II.

It had been the purpose of the younger brother to do a very magnificent thing, to celebrate this return to life by a dinner at some restaurant of indisputable quality, a dinner that should be followed by all that glittering succession of impressions the Music Halls of those days were so capable of giving. It was a worthy plan to wipe off the more superficial stains of the prison house by this display of free indulgence; but so far as the second item went the plan was changed. The dinner stood, but there was a desire already more powerful than the appetite for shows, already more efficient in turning the man's mind away from his grim prepossession with his past than any theatre could be, and that was an enormous curiosity and perplexity about this Boomfood and these Boom children—this new portentous giantry that seemed to dominate the world. "I 'aven't the 'ang of 'em," he said. "They disturve me."

His brother had that fineness of mind that can even set aside a contemplated hospitality. "It's *your* evening, dear old boy," he said. "We'll try to get into the mass meeting at the People's Palace."

And at last the man from prison had the luck to find himself wedged into a packed multitude and staring from afar at a little brightly lit platform under an organ and a gallery. The organist had been playing something that had set boots tramping as the people swarmed in; but that was over now.

Hardly had the man from prison settled into place and done his quarrel with an importunate stranger who elbowed, before Caterham came. He walked out of a shadow towards the middle of the platform, the most insignificant little pigmy, away there in the distance, a little black figure with a pink dab for a face,—in profile one saw his quite distinctive aquiline nose—a little figure that trailed after it most inexplicably—a cheer. A cheer it was that began away there and grew and spread. A little spluttering of voices about the platform at first that suddenly leapt up into a flame of sound and swept athwart the whole mass of humanity within the building and without. How they cheered! Hooray! Hooray!

No one in all those myriads cheered like the man from prison. The tears poured down his face, and he only stopped cheering at last because the thing had choked him. You must have been in prison as long as he before you can understand, or even begin to understand, what it means to a man to let his lungs go in a crowd. (But for all that he did not even pretend to himself that he knew what all this emotion was about.) Hooray! O God!—Hoo-ray!

And then a sort of silence. Caterham had subsided to a conspicuous patience, and subordinate and inaudible persons were saying and doing formal and insignificant things. It was like hearing voices through the noise of leaves in spring. “Wawawawa—-” What did it matter? People in the audience talked to one another. “Wawawawawa—-” the thing went on. Would that grey-headed duffer never have done? Interrupting? Of course they were interrupting. “Wa, wa, wa, wa—-” But shall we hear Caterham any better?

Meanwhile at any rate there was Caterham to stare at, and one could stand and study the distant prospect of the great man’s features. He was easy to draw was this man, and already the world had him to study at leisure on lamp chimneys and children’s plates, on Anti-Boomfood medals and Anti-Boomfood flags, on the selvedges of Caterham silks and cottons and in the linings of Good Old English Caterham hats. He pervades all the caricature of that time. One sees him as a sailor standing to an old-fashioned gun, a port-fire labelled “New Boomfood Laws” in his hand; while in the sea wallows that huge, ugly, threatening monster, “Boomfood;” or he is *cap-a-pie* in armour, St. George’s cross on shield and helm, and a cowardly titanic Caliban sitting amidst desecrations at the mouth of a horrid cave declines his gauntlet of the “New Boomfood Regulations;” or he comes flying down as Perseus and rescues a chained and beautiful Andromeda (labelled distinctly about her belt as “Civilisation”) from a wallowing waste of sea monster bearing upon its various necks and claws “Irreligion,” “Trampling Egotism,” “Mechanism,” “Monstrosity,” and the like. But it was as “Jack the Giant-killer” that the popular imagination considered Caterham most correctly cast, and it was in the vein of a Jack the Giant-killer poster that the man from prison, enlarged that distant miniature.

The “Wawawawa” came abruptly to an end.

He’s done. He’s sitting down. Yes! No! Yes! It’s Caterham! “Caterham!” “Caterham!” And then came the cheers.

It takes a multitude to make such a stillness as followed that disorder of cheering. A man alone in a wilderness;—it’s stillness of a sort no doubt, but he hears himself breathe, he hears himself move, he hears all sorts of things. Here the voice of Caterham was the one single thing heard, a thing very bright and clear, like a little light burning in a black velvet recess. Hear indeed! One heard him as though he spoke at one’s elbow.

It was stupendously effective to the man from prison, that gesticulating little figure in a halo of light, in a halo of rich and swaying sounds; behind it, partially effaced as it were, sat its supporters on the platform, and in the foreground was a wide perspective

of innumerable backs and profiles, a vast multitudinous attention. That little figure seemed to have absorbed the substance from them all.

Caterham spoke of our ancient institutions. “Earearear,” roared the crowd. “Ear! ear!” said the man from prison. He spoke of our ancient spirit of order and justice. “Earearear!” roared the crowd. “Ear! Ear!” cried the man from prison, deeply moved. He spoke of the wisdom of our forefathers, of the slow growth of venerable institutions, of moral and social traditions, that fitted our English national characteristics as the skin fits the hand. “Ear! Ear!” groaned the man from prison, with tears of excitement on his cheeks. And now all these things were to go into the melting pot. Yes, into the melting pot! Because three men in London twenty years ago had seen fit to mix something indescribable in a bottle, all the order and sanctity of things—Cries of “No! No!”—Well, if it was not to be so, they must exert themselves, they must say good-bye to hesitation—Here there came a gust of cheering. They must say good-bye to hesitation and half measures.

“We have heard, gentlemen,” cried Caterham, “of nettles that become giant nettles. At first they are no more than other nettles—little plants that a firm hand may grasp and wrench away; but if you leave them—if you leave them, they grow with such a power of poisonous expansion that at last you must needs have axe and rope, you must needs have danger to life and limb, you must needs have toil and distress—men may be killed in their felling, men may be killed in their felling—-”

There came a stir and interruption, and then the man from prison heard Caterham’s voice again, ringing clear and strong: “Learn about Boomfood from Boomfood itself and—” He paused—“*Grasp your nettle before it is too late!*”

He stopped and stood wiping his lips. “A crystal,” cried some one, “a crystal,” and then came that same strange swift growth to thunderous tumult, until the whole world seemed cheering....

The man from prison came out of the hall at last, marvellously stirred, and with that in his face that marks those who have seen a vision. He knew, every one knew; his ideas were no longer vague. He had come back to a world in crisis, to the immediate decision of a stupendous issue. He must play his part in the great conflict like a man—like a free, responsible man. The antagonism presented itself as a picture. On the one hand those easy gigantic mail-clad figures of the morning—one saw them now in a different light—on the other this little black-clad gesticulating creature under the limelight, that pigmy thing with its ordered flow of melodious persuasion, its little, marvellously penetrating voice, John Caterham—“Jack the Giant-killer.” They must all unite to “grasp the nettle” before it was “too late.”

III.

The tallest and strongest and most regarded of all the children of the Food were the three sons of Cossar. The mile or so of land near Sevenoaks in which their boyhood passed became so trenched, so dug out and twisted about, so covered with sheds and huge working models and all the play of their developing powers, it was like no other place on earth. And long since it had become too little for the things they sought to do. The eldest son was a mighty schemer of wheeled engines; he had made himself a sort of giant bicycle that no road in the world had room for, no bridge could bear. There it stood, a great thing of wheels and engines, capable of two hundred and fifty miles an hour, useless save that now and then he would mount it and fling himself backwards and forwards across that cumbered work-yard. He had meant to go around the little world with it; he had made it with that intention, while he was still no more than a dreaming boy. Now its spokes were rusted deep red like wounds, wherever the enamel had been chipped away.

“You must make a road for it first, Sonnie,” Cossar had said, “before you can do that.”

So one morning about dawn the young giant and his brothers had set to work to make a road about the world. They seem to have had an inkling of opposition impending, and they had worked with remarkable vigour. The world had discovered them soon enough, driving that road as straight as a flight of a bullet towards the English Channel, already some miles of it levelled and made and stamped hard. They had been stopped before midday by a vast crowd of excited people, owners of land, land agents, local authorities, lawyers, policemen, soldiers even.

“We’re making a road,” the biggest boy had explained.

“Make a road by all means,” said the leading lawyer on the ground, “but please respect the rights of other people. You have already infringed the private rights of twenty-seven private proprietors; let alone the special privileges and property of an urban district board, nine parish councils, a county council, two gasworks, and a railway company....”

“Goodney!” said the elder boy Cossar.

“You will have to stop it.”

“But don’t you want a nice straight road in the place of all these rotten rutty little lanes?”

“I won’t say it wouldn’t be advantageous, but—”

“It isn’t to be done,” said the eldest Cossar boy, picking up his tools.

“Not in this way,” said the lawyer, “certainly.”

“How is it to be done?”

The leading lawyer’s answer had been complicated and vague.

Cossar had come down to see the mischief his children had done, and reproved them severely and laughed enormously and seemed to be extremely happy over the affair. “You boys must wait a bit,” he shouted up to them, “before you can do things like that.”

“The lawyer told us we must begin by preparing a scheme, and getting special powers and all sorts of rot. Said it would take us years.”

“*We’ll* have a scheme before long, little boy,” cried Cossar, hands to his mouth as he shouted, “never fear. For a bit you’d better play about and make models of the things you want to do.”

They did as he told them like obedient sons.

But for all that the Cossar lads brooded a little.

“It’s all very well,” said the second to the first, “but I don’t always want just to play about and plan, I want to do something *real*, you know. We didn’t come into this world so strong as we are, just to play about in this messy little bit of ground, you know, and take little walks and keep out of the towns”—for by that time they were forbidden all boroughs and urban districts. “Doing nothing’s just wicked. Can’t we find out something the little people *want* done and do it for them—just for the fun of doing it?

“Lots of them haven’t houses fit to live in,” said the second boy, “Let’s go and build ‘em a house close up to London, that will hold heaps and heaps of them and be ever so comfortable and nice, and let’s make ‘em a nice little road to where they all go and do business—nice straight little road, and make it all as nice as nice. We’ll make it all so clean and pretty that they won’t any of them be able to live grubby and beastly like most of them do now. Water enough for them to wash with, we’ll have—you know they’re so dirty now that nine out of ten of their houses haven’t even baths in them, the filthy little skunks! You know, the ones that have baths spit insults at the ones that haven’t, instead of helping them to get them—and call ‘em the Great Unwashed—-*You* know. We’ll alter all that. And we’ll make electricity light and cook and clean up for them, and all. Fancy! They make their women—women who are going to be mothers—crawl about and scrub floors!

“We could make it all beautifully. We could bank up a valley in that range of hills over there and make a nice reservoir, and we could make a big place here to generate our electricity and have it all simply lovely. Couldn’t we, brother? And then perhaps they’d let us do some other things.”

“Yes,” said the elder brother, “we could do it *very* nice for them.”

“Then *let’s,”* said the second brother.

“*I* don’t mind,” said the elder brother, and looked about for a handy tool.

And that led to another dreadful bother.

Agitated multitudes were at them in no time, telling them for a thousand reasons to stop, telling them to stop for no reason at all—babbling, confused, and varied multitudes. The place they were building was too high—it couldn’t possibly be safe. It was ugly; it interfered with the letting of proper-sized houses in the neighbourhood; it ruined the tone of the neighbourhood; it was unneighbourly; it was contrary to the Local Building Regulations; it infringed the right of the local authority to muddle about with a minute expensive electric supply of its own; it interfered with the concerns of the local water company.

Local Government Board clerks roused themselves to judicial obstruction. The little lawyer turned up again to represent about a dozen threatened interests; local landowners appeared in opposition; people with mysterious claims claimed to be bought off at exorbitant rates; the Trades Unions of all the building trades lifted up collective voices; and a ring of dealers in all sorts of building material became a bar. Extraordinary associations of people with prophetic visions of aesthetic horrors rallied to protect the scenery of the place where they would build the great house, of the valley where they would bank up the water. These last people were absolutely the worst asses of the lot, the Cossar boys considered. That beautiful house of the Cossar boys was just like a walking-stick thrust into a wasps’ nest, in no time.

“I never did!” said the elder boy.

“We can’t go on,” said the second brother.

“Rotten little beasts they are,” said the third of the brothers; “we can’t do *anything!*”

“Even when it’s for their own comfort. Such a *nice* place we’d have made for them too.”

“They seem to spend their silly little lives getting in each other’s way,” said the eldest boy, “Rights and laws and regulations and rascalities; it’s like a game of spellicans….

Well, anyhow, they'll have to live in their grubby, dirty, silly little houses for a bit longer. It's very evident *we* can't go on with this."

And the Cossar children left that great house unfinished, a mere hole of foundations and the beginning of a wall, and sulked back to their big enclosure. After a time the hole was filled with water and with stagnation and weeds, and vermin, and the Food, either dropped there by the sons of Cossar or blowing thither as dust, set growth going in its usual fashion. Water voles came out over the country and did infinite havoc, and one day a farmer caught his pigs drinking there, and instantly and with great presence of mind—for he knew: of the great hog of Oakham—slew them all. And from that deep pool it was the mosquitoes came, quite terrible mosquitoes, whose only virtue was that the sons of Cossar, after being bitten for a little, could stand the thing no longer, but chose a moonlight night when law and order were abed and drained the water clean away into the river by Brook.

But they left the big weeds and the big water voles and all sorts of big undesirable things still living and breeding on the site they had chosen—the site on which the fair great house of the little people might have towered to heaven …

IV.

That had been in the boyhood of the Sons, but now they were nearly men, And the chains had been tightening upon them, and tightening with every year of growth. Each year they grew, and the Food spread and great things multiplied, each year the stress and tension rose. The Food had been at first for the great mass of mankind a distant marvel, and now It was coming home to every threshold, and threatening, pressing against and distorting the whole order of life. It blocked this, it overturned that; it changed natural products, and by changing natural products it stopped employments and threw men out of work by the hundred thousands; it swept over boundaries and turned the world of trade into a world of cataclysms: no wonder mankind hated it.

And since it is easier to hate animate than inanimate things, animals more than plants, and one's fellow-men more completely than any animals, the fear and trouble engendered by giant nettles and six-foot grass blades, awful insects and tiger-like vermin, grew all into one great power of detestation that aimed itself with a simple directness at that scattered band of great human beings, the Children of the Food. That hatred had become the central force in political affairs. The old party lines had been traversed and effaced altogether under the insistence of these newer issues, and the conflict lay now with the party of the temporisers, who were for putting little political men to control and regulate the Food, and the party of reaction for whom Caterham spoke, speaking always with a more sinister ambiguity, crystallising his

intention first in one threatening phrase and then another, now that men must “prune the bramble growths,” now that they must find a “cure for elephantiasis,” and at last upon the eve of the election that they must “Grasp the nettle.”

One day the three sons of Cossar, who were now no longer boys but men, sat among the masses of their futile work and talked together after their fashion of all these things. They had been working all day at one of a series of great and complicated trenches their father had bid them make, and now it was sunset, and they sat in the little garden space before the great house and looked at the world and rested, until the little servants within should say their food was ready.

You must figure these mighty forms, forty feet high the least of them was, reclining on a patch of turf that would have seemed a stubble of reeds to a common man. One sat up and chipped earth from his huge boots with an iron girder he grasped in his hand; the second rested on his elbow; the third whittled a pine tree into shape and made a smell of resin in the air. They were clothed not in cloth but in under-garments of woven rope and outer clothes of felted aluminium wire; they were shod with timber and iron, and the links and buttons and belts of their clothing were all of plated steel. The great single-storeyed house they lived in, Egyptian in its massiveness, half built of monstrous blocks of chalk and half excavated from the living rock of the hill, had a front a full hundred feet in height, and beyond, the chimneys and wheels, the cranes and covers of their work sheds rose marvellously against the sky. Through a circular window in the house there was visible a spout from which some white-hot metal dripped and dripped in measured drops into a receptacle out of sight. The place was enclosed and rudely fortified by monstrous banks of earth, backed with steel both over the crests of the Downs above and across the dip of the valley. It needed something of common size to mark the nature of the scale. The train that came rattling from Sevenoaks athwart their vision, and presently plunged into the tunnel out of their sight, looked by contrast with them like some small-sized automatic toy.

“They have made all the woods this side of Ightham out of bounds,” said one, “and moved the board that was out by Knockholt two miles and more this way.”

“It is the least they could do,” said the youngest, after a pause. “They are trying to take the wind out of Caterham’s sails.”

“It’s not enough for that, and—it is almost too much for us,” said the third.

“They are cutting us off from Brother Redwood. Last time I went to him the red notices had crept a mile in, either way. The road to him along the Downs is no more than a narrow lane.”

The speaker thought. “What has come to our brother Redwood?”

“Why?” said the eldest brother.

The speaker hacked a bough from his pine. “He was like—as though he wasn’t awake. He didn’t seem to listen to what I had to say. And he said something of—love.”

The youngest tapped his girder on the edge of his iron sole and laughed. “Brother Redwood,” he said, “has dreams.”

Neither spoke for a space. Then the eldest brother said, “This cooping up and cooping up grows more than I can bear. At last, I believe, they will draw a line round our boots and tell us to live on that.”

The middle brother swept aside a heap of pine boughs with one hand and shifted his attitude. “What they do now is nothing to what they will do when Caterham has power.”

“If he gets power,” said the youngest brother, smiting the ground with his girder.

“As he will,” said the eldest, staring at his feet.

The middle brother ceased his lopping, and his eye went to the great banks that sheltered them about. “Then, brothers,” he said, “our youth will be over, and, as Father Redwood said to us long ago, we must quit ourselves like men.”

“Yes,” said the eldest brother; “but what exactly does that mean? Just what does it mean—when that day of trouble comes?”

He too glanced at those rude vast suggestions of entrenchment about them, looking not so much at them as through them and over the hills to the innumerable multitudes beyond. Something of the same sort came into all their minds—a vision of little people coming out to war, in a flood, the little people, inexhaustible, incessant, malignant....

“They are little,” said the youngest brother; “but they have numbers beyond counting, like the sands of the sea.”

“They have arms—they have weapons even, that our brothers in Sunderland have made.”

“Besides, Brothers, except for vermin, except for little accidents with evil things, what have we seen of killing?”

“I know,” said the eldest brother. “For all that—we are what we are. When the day of trouble comes we must do the thing we have to do.”

He closed his knife with a snap—the blade was the length of a man—and used his new pine staff to help himself rise. He stood up and turned towards the squat grey immensity of the house. The crimson of the sunset caught him as he rose, caught the mail and clasps about his neck and the woven metal of his arms, and to the eyes of his brother it seemed as though he was suddenly suffused with blood …

As the young giant rose a little black figure became visible to him against that western incandescence on the top of the embankment that towered above the summit of the down. The black limbs waved in ungainly gestures. Something in the fling of the limbs suggested haste to the young giant’s mind. He waved his pine mast in reply, filled the whole valley with his vast Hullo! threw a “Something’s up” to his brothers, and set off in twenty-foot strides to meet and help his father.

V.

It chanced too that a young man who was not a giant was delivering his soul about these sons of Cossar just at that same time. He had come over the hills beyond Sevenoaks, he and his friend, and he it was did the talking. In the hedge as they came along they had heard a pitiful squealing, and had intervened to rescue three nestling tits from the attack of a couple of giant ants. That adventure it was had set him talking.

“Reactionary!” he was saying, as they came within sight of the Cossar encampment. “Who wouldn’t be reactionary? Look at that square of ground, that space of God’s earth that was once sweet and fair, torn, desecrated, disembowelled! Those sheds! That great wind-wheel! That monstrous wheeled machine! Those dykes! Look at those three monsters squatting there, plotting some ugly devilment or other! Look—look at all the land!”

His friend glanced at his face. “You have been listening to Caterham,” he said.

“Using my eyes. Looking a little into the peace and order of the past we leave behind. This foul Food is the last shape of the Devil, still set as ever upon the ruin of our world. Think what the world must have been before our days, what it was still when our mothers bore us, and see it now! Think how these slopes once smiled under the golden harvest, how the hedges, full of sweet little flowers, parted the modest portion of this man from that, how the ruddy farmhouses dotted the land, and the voice of the church bells from yonder tower stilled the whole world each Sabbath into Sabbath prayer. And now, every year, still more and more of monstrous weeds, of monstrous

vermin, and these giants growing all about us, straddling over us, blundering against all that is subtle and sacred in our world. Why here—Look!"

He pointed, and his friend's eyes followed the line of his white finger.

"One of their footmarks. See! It has smashed itself three feet deep and more, a pitfall for horse and rider, a trap to the unwary. There is a briar rose smashed to death; there is grass uprooted and a teazle crushed aside, a farmer's drain pipe snapped and the edge of the pathway broken down. Destruction! So they are doing all over the world, all over the order and decency the world of men has made. Trampling on all things. Reaction! What else?"

"But—reaction. What do you hope to do?"

"Stop it!" cried the young man from Oxford. "Before it is too late."

"But—-"

"It's *not* impossible," cried the young man from Oxford, with a jump in his voice. "We want the firm hand; we want the subtle plan, the resolute mind. We have been mealy-mouthed and weak-handed; we have trifled and temporised and the Food has grown and grown. Yet even now—"

He stopped for a moment. "This is the echo of Caterham," said his friend.

"Even now. Even now there is hope—abundant hope, if only we make sure of what we want and what we mean to destroy. The mass of people are with us, much more with us than they were a few years ago; the law is with us, the constitution and order of society, the spirit of the established religions, the customs and habits of mankind are with us—and against the Food. Why should we temporise? Why should we lie? We hate it, we don't want it; why then should we have it? Do you mean to just grizzle and obstruct passively and do nothing—till the sands are out?"

He stopped short and turned about. "Look at that grove of nettles there. In the midst of them are homes—deserted—where once clean families of simple men played out their honest lives!

"And there!" he swung round to where the young Cossars muttered to one another of their wrongs.

"Look at them! And I know their father, a brute, a sort of brute beast with an intolerant loud voice, a creature who has ran amuck in our all too merciful world for the last thirty years and more. An engineer! To him all that we hold dear and sacred is nothing. Nothing! The splendid traditions of our race and land, the noble institutions, the

venerable order, the broad slow march from precedent to precedent that has made our English people great and this sunny island free—it is all an idle tale, told and done with. Some claptrap about the Future is worth all these sacred things.... The sort of man who would run a tramway over his mother's grave if he thought that was the cheapest line the tramway could take.... And you think to temporise, to make some scheme of compromise, that will enable you to live in your way while that—that machinery—lives in its. I tell you it is hopeless—hopeless. As well make treaties with a tiger! They want things monstrous—we want them sane and sweet. It is one thing or the other."

"But what can you do?"

"Much! All! Stop the Food! They are still scattered, these giants; still immature and disunited. Chain them, gag them, muzzle them. At any cost stop them. It is their world or ours! Stop the Food. Shut up these men who make it. Do anything to stop Cossar! You don't seem to remember—one generation—only one generation needs holding down, and then—Then we could level those mounds there, fill up their footsteps, take the ugly sirens from our church towers, smash all our elephant guns, and turn our faces again to the old order, the ripe old civilisation for which the soul of man is fitted."

"It's a mighty effort."

"For a mighty end. And if we don't? Don't you see the prospect before us clear as day? Everywhere the giants will increase and multiply; everywhere they will make and scatter the Food. The grass will grow gigantic in our fields, the weeds in our hedges, the vermin in the thickets, the rats in the drains. More and more and more. This is only a beginning. The insect world will rise on us, the plant world, the very fishes in the sea, will swamp and drown our ships. Tremendous growths will obscure and hide our houses, smother our churches, smash and destroy all the order of our cities, and we shall become no more than a feeble vermin under the heels of the new race. Mankind will be swamped and drowned in things of its own begetting! And all for nothing! Size! Mere size! Enlargement and *da capo*. Already we go picking our way among the first beginnings of the coming time. And all we do is to say How inconvenient!' To grumble and do nothing. *No*!"

He raised his hand.

"Let them do the thing they have to do! So also will I. I am for Reaction—unstinted and fearless Reaction. Unless you mean to take this Food also, what else is there to do in all the world? We have trifled in the middle ways too long. You! Trifling in the middle

ways is your habit, your circle of existence, your space and time. So, not I! I am against the Food, with all my strength and purpose against the Food."

He turned on his companion's grunt of dissent. "Where are you?"

"It's a complicated business—-"

"Oh!—Driftwood!" said the young man from Oxford, very bitterly, with a fling of all his limbs. "The middle way is nothingness. It is one thing or the other. Eat or destroy. Eat or destroy! What else is there to do?"

CHAPTER THE SECOND. — THE GIANT LOVERS.

I.

Now it chanced in the days when Caterham was campaigning against the Boom-children before the General Election that was—amidst the most tragic and terrible circumstances—to bring him into power, that the giant Princess, that Serene Highness whose early nutrition had played so great a part in the brilliant career of Doctor Winkles, had come from the kingdom of her father to England, on an occasion that was deemed important. She was affianced for reasons of state to a certain Prince—and the wedding was to be made an event of international significance. There had arisen mysterious delays. Rumour and Imagination collaborated in the story and many things were said. There were suggestions of a recalcitrant Prince who declared he would not be made to look like a fool—at least to this extent. People sympathised with him. That is the most significant aspect of the affair.

Now it may seem a strange thing, but it is a fact that the giant Princess, when she came to England, knew of no other giants whatever. She had lived in a world where tact is almost a passion and reservations the air of one's life. They had kept the thing from her; they had hedged her about from sight or suspicion of any gigantic form, until her appointed coming to England was due. Until she met young Redwood she had no inkling that there was such a thing as another giant in the world.

In the kingdom of the father of the Princess there were wild wastes of upland and mountains where she had been accustomed to roam freely. She loved the sunrise and

the sunset and all the great drama of the open heavens more than anything else in the world, but among a people at once so democratic and so vehemently loyal as the English her freedom was much restricted. People came in brakes, in excursion trains, in organised multitudes to see her; they would cycle long distances to stare at her, and it was necessary to rise betimes if she would walk in peace. It was still near the dawn that morning when young Redwood came upon her.

The Great Park near the Palace where she lodged stretched, for a score of miles and more, west and south of the western palace gates. The chestnut trees of its avenues reached high above her head. Each one as she passed it seemed to proffer a more abundant wealth of blossom. For a time she was content with sight and scent, but at last she was won over by these offers, and set herself so busily to choose and pick that she did not perceive young Redwood until he was close upon her.

She moved among the chestnut trees, with the destined lover drawing near to her, unanticipated, unsuspected. She thrust her hands in among the branches, breaking them and gathering them. She was alone in the world. Then—-

She looked up, and in that moment she was mated.

We must needs put our imaginations to his stature to see the beauty he saw. That unapproachable greatness that prevents our immediate sympathy with her did not exist for him. There she stood, a gracious girl, the first created being that had ever seemed a mate for him, light and slender, lightly clad, the fresh breeze of the dawn moulding the subtly folding robe upon her against the soft strong lines of her form, and with a great mass of blossoming chestnut branches in her hands. The collar of her robe opened to show the whiteness of her neck and a soft shadowed roundness that passed out of sight towards her shoulders. The breeze had stolen a strand or so of her hair too, and strained its red-tipped brown across her cheek. Her eyes were open blue, and her lips rested always in the promise of a smile as she reached among the branches.

She turned upon him with a start, saw him, and for a space they regarded one another. For her, the sight of him was so amazing, so incredible, as to be, for some moments at least, terrible. He came to her with the shock of a supernatural apparition; he broke all the established law of her world. He was a youth of one-and-twenty then, slenderly built, with his father's darkness and his father's gravity. He was clad in a sober soft brown leather, close-fitting easy garments, and in brown hose, that shaped him bravely. His head went uncovered in all weathers. They stood regarding one another—she incredulously amazed, and he with his heart beating fast. It was a moment without a prelude, the cardinal meeting of their lives.

For him there was less surprise. He had been seeking her, and yet his heart beat fast. He came towards her, slowly, with his eyes upon her face.

“You are the Princess,” he said. “My father has told me. You are the Princess who was given the Food of the Gods.”

“I am the Princess—yes,” she said, with eyes of wonder. “But—what are you?”

“I am the son of the man who made the Food of the Gods.”

“The Food of the Gods!”

“Yes, the Food of the Gods.”

“But—”

Her face expressed infinite perplexity.

“What? I don’t understand. The Food of the Gods?”

“You have not heard?”

“The Food of the Gods! *No*!”

She found herself trembling violently. The colour left her face. “I did not know,” she said. “Do you mean—?”

He waited for her.

“Do you mean there are other—giants?”

He repeated, “Did you not know?”

And she answered, with the growing amazement of realisation, “*No!*”

The whole world and all the meaning of the world was changing for her. A branch of chestnut slipped from her hand. “Do you mean to say,” she repeated stupidly, “that there are other giants in the world? That some food—?”

He caught her amazement.

“You know nothing?” he cried. “You have never heard of us? You, whom the Food has made akin to us!”

There was terror still in the eyes that stared at him. Her hand rose towards her throat and fell again. She whispered, “*No*.”

It seemed to her that she must weep or faint. Then in a moment she had rule over herself and she was speaking and thinking clearly. “All this has been kept from me,”

she said. “It is like a dream. I have dreamt—have dreamt such things. But waking—No. Tell me! Tell me! What are you? What is this Food of the Gods? Tell me slowly—and clearly. Why have they kept it from me, that I am not alone?”

II.

“Tell me,” she said, and young Redwood, tremulous and excited, set himself to tell her—it was poor and broken telling for a time—of the Food of the Gods and the giant children who were scattered over the world.

You must figure them both, flushed and startled in their bearing; getting at one another’s meaning through endless half-heard, half-spoken phrases, repeating, making perplexing breaks and new departures—a wonderful talk, in which she awakened from the ignorance of all her life. And very slowly it became clear to her that she was no exception to the order of mankind, but one of a scattered brotherhood, who had all eaten the Food and grown for ever out of the little limits of the folk beneath their feet. Young Redwood spoke of his father, of Cossar, of the Brothers scattered throughout the country, of the great dawn of wider meaning that had come at last into the history of the world. “We are in the beginning of a beginning,” he said; “this world of theirs is only the prelude to the world the Food will make.

“My father believes—and I also believe—that a time will come when littleness will have passed altogether out of the world of man,—when giants shall go freely about this earth—their earth—doing continually greater and more splendid things. But that—that is to come. We are not even the first generation of that—we are the first experiments.”

“And of these things,” she said, “I knew nothing!”

“There are times when it seems to me almost as if we had come too soon. Some one, I suppose, had to come first. But the world was all unprepared for our coming and for the coming of all the lesser great things that drew their greatness from the Food. There have been blunders; there have been conflicts. The little people hate our kind....

“They are hard towards us because they are so little.... And because our feet are heavy on the things that make their lives. But at any rate they hate us now; they will have none of us—only if we could shrink back to the common size of them would they begin to forgive....

“They are happy in houses that are prison cells to us; their cities are too small for us; we go in misery along their narrow ways; we cannot worship in their churches....

“We see over their walls and over their protections; we look inadvertently into their upper windows; we look over their customs; their laws are no more than a net about our feet....

“Every time we stumble we hear them shouting; every time we blunder against their limits or stretch out to any spacious act....

“Our easy paces are wild flights to them, and all they deem great and wonderful no more than dolls’ pyramids to us. Their pettiness of method and appliance and imagination hampers and defeats our powers. There are no machines to the power of our hands, no helps to fit our needs. They hold our greatness in servitude by a thousand invisible bands. We are stronger, man for man, a hundred times, but we are disarmed; our very greatness makes us debtors; they claim the land we stand upon; they tax our ampler need of food and shelter, and for all these things we must toil with the tools these dwarfs can make us—and to satisfy their dwarfish fancies ...

“They pen us in, in every way. Even to live one must cross their boundaries. Even to meet you here to-day I have passed a limit. All that is reasonable and desirable in life they make out of bounds for us. We may not go into the towns; we may not cross the bridges; we may not step on their ploughed fields or into the harbours of the game they kill. I am cut off now from all our Brethren except the three sons of Cossar, and even that way the passage narrows day by day. One could think they sought occasion against us to do some more evil thing ...”

“But we are strong,” she said.

“We should be strong—yes. We feel, all of us—you too I know must feel—that we have power, power to do great things, power insurgent in us. But before we can do anything—”

He flung out a hand that seemed to sweep away a world.

“Though I thought I was alone in the world,” she said, after a pause, “I have thought of these things. They have taught me always that strength was almost a sin, that it was better to be little than great, that all true religion was to shelter the weak and little, encourage the weak and little, help them to multiply and multiply until at last they crawled over one another, to sacrifice all our strength in their cause. But ... always I have doubted the thing they taught.”

“This life,” he said, “these bodies of ours, are not for dying.”

“No.”

“Nor to live in futility. But if we would not do that, it is already plain to all our Brethren a conflict must come. I know not what bitterness of conflict must presently come, before the little folks will suffer us to live as we need to live. All the Brethren have thought of that. Cossar, of whom I told you: he too has thought of that.”

“They are very little and weak.”

“In their way. But you know all the means of death are in their hands, and made for their hands. For hundreds of thousands of years these little people, whose world we invade, have been learning how to kill one another. They are very able at that. They are able in many ways. And besides, they can deceive and change suddenly.... I do not know.... There comes a conflict. You—you perhaps are different from us. For us, assuredly, the conflict comes.... The thing they call War. We know it. In a way we prepare for it. But you know—those little people!—we do not know how to kill, at least we do not want to kill—”

“Look,” she interrupted, and he heard a yelping horn.

He turned at the direction of her eyes, and found a bright yellow motor car, with dark goggled driver and fur-clad passengers, whooping, throbbing, and buzzing resentfully at his heel. He moved his foot, and the mechanism, with three angry snorts, resumed its fussy way towards the town. “Filling up the roadway!” floated up to him.

Then some one said, “Look! Did you see? There is the monster Princess over beyond the trees!” and all their goggled faces came round to stare.

“I say,” said another. “*That* won’t do ...”

“All this,” she said, “is more amazing than I can tell.”

“That they should not have told you,” he said, and left his sentence incomplete.

“Until you came upon me, I had lived in a world where I was great—alone. I had made myself a life—for that. I had thought I was the victim of some strange freak of nature. And now my world has crumbled down, in half an hour, and I see another world, other conditions, wider possibilities—fellowship—”

“Fellowship,” he answered.

“I want you to tell me more yet, and much more,” she said. “You know this passes through my mind like a tale that is told. You even ... In a day perhaps, or after several days, I shall believe in you. Now—Now I am dreaming.... Listen!”

The first stroke of a clock above the palace offices far away had penetrated to them. Each counted mechanically “Seven.”

“This,” she said, “should be the hour of my return. They will be taking the bowl of my coffee into the hall where I sleep. The little officials and servants—you cannot dream how grave they are—will be stirring about their little duties.”

“They will wonder ... But I want to talk to you.”

She thought. “But I want to think too. I want now to think alone, and think out this change in things, think away the old solitude, and think you and those others into my world.... I shall go. I shall go back to-day to my place in the castle, and to-morrow, as the dawn comes, I shall come again—here.”

“I shall be here waiting for you.”

“All day I shall dream and dream of this new world you have given me. Even now, I can scarcely believe—”

She took a step back and surveyed him from the feet to the face. Their eyes met and locked for a moment.

“Yes,” she said, with a little laugh that was half a sob. “You are real. But it is very wonderful! Do you think—indeed—? Suppose to-morrow I come and find you—a pigmy like the others... Yes, I must think. And so for to-day—as the little people do—”

She held out her hand, and for the first time they touched one another. Their hands clasped firmly and their eyes met again.

“Good-bye,” she said, “for to-day. Good-bye! Good-bye, Brother Giant!”

He hesitated with some unspoken thing, and at last he answered her simply, “Good-bye.”

For a space they held each other’s hands, studying each the other’s face. And many times after they had parted, she looked back half doubtfully at him, standing still in the place where they had met....

She walked into her apartments across the great yard of the Palace like one who walks in a dream, with a vast branch of chestnut trailing from her hand.

III.

These two met altogether fourteen times before the beginning of the end. They met in the Great Park or on the heights and among the gorges of the rusty-roaded, heathery

moorland, set with dusky pine-woods, that stretched to the south-west. Twice they met in the great avenue of chestnuts, and five times near the broad ornamental water the king, her great-grandfather, had made. There was a place where a great trim lawn, set with tall conifers, sloped graciously to the water's edge, and there she would sit, and he would lie at her knees and look up in her face and talk, telling of all the things that had been, and of the work his father had set before him, and of the great and spacious dream of what the giant people should one day be. Commonly they met in the early dawn, but once they met there in the afternoon, and found presently a multitude of peering eavesdroppers about them, cyclists, pedestrians, peeping from the bushes, rustling (as sparrows will rustle about one in the London parks) amidst the dead leaves in the woods behind, gliding down the lake in boats towards a point of view, trying to get nearer to them and hear.

It was the first hint that offered of the enormous interest the countryside was taking in their meetings. And once—it was the seventh time, and it precipitated the scandal—they met out upon the breezy moorland under a clear moonlight, and talked in whispers there, for the night was warm and still.

Very soon they had passed from the realisation that in them and through them a new world of giantry shaped itself in the earth, from the contemplation of the great struggle between big and little, in which they were clearly destined to participate, to interests at once more personal and more spacious. Each time they met and talked and looked on one another, it crept a little more out of their subconscious being towards recognition, that something more dear and wonderful than friendship was between them, and walked between them and drew their hands together. And in a little while they came to the word itself and found themselves lovers, the Adam and Eve of a new race in the world.

They set foot side by side into the wonderful valley of love, with its deep and quiet places. The world changed about them with their changing mood, until presently it had become, as it were, a tabernacular beauty about their meetings, and the stars were no more than flowers of light beneath the feet of their love, and the dawn and sunset the coloured hangings by the way. They ceased to be beings of flesh and blood to one another and themselves; they passed into a bodily texture of tenderness and desire. They gave it first whispers and then silence, and drew close and looked into one another's moonlit and shadowy faces under the infinite arch of the sky. And the still black pine-trees stood about them like sentinels.

The beating steps of time were hushed into silence, and it seemed to them the universe hung still. Only their hearts were audible, beating. They seemed to be living

together in a world where there is no death, and indeed so it was with them then. It seemed to them that they sounded, and indeed they sounded, such hidden splendours in the very heart of things as none have ever reached before. Even for mean and little souls, love is the revelation of splendours. And these were giant lovers who had eaten the Food of the Gods …

You may imagine the spreading consternation in this ordered world when it became known that the Princess who was affianced to the Prince, the Princess, Her Serene Highness! with royal blood in her veins! met,—frequently met,—the hypertrophied offspring of a common professor of chemistry, a creature of no rank, no position, no wealth, and talked to him as though there were no Kings and Princes, no order, no reverence—nothing but Giants and Pigmies in the world, talked to him and, it was only too certain, held him as her lover.

“If those newspaper fellows get hold of it!” gasped Sir Arthur Poodle Bootlick …

“I am told—” whispered the old Bishop of Frumps.

“New story upstairs,” said the first footman, as he nibbled among the dessert things. “So far as I can make out this here giant Princess—”

“They say—” said the lady who kept the stationer’s shop by the main entrance to the Palace, where the little Americans get their tickets for the State Apartments …

And then:

“We are authorised to deny—” said “Picaroon” in *Gossip*.

And so the whole trouble came out.

IV.

“They say that we must part,” the Princess said to her lover.

“But why?” he cried. “What new folly have these people got into their heads?”

“Do you know,” she asked, “that to love me—is high treason?”

“My dear,” he cried; “but does it matter? What is their right—right without a shadow of reason—and their treason and their loyalty to us?”

“You shall hear,” she said, and told him of the things that had been told to her.

“It was the queerest little man who came to me with a soft, beautifully modulated voice, a softly moving little gentleman who sidled into the room like a cat and put his pretty white hand up so, whenever he had anything significant to say. He is bald, but not of course nakedly bald, and his nose and face are chubby rosy little things, and his beard is trimmed to a point in quite the loveliest way. He pretended to have emotions several times and made his eyes shine. You know he is quite a friend of the real royal family here, and he called me his dear young lady and was perfectly sympathetic even from the beginning. ‘My dear young lady,’ he said, ‘you know—*you mustn’t,*’’ several times, and then, ‘You owe a duty.’”

“Where do they make such men?”

“He likes it,” she said.

“But I don’t see—”

“He told me serious things.”

“You don’t think,” he said, turning on her abruptly, “that there’s anything in the sort of thing he said?”

“There’s something in it quite certainly,” said she.

“You mean—?”

“I mean that without knowing it we have been trampling on the most sacred conceptions of the little folks. We who are royal are a class apart. We are worshipped prisoners, processional toys. We pay for worship by losing—our elementary freedom. And I was to have married that Prince—You know nothing of him though. Well, a pigmy Prince. He doesn’t matter.... It seems it would have strengthened the bonds between my country and another. And this country also was to profit. Imagine it!—strengthening the bonds!”

“And now?”

“They want me to go on with it—as though there was nothing between us two.”

“Nothing!”

“Yes. But that isn’t all. He said—”

“Your specialist in Tact?”

“Yes. He said it would be better for you, better for all the giants, if we two—abstained from conversation. That was how he put it.”

“But what can they do if we don’t?”

“He said you might have your freedom.”

“*I!*”

“He said, with a stress, ‘My dear young lady, it would be better, it would be more dignified, if you parted, willingly.’ That was all he said. With a stress on willingly.”

“But—! What business is it of these little wretches, where we love, how we love? What have they and their world to do with us?”

“They do not think that.”

“Of course,” he said, “you disregard all this.”

“It seems utterly foolish to me.”

“That their laws should fetter us! That we, at the first spring of life, should be tripped by their old engagements, their aimless institutions! Oh—! We disregard it.”

“I am yours. So far—yes.”

“So far? Isn’t that all?”

“But they—If they want to part us—”

“What can they do?”

“I don’t know. What *can* they do?”

“Who cares what they can do, or what they will do? I am yours and you are mine. What is there more than that? I am yours and you are mine—for ever. Do you think I will stop for their little rules, for their little prohibitions, their scarlet boards indeed!—and keep from *you*?”

“Yes. But still, what can they do?”

“You mean,” he said, “what are we to do?”

“Yes.”

“We? We can go on.”

“But if they seek to prevent us?”

He clenched his hands. He looked round as if the little people were already coming to prevent them. Then turned away from her and looked about the world. “Yes,” he said. “Your question was the right one. What can they do?”

“Here in this little land,” she said, and stopped. He seemed to survey it all. “They are everywhere.”

“But we might—”

“Whither?”

“We could go. We could swim the seas together. Beyond the seas—”

“I have never been beyond the seas.”

“There are great and desolate mountains amidst which we should seem no more than little people, there are remote and deserted valleys, there are hidden lakes and snow-girdled uplands untrodden by the feet of men. *There*—”

“But to get there we must fight our way day after day through millions and millions of mankind.”

“It is our only hope. In this crowded land there is no fastness, no shelter. What place is there for us among these multitudes? They who are little can hide from one another, but where are we to hide? There is no place where we could eat, no place where we could sleep. If we fled—night and day they would pursue our footsteps.”

A thought came to him.

“There is one place,” he said, “even in this island.”

“Where?”

“The place our Brothers have made over beyond there. They have made great banks about their house, north and south and east and west; they have made deep pits and hidden places, and even now—one came over to me quite recently. He said—I did not altogether heed what he said then. But he spoke of arms. It may be—there—we should find shelter....

“For many days,” he said, after a pause, “I have not seen our Brothers... Dear! I have been dreaming, I have been forgetting! The days have passed, and I have done nothing but look to see you again ... I must go to them and talk to them, and tell them of you and of all the things that hang over us. If they will help us, they can help us. Then indeed we might hope. I do not know how strong their place is, but certainly Cossar will have made it strong. Before all this—before you came to me, I remember now—there was trouble brewing. There was an election—when all the little people settle things, by counting heads. It must be over now. There were threats against all our

race—against all our race, that is, but you. I must see our Brothers. I must tell them all that has happened between us, and all that threatens now."

V.

He did not come to their next meeting until she had waited some time. They were to meet that day about midday in a great space of park that fitted into a bend of the river, and as she waited, looking ever southward under her hand, it came to her that the world was very still, that indeed it was broodingly still. And then she perceived that, spite of the lateness of the hour, her customary retinue of voluntary spies had failed her. Left and right, when she came to look, there was no one in sight, and there was never a boat upon the silver curve of the Thames. She tried to find a reason for this strange stillness in the world....

Then, a grateful sight for her, she saw young Redwood far away over a gap in the tree masses that bounded her view.

Immediately the trees hid him, and presently he was thrusting through them and in sight again. She could see there was something different, and then she saw that he was hurrying unusually and then that he limped. He gestured to her, and she walked towards him. His face became clearer, and she saw with infinite concern that he winced at every stride.

She ran towards him, her mind full of questions and vague fear. He drew near to her and spoke without a greeting.

"Are we to part?" he panted.

"No," she answered. "Why? What is the matter?"

"But if we do not part—! It is *now*."

"What is the matter?"

"I do not want to part," he said. "Only—" He broke off abruptly to ask, "You will not part from me?"

She met his eyes with a steadfast look. "What has happened?" she pressed.

"Not for a time?"

"What time?"

"Years perhaps."

"Part! No!"

“You have thought?” he insisted.

“I will not part.” She took his hand. “If this meant death, *now*, I would not let you go.”

“If it meant death,” he said, and she felt his grip upon her fingers.

He looked about him as if he feared to see the little people coming as he spoke. And then: “It may mean death.”

“Now tell me,” she said.

“They tried to stop my coming.”

“How?”

“And as I came out of my workshop where I make the Food of the Gods for the Cossars to store in their camp, I found a little officer of police—a man in blue with white clean gloves—who beckoned me to stop. This way is closed!’ said he. I thought little of that; I went round my workshop to where another road runs west, and there was another officer. This road is closed!’ he said, and added: ‘All the roads are closed!’”

“And then?”

“I argued with him a little. ‘They are public roads!’ I said.

“‘That’s it,’ said he. ‘You spoil them for the public.’

“‘Very well,’ said I, ‘I’ll take the fields,’ and then, up leapt others from behind a hedge and said, ‘These fields are private.’

“‘Curse your public and private,’ I said, ‘I’m going to my Princess,’ and I stooped down and picked him up very gently—kicking and shouting—and put him out of my way. In a minute all the fields about me seemed alive with running men. I saw one on horseback galloping beside me and reading something as he rode—shouting it. He finished and turned and galloped away from me—head down. I couldn’t make it out. And then behind me I heard the crack of guns.”

“Guns!”

“Guns—just as they shoot at the rats. The bullets came through the air with a sound like things tearing: one stung me in the leg.”

“And you?”

“Came on to you here and left them shouting and running and shooting behind me. And now—”

“Now?”

“It is only the beginning. They mean that we shall part. Even now they are coming after me.”

“We will not.”

“No. But if we will not part—then you must come with me to our Brothers.”

“Which way?” she said.

“To the east. Yonder is the way my pursuers will be coming. This then is the way we must go. Along this avenue of trees. Let me go first, so that if they are waiting—”

He made a stride, but she had seized his arm.

“No,” cried she. “I come close to you, holding you. Perhaps I am royal, perhaps I am sacred. If I hold you—Would God we could fly with my arms about you!—it may be, they will not shoot at you—”

She clasped his shoulder and seized his hand as she spoke; she pressed herself nearer to him. “It may be they will not shoot you,” she repeated, and with a sudden passion of tenderness he took her into his arms and kissed her cheek. For a space he held her.

“Even if it is death,” she whispered.

She put her hands about his neck and lifted her face to his.

“Dearest, kiss me once more.”

He drew her to him. Silently they kissed one another on the lips, and for another moment clung to one another. Then hand in hand, and she striving always to keep her body near to his, they set forward if haply they might reach the camp of refuge the sons of Cossar had made, before the pursuit of the little people overtook them.

And as they crossed the great spaces of the park behind the castle there came horsemen galloping out from among the trees and vainly seeking to keep pace with their giant strides. And presently ahead of them were houses, and men with guns running out of the houses. At the sight of that, though he sought to go on and was even disposed to fight and push through, she made him turn aside towards the south.

As they fled a bullet whipped by them overhead.

CHAPTER THE THIRD. — YOUNG CADDLES IN LONDON.

I.

All unaware of the trend of events, unaware of the laws that were closing in upon all the Brethren, unaware indeed that there lived a Brother for him on the earth, young Caddles chose this time to come out of his chalk pit and see the world. His brooding came at last to that. There was no answer to all his questions in Cheasing Eyebright; the new Vicar was less luminous even than the old, and the riddle of his pointless labour grew at last to the dimensions of exasperation. “Why should I work in this pit day after day?” he asked. “Why should I walk within bounds and be refused all the wonders of the world beyond there? What have I done, to be condemned to this?”

And one day he stood up, straightened his back, and said in a loud voice, “No!

“I won’t,” he said, and then with great vigour cursed the pit.

Then, having few words, he sought to express his thought in acts. He took a truck half filled with chalk, lifted it, and flung it, smash, against another. Then he grasped a whole row of empty trucks and spun them down a bank. He sent a huge boulder of chalk bursting among them, and then ripped up a dozen yards of rail with a mighty plunge of his foot. So he commenced the conscientious wrecking of the pit.

“Work all my days,” he said, “at this!”

It was an astonishing five minutes for the little geologist he had, in his preoccupation, overlooked. This poor little creature having dodged two boulders by a hairbreadth, got out by the westward corner and fled athwart the hill, with flapping rucksack and twinkling knicker-bockered legs, leaving a trail of Cretaceous echinoderms behind him; while young Caddles, satisfied with the destruction he had achieved, came striding out to fulfil his purpose in the world.

“Work in that old pit, until I die and rot and stink!... What worm did they think was living in my giant body? Dig chalk for God knows what foolish purpose! Not *I!*”

The trend of road and railway perhaps, or mere chance it was, turned his face to London, and thither he came striding; over the Downs and athwart the meadows through the hot afternoon, to the infinite amazement of the world. It signified nothing

to him that torn posters in red and white bearing various names flapped from every wall and barn; he knew nothing of the electoral revolution that had flung Caterham, "Jack the Giant-killer," into power. It signified nothing to him that every police station along his route had what was known as Caterham's ukase upon its notice board that afternoon, proclaiming that no giant, no person whatever over eight feet in height, should go more than five miles from his "place of location" without a special permission. It signified nothing to him that on his wake belated police officers, not a little relieved to find themselves belated, shook warning handbills at his retreating back. He was going to see what the world had to show him, poor incredulous blockhead, and he did not mean that occasional spirited persons shouting "Hi!" at him should stay his course. He came on down by Rochester and Greenwich towards an ever-thickening aggregation of houses, walking rather slowly now, staring about him and swinging his huge chopper.

People in London had heard something of him before, how that he was idiotic but gentle, and wonderfully managed by Lady Wondershoot's agent and the Vicar; how in his dull way he revered these authorities and was grateful to them for their care of him, and so forth. So that when they learnt from the newspaper placards that afternoon that he also was "on strike," the thing appeared to many of them as a deliberate, concerted act.

"They mean to try our strength," said the men in the trains going home from business.

"Lucky we have Caterham."

"It's in answer to his proclamation."

The men in the clubs were better informed. They clustered round the tape or talked in groups in their smoking-rooms.

"He has no weapons. He would have gone to Sevenoaks if he had been put up to it."

"Caterham will handle him...."

The shopmen told their customers. The waiters in restaurants snatched a moment for an evening paper between the courses. The cabmen read it immediately after the betting news....

The placards of the chief government evening paper were conspicuous with "Grasping the Nettle." Others relied for effect on: "Giant Redwood continues to meet the Princess." The *Echo* struck a line of its own with: "Rumoured Revolt of Giants in the North of England. The Sunderland Giants start for Scotland." The *Westminster Gazette* sounded its usual warning note. "Giants Beware," said the *Westminster*

Gazette, and tried to make a point out of it that might perhaps serve towards uniting the Liberal party—at that time greatly torn between seven intensely egotistical leaders. The later newspapers dropped into uniformity. “The Giant in the New Kent Road,” they proclaimed.

“What I want to know,” said the pale young man in the tea shop, “is why we aren’t getting any news of the young Cossars. You’d think they’d be in it most of all …”

“They tell me there’s another of them young giants got loose,” said the barmaid, wiping out a glass. “I’ve always said they was dangerous things to ‘ave about. Right away from the beginning … It ought to be put a stop to. Any’ow, I ‘ope ‘e won’t come along ‘ere.”

“I’d like to ‘ave a look at ‘im,” said the young man at the bar recklessly, and added, “I *seen* the Princess.”

“D’you think they’ll ‘urt ‘im?” said the barmaid.

“May ‘ave to,” said the young man at the bar, finishing his glass.

Amidst a hum of ten million such sayings young Caddles came to London…

II.

I think of young Caddles always as he was seen in the New Kent Road, the sunset warm upon his perplexed and staring face. The Road was thick with its varied traffic, omnibuses, trams, vans, carts, trolleys, cyclists, motors, and a marvelling crowd—loafers, women, nurse-maids, shopping women, children, venturesome hobble-dehoys—gathered behind his gingerly moving feet. The hoardings were untidy everywhere with the tattered election paper. A babblement of voices surged about him. One sees the customers and shopmen crowding in the doorways of the shops, the faces that came and went at the windows, the little street boys running and shouting, the policemen taking it all quite stiffly and calmly, the workmen knocking off upon scaffoldings, the seething miscellany of the little folks. They shouted to him, vague encouragement, vague insults, the imbecile catchwords of the day, and he stared down at them, at such a multitude of living creatures as he had never before imagined in the world.

Now that he had fairly entered London he had had to slacken his pace more and more, the little folks crowded so mightily upon him. The crowd grew denser at every step, and at last, at a corner where two great ways converged, he came to a stop, and the multitude flowed about him and closed him in.

There he stood, with his feet a little apart, his back to a big corner gin palace that towered twice his height and ended In a sky sign, staring down at the pigmies and wondering—trying, I doubt not, to collate it all with the other things of his life, with the valley among the downlands, the nocturnal lovers, the singing in the church, the chalk he hammered daily, and with instinct and death and the sky, trying to see it all together coherent and significant. His brows were knit. He put up his huge paw to scratch his coarse hair, and groaned aloud.

“I don’t see It,” he said.

His accent was unfamiliar. A great babblement went across the open space—a babblement amidst which the gongs of the trams, ploughing their obstinate way through the mass, rose like red poppies amidst corn. “What did he say?” “Said he didn’t see.” “Said, where is the sea?” “Said, where is a seat?” “He wants a seat.” “Can’t the brasted fool sit on a ouse or somethin’?”

“What are ye for, ye swarming little people? What are ye all doing, what are ye all for?

“What are ye doing up here, ye swarming little people, while I’m a-cuttin’ chalk for ye, down in the chalk pits there?”

His queer voice, the voice that had been so bad for school discipline at Cheasing Eyebright, smote the multitude to silence while it sounded and splashed them all to tumult at the end. Some wit was audible screaming “Speech, speech!” “What’s he saying?” was the burthen of the public mind, and an opinion was abroad that he was drunk. “Hi, hi, hi,” bawled the omnibus-drivers, threading a dangerous way. A drunken American sailor wandered about tearfully inquiring, “What’s he want anyhow?” A leathery-faced rag-dealer upon a little pony-drawn cart soared up over the tumult by virtue of his voice. “Garn ‘ome, you Brasted Giant!” he brawled, “Garn ‘Ome! You Brasted Great Dangerous Thing! Can’t you see you’re a-frightening the ‘orses? Go *‘ome* with you! ‘Asn’t any one ‘ad the sense to tell you the law?” And over all this uproar young Caddles stared, perplexed, expectant, saying no more.

Down a side road came a little string of solemn policemen, and threaded itself ingeniously into the traffic. “Stand back,” said the little voices; “keep moving, please.”

Young Caddles became aware of a little dark blue figure thumping at his shin. He looked down, and perceived two white hands gesticulating. “*What*?” he said, bending forward.

“Can’t stand about here,” shouted the inspector.

“No! You can’t stand about here,” he repeated.

“But where am I to go?”

“Back to your village. Place of location. Anyhow, now—you’ve got to move on. You’re obstructing the traffic.”

“What traffic?”

“Along the road.”

“But where is it going? Where does it come from? What does it mean? They’re all round me. What do they want? What are they doin’? I want to understand. I’m tired of cuttin’ chalk and bein’ all alone. What are they doin’ for me while I’m a-cuttin’ chalk? I may just as well understand here and now as anywhere.”

“Sorry. But we aren’t here to explain things of that sort. I must arst you to move on.”

“Don’t you know?”

“I must arst you to move on—*if* you please … I’d strongly advise you to get off ‘ome. We’ve ‘ad no special instructions yet—but it’s against the law … Clear away there. Clear away.”

The pavement to his left became invitingly bare, and young Caddles went slowly on his way. But now his tongue was loosened.

“I don’t understand,” he muttered. “I don’t understand.” He would appeal brokenly to the changing crowd that ever trailed beside him and behind. “I didn’t know there were such places as this. What are all you people doing with yourselves? What’s it all for? What is it all for, and where do I come in?”

He had already begotten a new catchword. Young men of wit and spirit addressed each other in this manner, “Ullo ‘Arry O’Cock. Wot’s it all *for*? Eh? Wot’s it all bloomin’ well *for*?”

To which there sprang up a competing variety of repartees, for the most part impolite. The most popular and best adapted for general use appears to have been “*Shut* it,” or, in a voice of scornful detachment—“*Garn!*”

There were others almost equally popular.

III.

What was he seeking? He wanted something the pigmy world did not give, some end which the pigmy world prevented his attaining, prevented even his seeing clearly, which he was never to see clearly. It was the whole gigantic social side of this lonely

dumb monster crying out for his race, for the things akin to him, for something he might love and something he might serve, for a purpose he might comprehend and a command he could obey. And, you know, all this was *dumb*, raged dumbly within him, could not even, had he met a fellow giant, have found outlet and expression in speech. All the life he knew was the dull round of the village, all the speech he knew was the talk of the cottage, that failed and collapsed at the bare outline of his least gigantic need. He knew nothing of money, this monstrous simpleton, nothing of trade, nothing of the complex pretences upon which the social fabric of the little folks was built. He needed, he needed—Whatever he needed, he never found his need.

All through the day and the summer night he wandered, growing hungry but as yet untired, marking the varied traffic of the different streets, the inexplicable businesses of all these infinitesimal beings. In the aggregate it had no other colour than confusion for him....

He is said to have plucked a lady from her carriage in Kensington, a lady in evening dress of the smartest sort, to have scrutinised her closely, train and shoulder blades, and to have replaced her—a little carelessly—with the profoundest sigh. For that I cannot vouch. For an hour or so he watched people fighting for places in the omnibuses at the end of Piccadilly. He was seen looming over Kennington Oval for some moments in the afternoon, but when he saw these dense thousands were engaged with the mystery of cricket and quite regardless of him he went his way with a groan.

He came back to Piccadilly Circus between eleven and twelve at night and found a new sort of multitude. Clearly they were very intent: full of things they, for inconceivable reasons, might do, and of others they might not do. They stared at him and jeered at him and went their way. The cabmen, vulture-eyed, followed one another continually along the edge of the swarming pavement. People emerged from the restaurants or entered them, grave, intent, dignified, or gently and agreeably excited or keen and vigilant—beyond the cheating of the sharpest waiter born. The great giant, standing at his corner, peered at them all. “What is it all for?” he murmured in a mournful vast undertone, “What is it all for? They are all so earnest. What is it I do not understand?”

And none of them seemed to see, as he could do, the drink-sodden wretchedness of the painted women at the corner, the ragged misery that sneaked along the gutters, the infinite futility of all this employment. The infinite futility! None of them seemed to feel the shadow of that giant’s need, that shadow of the future, that lay athwart their paths...

Across the road high up mysterious letters flamed and went, that might, could he have read them, have measured for him the dimensions of human interest, have told him of the fundamental needs and features of life as the little folks conceived it. First would come a flaming

T;

Then U would follow,

TU;

Then P,

TUP;

Until at last there stood complete, across the sky, this cheerful message to all who felt the burthen of life's earnestness:

TUPPER'S TONIC WINE FOR VIGOUR.

Snap! and it had vanished into night, to be followed in the same slow development by a second universal solicitude:

BEAUTY SOAP.

Not, you remark, mere cleansing chemicals, but something, as they say, "ideal;" and then, completing the tripod of the little life:

TANKER'S YELLOW PILLS.

After that there was nothing for it but Tupper again, in naming crimson letters, snap, snap, across the void.

T U P P....

Early in the small hours it would seem that young Caddles came to the shadowy quiet of Regent's Park, stepped over the railings and lay down on a grassy slope near where the people skate in winter time, and there he slept an hour or so. And about six o'clock in the morning, he was talking to a draggled woman he had found sleeping in a ditch near Hampstead Heath, asking her very earnestly what she thought she was for....

IV.

The wandering of Caddles about London came to a head on the second day in the morning. For then his hunger overcame him. He hesitated where the hot-smelling loaves were being tossed into a cart, and then very quietly knelt down and

commenced robbery. He emptied the cart while the baker's man fled for the police, and then his great hand came into the shop and cleared counter and cases. Then with an armful, still eating, he went his way looking for another shop to go on with his meal. It happened to be one of those seasons when work is scarce and food dear, and the crowd in that quarter was sympathetic even with a giant who took the food they all desired. They applauded the second phase of his meal, and laughed at his stupid grimace at the policeman.

"I woff hungry," he said, with his mouth full.

"Brayvo!" cried the crowd. "Brayvo!"

Then when he was beginning his third baker's shop, he was stopped by half a dozen policemen hammering with truncheons at his shins. "Look here, my fine giant, you come along o' me," said the officer in charge. "You ain't allowed away from home like this. You come off home with me." They did their best to arrest him. There was a trolley, I am told, chasing up and down streets at that time, bearing rolls of chain and ship's cable to play the part of handcuffs in that great arrest. There was no intention then of killing him. "He is no party to the plot," Caterham had said. "I will not have innocent blood upon my hands." And added: "—until everything else has been tried."

At first Caddles did not understand the import of these attentions. When he did, he told the policemen not to be fools, and set off in great strides that left them all behind. The bakers' shops had been in the Harrow Road, and he went through canal London to St. John's Wood, and sat down in a private garden there to pick his teeth and be speedily assailed by another posse of constables.

"You lea' me alone," he growled, and slouched through the gardens—spoiling several lawns and kicking down a fence or so, while the energetic little policemen followed him up, some through the gardens, some along the road in front of the houses. Here there were one or two with guns, but they made no use of them. When he came out into the Edgware Road there was a new note and a new movement in the crowd, and a mounted policeman rode over his foot and got upset for his pains.

"You lea' me alone," said Caddles, facing the breathless crowd. "I ain't done anything to you." At that time he was unarmed, for he had left his chalk chopper in Regent's Park. But now, poor wretch, he seems to have felt the need of some weapon. He turned back towards the goods yard of the Great Western Railway, wrenched up the standard of a tall arc light, a formidable mace for him, and flung it over his shoulder. And finding the police still turning up to pester him, he went back along the Edgware Road, towards Cricklewood, and struck off sullenly to the north.

He wandered as far as Waltham, and then turned back westward and then again towards London, and came by the cemeteries and over the crest of Highgate about midday into view of the greatness of the city again. He turned aside and sat down in a garden, with his back to a house that overlooked all London. He was breathless, and his face was lowering, and now the people no longer crowded upon him as they had done when first he came to London, but lurked in the adjacent garden, and peeped from cautious securities. They knew by now the thing was grimmer than they had thought. "Why can't they lea' me alone?" growled young Caddles. "I *mus''* eat. Why can't they lea' me alone?"

He sat with a darkling face, gnawing at his knuckles and looking down over London. All the fatigue, worry, perplexity, and impotent wrath of his wanderings was coming to a head in him. "They mean nothing," he whispered. "They mean nothing. And they *won't* let me alone, and they *will* get in my way." And again, over and over to himself, "Meanin' nothing.

"Ugh! the little people!"

He bit harder at his knuckles and his scowl deepened. "Cuttin' chalk for 'em," he whispered. "And all the world is theirs! *I* don't come in—nowhere."

Presently with a spasm of sick anger he saw the now familiar form of a policeman astride the garden wall.

"Lea' me alone," grunted the giant. "Lea' me alone."

"I got to do my duty," said the little policeman, with a face that was white and resolute.

"You lea' me alone. I got to live as well as you. I got to think. I got to eat. You lea' me alone."

"It's the Law," said the little policeman, coming no further. "We never made the Law."

"Nor me," said young Caddles. "You little people made all that before I was born. You and your Law! What I must and what I mustn't! No food for me to eat unless I work a slave, no rest, no shelter, nothin', and you tell me—"

"I ain't got no business with that," said the policeman. "I'm not one to argue. All I got to do is to carry out the Law." And he brought his second leg over the wall and seemed disposed to get down. Other policemen appeared behind him.

"I got no quarrel with *you*—mind," said young Caddles, with his grip tight upon his huge mace of iron, his face pale, and a lank explanatory great finger to the policeman. "I got no quarrel with you. But—*You lea' me alone.*"

The policeman tried to be calm and commonplace, with a monstrous tragedy clear before his eyes. “Give me the proclamation,” he said to some unseen follower, and a little white paper was handed to him.

“Lea’ me alone,” said Caddles, scowling, tense, and drawn together.

“This means,” said the policeman before he read, “go ‘ome. Go ‘ome to your chalk pit. If not, you’ll be hurt.”

Caddles gave an inarticulate growl.

Then when the proclamation had been read, the officer made a sign. Four men with rifles came into view and took up positions of affected ease along the wall. They wore the uniform of the rat police. At the sight of the guns, young Caddles blazed into anger. He remembered the sting of the Wreckstone farmers’ shot guns. “You going to shoot off those at me?” he said, pointing, and it seemed to the officer he must be afraid.

“If you don’t march back to your pit—”

Then in an instant the officer had slung himself back over the wall, and sixty feet above him the great electric standard whirled down to his death. Bang, bang, bang, went the heavy guns, and smash! the shattered wall, the soil and subsoil of the garden flew. Something flew with it, that left red drops on one of the shooter’s hands. The riflemen dodged this way and that and turned valiantly to fire again. But young Caddles, already shot twice through the body, had spun about to find who it was had hit him so heavily in the back. Bang! Bang! He had a vision of houses and greenhouses and gardens, of people dodging at windows, the whole swaying fearfully and mysteriously. He seems to have made three stumbling strides, to have raised and dropped his huge mace, and to have clutched his chest. He was stung and wrenched by pain.

What was this, warm and wet, on his hand?

One man peering from a bedroom window saw his face, saw him staring, with a grimace of weeping dismay, at the blood upon his hand, and then his knees bent under him, and he came crashing to the earth, the first of the giant nettles to fall to Caterham’s resolute clutch, the very last that he had reckoned would come into his hand.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH. — REDWOOD'S TWO DAYS.

I.

So soon as Caterham knew the moment for grasping his nettle had come, he took the law into his own hands and sent to arrest Cossar and Redwood.

Redwood was there for the taking. He had been undergoing an operation in the side, and the doctors had kept all disturbing things from him until his convalescence was assured. Now they had released him. He was just out of bed, sitting in a fire-warmed room, with a heap of newspapers about him, reading for the first time of the agitation that had swept the country into the hands of Caterham, and of the trouble that was darkening over the Princess and his son. It was in the morning of the day when young Caddles died, and when the policeman tried to stop young Redwood on his way to the Princess. The latest newspapers Redwood had did but vaguely prefigure these imminent things. He was re-reading these first adumbrations of disaster with a sinking heart, reading the shadow of death more and more perceptibly into them, reading to occupy his mind until further news should come. When the officers followed the servant into his room, he looked up eagerly.

"I thought it was an early evening paper," he said. Then standing up, and with a swift change of manner: "What's this?"

After that Redwood had no news of anything for two days.

They had come with a vehicle to take him away, but when it became evident that he was ill, it was decided to leave him for a day or so until he could be safely removed, and his house was taken over by the police and converted into a temporary prison. It was the same house in which Giant Redwood had been born and in which Herakleophorbia had for the first time been given to a human being, and Redwood had now been a widower and had lived alone in it eight years.

He had become an iron-grey man, with a little pointed grey beard and still active brown eyes. He was slender and soft-voiced, as he had ever been, but his features had now that indefinable quality that comes of brooding over mighty things. To the arresting officer his appearance was in impressive contrast to the enormity of his offences. "Here's this feller," said the officer in command, to his next subordinate, "has done his level best to bust up everything, and 'e's got a face like a quiet country

gentleman; and here's Judge Hangbrow keepin' everything nice and in order for every one, and 'e's got a 'ead like a 'og. Then their manners! One all consideration and the other snort and grunt. Which just shows you, doesn't it, that appearances aren't to be gone upon, whatever else you do."

But his praise of Redwood's consideration was presently dashed. The officers found him troublesome at first until they had made it clear that it was useless for him to ask questions or beg for papers. They made a sort of inspection of his study indeed, and cleared away even the papers he had. Redwood's voice was high and expostulatory. "But don't you see," he said over and over again, "it's my Son, my only Son, that is in this trouble. It isn't the Food I care for, but my Son."

"I wish indeed I could tell you, Sir," said the officer. "But our orders are strict."

"Who gave the orders?" cried Redwood.

"Ah! *that*, Sir—-" said the officer, and moved towards the door....

"'E's going up and down 'is room," said the second officer, when his superior came down. "That's all right. He'll walk it off a bit."

"I hope 'e will," said the chief officer. "The fact is I didn't see it in that light before, but this here Giant what's been going on with the Princess, you know, is this man's son."

The two regarded one another and the third policeman for a space.

"Then it is a bit rough on him," the third policeman said.

It became evident that Redwood had still imperfectly apprehended the fact that an iron curtain had dropped between him and the outer world. They heard him go to the door, try the handle and rattle the lock, and then the voice of the officer who was stationed on the landing telling him it was no good to do that. Then afterwards they heard him at the windows and saw the men outside looking up. "It's no good that way," said the second officer. Then Redwood began upon the bell. The senior officer went up and explained very patiently that it could do no good to ring the bell like that, and if it was rung for nothing now it might have to be disregarded presently when he had need of something. "Any reasonable attendance, Sir," the officer said. "But if you ring it just by way of protest we shall be obliged, Sir, to disconnect."

The last word the officer heard was Redwood's high-pitched, "But at least you might tell me if my Son—"

II.

After that Redwood spent most of his time at the windows.

But the windows offered him little of the march of events outside. It was a quiet street at all times, and that day it was unusually quiet: scarcely a cab, scarcely a tradesman's cart passed all that morning. Now and then men went by—without any distinctive air of events—now and then a little group of children, a nursemaid and a woman going shopping, and so forth. They came on to the stage right or left, up or down the street, with an exasperating suggestion of indifference to any concerns more spacious than their own; they would discover the police-guarded house with amazement and exit in the opposite direction, where the great trusses of a giant hydrangea hung across the pavement, staring back or pointing. Now and then a man would come and ask one of the policemen a question and get a curt reply ...

Opposite the houses seemed dead. A housemaid appeared once at a bedroom window and stared for a space, and it occurred to Redwood to signal to her. For a time she watched his gestures as if with interest and made a vague response to them, then looked over her shoulder suddenly and turned and went away. An old man hobbled out of Number 37 and came down the steps and went off to the right, altogether without looking up. For ten minutes the only occupant of the road was a cat....

With such events that interminable momentous morning lengthened out.

About twelve there came a bawling of newsvendors from the adjacent road; but it passed. Contrary to their wont they left Redwood's street alone, and a suspicion dawned upon him that the police were guarding the end of the street. He tried to open the window, but this brought a policeman into the room forthwith....

The clock of the parish church struck twelve, and after an abyss of time—one.

They mocked him with lunch.

He ate a mouthful and tumbled the food about a little in order to get it taken away, drank freely of whisky, and then took a chair and went back to the window. The minutes expanded into grey immensities, and for a time perhaps he slept....

He woke with a vague impression of remote concussions. He perceived a rattling of the windows like the quiver of an earthquake, that lasted for a minute or so and died away. Then after a silence it returned.... Then it died away again. He fancied it might be merely the passage of some heavy vehicle along the main road. What else could it be?

After a time he began to doubt whether he had heard this sound.

He began to reason interminably with himself. Why, after all, was he seized? Caterham had been in office two days—just long enough—to grasp his Nettle! Grasp his Nettle! Grasp his Giant Nettle! The refrain once started, sang through his mind, and would not be dismissed.

What, after all, could Caterham do? He was a religious man. He was bound in a sort of way by that not to do violence without a cause.

Grasp his Nettle! Perhaps, for example, the Princess was to be seized and sent abroad. There might be trouble with his son. In which case—! But why had he been arrested? Why was it necessary to keep him in ignorance of a thing like that? The thing suggested—something more extensive.

Perhaps, for example—they meant to lay all the giants by the heels! They were all to be arrested together. There had been hints of that in the election speeches. And then?

No doubt they had got Cossar also?

Caterham was a religious man. Redwood clung to that. The back of his mind was a black curtain, and on that curtain there came and went a word—a word written in letters of fire. He struggled perpetually against that word. It was always as it were beginning to get written on the curtain and never getting completed.

He faced it at last. "Massacre!" There was the word in its full brutality.

No! No! No! It was impossible! Caterham was a religious man, a civilised man. And besides after all these years, after all these hopes!

Redwood sprang up; he paced the room. He spoke to himself; he shouted.

"*No!*"

Mankind was surely not so mad as that—surely not! It was impossible, it was incredible, it could not be. What good would it do to kill the giant human when the gigantic in all the lower things had now inevitably come? They could not be so mad as that! "I must dismiss such an idea," he said aloud; "dismiss such an idea! Absolutely!"

He pulled up short. What was that?

Certainly the windows had rattled. He went to look out into the street. Opposite he saw the instant confirmation of his ears. At a bedroom at Number 35 was a woman, towel in hand, and at the dining-room of Number 37 a man was visible behind a great vase of hypertrophied maidenhair fern, both staring out and up, both disquieted and

curious. He could see now too, quite clearly, that the policeman on the pavement had heard it also. The thing was not his imagination.

He turned to the darkling room.

“Guns,” he said.

He brooded.

“Guns?”

They brought him in strong tea, such as he was accustomed to have. It was evident his housekeeper had been taken into consultation. After drinking it, he was too restless to sit any longer at the window, and he paced the room. His mind became more capable of consecutive thought.

The room had been his study for four-and-twenty years. It had been furnished at his marriage, and all the essential equipment dated from then, the large complex writing-desk, the rotating chair, the easy chair at the fire, the rotating bookcase, the fixture of indexed pigeon-holes that filled the further recess. The vivid Turkey carpet, the later Victorian rugs and curtains had mellowed now to a rich dignity of effect, and copper and brass shone warm about the open fire. Electric lights had replaced the lamp of former days; that was the chief alteration in the original equipment. But among these things his connection with the Food had left abundant traces. Along one wall, above the dado, ran a crowded array of black-framed photographs and photogravures, showing his son and Cossar’s sons and others of the Boom-children at various ages and amidst various surroundings. Even young Caddles’ vacant visage had its place in that collection. In the corner stood a sheaf of the tassels of gigantic meadow grass from Cheasing Eyebright, and on the desk there lay three empty poppy heads as big as hats. The curtain rods were grass stems. And the tremendous skull of the great hog of Oakham hung, a portentous ivory overmantel, with a Chinese jar in either eye socket, snout down above the fire....

It was to the photographs that Redwood went, and in particular to the photographs of his son.

They brought back countless memories of things that had passed out of his mind, of the early days of the Food, of Bensington’s timid presence, of his cousin Jane, of Cossar and the night work at the Experimental Farm. These things came to him now very little and bright and distinct, like things seen through a telescope on a sunny day. And then there was the giant nursery, the giant childhood, the young giant’s first efforts to speak, his first clear signs of affection.

Guns?

It flowed in on him, irresistibly, overwhelmingly, that outside there, outside this accursed silence and mystery, his son and Cossar's sons, and all these glorious first-fruits of a greater age were even now—fighting. Fighting for life! Even now his son might be in some dismal quandary, cornered, wounded, overcome....

He swung away from the pictures and went up and down the room gesticulating. "It cannot be," he cried, "it cannot be. It cannot end like that!"

"What was that?"

He stopped, stricken rigid.

The trembling of the windows had begun again, and then had come a thud—a vast concussion that shook the house. The concussion seemed to last for an age. It must have been very near. For a moment it seemed that something had struck the house above him—an enormous impact that broke into a tinkle of falling glass, and then a stillness that ended at last with a minute clear sound of running feet in the street below.

Those feet released him from his rigor. He turned towards the window, and saw it starred and broken.

His heart beat high with a sense of crisis, of conclusive occurrence, of release. And then again, his realisation of impotent confinement fell about him like a curtain!

He could see nothing outside except that the small electric lamp opposite was not lighted; he could hear nothing after the first suggestion of a wide alarm. He could add nothing to interpret or enlarge that mystery except that presently there came a reddish fluctuating brightness in the sky towards the south-east.

This light waxed and waned. When it waned he doubted if it had ever waxed. It had crept upon him very gradually with the darkling. It became the predominant fact in his long night of suspense. Sometimes it seemed to him it had the quiver one associates with dancing flames, at others he fancied it was no more than the normal reflection of the evening lights. It waxed and waned through the long hours, and only vanished at last when it was submerged altogether under the rising tide of dawn. Did it mean—? What could it mean? Almost certainly it was some sort of fire, near or remote, but he could not even tell whether it was smoke or cloud drift that streamed across the sky. But about one o'clock there began a flickering of searchlights athwart that ruddy tumult, a flickering that continued for the rest of the night. That too might mean many things? What could it mean? What did it mean? Just this stained unrestful sky he had

and the suggestion of a huge explosion to occupy his mind. There came no further sounds, no further running, nothing but a shouting that might have been only the distant efforts of drunken men…

He did not turn up his lights; he stood at his draughty broken window, a distressful, slight black outline to the officer who looked ever and again into the room and exhorted him to rest.

All night Redwood remained at his window peering up at the ambiguous drift of the sky, and only with the coming of the dawn did he obey his fatigue and lie down upon the little bed they had prepared for him between his writing-desk and the sinking fire in the fireplace under the great hog's skull.

III.

For thirty-six long hours did Redwood remain imprisoned, closed in and shut off from the great drama of the Two Days, while the little people in the dawn of greatness fought against the Children of the Food. Then abruptly the iron curtain rose again, and he found himself near the very centre of the struggle. That curtain rose as unexpectedly as it fell. In the late afternoon he was called to the window by the clatter of a cab, that stopped without. A young man descended, and in another minute stood before him in the room, a slightly built young man of thirty perhaps, clean shaven, well dressed, well mannered.

"Mr. Redwood, Sir," he began, "would you be willing to come to Mr. Caterham? He needs your presence very urgently."

"Needs my presence!" There leapt a question into Redwood's mind, that for a moment he could not put. He hesitated. Then in a voice that broke he asked: "What has he done to my Son?" and stood breathless for the reply.

"Your Son, Sir? Your Son is doing well. So at least we gather."

"Doing well?"

"He was wounded, Sir, yesterday. Have you not heard?"

Redwood smote these pretences aside. His voice was no longer coloured by fear, but by anger. "You know I have not heard. You know I have heard nothing."

"Mr. Caterham feared, Sir—It was a time of upheaval. Every one—taken by surprise. He arrested you to save you, Sir, from any misadventure—"

“He arrested me to prevent my giving any warning or advice to my son. Go on. Tell me what has happened. Have you succeeded? Have you killed them all?”

The young man made a pace or so towards the window, and turned.

“No, Sir,” he said concisely.

“What have you to tell me?”

“It’s our proof, Sir, that this fighting was not planned by us. They found us … totally unprepared.”

“You mean?”

“I mean, Sir, the Giants have—to a certain extent—held their own.”

The world changed, for Redwood. For a moment something like hysteria had the muscles of his face and throat. Then he gave vent to a profound “Ah!” His heart bounded towards exultation. “The Giants have held their own!”

“There has been terrible fighting—terrible destruction. It is all a most hideous misunderstanding … In the north and midlands Giants have been killed … Everywhere.”

“They are fighting now?”

“No, Sir. There was a flag of truce.”

“From them?”

“No, Sir. Mr. Caterham sent a flag of truce. The whole thing is a hideous misunderstanding. That is why he wants to talk to you, and put his case before you. They insist, Sir, that you should intervene—”

Redwood interrupted. “Do you know what happened to my Son?” he asked.

“He was wounded.”

“Tell me! Tell me!”

“He and the Princess came—before the—the movement to surround the Cossar camp was complete—the Cossar pit at Chislehurst. They came suddenly, Sir, crashing through a dense thicket of giant oats, near River, upon a column of infantry … Soldiers had been very nervous all day, and this produced a panic.”

“They shot him?”

“No, Sir. They ran away. Some shot at him—wildly—against orders.”

Redwood gave a note of denial. “It’s true, Sir. Not on account of your son, I won’t pretend, but on account of the Princess.”

“Yes. That’s true.”

“The two Giants ran shouting towards the encampment. The soldiers ran this way and that, and then some began firing. They say they saw him stagger—”

“Ugh!”

“Yes, Sir. But we know he is not badly hurt.”

“How?”

“He sent the message, Sir, that he was doing well!”

“To me?”

“Who else, Sir?”

Redwood stood for nearly a minute with his arms tightly folded, taking this in. Then his indignation found a voice.

“Because you were fools in doing the thing, because you miscalculated and blundered, you would like me to think you are not murderers in intention. And besides—The rest?”

The young man looked interrogation.

“The other Giants?”

The young man made no further pretence of misunderstanding. His tone fell.
“Thirteen, Sir, are dead.”

“And others wounded?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“And Caterham,” he gasped, “wants to meet me! Where are the others?”

“Some got to the encampment during the fighting, Sir … They seem to have known—”

“Well, of course they did. If it hadn’t been for Cossar—Cossar is there?”

“Yes, Sir. And all the surviving Giants are there—the ones who didn’t get to the camp in the fighting have gone, or are going now under the flag of trace.”

“That means,” said Redwood, “that you are beaten.”

“We are not beaten. No, Sir. You cannot say we are beaten. But your sons have broken the rules of war. Once last night, and now again. After our attack had been withdrawn. This afternoon they began to bombard London—”

“That’s legitimate!”

“They have been firing shells filled with—poison.”

“Poison?”

“Yes. Poison. The Food—”

“Herakleophorbia?”

“Yes, Sir. Mr. Caterham, Sir—”

“You are beaten! Of course that beats you. It’s Cossar! What can you hope to do now? What good is it to do anything now? You will breathe it in the dust of every street. What is there to fight for more? Rules of war, indeed! And now Caterham wants to humbug me to help him bargain. Good heavens, man! Why should I come to your exploded windbag? He has played his game … murdered and muddled. Why should I?”

The young man stood with an air of vigilant respect.

“It is a fact, Sir,” he interrupted, “that the Giants insist that they shall see you. They will have no ambassador but you. Unless you come to them, I am afraid, Sir, there will be more bloodshed.”

“On *your* side, perhaps.”

“No, Sir—on both sides. The world is resolved the thing must end.”

Redwood looked about the study. His eyes rested for a moment on the photograph of his boy. He turned and met the expectation of the young man. “Yes,” he said at last, “I will come.”

IV.

His encounter with Caterham was entirely different from his anticipation. He had seen the man only twice in his life, once at dinner and once in the lobby of the House, and his imagination had been active not with the man but with the creation of the newspapers and caricaturists, the legendary Caterham, Jack the Giant-killer, Perseus, and all the rest of it. The element of a human personality came in to disorder all that.

Here was not the face of the caricatures and portraits, but the face of a worn and sleepless man, lined and drawn, yellow in the whites of the eyes, a little weakened about the mouth. Here, indeed, were the red-brown eyes, the black hair, the distinctive aquiline profile of the great demagogue, but here was also something else that smote any premeditated scorn and rhetoric aside. This man was suffering; he was suffering acutely; he was under enormous stress. From the beginning he had an air of impersonating himself. Presently, with a single gesture, the slightest movement, he revealed to Redwood that he was keeping himself up with drugs. He moved a thumb to his waistcoat pocket, and then, after a few sentences more, threw concealment aside, and slipped the little tabloid to his lips.

Moreover, in spite of the stresses upon him, in spite of the fact that he was in the wrong, and Redwood's junior by a dozen years, that strange quality in him, the something—personal magnetism one may call it for want of a better name—that had won his way for him to this eminence of disaster was with him still. On that also Redwood had failed to reckon. From the first, so far as the course and conduct of their speech went, Caterham prevailed over Redwood. All the quality of the first phase of their meeting was determined by him, all the tone and procedure were his. That happened as if it was a matter of course. All Redwood's expectations vanished at his presence. He shook hands before Redwood remembered that he meant to parry that familiarity; he pitched the note of their conference from the outset, sure and clear, as a search for expedients under a common catastrophe.

If he made any mistake it was when ever and again his fatigue got the better of his immediate attention, and the habit of the public meeting carried him away. Then he drew himself up—through all their interview both men stood—and looked away from Redwood, and began to fence and justify. Once even he said "Gentlemen!"

Quietly, expandingly, he began to talk....

There were moments when Redwood ceased even to feel himself an interlocutor, when he became the mere auditor of a monologue. He became the privileged spectator of an extraordinary phenomenon. He perceived something almost like a specific difference between himself and this being whose beautiful voice enveloped him, who was talking, talking. This mind before him was so powerful and so limited. From its driving energy, its personal weight, its invincible oblivion to certain things, there sprang up in Redwood's mind the most grotesque and strange of images. Instead of an antagonist who was a fellow-creature, a man one could hold morally responsible, and to whom one could address reasonable appeals, he saw Caterham as something, something like a monstrous rhinoceros, as it were, a civilised

rhinoceros begotten of the jungle of democratic affairs, a monster of irresistible onset and invincible resistance. In all the crashing conflicts of that tangle he was supreme. And beyond? This man was a being supremely adapted to make his way through multitudes of men. For him there was no fault so important as self-contradiction, no science so significant as the reconciliation of "interests." Economic realities, topographical necessities, the barely touched mines of scientific expedients, existed for him no more than railways or rifled guns or geographical literature exist for his animal prototype. What did exist were gatherings, and caucuses, and votes—above all, votes. He was votes incarnate—millions of votes.

And now in the great crisis, with the Giants broken but not beaten, this vote-monster talked.

It was so evident that even now he had everything to learn. He did not know there were physical laws and economic laws, quantities and reactions that all humanity voting *nemine contradicente* cannot vote away, and that are disobeyed only at the price of destruction. He did not know there are moral laws that cannot be bent by any force of glamour, or are bent only to fly back with vindictive violence. In the face of shrapnel or the Judgment Day, it was evident to Redwood that this man would have sheltered behind some curiously dodged vote of the House of Commons.

What most concerned his mind now was not the powers that held the fastness away there to the south, not defeat and death, but the effect of these things upon his Majority, the cardinal reality in his life. He had to defeat the Giants or go under. He was by no means absolutely despairful. In this hour of his utmost failure, with blood and disaster upon his hands, and the rich promise of still more horrible disaster, with the gigantic destinies of the world towering and toppling over him, he was capable of a belief that by sheer exertion of his voice, by explaining and qualifying and restating, he might yet reconstitute his power. He was puzzled and distressed no doubt, fatigued and suffering, but if only he could keep up, if only he could keep talking—

As he talked he seemed to Redwood to advance and recede, to dilate and contract. Redwood's share of the talk was of the most subsidiary sort, wedges as it were suddenly thrust in. "That's all nonsense." "No." "It's no use suggesting that." "Then why did you begin?"

It is doubtful if Caterham really heard him at all. Round such interpolations Caterham's speech flowed indeed like some swift stream about a rock. There this incredible man stood, on his official hearthrug, talking, talking with enormous power and skill, talking as though a pause in his talk, his explanations, his presentation of standpoints and lights, of considerations and expedients, would permit some

antagonistic influence to leap into being—into vocal being, the only being he could comprehend. There he stood amidst the slightly faded splendours of that official room in which one man after another had succumbed to the belief that a certain power of intervention was the creative control of an empire....

The more he talked the more certain Redwood's sense of stupendous futility grew. Did this man realise that while he stood and talked there, the whole great world was moving, that the invincible tide of growth flowed and flowed, that there were any hours but parliamentary hours, or any weapons in the hands of the Avengers of Blood? Outside, darkling the whole room, a single leaf of giant Virginia creeper tapped unheeded on the pane.

Redwood became anxious to end this amazing monologue, to escape to sanity and judgment, to that beleaguered camp, the fastness of the future, where, at the very nucleus of greatness, the Sons were gathered together. For that this talking was endured. He had a curious impression that unless this monologue ended he would presently find himself carried away by it, that he must fight against Caterham's voice as one fights against a drug. Facts had altered and were altering beneath that spell.

What was the man saying?

Since Redwood had to report it to the Children of the Food, in a sort of way he perceived it did matter. He would have to listen and guard his sense of realities as well as he could.

Much about bloodguiltiness. That was eloquence. That didn't matter. Next?

He was suggesting a convention!

He was suggesting that the surviving Children of the Food should capitulate and go apart and form a community of their own. There were precedents, he said, for this. "We would assign them territory—"

"Where?" interjected Redwood, stooping to argue.

Caterham snatched at that concession. He turned his face to Redwood's, and his voice fell to a persuasive reasonableness. That could be determined. That, he contended, was a quite subsidiary question. Then he went on to stipulate: "And except for them and where they are we must have absolute control, the Food and all the Fruits of the Food must be stamped out—"

Redwood found himself bargaining: "The Princess?"

"She stands apart."

“No,” said Redwood, struggling to get back to the old footing. “That’s absurd.”

“That afterwards. At any rate we are agreed that the making of the Food must stop—”

“I have agreed to nothing. I have said nothing—”

“But on one planet, to have two races of men, one great, one small! Consider what has happened! Consider that is but a little foretaste of what might presently happen if this Food has its way! Consider all you have already brought upon this world! If there is to be a race of Giants, increasing and multiplying—”

“It is not for me to argue,” said Redwood. “I must go to our sons. I want to go to my son. That is why I have come to you. Tell me exactly what you offer.”

Caterham made a speech upon his terms.

The Children of the Food were to be given a great reservation—in North America perhaps or Africa—in which they might live out their lives in their own fashion.

“But it’s nonsense,” said Redwood. “There are other Giants now abroad. All over Europe—here and there!”

“There could be an international convention. It’s *not* impossible. Something of the sort indeed has already been spoken of … But in this reservation they can live out their own lives in their own way. They may do what they like; they may make what they like. We shall be glad if they will make us things. They may be happy. Think!”

“Provided there are no more Children.”

“Precisely. The Children are for us. And so, Sir, we shall save the world, we shall save it absolutely from the fruits of your terrible discovery. It is not too late for us. Only we are eager to temper expediency with mercy. Even now we are burning and searing the places their shells hit yesterday. We can get it under. Trust me we shall get it under. But in that way, without cruelty, without injustice—”

“And suppose the Children do not agree?”

For the first time Caterham looked Redwood fully in the face.

“They must!”

“I don’t think they will.”

“Why should they not agree?” he asked, in richly toned amazement.

“Suppose they don’t?”

“What can it be but war? We cannot have the thing go on. We cannot. Sir. Have you scientific men *no* imagination? Have you no mercy? We cannot have our world trampled under a growing herd of such monsters and monstrous growths as your Food has made. We cannot and we cannot! I ask you, Sir, what can it be but war? And remember—this that has happened is only a beginning! *This* was a skirmish. A mere affair of police. Believe me, a mere affair of police. Do not be cheated by perspective, by the immediate bigness of these newer things. Behind us is the nation—is humanity. Behind the thousands who have died there are millions. Were it not for the fear of bloodshed, Sir, behind our first attacks there would be forming other attacks, even now. Whether we can kill this Food or not, most assuredly we can kill your sons! You reckon too much on the things of yesterday, on the happenings of a mere score of years, on one battle. You have no sense of the slow course of history. I offer this convention for the sake of lives, not because it can change the inevitable end. If you think that your poor two dozen of Giants can resist all the forces of our people and of all the alien peoples who will come to our aid; if you think you can change Humanity at a blow, in a single generation, and alter the nature and stature of Man—”

He flung out an arm. “Go to them now, Sir. I see them, for all the evil they have done, crouching among their wounded—”

He stopped, as though he had glanced at Redwood’s son by chance.

There came a pause.

“Go to them,” he said.

“That is what I want to do.”

“Then go now....”

He turned and pressed the button of a bell; without, in immediate response, came a sound of opening doors and hastening feet.

The talk was at an end. The display was over. Abruptly Caterham seemed to contract, to shrivel up into a yellow-faced, fagged-out, middle-sized, middle-aged man. He stepped forward, as if he were stepping out of a picture, and with a complete assumption of that friendliness that lies behind all the public conflicts of our race, he held out his hand to Redwood.

As if it were a matter of course, Redwood shook hands with him for the second time.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH. — THE GIANT LEAGUER.

I.

Presently Redwood found himself in a train going south over the Thames. He had a brief vision of the river shining under its lights, and of the smoke still going up from the place where the shell had fallen on the north bank, and where a vast multitude of men had been organised to burn the Herakleophorbia out of the ground. The southern bank was dark, for some reason even the streets were not lit, all that was clearly visible was the outlines of the tall alarm-towers and the dark bulks of flats and schools, and after a minute of peering scrutiny he turned his back on the window and sank into thought. There was nothing more to see or do until he saw the Sons....

He was fatigued by the stresses of the last two days; it seemed to him that his emotions must needs be exhausted, but he had fortified himself with strong coffee before starting, and his thoughts ran thin and clear. His mind touched many things. He reviewed again, but now in the enlightenment of accomplished events, the manner in which the Food had entered and unfolded itself in the world.

“Bensington thought it might be an excellent food for infants,” he whispered to himself, with a faint smile. Then there came into his mind as vivid as if they were still unsettled his own horrible doubts after he had committed himself by giving it to his own son. From that, with a steady unfaltering expansion, in spite of every effort of men to help and hinder, the Food had spread through the whole world of man. And now?

“Even if they kill them all,” Redwood whispered, “the thing is done.”

The secret of its making was known far and wide. That had been his own work. Plants, animals, a multitude of distressful growing children would conspire irresistibly to force the world to revert again to the Food, whatever happened in the present struggle. “The thing is done,” he said, with his mind swinging round beyond all his controlling to rest upon the present fate of the Children and his son. Would he find them exhausted by the efforts of the battle, wounded, starving, on the verge of defeat, or would he find them still stout and hopeful, ready for the still grimmer conflict of the morrow? His son was wounded! But he had sent a message!

His mind came back to his interview with Caterham.

He was roused from his thoughts by the stopping of his train in Chislehurst station. He recognised the place by the huge rat alarm-tower that crested Camden Hill, and the row of blossoming giant hemlocks that lined the road....

Caterham's private secretary came to him from the other carriage and told him that half a mile farther the line had been wrecked, and that the rest of the journey was to be made in a motor car. Redwood descended upon a platform lit only by a hand lantern and swept by the cool night breeze. The quiet of that derelict, wood-set, weed-embedded suburb—for all the inhabitants had taken refuge in London at the outbreak of yesterday's conflict—became instantly impressive. His conductor took him down the steps to where a motor car was waiting with blazing lights—the only lights to be seen—handed him over to the care of the driver and bade him farewell.

"You will do your best for us," he said, with an imitation of his master's manner, as he held Redwood's hand.

So soon as Redwood could be wrapped about they started out into the night. At one moment they stood still, and then the motor car was rushing softly and swiftly down the station incline. They turned one corner and another, followed the windings of a lane of villas, and then before them stretched the road. The motor droned up to its topmost speed, and the black night swept past them. Everything was very dark under the starlight, and the whole world crouched mysteriously and was gone without a sound. Not a breath stirred the flying things by the wayside; the deserted, pallid white villas on either hand, with their black unlit windows, reminded him of a noiseless procession of skulls. The driver beside him was a silent man, or stricken into silence by the conditions of his journey. He answered Redwood's brief questions in monosyllables, and gruffly. Athwart the southern sky the beams of searchlights waved noiseless passes; the sole strange evidences of life they seemed in all that derelict world about the hurrying machine.

The road was presently bordered on either side by gigantic blackthorn shoots that made it very dark, and by tail grass and big campions, huge giant dead-nettles as high as trees, flickering past darkly in silhouette overhead. Beyond Keston they came to a rising hill, and the driver went slow. At the crest he stopped. The engine throbbed and became still. "There," he said, and his big gloved finger pointed, a black misshapen thing before Redwood's eyes.

Far away as it seemed, the great embankment, crested by the blaze from which the searchlights sprang, rose up against the sky. Those beams went and came among the clouds and the hilly land about them as if they traced mysterious incantations.

“I don’t know,” said the driver at last, and it was clear he was afraid to go on.

Presently a searchlight swept down the sky to them, stopped as it were with a start, scrutinised them, a blinding stare confused rather than mitigated by an intervening monstrous weed stem or so. They sat with their gloves held over their eyes, trying to look under them and meet that light.

“Go on,” said Redwood after a while.

The driver still had his doubts; he tried to express them, and died down to “I don’t know” again.

At last he ventured on. “Here goes,” he said, and roused his machinery to motion again, followed intently by that great white eye.

To Redwood it seemed for a long time they were no longer on earth, but in a state of palpitating hurry through a luminous cloud. Teuf, teuf, teuf, teuf, went the machine, and ever and again—obeying I know not what nervous impulse—the driver sounded his horn.

They passed into the welcome darkness of a high-fenced lane, and down into a hollow and past some houses into that blinding stare again. Then for a space the road ran naked across a down, and they seemed to hang throbbing in immensity. Once more giant weeds rose about them and whirled past. Then quite abruptly close upon them loomed the figure of a giant, shining brightly where the searchlight caught him below, and black against the sky above. “Hullo there!” he cried, and “stop! There’s no more road beyond … Is that Father Redwood?”

Redwood stood up and gave a vague shout by way of answer, and then Cossar was in the road beside him, gripping both hands with both of his and pulling him out of the car.

“What of my son?” asked Redwood.

“He’s all right,” said Cossar. “They’ve hurt nothing serious in *him*.”

“And your lads?”

“Well. All of them, well. But we’ve had to make a fight for it.”

The Giant was saying something to the motor driver. Redwood stood aside as the machine wheeled round, and then suddenly Cossar vanished, everything vanished, and he was in absolute darkness for a space. The glare was following the motor back to the crest of the Keston hill. He watched the little conveyance receding in that white

halo. It had a curious effect, as though it was not moving at all and the halo was. A group of war-blasted Giant elders flashed into gaunt scarred gesticulations and were swallowed again by the night … Redwood turned to Cossar's dim outline again and clasped his hand. "I have been shut up and kept in ignorance," he said, "for two whole days."

"We fired the Food at them," said Cossar. "Obviously! Thirty shots. Eh!"

"I come from Caterham."

"I know you do." He laughed with a note of bitterness. "I suppose he's wiping it up."

II.

"Where is my son?" said Redwood.

"He is all right. The Giants are waiting for your message."

"Yes, but my son—…"

He passed with Cossar down a long slanting tunnel that was lit red for a moment and then became dark again, and came out presently into the great pit of shelter the Giants had made.

Redwood's first impression was of an enormous arena bounded by very high cliffs and with its floor greatly encumbered. It was in darkness save for the passing reflections of the watchman's searchlights that whirled perpetually high overhead, and for a red glow that came and went from a distant corner where two Giants worked together amidst a metallic clangour. Against the sky, as the glare came about, his eye caught the familiar outlines of the old worksheds and playsheds that were made for the Cossar boys. They were hanging now, as it were, at a cliff brow, and strangely twisted and distorted with the guns of Caterham's bombardment. There were suggestions of huge gun emplacements above there, and nearer were piles of mighty cylinders that were perhaps ammunition. All about the wide space below, the forms of great engines and incomprehensible bulks were scattered in vague disorder. The Giants appeared and vanished among these masses and in the uncertain light; great shapes they were, not disproportionate to the things amidst which they moved. Some were actively employed, some sitting and lying as if they courted sleep, and one near at hand, whose body was bandaged, lay on a rough litter of pine boughs and was certainly asleep. Redwood peered at these dim forms; his eyes went from one stirring outline to another.

"Where is my son, Cossar?"

Then he saw him.

His son was sitting under the shadow of a great wall of steel. He presented himself as a black shape recognisable only by his pose,—his features were invisible. He sat chin upon hand, as though weary or lost in thought. Beside him Redwood discovered the figure of the Princess, the dark suggestion of her merely, and then, as the glow from the distant iron returned, he saw for an instant, red lit and tender, the infinite kindliness of her shadowed face. She stood looking down upon her lover with her hand resting against the steel. It seemed that she whispered to him.

Redwood would have gone towards them.

“Presently,” said Cossar. “First there is your message.”

“Yes,” said Redwood, “but—”

He stopped. His son was now looking up and speaking to the Princess, but in too low a tone for them to hear. Young Redwood raised his face, and she bent down towards him, and glanced aside before she spoke.

“But if we are beaten,” they heard the whispered voice of young Redwood.

She paused, and the red blaze showed her eyes bright with unshed tears. She bent nearer him and spoke still lower. There was something so intimate and private in their bearing, in their soft tones, that Redwood—Redwood who had thought for two whole days of nothing but his son—felt himself intrusive there. Abruptly he was checked. For the first time in his life perhaps he realised how much more a son may be to his father than a father can ever be to a son; he realised the full predominance of the future over the past. Here between these two he had no part. His part was played. He turned to Cossar, in the instant realisation. Their eyes met. His voice was changed to the tone of a grey resolve.

“I will deliver my message now,” he said. “Afterwards—... It will be soon enough then.”

The pit was so enormous and so encumbered that it was a long and tortuous route to the place from which Redwood could speak to them all.

He and Cossar followed a steeply descending way that passed beneath an arch of interlocking machinery, and so came into a vast deep gangway that ran athwart the bottom of the pit. This gangway, wide and vacant, and yet relatively narrow, conspired with everything about it to enhance Redwood’s sense of his own littleness. It became, as it were, an excavated gorge. High overhead, separated from him by cliffs of darkness, the searchlights wheeled and blazed, and the shining shapes went to and

fro. Giant voices called to one another above there, calling the Giants together to the Council of War, to hear the terms that Caterham had sent. The gangway still inclined downward towards black vastnesses, towards shadows and mysteries and inconceivable things, into which Redwood went slowly with reluctant footsteps and Cossar with a confident stride....

Redwood's thoughts were busy. The two men passed into the completest darkness, and Cossar took his companion's wrist. They went now slowly perforce.

Redwood was moved to speak. "All this," he said, "is strange."

"Big," said Cossar.

"Strange. And strange that it should be strange to me—I, who am, in a sense, the beginning of it all. It's—"

He stopped, wrestling with his elusive meaning, and threw an unseen gesture at the cliff.

"I have not thought of it before. I have been busy, and the years have passed. But here I see—It is a new generation, Cossar, and new emotions and new needs. All this, Cossar—"

Cossar saw now his dim gesture to the things about them.

"All this is Youth."

Cossar made no answers and his irregular footfalls went striding on.

"It isn't *our* youth, Cossar. They are taking things over. They are beginning upon their own emotions, their own experiences, their own way. We have made a new world, and it isn't ours. It isn't even—sympathetic. This great place—"

"I planned it," said Cossar, his face close.

"But now?"

"Ah! I have given it to my sons."

Redwood could feel the loose wave of the arm that he could not see.

"That is it. We are over—or almost over."

"Your message!"

"Yes. And then—"

“We’re over.”

“Well—?”

“Of course we are out of it, we two old men,” said Cossar, with his familiar note of sudden anger. “Of course we are. Obviously. Each man for his own time. And now—it’s *their* time beginning. That’s all right. Excavator’s gang. We do our job and go. See? That is what death is for. We work out all our little brains and all our little emotions, and then this lot begins afresh. Fresh and fresh! Perfectly simple. What’s the trouble?”

He paused to guide Redwood to some steps.

“Yes,” said Redwood, “but one feels—”

He left his sentence incomplete.

“That is what Death is for.” He heard Cossar below him insisting, “How else could the thing be done? That is what Death is for.”

III.

After devious windings and ascents they came out upon a projecting ledge from which it was possible to see over the greater extent of the Giants’ pit, and from which Redwood might make himself heard by the whole of their assembly. The Giants were already gathered below and about him at different levels, to hear the message he had to deliver. The eldest son of Cossar stood on the bank overhead watching the revelations of the searchlights, for they feared a breach of the truce. The workers at the great apparatus in the corner stood out clear in their own light; they were near stripped; they turned their faces towards Redwood, but with a watchful reference ever and again to the castings that they could not leave. He saw these nearer figures with a fluctuating indistinctness, by lights that came and went, and the remoter ones still less distinctly. They came from and vanished again into the depths of great obscurities. For these Giants had no more light than they could help in the pit, that their eyes might be ready to see effectually any attacking force that might spring upon them out of the darknesses around.

Ever and again some chance glare would pick out and display this group or that of tall and powerful forms, the Giants from Sunderland clothed in overlapping metal plates, and the others clad in leather, in woven rope or in woven metal, as their conditions had determined. They sat amidst or rested their hands upon, or stood erect among machines and weapons as mighty as themselves, and all their faces, as they came and went from visible to invisible, had steadfast eyes.

He made an effort to begin and did not do so. Then for a moment his son's face glowed out in a hot insurgence of the fire, his son's face looking up to him, tender as well as strong; and at that he found a voice to reach them all, speaking across a gulf, as it were, to his son.

"I come from Caterham," he said. "He sent me to you, to tell you the terms he offers."

He paused. "They are impossible terms, I know, now that I see you here all together; they are impossible terms, but I brought them to you, because I wanted to see you all—and my son. Once more ... I wanted to see my son...."

"Tell them the terms," said Cossar.

"This is what Caterham offers. He wants you to go apart and leave his world!"

"Where?"

"He does not know. Vaguely somewhere in the world a great region is to be set apart.... And you are to make no more of the Food, to have no children of your own, to live in your own way for your own time, and then to end for ever."

He stopped.

"And that is all?"

"That is all."

There followed a great stillness. The darkness that veiled the Giants seemed to look thoughtfully at him.

He felt a touch at his elbow, and Cossar was holding a chair for him—a queer fragment of doll's furniture amidst these piled immensities. He sat down and crossed his legs, and then put one across the knee of the other, and clutched his boot nervously, and felt small and self-conscious and acutely visible and absurdly placed.

Then at the sound of a voice he forgot himself again.

"You have heard, Brothers," said this voice out of the shadows.

And another answered, "We have heard."

"And the answer, Brothers?"

"To Caterham?"

"Is No!"

“And then?”

There was a silence for the space of some seconds.

Then a voice said: “These people are right. After their lights, that is. They have been right in killing all that grew larger than its kind—beast and plant and all manner of great things that arose. They were right in trying to massacre us. They are right now in saying we must not marry our kind. According to their lights they are right. They know—it is time that we also knew—that you cannot have pigmies and giants in one world together. Caterham has said that again and again—clearly—their world or ours.”

“We are not half a hundred now,” said another, “and they are endless millions.”

“So it may be. But the thing is as I have said.”

Then another long silence.

“And are we to die then?”

“God forbid!”

“Are they?”

“No.”

“But that is what Caterham says! He would have us live out our lives, die one by one, till only one remains, and that one at last would die also, and they would cut down all the giant plants and weeds, kill all the giant under-life, burn out the traces of the Food—make an end to us and to the Food for ever. Then the little pigmy world would be safe. They would go on—safe for ever, living their little pigmy lives, doing pigmy kindnesses and pigmy cruelties each to the other; they might even perhaps attain a sort of pigmy millennium, make an end to war, make an end to over-population, sit down in a world-wide city to practise pigmy arts, worshipping one another till the world begins to freeze....”

In the corner a sheet of iron fell in thunder to the ground.

“Brothers, we know what we mean to do.”

In a spluttering of light from the searchlights Redwood saw earnest youthful faces turning to his son.

“It is easy now to make the Food. It would be easy for us to make Food for all the world.”

“You mean, Brother Redwood,” said a voice out of the darkness, “that it is for the little people to eat the Food.”

“What else is there to do?”

“We are not half a hundred and they are many millions.”

“But we held our own.”

“So far.”

“If it is God’s will, we may still hold our own.”

“Yes. But think of the dead!”

Another voice took up the strain. “The dead,” it said. “Think of the unborn….”

“Brothers,” came the voice of young Redwood, “what can we do but fight them, and if we beat them, make them take the Food? They cannot help but take the Food now. Suppose we were to resign our heritage and do this folly that Caterham suggests! Suppose we could! Suppose we give up this great thing that stirs within us, repudiate this thing our fathers did for us—that *you*, Father, did for us—and pass, when our time has come, into decay and nothingness! What then? Will this little world of theirs be as it was before? They may fight against greatness in us who are the children of men, but can they conquer? Even if they should destroy us every one, what then? Would it save them? No! For greatness is abroad, not only in us, not only in the Food, but in the purpose of all things! It is in the nature of all things; it is part of space and time. To grow and still to grow: from first to last that is Being—that is the law of life. What other law can there be?”

“To help others?”

“To grow. It is still, to grow. Unless we help them to fail….”

“They will fight hard to overcome us,” said a voice.

And another, “What of that?”

“They will fight,” said young Redwood. “If we refuse these terms, I doubt not they will fight. Indeed I hope they will be open and fight. If after all they offer peace, it will be only the better to catch us unawares. Make no mistake, Brothers; in some way or other they will fight. The war has begun, and we must fight, to the end. Unless we are wise, we may find presently we have lived only to make them better weapons against our children and our kind. This, so far, has been only the dawn of battle. All our lives will be a battle. Some of us will be killed in battle, some of us will be waylaid. There is

no easy victory—no victory whatever that is not more than half defeat for us. Be sure of that. What of that? If only we keep a foothold, if only we leave behind us a growing host to fight when we are gone!"

"And to-morrow?"

"We will scatter the Food; we will saturate the world with the Food."

"Suppose they come to terms?"

"Our terms are the Food. It is not as though little and great could live together in any perfection of compromise. It is one thing or the other. What right have parents to say, My child shall have no light but the light I have had, shall grow no greater than the greatness to which I have grown? Do I speak for you, Brothers?"

Assenting murmurs answered him.

"And to the children who will be women as well as to the children who will be men," said a voice from the darkness.

"Even more so—to be mothers of a new race ..."

"But for the next generation there must be great and little," said Redwood, with his eyes on his son's face.

"For many generations. And the little will hamper the great and the great press upon the little. So it must needs be, father."

"There will be conflict."

"Endless conflict. Endless misunderstanding. All life is that. Great and little cannot understand one another. But in every child born of man, Father Redwood, lurks some seed of greatness—waiting for the Food."

"Then I am to go to Caterham again and tell him—"

"You will stay with us, Father Redwood. Our answer goes to Caterham at dawn."

"He says that he will fight...."

"So be it," said young Redwood, and his brethren murmured assent.

"*The iron waits*," cried a voice, and the two giants who were working in the corner began a rhythmic hammering that made a mighty music to the scene. The metal glowed out far more brightly than it had done before, and gave Redwood a clearer view of the encampment than had yet come to him. He saw the oblong space to its full

extent, with the great engines of warfare ranged ready to hand. Beyond, and at a higher level, the house of the Cossars stood. About him were the young giants, huge and beautiful, glittering in their mail, amidst the preparations for the morrow. The sight of them lifted his heart. They were so easily powerful! They were so tall and gracious! They were so steadfast in their movements! There was his son amongst them, and the first of all giant women, the Princess....

There leapt into his mind the oddest contrast, a memory of Bensington, very bright and little—Bensington with his hand amidst the soft breast feathers of that first great chick, standing in that conventionally furnished room of his, peering over his spectacles dubiously as cousin Jane banged the door....

It had all happened in a yesterday of one-and-twenty years.

Then suddenly a strange doubt took hold of him: that this place and present greatness were but the texture of a dream; that he was dreaming, and would in an instant wake to find himself in his study again, the Giants slaughtered, the Food suppressed, and himself a prisoner locked in. What else indeed was life but that—always to be a prisoner locked in! This was the culmination and end of his dream. He would wake through bloodshed and battle, to find his Food the most foolish of fancies, and his hopes and faith of a greater world to come no more than the coloured film upon a pool of bottomless decay. Littleness invincible!

So strong and deep was this wave of despondency, this suggestion of impending disillusionment, that he started to his feet. He stood and pressed his clenched fists into his eyes, and so for a moment remained, fearing to open them again and see, lest the dream should already have passed away....

The voice of the giant children spoke to one another, an undertone to that clangorous melody of the smiths. His tide of doubt ebbed. He heard the giant voices; he heard their movements about him still. It was real, surely it was real—as real as spiteful acts! More real, for these great things, it may be, are the coming things, and the littleness, bestiality, and infirmity of men are the things that go. He opened his eyes. "Done," cried one of the two ironworkers, and they flung their hammers down.

A voice sounded above. The son of Cossar, standing on the great embankment, had turned and was now speaking to them all.

"It is not that we would oust the little people from the world," he said, "in order that we, who are no more than one step upwards from their littleness, may hold their world for ever. It is the step we fight for and not ourselves.... We are here, Brothers, to what end? To serve the spirit and the purpose that has been breathed into our lives. We fight

not for ourselves—for we are but the momentary hands and eyes of the Life of the World. So you, Father Redwood, taught us. Through us and through the little folk the Spirit looks and learns. From us by word and birth and act it must pass—to still greater lives. This earth is no resting place; this earth is no playing place, else indeed we might put our throats to the little people's knife, having no greater right to live than they. And they in their turn might yield to the ants and vermin. We fight not for ourselves but for growth—growth that goes on for ever. To-morrow, whether we live or die, growth will conquer through us. That is the law of the spirit for ever more. To grow according to the will of God! To grow out of these cracks and crannies, out of these shadows and darknesses, into greatness and the light! Greater," he said, speaking with slow deliberation, "greater, my Brothers! And then—still greater. To grow, and again—to grow. To grow at last into the fellowship and understanding of God. Growing.... Till the earth is no more than a footstool.... Till the spirit shall have driven fear into nothingness, and spread...." He swung his arm heavenward:—"*There!*" His voice ceased. The white glare of one of the searchlights wheeled about, and for a moment fell upon him, standing out gigantic with hand upraised against the sky.

For one instant he shone, looking up fearlessly into the starry deeps, mail-clad, young and strong, resolute and still. Then the light had passed, and he was no more than a great black outline against the starry sky—a great black outline that threatened with one mighty gesture the firmament of heaven and all its multitude of stars.

THE END.