling. Having no rope, I could only help her from below. She became scared and broke into a passionate monologue punctuated by screams. It consisted of variations on a triple theme. "I'm going to fall—Our Father which art in heaven—Don't look at my legs." Ah me!—"I learnt about women from 'er." It was a startlingly complete revelation of the psychology of the well-brought-up young lady. Craven fear, prurient shame, and narcotic piety : of such is the Kingdom of Tennyson!

The glimpse that I had had of Wastdale attracted me, and I went over there. One very wet morning I started to climb Scafell, chiefly with the idea of tackling some of

the gullies which I had noticed in the Great Cliff. I had reached the Grass Traverse when I heard voices in the mist above me, and a few minutes later a powerful man with red whiskers and a rope about his shoulders came towards me from the cliff. It was J. W. Robinson, a local farmer, who had laid the foundation of Cumberland climbing. He offered to show me some of the easier climbs. He had started that morning with a man named Owen Glynne Jones. Jones had insisted on trying to climb Steep Gill, which is for the most part a shallow gully of smooth slabs set at a dangerous angle. There is no reliable hold for hand or foot on the main pitch, which is some eighty feet high. As torrents of icy water were pouring over the crags, it was sheer foolhardiness to attempt it. Robinson had refused to do so, whereupon Jones had quarrelled with him and they had parted.

I had every reason, later on, to agree with Robinson. I was only once on a rope with Jones. It was on Great Gable; the rocks were plastered with ice, and a bitter wind was blowing. In such conditions one cannot rely on one's fingers. Our party proposed to descend the Oblique Chimney on the Ennerdale face. Robinson led the way down. The second man was a Pole named Lewkowitch, who was generally known as "Oils, fats and waxes," because of his expert knowledge of them and the personal illustration of their properties which he afforded. He had no experience of climbing, and weighed about sixteen stone. It was up to me, as third man on the rope, to let him slowly down. I had, of course, to descend little by little, the rope being too short to allow me to lower him from the top. I soon found myself in the most difficult part of the chimney, very ill placed to manipulate a dangling ox. I looked

up to Jones, the last man, to hold my rope so that I could give full attention to Lewkowitch, and saw to my horror that he was maintaining his equilibrium by a sort of savage war dance! He was hampered by a photographic apparatus which was strapped to his back. Robinson had urged him to lower it separately. As nor Einstein nor the Blessed Virgin Mary was there to suspend the law of gravitation, I have no idea how we got to the bottom undamaged; but when we did I promptly took off the rope and walked home, utterly disgusted with the vanity which had endangered the party. Of course, there could only be one end to that sort of thing, and Jones ended by killing himself and three guides on the Zinal side of the Dent Blanche a few years later.

The imbecility of the accident is shown by the fact that the fifth member of the party, who was quite a beginner, found himself—after the smash—alone on the precipice. The guides had begged Jones not to attempt the pitch from which he fell, but he had persisted. The fifth man had hitched the rope over a rock, and it had broken between him and the third guide. But this man, instead of going down to the valley, actually climbed the mountain, spent a night on the ridge, and went down the next day to Zermatt.

The dangers of mountaineering are ridiculously exaggerated. I have never known of any accident which was not due to ignorance or folly. Eckenstein, the greatest climber of his age, told me the same thing.

Jones obtained the reputation of being the most brilliant rock-climber of his time by persistent self-advertisement. He was never a first-rate climber, because he was never a safe climber. If a handhold was out of his reach he would jump at it, and he had met with several serious accidents

before the final smash. But his reputation is founded principally on climbs which he did not make at all, in the proper sense of the word. He used to go out with a couple of photographers and have himself lowered up and down a climb repeatedly until he had learnt its peculiarities, and then make the "first ascent" before a crowd of admirers. Now the essential difficulty of negotiating a pitch of any length is that one has to waste any amount of time and strength while one is finding out where the holds are. There is no credit at all in repeating a climb.

Another trick of Jones's was to get his friends to make dates with other people to try various unclimbed places, and then to postpone the expedition on various pretexts until Jones had managed to negotiate it by the method above described.

This conduct seemed to me absolutely unsportsmanlike. To prostitute the mountains to personal vanity is in fact something rather worse. And I had a taste of the malice of people's envy in my first week. A personal issue arose from the very start. Robinson happened to ask me if I had climbed in Wales. I told him yes, and mentioned one particular place, the Devil's Kitchen or Twll Du, which I had climbed by taking off my boots. I had no idea that the place was famous, but it was. It was reputed unclimbable. Almighty Jones himself had failed. I found myself, to my astonishment, the storm centre. Jones, behind my back, accused me flatly of lying. Quite unconsciously, however, I put myself in the right. I have always failed to see that it is necessary to make a fuss about one's climbs. There is a good reason for describing a first climb. To do so is to guide others to enjoyment. One may also for the same reason describe interesting

variations of a climb, or its accomplishment by a solitary man. Now as it happened, Jones had been blowing his trumpet about the first ascent of Kern Knotts Chimney; the top pitch, however, he had failed to do unaided. He had been hoisted on the shoulders of the second man. I went to have a look at it, and found that by wedging a stone into a convenient crack, and thus starting a foot higher up, I could get to the top, and did so. I recorded this in the climbers' book; and the following day a man named H. V. Reade, possibly in a sceptical mood, followed in my footsteps. He found my wedged stone, contemptuously threw it away, climbed the pitch without it, and recorded the feat. That was a double blow to Mr. Jones. It was no longer a convincing argument that if he couldn't do a thing it couldn't be done.

But this was not all. Scafell is separated from Scafell Pikes by a pass called Mickledoor; and on the Scafell side it is precipitous. The ridge of the pass is well-marked; by going down a little on one side one can climb the cliffs by the Broad Stand or Mickledoor Chimney, on the other side by the North Climb; and so on. But it had been the ambition of every climber to start from the exact top of the ridge. This was called the Direct Climb of Mickledoor; and nobody had done it. That seemed to me a shame, so I did it. This time the fat was in the fire. My good faith was openly challenged in the smoking-room. I shrugged my shoulders, but offered to repeat the climb the following day before witnesses—which I accordingly did. I suppose I am a very innocent ass, but I could not understand why anyone calling himself human should start a series of malicious intrigues on such a cause of quarrel. I must admit that my methods were sometimes

calculated to annoy; but I had no patience with the idiotic vanity of mediocrities. I took the Climbers' Record to be a serious compilation, and never wrote in it without the fullest sense of responsibility. So when I found a solemn Te Deum being chanted on account of the fifth ascent of the Pillar Rock by a "lady," I took my dog to the top and recorded: "First ascent by a *St. Bernard* bitch." When Jones, after the usual practice, had climbed Kern Knotts Crack, and three public-school-masters, who ought to have known better, said they had seen him do it, and it was a marvellous exhibition of skill and so on, I completed their remarks by a colophon: [Advt.] So much fuss was made about Kern Knotts Crack that Eckenstein took a young girl named Miss Nicholls and asked her to lead up it, which she did.

Wastdale at that time was a rendezvous for many amusing characters as well as for some of the most brilliant men in England. Professor Milnes Marshall spent most of his holidays there. His death is one of the most curious accidents in the history of climbing. He had gone up to Deep Ghyll with some friends one bright winter day when the mountains were covered with snow. But, not feeling particularly well, he remained at the foot of Deep Ghyll while his friends climbed it, proposing to take photographs of them. He set up his camera on a snow-slope no steeper than Ludgate Hill, a place entirely free from danger. But he fell and rolled gently down the slope, making no effort to save himself, finally pitching over a small cliff, at the foot of which he was picked up dead. It was not a climbing accident at all, any more than the death of Norman Neruda, who died of heart failure when he happened to be in a rock chimney in the Dolomites.

After a short time at Tonbridge my health again broke down. It was evident that boarding-school life was unsuited to me. It was arranged for me to live at Eastbourne with a tutor named Lambert, a Plymouth Brother. It is curious (by the way) to reflect that Henri Bernstein, the celebrated French dramatist, being also a "hope" of the Brethren, was one of Lambert's pupils. I saw hardly anything of him. All I remember is that one day, for no reason that I can remember, we set to in the street and fought it out. At that time I knew no boxing. My one idea was to get his head "in Chancery" under my left arm and bash his face in with my right, which I succeeded in doing, making no attempt to defend myself against his blows which he gave like a windmill on my skull. I remember acutely my surprise that they did not hurt me at all. During the day I worked at Eastbourne College in the chemical laboratory under Professor Hughes, and was privileged to assist that great man in several researches which go to prove that no two substances can combine in the absence of a third. It seems strange that I should have seen the bearings of this upon philosophy.

One very significant incident is stamped upon my memory. I was spending an evening with the professor, and in the course of some discussion I said: "The Bible says so." These words dripped with the utmost irony from my lips. I meant to imply the bitterest contempt. I was not understood. He took me seriously, and broke out into a passionate denunciation of the book. His manner was so ferocious that I was positively startled; and the interesting thing about the incident is this. I had been so long so alert lest I should be accused of disbelief, that it almost took my breath away to hear a man in authority

speak so openly.* I have explained how I had vainly sought supreme wickedness in the Church of England. I had even gone to so-called "high" churches, and on one occasion dared to enter the portals of the Papists. But I had found nothing wicked even there. They all seemed to me to be tarred with the same brush; they were cold, heartless, dull, stupid, vapid and fatuous. The emotionalism of some and the sacramentalism of others seemed to me perfectly insincere. The fact is that (as my brother-in-law, Gerald Kelly, once told me, with astounding insight), I was the most religious man that he had ever met. It is the inmost truth. The instinct was masked for a long time, firstly by the abominations of the Plymouth Brethren and the Evangelicals; secondly, by the normal world. It only broke out at a subsequent period in any recognisable form. But when it did so, it became the axis of my being. As a matter of fact, even in these early days, my real need was spiritual satisfaction; and I was a Satanist or a Worldling (as the case might be) in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

My poetry during this period was either amorous or satirical. A few of my efforts are preserved in "Oracles." I quote the first and last verses from a lyric about a girl I met on the sea front.

ELVIRA

Was thy fault to be too tender?
Was thine error to be weak?
Was my kiss the first offender
Pressed upon thy blushing cheek?

. . . . . .

* I remember my first stolen visit to the Theatre—"Little Christopher Columbus." Weren't all these people afraid of being found out?

Heaven at your accurst creation
Shall become a hell of fire :
Death for kisses, and damnation
For your love, shall God require !

What is worthy of note is what I may call the " Laus Veneris " point of view; which symbolises my revolt, and required many years to wear out. It seems as if I clung to the idea of the wickedness of love, and the belief that it entailed divine retribution, partly perhaps because of my tendency to masochism, but consciously, at least, as adding actual value to sin. Pleasure as such has never attracted me. It must be spiced by moral satisfaction. I was reluctant to abandon my intellectual belief in Christianity ; if the whole thing was nonsense, where was the fun of fighting it ?

All this early poetry, moreover, tended to become worse instead of better as my mind developed. I explain this by reference to the analogy of such games as billiards. As soon as one begins to take lessons one spoils one's natural game, and one does not recover until the artificially acquired technique has been driven down into the subconscious by continual practice.

Apart from a very few very early poems like " The Balloon," all my writing is wooden, imitative and conscious, until I reached Cambridge, with hardly an exception.

At Eastbourne, I had still no interest in games. I was still prevented from anything like intimate association with my fellow creatures. I was still ignorant of the existence of English literature, and I became a first-rate French scholar without reading any French literature. In my play-time I was either hunting flappers on the front, playing chess, or climbing Beachy Head. My chess was almost

entirely book-learning, and I was very much surprised to find myself the best player in the town. For although the local champion insisted on giving me pawn and move, I beat him so easily every time I met him that the odds might have been reversed without making much difference to the result. I edited a Chess Column in the Eastbourne Gazette, and made myself a host of enemies by criticising the team. I wanted to arouse enthusiasm, to insist on study and practice, and to make Eastbourne the strongest town in England. The result fell short of breaking up the club, but not very far.

I used my position as editor to criticise the formation of the team and anything else that seemed to me wrong. I was absolutely unable to conceive that any one should be anything but grateful for constructive criticism. I had moreover in my mind a firm conception of an editor as Jupiter Tonans. I remember one occasion on which I made myself particularly nasty. In a club tournament I had won all my games except two against a man named Martin, who had failed to play any of his games. At the same time he would not withdraw from the tournament. I tried to deal with the situation in my weekly articles. I requested Mr. Martin to begin to play his games; I implored him to begin to play his games; I pointed out to him the propriety of beginning to play his games, I showed him that the best traditions of England (which had made her what she was) spoke with no uncertain voice to the effect that he should begin to play his games. All this settled down to a weekly chorus à la Cato "delenda est Carthago." Whatever the subject of my discourse, it invariably ended, "Mr. Martin has not yet begun to play his games."

By this persistent nagging I got him to make an appointment with me, and the game had to be adjourned in a position which was clearly won for me. He determined to avoid defeat by the simple process of refusing to make any further moves. I could have done a good deal with a brazier and a gimlet, but short of that there was no moving him; and his abstention prevented me from being proclaimed the winner. I published an analysis of the position, demonstrating that he was bound to lose, and suggesting that he should either play it out or resign. But of course the result of my manœuvres had simply been to drive him into blind fury, and the situation was never settled. It simply lapsed by my departure for Switzerland.

STANZA X

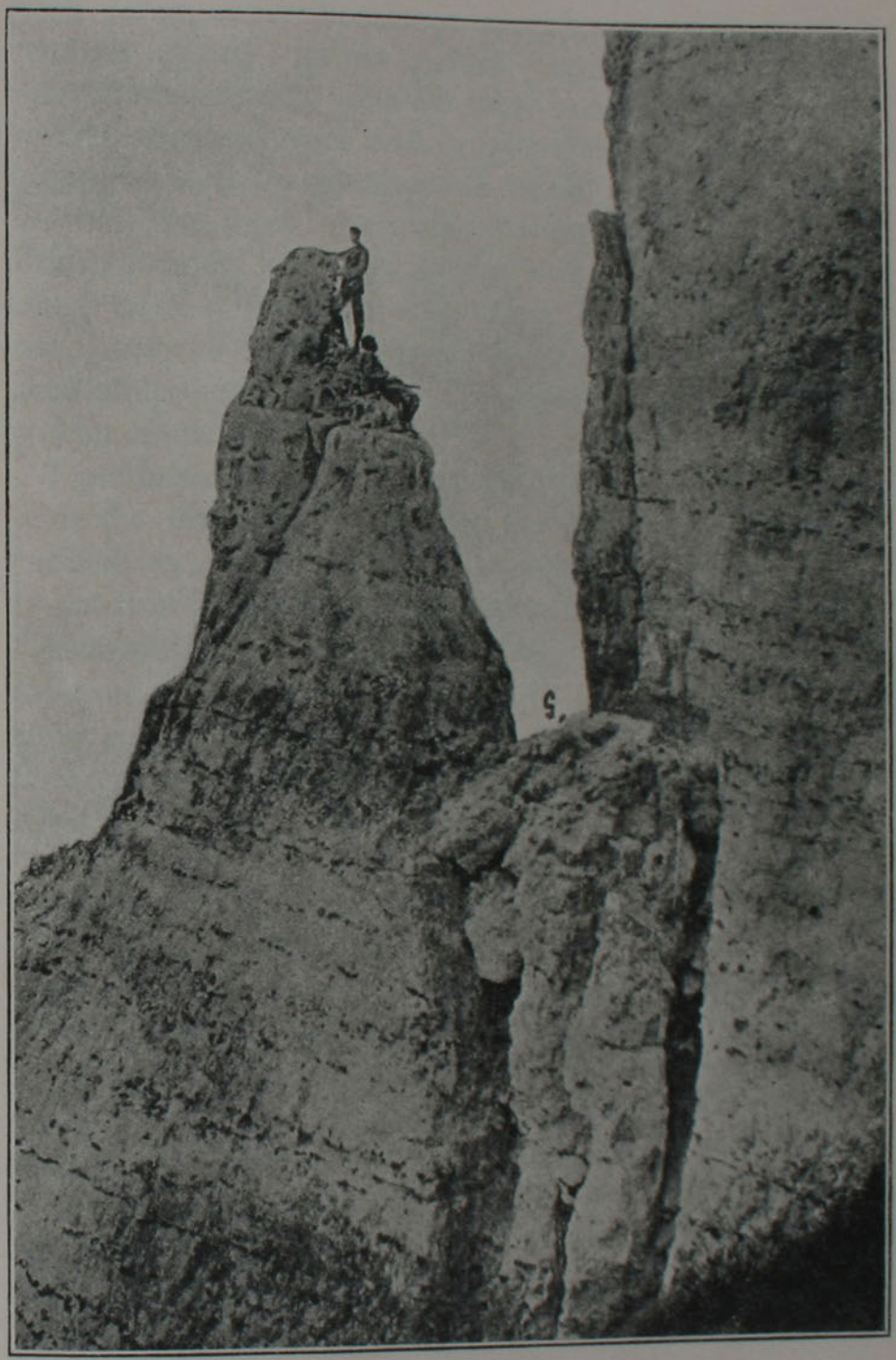
There is a cliff, whose high and
bending head
Looks fearfully in the confined deep.
King Lear

My grand passion was Beachy Head. The fantastic beauty of the cliffs can never be understood by anyone who has not grappled them. Mountain scenery of any kind, but especially rock scenery, depends largely on foreground. This is especially the case when one has acquired an intimate knowledge of the meaning, from the climber's point of view, of what the eyes tell one. The ordinary man looking at a mountain is like an illiterate person confronted with a Greek manuscript. The only chalk in England which is worth reading, so to speak, is that on Beachy Head. This is due to the fact that it is relatively so much higher than other similar cliffs. Most chalk cliffs are either unbroken precipices, unclimbable in our present stage of the game, or broken-down rubble; but Beachy Head offers rock problems as varied, interesting and picturesque as any cliffs in the world. I began to explore the face. Popular ignorance had surrounded it with innumerable absurd rumours. The general opinion was that no one had ever climbed it. There was, however, a legend that it had once been done. I settled the point by walking up, smoking a pipe, with my dog (I had no woman available) in nine and a half minutes from the beach to the coastguard station.

My cousin, Gregor Grant, was with me on my earlier climbs. These were the most obvious, but also the most important. Etheldreda's Pinnacle—which I named after my dog, or a schoolgirl with whom I had stolen interviews, I forget which—was the first great triumph. The second was the Devil's Chimney, and the third the Cuillin Crack. I have always refused till now to claim this climb, as I finished it with the moral support of a loose rope from above. It would be formidable enough were it of the best rock in the world : there is one section which actually overhangs. I believe that these latter climbs have never been repeated.

Chalk is probably the most dangerous and difficult of all kinds of rock. Its condition varies at every step. Often one has to clear away an immense amount of débris in order to get any hold at all. Yet indiscretion in this operation might pull down a few hundred tons on one's head. One can hardly ever be sure that any given hold is secure. It is, therefore, a matter of the most exquisite judgment to put on it no more weight than is necessary. A jerk or a spring would almost infallibly lead to disaster. One does not climb the cliffs. One hardly even crawls. Trickles or oozes would perhaps be the ideal verbs.

The unique character of the climbing led to an amusing incident. The greatest rock-climber in England, A. F. Mummery, published a short account of his work on the cliffs at Dover, where he lived. He stated that at more than twenty to thirty feet above sea-level no climbing was possible, and that practically all his climbs were traverses ; that is, horizontal and not vertical. I wrote to him saying that my experience was precisely the opposite. All my climbing had been done at greater altitudes, and that (with hardly an exception) my climbs were vertical. He wrote



ETHELDREDA'S PINNACLE, BEACHY HEAD

back rather superciliously to the effect that there were certainly grassy gullies which corresponded to my description, but they were not what he called climbing. I replied, thanking him and begging him to accept a few photographs of the grassy gullies under discussion. These showed the most formidable-looking pinnacles in the British Islands, and vertical cracks as precipitous as anything in Cumberland. He wrote back immediately a warm letter of congratulation. It was evident that we had been using the word " chalk " to cover two widely different species of material.

I published some of my records in the local newspapers with the idea of inspiring the natives with praiseworthy enthusiasm. Once again I had misjudged humanity. All I got was a leading article beginning with the words: " Insensate folly takes various forms." Another shock was to come. Cousin Gregor suddenly declared that he was engaged to be married, and that he didn't think he had the right to climb any more on Beachy Head. My boyhood's idol was shattered at a blow. I received my first lesson in what the religions of the world have discovered long since, that no man who allows a woman to take any place in his life is capable of doing good work. (Similarly, men may be as foolish over dogs as old maids over cats.) A man who is strong enough to use women as slaves and playthings is all right. Even so, there is always a danger, though it is difficult to avoid it. In fact, I don't think it should be avoided. I think a man should train himself to master what are commonly called vices, from maidens to morphia. It is undeniable that there are very few such men. Again and again I have had the most promising pupils give up the great work of their lives for the sake of some wretched

woman who could have been duplicated in a Ten Cent Store. It doesn't matter what the work is ; if it is worth while doing, it demands one's whole attention, and a woman is only tolerable in one's life if she is trained to help the man in his work without the slightest reference to any other interests soever. The necessary self-abnegation and concentration on his part must be matched by similar qualities on hers. I say matched—I might say better, surpassed—for such devotion must be blind. A man can *become* his work, so that he satisfies himself by satisfying it ; but a woman is fundamentally incapable of understanding the nature of work in itself. She must consent to co-operate with him in the dark. Her self-surrender is, therefore, really self-surrender, whereas with him it is rather self-realisation. It is true that if a woman persists long enough in the habit, she will ultimately find herself therein. For woman is a creature of habit, that is, of solidified impulses. She has no individuality. Attached to a strong man who is no longer himself but his work, she may become a more or less reliable mood. Otherwise her moods change with her phantasms. But the most dominant mood of woman will always be motherhood. Nature itself, therefore, insures that a man who relies on a woman to help him is bucking the tiger. At any moment, without warning, her interest in him may be swept off its feet and become secondary. Worse—she will expect her man to abandon the whole interest of his life in order to look after her new toy. A bitch does not lose all her interest in her master just because she has puppies.

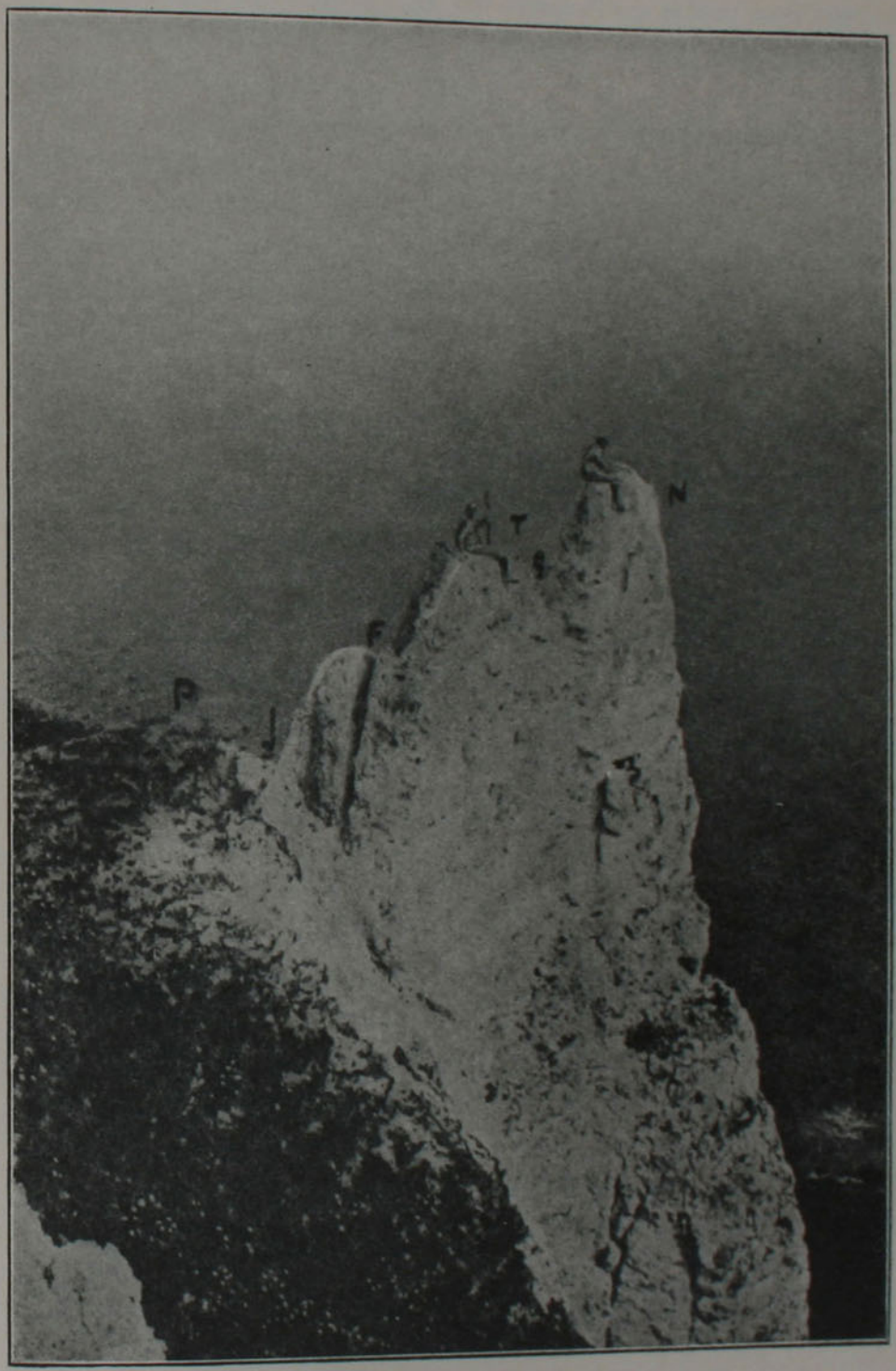
I found a new climbing companion on Beachy Head in a man named J. S. New. We worked out the possible climbs systematically, and made a large scale map of the

cliff. I ultimately contributed an illustrated article on the subject to the "Scottish Mountaineering Journal." But with the exception of Mr. H. S. Bullock, and one or two others who repeated a few of our climbs and made one or two new ones, little work has been done on the Head. Climbers generally seem to have come to the conclusion that it was altogether too dangerous. It must be admitted that, at any rate, it is very unpleasant. In wet weather the chalk forms a paste which clogs the boots and makes foothold impossible. In dry weather the dust takes possession of the eyes and throat. But for all that, many of my happiest days have been spent on the face.

I must record a very strange phenomenon in connection with my adventures on Beachy Head. One summer day I went up with my mother and took her down to the grassy slopes (the Grass Traverse) which used to extend eastward from Etheldreda's Pinnacle. I say "used to extend," for since that time there has been an extensive landslide. It was rather a scramble for an old lady to reach them from the top of the cliff, but it could be done by descending a narrow gully called Etheldreda's Walk. I put her in a comfortable position where she could make a water-colour sketch, and went off to do some climbing on the Devil's Chimney, which is some distance west of the pinnacle. The general contour of the cliff is here convex, so that I was entirely out of her sight, besides being a quarter of a mile away. Such breeze as there was was blowing from the south-west, that is, from me to her. I was trying to make a new climb on the West of the Devil's Chimney, and had got some distance down, when I distinctly heard her crying for help. At this time I had no acquaintance with psychic phenomena, yet I recognised the call as of this

type; that is, I had a direct intuition that it was so. It was not merely that it seemed improbable that it could be normal audition. I did not know at the time for certain that this was impossible, though it was afterwards proved to be so by experiment. I had no reason for supposing the danger to be urgent; but I rushed madly to the top of the cliff, along it, and down to the Grass Traverse. I reached her in time to save her life, though there were not many seconds to spare. She had shifted her position to get a better view, and had wandered off the Traverse on to steep, dusty, crumbling slopes. She had begun to slip, got frightened, and done the worst thing possible; that is, had sat down. She had been slipping by inches, and was on the brink of a cliff when I reached her. She had actually cried for help at the time when I heard her, as nearly as I could judge; but, as explained above, it was physically impossible for me to have done so. I regard this incident as very extraordinary indeed. I have never taken much stock in the regular stories of people appearing at a distance at the moment of death and so on; nor does the fact of something so similar having actually happened to me make me inclined to believe such stories. I cannot offer any explanation, apart from the conventional magical theory that a supreme explosion of Will is sometimes able to set forces in motion which cannot be invoked in ordinary circumstances.

To return to my subject. Despite the regrettable incident of impulsive humanitarianism above recorded, my associations with Beachy Head possess a charm which I have never known in any other district of England. My climbs there fulfilled all my ideals of romance, and in addition I had the particularly delightful feeling of complete originality.



THE DEVIL'S CHIMNEY, BEACHY HEAD

In other districts I could be no more than *primus inter pares*. On Beachy Head I was the only one—I had invented an entirely new branch of the sport.

For a number of weeks I slept in a Mummery Tent on one of the traverses. It was my first experience of camp life, which is, one thing with another, the best life I know. The mere feeling of being in the fresh air under the stars when one goes to sleep, and of waking at dawn because it is dawn, raises one's animal life *ipso facto* to the level of poetry.

There have always been in me two quite incompatible personalities with regard to my judgment of men and in practical matters. One of them possesses great instinctive shrewdness partaking of cynicism; the other an innocence amounting almost to imbecility. *Der Reine Thor!* In certain respects, this latter quality is calculated. Thus, I have always refused to believe that I am being cheated, even when I know the facts perfectly well. I have deliberately made up my mind that it is not worth while to allow my purity to be contaminated by descending to the level of the people who are swindling me. In some matters again, I am genuinely unable to criticise; and so I take people at their face value, occasionally with disastrous results.

For instance, one of the most original characters that I have ever met was the Rev. T. C. V. Bastow, of Little Peatling Rectory, Lutterworth. It was the proud boast of this gentleman, who used to spend his vacations at Wastdale Head, that he possessed a rudimentary tail; and though I was never favoured personally with a view of this distinction, he was credited with readiness to demonstrate the Darwinian Theory to any earnest young anatomist who might be in the offing. He wandered about the crags with

a three-pronged claw attached to twenty or thirty feet of rope, his theory being to throw it up the rocks till it caught somewhere, and then swarm up the rope. He gave himself the air of being a rock-climber of the first rank, and I never thought of doubting it.

Now I had made the first solitary descent of the Ennerdale face of the Pillar Rock, a feat at that time considered theoretically impossible. He asked me casually whether it was the sort of place that he could take his daughter. I did a sort of Rule of Three sum in my head. If poor little I, the beginner, could do it, *à fortiori* so could the great man, even with the handicap of the girl novice. As a matter of fact, he could not climb at all, and the delightful pair found themselves crag-fast.

Some years later I made a blunder of the same kind which resulted in a frightful tragedy. I was in Arolla in 1897* with Morris Travers and his younger brother. In Coolidge's Guide there is a record of the ascent of the Petite Dent de Veisivi by the gap facing Arolla. The local guides, however, unanimously denied that this route had ever been done. The rocks below the gap, they said, were overhanging and were impossible. We decided to test these statements, ascended the mountain by the ordinary way, and came down by the route in question. The rocks do overhang, but the holds are so good that the climb is quite easy. We discussed the climb with a son of the celebrated Dr. John Hopkinson, Edward, who was there with a large family. We said, quite truthfully, that there was no difficulty or danger for a responsible party ; but he and three of his children attempted to repeat our climb, and all were killed. A peculiarly English incident adds a

* See "Collected Works," Vol. I, p. 127. "Elegy," the date seems a misprint.

touch of grotesque grimness to the story. The widow begged Travers, who was a member of the rescue party (I had left the valley), to allow her to take a last look at her husband. She had been brought up to fancy pictures of people lying in state—" calm and grand in Death," and that sort of thing. As a matter of fact, all the remains had been brought down in one sack ; no one could tell what was whose.

This difficulty in understanding that professed climbers could be incurably incompetent culminated in the one great mistake of my mountaineering career. Despite the actual evidence of 1902 that Dr. Jacot-Guillarmod was utterly ignorant and untrustworthy, vain and obstinate, I consented to take him to Kang Chen Janga, with the disastrous result to be recorded later.

There remains one remarkable incident of my climbing in Cumberland. I had been trying some new routes on the Pillar Rock one day, when I was caught by a terrific thunderstorm. Luckily for me, as it turned out, I was soaked to the skin in ten minutes. Any further serious climbing being impossible, I started back to Wastdale. In doing this one crosses the ridge of Pillar Mountain, along which runs a wire sheep fence. I crossed this ; and, the storm increasing in violence, my attention was attracted by the little flames of lightning that played upon the iron uprights. I forgot about my axe. The next thing I knew was that I had been knocked down. I can hardly say that I felt any definitely electrical shock : but I knew what must have happened. I was seized by a curious mixture of exhilaration and terror ; and dashed down the face of the mountain at its steepest point, leaping from rock to rock like a goat. I easily beat the record from the summit to the

hotel! Despite the intense concentration* necessary to jump down the dangerous crags, my conscious attention was absorbed by the magnificent spectacle of the cliffs of Scafell, framed in lurid purple storm clouds and literally ablaze with lightning; continuous and vivid to a degree that I have never since seen except on one occasion near Madrid, when the entire sky was a kaleidoscopic network of flame for nearly two hours.

* But see "The Book of Lies," cap. 32, "The Mountaineer."

STANZA XI

I wish I had a curly tail
To swing myself from
bough to bough!
Book of Oaths

In 1894 I had my first serious taste of the Alps. I went with my tutor to the Suldenthal in the Austrian Tyrol. I had discovered the Badminton Volume of Mountaineering. I looked on it very much as I had been taught to look on the Bible. It says much for my innocence previously described, that despite the data already in my possession, I failed entirely to realise that the one book was as full of grotesque blunders and inaccuracies as the other. I arrived in Sulden with a deep reverence for the Alpine guide, and hastened to engage Joseph Pingerra, who was supposed to be the best in the valley. I was very shocked to find that it was customary in the Tyrol to go two on a rope instead of three, though in point of fact this was the only thing they knew about climbing. But I was amazed beyond measure to find that I was a much better rock-climber than my guide. He did not know what rock climbing was, judged by Cumberland standards! I had no experience of snow and ice; so here, of course, I was the reverent disciple. Imagine my astonishment, then, when after two or three days Pingerra slipped and fell on a perfectly easy snow slope. He was entirely unable to do anything to save himself, and I had to pull him up on the rope. I retained my faith in Badminton by saying to

myself that the guides in the outlying groups must be very poor examples. I engaged two other guides and started for the Königspitze, spending the night in a hut. In the morning the guides were drunk and unwilling to start, making absurd excuses about the weather. I had not sufficient self-confidence to tackle the Königspitze by myself; but I dismissed them, made a solitary ascent of the Eisseespitze, and thought the matter over. I was utterly disgusted, and decided to learn ice and snowcraft by myself, as I had with rocks.

A few days later I went out alone and made the first ascent of the Ortler by the Hintere Grat. The mountain had previously been climbed on this side; but the ridge had not been followed with the conscientiousness which was the rule in England. It took me six and a half hours to reach the summit.

My arrival created a profound sensation. Sitting on the top were an American and a guide, who had come up by the easy way from the Payerhütte. The guide regarded my appearance as strictly supernatural; but the American feared not God, neither regarded man. He had been trying to persuade the guide to go down to Sulden by the Hintere Grat, and the guide had cold feet.

My arrival changed the situation. Once assured that I was flesh and blood, the guide plucked up a little courage, which the American further stimulated by a promise of additional dollars. As I had come up alone, the three of us could evidently go down together. I agreed to accept the responsible position of last man, and we roped-up accordingly. But we were no sooner started than the guide again lost whatever nerve he ever possessed. His employer had never been on a mountain before, but he had common

sense and pluck; he behaved admirably in every respect; we half nursed and half chivvied that guide down that ridge. It was, of course, out of the question to follow the ridge, as I had just done, so that two or three thousand feet of the descent were accomplished by glissading down snow slopes. If I had been alone I could have got down by that route in under three hours. As it was, we took nine and a half. But the next day the guide had no lack of nerve; he wanted me to pay him for his services! Nothing doing.

I made a number of other ascents in the district, for the most part alone, but once or twice with some chance-met English. My chief aim was to master the technique of snow and ice; and by dint of using my senses and my sense I found out most of the tricks of the trade in the course of the season. I am particularly proud of having invented a pattern of Steigeisen, identical with that used by Oscar Eckenstein as far as the idea was concerned. The difference was that he, being an engineer, had had them forged in accordance with mechanical principles, whereas I had entrusted the execution of mine to a rotten firm with a great reputation in Alpine Club circles, whose ignorance of the elements of material and workmanship must have caused many "regrettable incidents."

In 1895 I felt myself fit to tackle the higher peaks of the Alps, and went to the Little Scheideck. My first exploit was a solitary ascent of the Eiger. I started late, and on the final ridge caught up with a "strong" party of English with guides, the principal Herr being a charming clergyman from Japan, the Rev. Walter Weston. The guides were more or less drunk and frightened. They were trying to make some excuse for turning back; but shame stimulated

their courage when I came up, and we proceeded to the summit. We all went down together ; the guides professed themselves delighted with the sure-footed agility of my performance, and said that I was "wie ein Führer." A year before the compliment would have persuaded me that I had died and gone to heaven, but time had changed all that. I still clung pathetically to Badminton ; I had merely reached the stage of praying pathetically to meet the good guides described in the book. I was still obsessed by the idea that it was suicidal to cross snow-covered glaciers without a rope. So I took a porter : he was quite willing to obey my orders implicitly, since I was regarded as a "Wunderkind." We went up the Jungfrau by the Schneehorn-Silberhorn route, I leading up and descending last. But it was the same old story. The man couldn't stand on a snow-slope. I was constantly having to misuse valuable time in saving his worthless life.

I began to reason the whole business out from the start. Mountaineering, I saw, was primarily a scientific problem. How, then, could the superstitious and ignorant peasants of the Alps master it or even attack it ? There could be only one answer ; they made no attempt to do so. Their craft was traditional ; one man learnt from another by rule of thumb. Confront any guide with any mountain that he did not know by habit, and he was at sea. How was it, then, that the mountains had ever been climbed at all ? And the answer to that was that the general standard of climbing was, given good weather conditions, altogether beneath contempt from the standpoint of the pioneers in England and Wales. The ordinary way up any Swiss mountain is little more than a scramble. Eckenstein used to say that he would take a cow up the Matterhorn provided

that he were allowed to tie its legs. And once, when an ex-president of the Alpine Club began his reply to this remark by mentioning that he had been up the Matterhorn, some tactless person interrupted: "Did they tie *your* legs?"

Mummery, Collie, and Hastings from England, with Eckenstein and one or two minor lights on the one hand, and Purtscheller, Blodig and others from Germany on the other, were setting up an entirely new standard of Alpine climbing. They were men of education and intelligence; they had studied the physical theory of mountain conditions; they had practised the various types of technique required to meet these conditions in detail. They were doing climbs which had never been dreamt of by any Alpine guide. The first-rate amateur was to the professional as a rifleman to a man with a flint axe.

In '95 I was not yet aware of what was going on. I discovered independently the facts of the case. I found that I could go pretty well anywhere without the least danger or difficulty, whereas all the people I met were constantly on the brink of disaster. I began to think that solitary climbing was the safest form of the game. The one problem was the snow-covered glacier. I began to study that question by itself. I soon noticed that when I looked down on such a glacier from a ridge, I could see the covered crevasses quite plainly. They appeared as lines of shade. Descending to the glacier, I found that I was still able to detect the slight differences in illumination. So much for the theory. But the question still remained: "I see it, but can I cross it safely?" My experience with chalk helped to give me confidence. I was accustomed to estimate the breaking-strain of rotten material. Now,

given a night's hard frost, it stands to reason that a bridge which has not fallen through by its own weight during the previous day would support my extra weight in the early morning. I began to test my theory, being, of course, careful to arrange my routes so as to avoid having to cross snow-covered glaciers after sunrise. I noticed, however, that a great deal of care was necessary to avoid accidents; and this made for slowness. There were also many other occasions on which a second man would be a safeguard, and some when he might be of active assistance.

The question of a third man is quite different. He diminishes the mobility of the party; the middle man is deprived almost completely of any freedom of action. Whenever the ground is so difficult that only one man can move at a time, a party of three takes not half as long again but twice as long as a party of two, since the operation of pulling in a section of rope is duplicated. The speed of a party means a great deal to its safety. As regards nightfall, weather conditions, and avalanches or falling stones, two is evidently much safer than three. Another point is that it is at least twice as hard to find two competent companions as it is to find one.

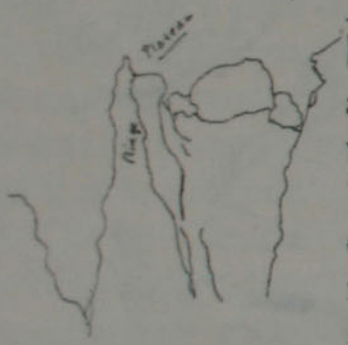
The combination of Mummery, Collie and Hastings could hardly happen again in a century. Mummery had a genius for rock-climbing and an uncanny instinct for mountain problems in general. Collie was brilliant all round, and had an absolute scientific knowledge of materials and a feeling for topography. Hastings was a tower of physical strength and endurance, an ideal second man either as a hoist or an anchor. All three were accomplished technicians, and had experience of every kind of ground and conditions.

In the absence of so miraculous a combination, the best thing to be hoped for was one other man who would possess all the qualities which one lacked oneself; and it was my supreme good fortune in 1898 to find what I sought in Oscar Eckenstein.

In the meanwhile I went on climbing in the Bernese Oberland during the summer of 1895. Certainly the Lord must have been leading me, for I hardly ever went out on a mountain without striking some episode which directed my thoughts into the right channel. I recall one exceptionally comic incident. A boy about my own age, named Armstrong, wanted to cross the Petersgrat with a guide, and his father asked me to join the party and see fair play.

Here is an account (written at the time) of one of our small climbs :

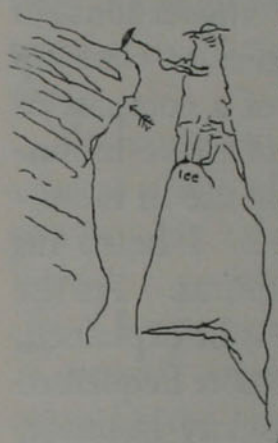
"At two-thirty we started, reached the glacier & roped at 4.15 & began the ascent of the Wetterlücke (3,169m.). Self first as usual, Armstrong 2nd & guide 3rd. New snow, one to three feet. At last we came to the badly crevassed portion of the glacier. I append map on previous page. Where the figure X is it is usual to go to the rocks of the Lauterbrunnen Wetterhorn on the right, as the glacier breaks off sharp with a 30-foot or perhaps 50-foot ice-wall overhanging and absolutely unclimbable (Mummery, Collie & Co. barred). To-day the rocks were simply icicles all over & a blizzard was blowing over the new snow like nothing I have ever seen before. But when I brought up under the ice-wall Christian wanted to go back a bit & over these ice-plastered slabs—at an angle of 60° anyhow. I refused & pointed out a possible way up the ice-wall. A steep narrow ridge of rotten névé led up to a plateau, whence a block of ice formed a bridge, thus :



A traverse under the overhanging blocks on the other side took me into a bottomless crevasse, but here filled with new snow at an angle of 70°. This might be climbed & the top of the overhanging blocks reached. Another rotten narrow ridge traversed back again to the right to another 70° new-snow slope & this led me to the final pinnacle 4-feet deep in new snow.

"This appeared to join the top of wall, but afterwards proved only a new-snow cornice. I did not think it easy or safe or anything nice—it was simply the only way. I told Christian so, & started up. Impassioned cries of 'Come back.' '*When* you fall (not *if*) don't say I didn't

tell you!' All in old High German. Finally 'Ich gehe nicht.' I told him to stay there & we'd pull him straight up afterwards. Still the impassioned cries. But I went on. He took the rope off. I got Armstrong to the plateau & put him on the end. Freezing in the blizzard. Bridge very good, Traverse very bad. New-snow cliff atrocious. Rotten little ridge ghastly. Next slope wusser & wusser. Fixed myself on flat place. Freezing in blizzard. Inches thick in solid ice. Pulled Armstrong up to where I was. Went on to pinnacle. Discovered 4-foot cornice. Broke it away. Result, I cut a step in the undercut wall & a handhold above. But it was not to be crossed thus with safety, especially as here I was out of all shelter from the blizzard. So Armstrong had to come up to me. Collaring my leg, he raised it to about the level of his shoulder with a most almighty everlasting boost & got me on to the top of the cliff at last. He was soon hauled up: the pass was practically won. The guide however had still to come. With the rash confidence of youth, we thought to bring him up straight. But once he was a foot off the ground the rope was two feet into the edge. Nary an inch further. I went down on the rope to the pinnacle to put an axe as a roller. I looked over. The most glorious sight met my gaze. The guide—6 in. thick in ice, his face blue with cold, hanging from the rope expecting to be pulled up. I shouted that he must help himself—he said he couldn't. I might have known it! I said he



must come up our way, & he, swallowing in one great gulp his previous principles, agreed. And this he actually managed to do. Meanwhile Armstrong, sitting on the ice above in full blizzard, froze unto it, & he was released with difficulty."

This climb developed as follows. The Petersgrat is a broad pass of almost flat glacier. Near the top the weather turned extremely bad ; it got very dark, and the snow fell so heavily that I at one end of the rope could hardly see the guide at the other. Needless to say, he was hopelessly lost without further ado ; and repeated invocations of various Powers incomprehensibly failed either to clear up the weather or to compensate for the lack of a compass or a sense of direction. Faith may be able to move mountains ; but that is, so far as I know, its only use in mountaineering. At last his piety was rewarded. I heard his joyful exclamation as he discovered footprints. As he followed them they increased in number. As he explained, this proved that we were getting to more and more frequented districts. During this time, with my customary lassitude, I had been sitting down. But presently I called Armstrong's attention to the fact that the guide had been walking in a circle. I asked him if he was tired of this foolishness ; he said he was ; I told the guide he was a Dummer Esel, assumed the lead and walked in a straight line to the edge of the glacier, which was not ten minutes away.

This was not a question of using a compass. I was born with a sense of direction which, though it does not tell me in so many words where the North is, tells me when I am facing in the same direction as the door of the house, hut or tent from which I have started in the morning. I can therefore keep straight in any conditions of light or

weather. I have also what I may call a subliminal, self-registering, trigonometrical pedometer, which enables me to make the correct compensation whenever I am forced out of my way. It also enables me to find a place, provided that I know its distance and direction from my starting point. This peculiar faculty has constantly been of the utmost use to me in the course of my explorations. It works not only in open country but in cities, provided that they are unfamiliar. In London or Paris, for example, my rational mind is liable to interfere with the process, with the result that I can lose my way in the most ridiculous manner in the course of a quarter of a mile of quite familiar streets.

To return to psychology. It is hard to summarise the general effects of my queer education. But it was terribly uneven. In some respects I was a long way ahead of most boys of my age ; in others I was little better than an imbecile. I was practically prevented from acquiring the habit of normal relations with other people. My associates were, for the most part, much older than myself.

But the one really disastrous feature was the attitude which I was compelled to assume about money. I was taught to expect every possible luxury. Nothing was too good for me ; and I had no idea of what anything cost. It was all paid for behind my back. I was never taught that effort on my part might be required to obtain anything that I wanted ; but on the other hand I was kept criminally short of pocket-money lest I should spend it in some disgraceful way, such as buying books or tobacco, or spending it on even worse abominations such as theatres and women. (I was encouraged to keep a dog!) I had therefore no sense of responsibility in the matter of money. It never

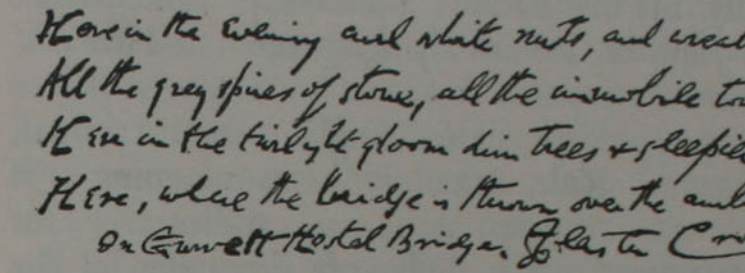
occurred to me that it was possible to make it, and I was thus trained to be dependent to the point of mendicancy. The effect was, of course, disastrous. When I got to Cambridge I still had everything paid for me, and in addition I found myself with unlimited credit which I could keep secret. When I came into my fortune a year later, I was utterly unprepared to use it with the most ordinary prudence, and all the inherent vices of my training had a perfectly free field for their development. Before, if I wanted to give a dinner party every day of the week, I could do it, but if I wanted a little cash my only alternative to the card table was the pawnshop, till I came of age. After that, it was simply a question of writing a cheque, which gave me no idea of the nature of the transaction involved. I doubt whether any one in history was ever furnished with such a completely rotten preparation for the management of practical affairs.

My residence at Eastbourne broke up very suddenly. During the whole of my adolescence I had taken the romantic point of view of love; and I found that the universal practice was for elder people to interfere in the affairs of their juniors. Two people could not decide to marry without rousing a hurricane. There was never any exception. Engagements were always being made and broken on unintelligible religious grounds. The family of the Lamberts was no exception to this. The eldest daughter was an acid old maid in the late twenties; the youngest was a hysterical monster of suppression. The middle girl was beautiful, voluptuous, and normal. She was not sufficiently intelligent to revolt openly against her family; but her human instincts told her that something was wrong, and that she had better get out of it. She was

in love with a quite suitable young man, and engaged to him on probation. The question was whether he would or wouldn't join the Plymouth Brethren. Naturally, the more he saw of them the less he liked them, and he ultimately made up his mind to stand by the church of his fathers. On announcing this desolating decision he was overwhelmed with abuse and thrown out of the house. His fiancée was forbidden to communicate with him in any way, and to all intents and purposes imprisoned. I offered to arrange for correspondence with a view to an early elopement. But I couldn't stand the continuous abuse and ill-treatment which was the portion of the unfortunate girl. The family literally foamed at the mouth on every opportunity. Meals were a poisoned whirlwind. She was constantly reduced to tears, and perhaps the happiest time she had was when she was actually being beaten. I ought to have conducted my intrigues with greater patience, no doubt, but it got on my nerves too much. One morning at breakfast I said about a millionth part of what I thought, and the family started screaming. It was as if they had been attacked by collective mania. Everything was thrown at me ; they went for me with claws and fists. They were too blind with rage to know what they were doing. I simply knocked their heads together and walked out of the house. When I thought the atmosphere had had time to dissipate I returned with the intention of carrying out a rescue for the distressed damsel. They were too much scared to oppose me, and I begged her to come away at once and go to her ex-fiancé's family. But she could not summon up courage to do it. The opportunity went by ; and later in the afternoon my Uncle Tom, summoned by telegram, came to fetch me away from the accursed spot.

The incident had a wholesome effect upon my own family. They had failed to break my spirit, and begun to realise that I had reached the stage when I could make as much trouble for them as they could for me. The best thing they could do was to let me go my own way. I had won the fight; and the evidence of my triumph was my season in the Bernese Oberland on my own responsibility. I was recalled by a telegram. They had decided to let me go to Trinity; and the entrance examination was only a week away. I went up to Cambridge and passed it without difficulty, though I had had no opportunity of preparing the set classics. But I followed Browning's advice to "greet the Unseen with a cheer": my real knowledge of Greek and Latin enabled me to give renderings, far above the average, of unfamiliar passages. I could never adapt myself to the sheep-system of mnemonic "learning." In October I entered the University, taking rooms at 16 St. John's Street. From that moment begins an entirely new chapter in my life.

STANZA XII



When I went up to Cambridge in the October term of 1895, I had the sensation of drawing a long deep breath as one does after swimming under water or (an even better analogy) as one does after bracing oneself against the pain inflicted by a dentist. I could not imagine anything better in life. I found myself suddenly in an entirely new world. I was part of the glories of the past; and I made a firm resolution to be one of the glories of the future. I should like the haunted room over the Great Gate of Trinity to be turned into a vault like that of Christian Rosencreutz to receive my sarcophagus. I must admit that I don't know of much else in England of the works of man which I would not make haste to destroy if the opportunity occurred. But Trinity, except New Court and Whewell's Court, is enough for any poet to live and die for.

I remember being amazed in later years when my patriotism was doubted. I wasn't going to have "Eintritt Verboten" put up over the Great Gate with a Prussian sentry to enforce it. I am perfectly aware that I am irrational. The traditions of England are intertwined inextricably with a million abuses and deformities which I am only too eager to destroy. But all Englishmen keep their brains in water-tight compartments. It would be a comic degradation to

make Trinity the headquarters of the Rationalist Press Association. But at the time I had not seen the logical incompatibility of my various positions. Shakespeare's patriotism in John of Gaunt's dying speech and Henry V appeals directly to my poetic sense.

I am quite prepared to die for England in that brutal, unthinking way. "Rule, Britannia" gets me going as if I were the most ordinary music-hall audience. This sentiment is not interfered with by my detestation of the moral and religious humbug which one is expected to produce at moments of national crisis. My patriotism is of the blatant, unintelligent variety, popularised by Kipling. I like the old rime :

> "Two skinny Frenchmen, one Portugee,
> One jolly Englishman lick 'em all three."

But I can find no moral excuse for my attitude. I am an animal with a family and a country. To hell with everybody! This animal is prepared to use its brains and its force as stupidly and unscrupulously as the Duke of Wellington. It is not convinced by its own philosophical opinions, which condemn patriotism as parochialism, regard war as immoral savagery and economic insanity, and consider public opinion and its leaders as the bleating of sheep, huddling into their fold at the barking of mongrel dogs.

The atmosphere of Cambridge formed an admirable background for my state of mind. I saw myself as a romantic character in history. The Church of England, as represented by my Uncle Tom, had seemed a narrow tyranny, as detestable as that of the Plymouth Brethren ; less logical and more hypocritical. My Uncle Jonathan