THE NEW MACHIAVELLI

by H. G. Wells

CONTENTS

BOOK THE FIRST: THE MAKING OF A MAN

CHAPTER THE FIRST ~~ CONCERNING A BOOK THAT WAS NEVER WRITTEN

1

Since I came to this place I have been very restless, wasting my energies in the futile beginning of ill-conceived books. One does not settle down very readily at two and forty to a new way of living, and I have found myself with the teeming interests of the life I have abandoned still buzzing like a swarm of homeless bees in my head. My mind has been full of confused protests and justifications. In any case I should have found difficulties enough in expressing the complex thing I have to tell, but it has added greatly to my trouble that I have a great analogue, that a certain Niccolo Machiavelli chanced to fall out of politics at very much the age I have reached, and wrote a book to engage the restlessness of his mind, very much as I have wanted to do. He wrote about the relation of the great constructive spirit in politics to individual character and weaknesses, and so far his achievement lies like a deep rut in the road of my intention. It has taken me far astray. It is a matter of many weeks now—diversified indeed by some long drives into the mountains behind us and a memorable sail to Genoa across the blue and purple waters that drowned Shelley—since I began a laboured and futile imitation of “The Prince.” I sat up late last night with the jumbled accumulation; and at last made a little fire of olive twigs and burnt it all, sheet by sheet—to begin again clear this morning.

But incidentally I have re-read most of Machiavelli, not excepting those scandalous letters of his to Vettori, and it seems to me, now that I have released myself altogether from his literary precedent, that he still has his use for me. In spite of his vast prestige I claim kindred with him and set his name upon my title-page, in partial intimation of the matter of my story. He takes me with sympathy not only by reason of the dream he pursued and the humanity of his politics, but by the mixture of his nature. His vices come in, essential to my issue. He is dead and gone, all his immediate correlations to party and faction have faded to insignificance, leaving only on the one hand his broad method and conceptions, and upon the other his intimate living personality, exposed down to its salacious corners as the soul of no contemporary can ever be exposed. Of those double strands it is I have to write, of the subtle protesting perplexing play of instinctive passion and desire against too abstract a dream of statesmanship. But things that seemed to lie very far apart in Machiavelli's time have come near to one another; it is no simple story of white passions struggling against the red that I have to tell.

The state-making dream is a very old dream indeed in the world's history. It plays too small a part in novels. Plato and Confucius are but the highest of a great host of minds that have had a kindred aspiration, have dreamt of a world of men better ordered, happier, finer, securer. They imagined cities grown more powerful and peoples made rich and multitudinous by their efforts, they thought in terms of harbours and shining navies, great roads engineered marvellously, jungles cleared and deserts conquered, the ending of muddle and diseases and dirt and misery; the ending of confusions that waste human possibilities; they thought of these things with passion and desire as other men think of the soft lines and tender beauty of women. Thousands of men there are to-day almost mastered by this white passion of statecraft, and in nearly every one who reads and thinks you could find, I suspect, some sort of answering response. But in every one it presents itself extraordinarily entangled and mixed up with other, more intimate things.

It was so with Machiavelli. I picture him at San Casciano as he lived in retirement upon his property after the fall of the Republic, perhaps with a twinge of the torture that punished his conspiracy still lurking in his limbs. Such twinges could not stop his dreaming. Then it was “The Prince” was written. All day he went about his personal affairs, saw homely neighbours, dealt with his family, gave vent to everyday passions. He would sit in the shop of Donato del Corno gossiping curiously among vicious company, or pace the lonely woods of his estate, book in hand, full of bitter meditations. In the evening he returned home and went to his study. At the entrance, he says, he pulled off his peasant clothes covered with the dust and dirt of that

immediate life, washed himself, put on his “noble court dress,” closed the door on the world of toiling and getting, private loving, private hating and personal regrets, sat down with a sigh of contentment to those wider dreams.

I like to think of him so, with brown books before him lit by the light of candles in silver candlesticks, or heading some new chapter of “The Prince,” with a grey quill in his clean fine hand.

So writing, he becomes a symbol for me, and the less none because of his animal humour, his queer indecent side, and because of such lapses into utter meanness as that which made him sound the note of the begging-letter writer even in his “Dedication,” reminding His Magnificence very urgently, as if it were the gist of his matter, of the continued malignity of fortune in his affairs. These flaws complete him. They are my reason for preferring him as a symbol to Plato, of whose indelicate side we know nothing, and whose correspondence with Dionysius of Syracuse has perished; or to Confucius who travelled China in search of a Prince he might instruct, with lapses and indignities now lost in the mists of ages. They have achieved the apotheosis of individual forgetfulness, and Plato has the added glory of that acquired beauty, that bust of the Indian Bacchus which is now indissolubly mingled with his tradition. They have passed into the world of the ideal, and every humbug takes his freedoms with their names. But Machiavelli, more recent and less popular, is still all human and earthly, a fallen brother—and at the same time that nobly dressed and nobly dreaming writer at the desk.

That vision of the strengthened and perfected state is protagonist in my story. But as I re-read “The Prince” and thought out the manner of my now abandoned project, I came to perceive how that stir and whirl of human thought one calls by way of embodiment the French Revolution, has altered absolutely the approach to such a question. Machiavelli, like Plato and Pythagoras and Confucius two hundred odd decades before him, saw only one method by which a thinking man, himself not powerful, might do the work of state building, and that was by seizing the imagination of a Prince. Directly these men turned their thoughts towards realisation, their attitudes became—what shall I call it?—secretarial. Machiavelli, it is true, had some little doubts about the particular Prince he wanted, whether it was Caesar Borgia of Giuliano or Lorenzo, but a Prince it had to be. Before I saw clearly the differences of our own time I searched my mind for the modern equivalent of a Prince. At various times I redrafted a parallel dedication to the Prince of Wales, to the Emperor William, to Mr. Evesham, to a certain newspaper proprietor who was once my schoolfellow at City Merchants', to Mr. J. D. Rockefeller—all of them men in their several ways and circumstances and possibilities, princely. Yet in every case my pen bent of its own

accord towards irony because—because, although at first I did not realise it, I myself am just as free to be a prince. The appeal was unfair. The old sort of Prince, the old little principality has vanished from the world. The commonweal is one man's absolute estate and responsibility no more. In Machiavelli's time it was indeed to an extreme degree one man's affair. But the days of the Prince who planned and directed and was the source and centre of all power are ended. We are in a condition of affairs infinitely more complex, in which every prince and statesman is something of a servant and every intelligent human being something of a Prince. No magnificent pensive Lorenzos remain any more in this world for secretarial hopes.

In a sense it is wonderful how power has vanished, in a sense wonderful how it has increased. I sit here, an unarmed discredited man, at a small writing-table in a little defenceless dwelling among the vines, and no human being can stop my pen except by the deliberate self-immolation of murdering me, nor destroy its fruits except by theft and crime. No King, no council, can seize and torture me; no Church, no nation silence me. Such powers of ruthless and complete suppression have vanished. But that is not because power has diminished, but because it has increased and become multitudinous, because it has dispersed itself and specialised. It is no longer a negative power we have, but positive; we cannot prevent, but we can do. This age, far beyond all previous ages, is full of powerful men, men who might, if they had the will for it, achieve stupendous things.

The things that might be done to-day! The things indeed that are being done! It is the latter that give one so vast a sense of the former. When I think of the progress of physical and mechanical science, of medicine and sanitation during the last century, when I measure the increase in general education and average efficiency, the power now available for human service, the merely physical increment, and compare it with anything that has ever been at man's disposal before, and when I think of what a little straggling, incidental, undisciplined and uncoordinated minority of inventors, experimenters, educators, writers and organisers has achieved this development of human possibilities, achieved it in spite of the disregard and aimlessness of the huge majority, and the passionate resistance of the active dull, my imagination grows giddy with dazzling intimations of the human splendours the justly organised state may yet attain. I glimpse for a bewildering instant the heights that may be scaled, the splendid enterprises made possible.

But the appeal goes out now in other forms, in a book that catches at thousands of readers for the eye of a Prince diffused. It is the old appeal indeed for the unification of human effort, the ending of confusions, but instead of the Machiavellian deference to a flattered lord, a man cries out of his heart to the unseen fellowship about him. The

last written dedication of all those I burnt last night, was to no single man, but to the socially constructive passion—in any man....

There is, moreover, a second great difference in kind between my world and Machiavelli's. We are discovering women. It is as if they had come across a vast interval since his time, into the very chamber of the statesman.

2

In Machiavelli's outlook the interest of womanhood was in a region of life almost infinitely remote from his statecraft. They were the vehicle of children, but only Imperial Rome and the new world of to-day have ever had an inkling of the significance that might give them in the state. They did their work, he thought, as the ploughed earth bears its crops. Apart from their function of fertility they gave a humorous twist to life, stimulated worthy men to toil, and wasted the hours of Princes. He left the thought of women outside with his other dusty things when he went into his study to write, dismissed them from his mind. But our modern world is burthened with its sense of the immense, now half articulate, significance of women. They stand now, as it were, close beside the silver candlesticks, speaking as Machiavelli writes, until he stays his pen and turns to discuss his writing with them.

It is this gradual discovery of sex as a thing collectively portentous that I have to mingle with my statecraft if my picture is to be true which has turned me at length from a treatise to the telling of my own story. In my life I have paralleled very closely the slow realisations that are going on in the world about me. I began life ignoring women, they came to me at first perplexing and dishonouring; only very slowly and very late in my life and after misadventure, did I gauge the power and beauty of the love of man and woman and learnt how it must needs frame a justifiable vision of the ordered world. Love has brought me to disaster, because my career had been planned regardless of its possibility and value. But Machiavelli, it seems to me, when he went into his study, left not only the earth of life outside but its unsuspected soul.

3

Like Machiavelli at San Casciano, if I may take this analogy one step further, I too am an exile. Office and leading are closed to me. The political career that promised so much for me is shattered and ended for ever.

I look out from this vine-wreathed veranda under the branches of a stone pine; I see wide and far across a purple valley whose sides are terraced and set with houses of pine and ivory, the Gulf of Liguria gleaming sapphire blue, and cloud-like baseless mountains hanging in the sky, and I think of lank and coaly steamships heaving on the

grey rollers of the English Channel and darkling streets wet with rain, I recall as if I were back there the busy exit from Charing Cross, the cross and the money-changers' offices, the splendid grime of giant London and the crowds going perpetually to and fro, the lights by night and the urgency and eventfulness of that great rain-swept heart of the modern world.

It is difficult to think we have left that—for many years if not for ever. In thought I walk once more in Palace Yard and hear the clink and clatter of hansoms and the quick quiet whirr of motors; I go in vivid recent memories through the stir in the lobbies, I sit again at eventful dinners in those old dining-rooms like cellars below the House—dinners that ended with shrill division bells, I think of huge clubs swarming and excited by the bulletins of that electoral battle that was for me the opening opportunity. I see the stencilled names and numbers go up on the green baize, constituency after constituency, amidst murmurs or loud shouting....

It is over for me now and vanished. That opportunity will come no more. Very probably you have heard already some crude inaccurate version of our story and why I did not take office, and have formed your partial judgement on me. And so it is I sit now at my stone table, half out of life already, in a warm, large, shadowy leisure, splashed with sunlight and hung with vine tendrils, with paper before me to distil such wisdom as I can, as Machiavelli in his exile sought to do, from the things I have learnt and felt during the career that has ended now in my divorce.

I climbed high and fast from small beginnings. I had the mind of my party. I do not know where I might not have ended, but for this red blaze that came out of my unguarded nature and closed my career for ever.

CHAPTER THE SECOND ~~ BROMSTEAD AND MY FATHER

1

I dreamt first of states and cities and political things when I was a little boy in knickerbockers.

When I think of how such things began in my mind, there comes back to me the memory of an enormous bleak room with its ceiling going up to heaven and its floor covered irregularly with patched and defective oilcloth and a dingy mat or so and a "surround" as they call it, of dark stained wood. Here and there against the wall are

trunks and boxes. There are cupboards on either side of the fireplace and bookshelves with books above them, and on the wall and rather tattered is a large yellow-varnished geological map of the South of England. Over the mantel is a huge lump of white coral rock and several big fossil bones, and above that hangs the portrait of a brainy gentleman, sliced in half and displaying an interior of intricate detail and much vigour of coloring. It is the floor I think of chiefly; over the oilcloth of which, assumed to be land, spread towns and villages and forts of wooden bricks; there are steep square hills (geologically, volumes of Orr's CYCLOPAEDIA OF THE SCIENCES) and the cracks and spaces of the floor and the bare brown surround were the water channels and open sea of that continent of mine.

I still remember with infinite gratitude the great-uncle to whom I owe my bricks. He must have been one of those rare adults who have not forgotten the chagrins and dreams of childhood. He was a prosperous west of England builder; including my father he had three nephews, and for each of them he caused a box of bricks to be made by an out-of-work carpenter, not the insufficient supply of the toyshop, you understand, but a really adequate quantity of bricks made out of oak and shaped and smoothed, bricks about five inches by two and a half by one, and half-bricks and quarter-bricks to correspond. There were hundreds of them, many hundreds. I could build six towers as high as myself with them, and there seemed quite enough for every engineering project I could undertake. I could build whole towns with streets and houses and churches and citadels; I could bridge every gap in the oilcloth and make causeways over crumpled spaces (which I feigned to be morasses), and on a keel of whole bricks it was possible to construct ships to push over the high seas to the remotest port in the room. And a disciplined population, that rose at last by sedulous begging on birthdays and all convenient occasions to well over two hundred, of lead sailors and soldiers, horse, foot and artillery, inhabited this world.

Justice has never been done to bricks and soldiers by those who write about toys. The praises of the toy theatre have been a common theme for essayists, the planning of the scenes, the painting and cutting out of the caste, penny plain twopence coloured, the stink and glory of the performance and the final conflagration. I had such a theatre once, but I never loved it nor hoped for much from it; my bricks and soldiers were my perpetual drama. I recall an incessant variety of interests. There was the mystery and charm of the complicated buildings one could make, with long passages and steps and windows through which one peeped into their intricacies, and by means of slips of card one could make slanting ways in them, and send marbles rolling from top to base and thence out into the hold of a waiting ship. Then there were the fortresses and gun emplacements and covered ways in which one's soldiers went. And there was

commerce; the shops and markets and store-rooms full of nasturtium seed, thrift seed, lupin beans and suchlike provender from the garden; such stuff one stored in match-boxes and pill-boxes, or packed in sacks of old glove fingers tied up with thread and sent off by waggons along the great military road to the beleaguered fortress on the Indian frontier beyond the worn places that were dismal swamps. And there were battles on the way.

That great road is still clear in my memory. I was given, I forget by what benefactor, certain particularly fierce red Indians of lead—I have never seen such soldiers since—and for these my father helped me to make tepees of brown paper, and I settled them in a hitherto desolate country under the frowning nail-studded cliffs of an ancient trunk. Then I conquered them and garrisoned their land. (Alas! they died, no doubt through contact with civilisation—one my mother trod on—and their land became a wilderness again and was ravaged for a time by a clockwork crocodile of vast proportions.) And out towards the coal-scuttle was a region near the impassable thickets of the ragged hearthrug where lived certain china Zulus brandishing spears, and a mountain country of rudely piled bricks concealing the most devious and enchanting caves and several mines of gold and silver paper. Among these rocks a number of survivors from a Noah's Ark made a various, dangerous, albeit frequently invalid and crippled fauna, and I was wont to increase the uncultivated wildness of this region further by trees of privet-twigs from the garden hedge and box from the garden borders. By these territories went my Imperial Road carrying produce to and fro, bridging gaps in the oilcloth, tunnelling through Encyclopaedic hills—one tunnel was three volumes long—defended as occasion required by camps of paper tents or brick blockhouses, and ending at last in a magnificently engineered ascent to a fortress on the cliffs commanding the Indian reservation.

My games upon the floor must have spread over several years and developed from small beginnings, incorporating now this suggestion and now that. They stretch, I suppose, from seven to eleven or twelve. I played them intermittently, and they bulk now in the retrospect far more significantly than they did at the time. I played them in bursts, and then forgot them for long periods; through the spring and summer I was mostly out of doors, and school and classes caught me early. And in the retrospect I see them all not only magnified and transfigured, but fore-shortened and confused together. A clockwork railway, I seem to remember, came and went; one or two clockwork boats, toy sailing ships that, being keeled, would do nothing but lie on their beam ends on the floor; a detestable lot of cavalrymen, undersized and gilt all over, given me by a maiden aunt, and very much what one might expect from an aunt, that I used as Nero used his Christians to ornament my public buildings; and I finally melted

some into fratricidal bullets, and therewith blew the rest to flat splashes of lead by means of a brass cannon in the garden.

I find this empire of the floor much more vivid and detailed in my memory now than many of the owners of the skirts and legs and boots that went gingerly across its territories. Occasionally, alas! they stooped to scrub, abolishing in one universal destruction the slow growth of whole days of civilised development. I still remember the hatred and disgust of these catastrophes. Like Noah I was given warnings. Did I disregard them, coarse red hands would descend, plucking garrisons from fortresses and sailors from ships, jumbling them up in their wrong boxes, clumsily so that their rifles and swords were broken, sweeping the splendid curves of the Imperial Road into heaps of ruins, casting the jungle growth of Zululand into the fire.

“Well, Master Dick,” the voice of this cosmic calamity would say, “you ought to have put them away last night. No! I can't wait until you've sailed them all away in ships. I got my work to do, and do it I will.”

And in no time all my continents and lands were swirling water and swiping strokes of house-flannel.

That was the worst of my giant visitants, but my mother too, dear lady, was something of a terror to this microcosm. She wore spring-sided boots, a kind of boot now vanished, I believe, from the world, with dull bodies and shiny toes, and a silk dress with flounces that were very destructive to the more hazardous viaducts of the Imperial Road. She was always, I seem to remember, fetching me; fetching me for a meal, fetching me for a walk or, detestable absurdity! fetching me for a wash and brush up, and she never seemed to understand anything whatever of the political systems across which she came to me. Also she forbade all toys on Sundays except the bricks for church-building and the soldiers for church parade, or a Scriptural use of the remains of the Noah's Ark mixed up with a wooden Swiss dairy farm. But she really did not know whether a thing was a church or not unless it positively bristled with cannon, and many a Sunday afternoon have I played Chicago (with the fear of God in my heart) under an infidel pretence that it was a new sort of ark rather elaborately done.

Chicago, I must explain, was based upon my father's description of the pig slaughterings in that city and certain pictures I had seen. You made your beasts—which were all the ark lot really, provisionally conceived as pigs—go up elaborate approaches to a central pen, from which they went down a cardboard slide four at a time, and dropped most satisfyingly down a brick shaft, and pitter-litter over some steep steps to where a head slaughterman (ne Noah) strung a cotton loop round their

legs and sent them by pin hooks along a wire to a second slaughterman with a chipped foot (formerly Mrs. Noah) who, if I remember rightly, converted them into Army sausage by means of a portion of the inside of an old alarum clock.

My mother did not understand my games, but my father did. He wore bright-coloured socks and carpet slippers when he was indoors—my mother disliked boots in the house—and he would sit down on my little chair and survey the microcosm on the floor with admirable understanding and sympathy.

It was he who gave me most of my toys and, I more than suspect, most of my ideas. “Here's some corrugated iron,” he would say, “suitable for roofs and fencing,” and hand me a lump of that stiff crinkled paper that is used for packing medicine bottles. Or, “Dick, do you see the tiger loose near the Imperial Road?—won't do for your cattle ranch.” And I would find a bright new lead tiger like a special creation at large in the world, and demanding a hunting expedition and much elaborate effort to get him safely housed in the city menagerie beside the captured dragon crocodile, tamed now, and his key lost and the heart and spring gone out of him.

And to the various irregular reading of my father I owe the inestimable blessing of never having a boy's book in my boyhood except those of Jules Verne. But my father used to get books for himself and me from the Bromstead Institute, Fenimore Cooper and Mayne Reid and illustrated histories; one of the Russo-Turkish war and one of Napier's expedition to Abyssinia I read from end to end; Stanley and Livingstone, lives of Wellington, Napoleon and Garibaldi, and back volumes of PUNCH, from which I derived conceptions of foreign and domestic politics it has taken years of adult reflection to correct. And at home permanently we had Wood's NATURAL HISTORY, a brand-new illustrated Green's HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE, Irving's COMPANIONS OF COLUMBUS, a great number of unbound parts of some geographical work, a VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD I think it was called, with pictures of foreign places, and Clarke's NEW TESTAMENT with a map of Palestine, and a variety of other informing books bought at sales. There was a Sowerby's BOTANY also, with thousands of carefully tinted pictures of British plants, and one or two other important works in the sitting-room. I was allowed to turn these over and even lie on the floor with them on Sundays and other occasions of exceptional cleanliness.

And in the attic I found one day a very old forgotten map after the fashion of a bird's-eye view, representing the Crimea, that fascinated me and kept me for hours navigating its waters with a pin.

My father was a lank-limbed man in easy shabby tweed clothes and with his hands in his trouser pockets. He was a science teacher, taking a number of classes at the Bromstead Institute in Kent under the old Science and Art Department, and “visiting” various schools; and our resources were eked out by my mother's income of nearly a hundred pounds a year, and by his inheritance of a terrace of three palatial but structurally unsound stucco houses near Bromstead Station.

They were big clumsy residences in the earliest Victorian style, interminably high and with deep damp basements and downstairs coal-cellars and kitchens that suggested an architect vindictively devoted to the discomfort of the servant class. If so, he had overreached himself and defeated his end, for no servant would stay in them unless for exceptional wages or exceptional tolerance of inefficiency or exceptional freedom in repartee. Every storey in the house was from twelve to fifteen feet high (which would have been cool and pleasant in a hot climate), and the stairs went steeply up, to end at last in attics too inaccessible for occupation. The ceilings had vast plaster cornices of classical design, fragments of which would sometimes fall unexpectedly, and the wall-papers were bold and gigantic in pattern and much variegated by damp and ill-mended rents.

As my father was quite unable to let more than one of these houses at a time, and that for the most part to eccentric and undesirable tenants, he thought it politic to live in one of the two others, and devote the rent he received from the let one, when it was let, to the incessant necessary repairing of all three. He also did some of the repairing himself and, smoking a bull-dog pipe the while, which my mother would not allow him to do in the house, he cultivated vegetables in a sketchy, unpunctual and not always successful manner in the unoccupied gardens. The three houses faced north, and the back of the one we occupied was covered by a grape-vine that yielded, I remember, small green grapes for pies in the spring, and imperfectly ripe black grapes in favourable autumns for the purposes of dessert. The grape-vine played an important part in my life, for my father broke his neck while he was pruning it, when I was thirteen.

My father was what is called a man of ideas, but they were not always good ideas. My grandfather had been a private schoolmaster and one of the founders of the College of Preceptors, and my father had assisted him in his school until increasing competition and diminishing attendance had made it evident that the days of small private schools kept by unqualified persons were numbered. Thereupon my father had roused himself and had qualified as a science teacher under the Science and Art Department, which in these days had charge of the scientific and artistic education of

the mass of the English population, and had thrown himself into science teaching and the earning of government grants therefor with great if transitory zeal and success.

I do not remember anything of my father's earlier and more energetic time. I was the child of my parents' middle years; they married when my father was thirty-five and my mother past forty, and I saw only the last decadent phase of his educational career.

The Science and Art Department has vanished altogether from the world, and people are forgetting it now with the utmost readiness and generosity. Part of its substance and staff and spirit survive, more or less completely digested into the Board of Education.

The world does move on, even in its government. It is wonderful how many of the clumsy and limited governing bodies of my youth and early manhood have given place now to more scientific and efficient machinery. When I was a boy, Bromstead, which is now a borough, was ruled by a strange body called a Local Board—it was the Age of Boards—and I still remember indistinctly my father rejoicing at the breakfast-table over the liberation of London from the corrupt and devastating control of a Metropolitan Board of Works. Then there were also School Boards; I was already practically in politics before the London School Board was absorbed by the spreading tentacles of the London County Council.

It gives a measure of the newness of our modern ideas of the State to remember that the very beginnings of public education lie within my father's lifetime, and that many most intelligent and patriotic people were shocked beyond measure at the State doing anything of the sort. When he was born, totally illiterate people who could neither read a book nor write more than perhaps a clumsy signature, were to be found everywhere in England; and great masses of the population were getting no instruction at all. Only a few schools flourished upon the patronage of exceptional parents; all over the country the old endowed grammar schools were to be found sinking and dwindling; many of them had closed altogether. In the new great centres of population multitudes of children were sweated in the factories, darkly ignorant and wretched and the under-equipped and under-staffed National and British schools, supported by voluntary contributions and sectarian rivalries, made an ineffectual fight against this festering darkness. It was a condition of affairs clamouring for remedies, but there was an immense amount of indifference and prejudice to be overcome before any remedies were possible. Perhaps some day some industrious and lucid historian will disentangle all the muddle of impulses and antagonisms, the commercialism, utilitarianism, obstinate conservatism, humanitarian enthusiasm, out of which our present educational organisation arose. I have long since come to believe it necessary

that all new social institutions should be born in confusion, and that at first they should present chiefly crude and ridiculous aspects. The distrust of government in the Victorian days was far too great, and the general intelligence far too low, to permit the State to go about the new business it was taking up in a businesslike way, to train teachers, build and equip schools, endow pedagogic research, and provide properly written school-books. These things it was felt MUST be provided by individual and local effort, and since it was manifest that it was individual and local effort that were in default, it was reluctantly agreed to stimulate them by money payments. The State set up a machinery of examination both in Science and Art and for the elementary schools; and payments, known technically as grants, were made in accordance with the examination results attained, to such schools as Providence might see fit to send into the world. In this way it was felt the Demand would be established that would, according to the beliefs of that time, inevitably ensure the Supply. An industry of "Grant earning" was created, and this would give education as a necessary by-product.

In the end this belief was found to need qualification, but Grant-earning was still in full activity when I was a small boy. So far as the Science and Art Department and my father are concerned, the task of examination was entrusted to eminent scientific men, for the most part quite unaccustomed to teaching. You see, if they also were teaching similar classes to those they examined, it was feared that injustice might be done. Year after year these eminent persons set questions and employed subordinates to read and mark the increasing thousands of answers that ensued, and having no doubt the national ideal of fairness well developed in their minds, they were careful each year to re-read the preceding papers before composing the current one, in order to see what it was usual to ask. As a result of this, in the course of a few years the recurrence and permutation of questions became almost calculable, and since the practical object of the teaching was to teach people not science, but how to write answers to these questions, the industry of Grant-earning assumed a form easily distinguished from any kind of genuine education whatever.

Other remarkable compromises had also to be made with the spirit of the age. The unfortunate conflict between Religion and Science prevalent at this time was mitigated, if I remember rightly, by making graduates in arts and priests in the established church Science Teachers EX OFFICIO, and leaving local and private enterprise to provide schools, diagrams, books, material, according to the conceptions of efficiency prevalent in the district. Private enterprise made a particularly good thing of the books. A number of competing firms of publishers sprang into existence specialising in Science and Art Department work; they set

themselves to produce text-books that should supply exactly the quantity and quality of knowledge necessary for every stage of each of five and twenty subjects into which desirable science was divided, and copies and models and instructions that should give precisely the method and gestures esteemed as proficiency in art. Every section of each book was written in the idiom found to be most satisfactory to the examiners, and test questions extracted from papers set in former years were appended to every chapter. By means of these last the teacher was able to train his class to the very highest level of grant-earning efficiency, and very naturally he cast all other methods of exposition aside. First he posed his pupils with questions and then dictated model replies.

That was my father's method of instruction. I attended his classes as an elementary grant-earner from the age of ten until his death, and it is so I remember him, sitting on the edge of a table, smothering a yawn occasionally and giving out the infallible formulae to the industriously scribbling class sitting in rows of desks before him. Occasionally he would slide to his feet and go to a blackboard on an easel and draw on that very slowly and deliberately in coloured chalks a diagram for the class to copy in coloured pencils, and sometimes he would display a specimen or arrange an experiment for them to see. The room in the Institute in which he taught was equipped with a certain amount of apparatus prescribed as necessary for subject this and subject that by the Science and Art Department, and this my father would supplement with maps and diagrams and drawings of his own.

But he never really did experiments, except that in the class in systematic botany he sometimes made us tease common flowers to pieces. He did not do experiments if he could possibly help it, because in the first place they used up time and gas for the Bunsen burner and good material in a ruinous fashion, and in the second they were, in his rather careless and sketchy hands, apt to endanger the apparatus of the Institute and even the lives of his students. Then thirdly, real experiments involved washing up. And moreover they always turned out wrong, and sometimes misled the too observant learner very seriously and opened demoralising controversies. Quite early in life I acquired an almost ineradicable sense of the unscientific perversity of Nature and the impassable gulf that is fixed between systematic science and elusive fact. I knew, for example, that in science, whether it be subject XII., Organic Chemistry, or subject XVII., Animal Physiology, when you blow into a glass of lime-water it instantly becomes cloudy, and if you continue to blow it clears again, whereas in truth you may blow into the stuff from the lime-water bottle until you are crimson in the face and painful under the ears, and it never becomes cloudy at all. And I knew, too, that in science if you put potassium chlorate into a retort and heat it over a Bunsen burner,

oxygen is disengaged and may be collected over water, whereas in real life if you do anything of the sort the vessel cracks with a loud report, the potassium chlorate descends sizzling upon the flame, the experimenter says “Oh! Damn!” with astonishing heartiness and distinctness, and a lady student in the back seats gets up and leaves the room.

Science is the organised conquest of Nature, and I can quite understand that ancient libertine refusing to co-operate in her own undoing. And I can quite understand, too, my father's preference for what he called an illustrative experiment, which was simply an arrangement of the apparatus in front of the class with nothing whatever by way of material, and the Bunsen burner clean and cool, and then a slow luminous description of just what you did put in it when you were so ill-advised as to carry the affair beyond illustration, and just exactly what ought anyhow to happen when you did. He had considerable powers of vivid expression, so that in this way he could make us see all he described. The class, freed from any unpleasant nervous tension, could draw this still life without flinching, and if any part was too difficult to draw, then my father would produce a simplified version on the blackboard to be copied instead. And he would also write on the blackboard any exceptionally difficult but grant-earning words, such as “empyreumatic” or “botryoidal.”

Some words in constant use he rarely explained. I remember once sticking up my hand and asking him in the full flow of description, “Please, sir, what is flocculent?”

“The precipitate is.”

“Yes, sir, but what does it mean?”

“Oh! flocculent!” said my father, “flocculent! Why—” he extended his hand and arm and twiddled his fingers for a second in the air. “Like that,” he said.

I thought the explanation sufficient, but he paused for a moment after giving it. “As in a flock bed, you know,” he added and resumed his discourse.

3

My father, I am afraid, carried a natural incompetence in practical affairs to an exceptionally high level. He combined practical incompetence, practical enterprise and a thoroughly sanguine temperament, in a manner that I have never seen paralleled in any human being. He was always trying to do new things in the briskest manner, under the suggestion of books or papers or his own spontaneous imagination, and as he had never been trained to do anything whatever in his life properly, his futilities were extensive and thorough. At one time he nearly gave up his

classes for intensive culture, so enamoured was he of its possibilities; the peculiar pungency of the manure he got, in pursuit of a chemical theory of his own, has scarred my olfactory memories for a lifetime. The intensive culture phase is very clear in my memory; it came near the end of his career and when I was between eleven and twelve. I was mobilised to gather caterpillars on several occasions, and assisted in nocturnal raids upon the slugs by lantern-light that wrecked my preparation work for school next day. My father dug up both lawns, and trenched and manured in spasms of immense vigour alternating with periods of paralysing distaste for the garden. And for weeks he talked about eight hundred pounds an acre at every meal.

A garden, even when it is not exasperated by intensive methods, is a thing as exacting as a baby, its moods have to be watched; it does not wait upon the cultivator's convenience, but has times of its own. Intensive culture greatly increases this disposition to trouble mankind; it makes a garden touchy and hysterical, a drugged and demoralised and over-irritated garden. My father got at cross purposes with our two patches at an early stage. Everything grew wrong from the first to last, and if my father's manures intensified nothing else, they certainly intensified the Primordial Curse. The peas were eaten in the night before they were three inches high, the beans bore nothing but blight, the only apparent result of a spraying of the potatoes was to develop a PENCHANT in the cat for being ill indoors, the cucumber frames were damaged by the catapulting of boys going down the lane at the back, and all your cucumbers were mysteriously embittered. That lane with its occasional passers-by did much to wreck the intensive scheme, because my father always stopped work and went indoors if any one watched him. His special manure was apt to arouse a troublesome spirit of inquiry in hardy natures.

In digging his rows and shaping his patches he neglected the guiding string and trusted to his eye altogether too much, and the consequent obliquity and the various wind-breaks and scare-crows he erected, and particularly an irrigation contrivance he began and never finished by which everything was to be watered at once by means of pieces of gutter from the roof and outhouses of Number 2, and a large and particularly obstinate clump of elder-bushes in the abolished hedge that he had failed to destroy entirely either by axe or by fire, combined to give the gardens under intensive culture a singularly desolate and disorderly appearance. He took steps towards the diversion of our house drain under the influence of the Sewage Utilisation Society; but happily he stopped in time. He hardly completed any of the operations he began; something else became more urgent or simply he tired; a considerable area of the Number 2 territory was never even dug up.

In the end the affair irritated him beyond endurance. Never was a man less horticulturally-minded. The clamour of these vegetables he had launched into the world for his service and assistance, wore out his patience. He would walk into the garden the happiest of men after a day or so of disregard, talking to me of history perhaps or social organisation, or summarising some book he had read. He talked to me of anything that interested him, regardless of my limitations. Then he would begin to note the growth of the weeds. “This won't do,” he would say and pull up a handful.

More weeding would follow and the talk would become fragmentary. His hands would become earthy, his nails black, weeds would snap off in his careless grip, leaving the roots behind. The world would darken. He would look at his fingers with disgusted astonishment. “CURSE these weeds!” he would say from his heart. His discourse was at an end.

I have memories, too, of his sudden unexpected charges into the tranquillity of the house, his hands and clothes intensively enriched. He would come in like a whirlwind. “This damned stuff all over me and the Agricultural Chemistry Class at six! Bah! AAAAAAH!”

My mother would never learn not to attempt to break him of swearing on such occasions. She would remain standing a little stiffly in the scullery refusing to assist him to the adjectival towel he sought.

“If you say such things—”

He would dance with rage and hurl the soap about. “The towel!” he would cry, flicking suds from big fingers in every direction; “the towel! I'll let the blithering class slide if you don't give me the towel! I'll give up everything, I tell you—everything!”...

At last with the failure of the lettuces came the breaking point. I was in the little arbour learning Latin irregular verbs when it happened. I can see him still, his peculiar tenor voice still echoes in my brain, shouting his opinion of intensive culture for all the world to hear, and slashing away at that abominable mockery of a crop with a hoe. We had tied them up with bast only a week or so before, and now half were rotten and half had shot up into tall slender growths. He had the hoe in both hands and slogged. Great wipes he made, and at each stroke he said, “Take that!”

The air was thick with flying fragments of abortive salad. It was a fantastic massacre. It was the French Revolution of that cold tyranny, the vindictive overthrow of the pampered vegetable aristocrats. After he had assuaged his passion upon them, he turned for other prey; he kicked holes in two of our noblest marrows, flicked off the

heads of half a row of artichokes, and shied the hoe with a splendid smash into the cucumber frame. Something of the awe of that moment returns to me as I write of it.

“Well, my boy,” he said, approaching with an expression of beneficent happiness, “I've done with gardening. Let's go for a walk like reasonable beings. I've had enough of this”—his face was convulsed for an instant with bitter resentment—“Pandering to cabbages.”

4

That afternoon's walk sticks in my memory for many reasons. One is that we went further than I had ever been before; far beyond Keston and nearly to Seven-oaks, coming back by train from Dunton Green, and the other is that my father as he went along talked about himself, not so much to me as to himself, and about life and what he had done with it. He monologued so that at times he produced an effect of weird world-forgetfulness. I listened puzzled, and at that time not understanding many things that afterwards became plain to me. It is only in recent years that I have discovered the pathos of that monologue; how friendless my father was and uncompanioned in his thoughts and feelings, and what a hunger he may have felt for the sympathy of the undeveloped youngster who trotted by his side.

“I'm no gardener,” he said, “I'm no anything. Why the devil did I start gardening?

“I suppose man was created to mind a garden... But the Fall let us out of that! What was I created for? God! what was I created for?...

“Slaves to matter! Minding inanimate things! It doesn't suit me, you know. I've got no hands and no patience. I've mucked about with life. Mucked about with life.” He suddenly addressed himself to me, and for an instant I started like an eavesdropper discovered. “Whatever you do, boy, whatever you do, make a Plan. Make a good Plan and stick to it. Find out what life is about—I never have—and set yourself to do whatever you ought to do. I admit it's a puzzle....

“Those damned houses have been the curse of my life. Stucco white elephants! Beastly cracked stucco with stains of green—black and green. Conferva and soot.... Property, they are!... Beware of Things, Dick, beware of Things! Before you know where you are you are waiting on them and minding them. They'll eat your life up. Eat up your hours and your blood and energy! When those houses came to me, I ought to have sold them—or fled the country. I ought to have cleared out. Sarcophagi—eaters of men! Oh! the hours and days of work, the nights of anxiety those vile houses have cost me! The painting! It worked up my arms; it got all over me. I stank of it. It made me ill. It isn't living—it's minding....

“Property's the curse of life. Property! Ugh! Look at this country all cut up into silly little parallelograms, look at all those villas we passed just now and those potato patches and that tarred shanty and the hedge! Somebody's minding every bit of it like a dog tied to a cart's tail. Patching it and bothering about it. Bothering! Yapping at every passer-by. Look at that notice-board! One rotten worried little beast wants to keep us other rotten little beasts off HIS patch,—God knows why! Look at the weeds in it. Look at the mended fence!... There's no property worth having, Dick, but money. That's only good to spend. All these things. Human souls buried under a cartload of blithering rubbish....

“I'm not a fool, Dick. I have qualities, imagination, a sort of go. I ought to have made a better thing of life.

“I'm sure I could have done things. Only the old people pulled my leg. They started me wrong. They never started me at all. I only began to find out what life was like when I was nearly forty.

“If I'd gone to a university; if I'd had any sort of sound training, if I hadn't slipped into the haphazard places that came easiest....

“Nobody warned me. Nobody. It isn't a world we live in, Dick; it's a cascade of accidents; it's a chaos exasperated by policemen! YOU be warned in time, Dick. You stick to a plan. Don't wait for any one to show you the way. Nobody will. There isn't a way till you make one. Get education, get a good education. Fight your way to the top. It's your only chance. I've watched you. You'll do no good at digging and property minding. There isn't a neighbour in Bromstead won't be able to skin you at suchlike games. You and I are the brainy unstable kind, topside or nothing. And if ever those blithering houses come to you—don't have 'em. Give them away! Dynamite 'em—and off! LIVE, Dick! I'll get rid of them for you if I can, Dick, but remember what I say.”...

So it was my father discoursed, if not in those particular words, yet exactly in that manner, as he slouched along the southward road, with resentful eyes becoming less resentful as he talked, and flinging out clumsy illustrative motions at the outskirts of Bromstead as we passed along them. That afternoon he hated Bromstead, from its foot-tiring pebbles up. He had no illusions about Bromstead or himself. I have the clearest impression of him in his garden-stained tweeds with a deer-stalker hat on the back of his head and presently a pipe sometimes between his teeth and sometimes in his gesticulating hand, as he became diverted by his talk from his original exasperation....

This particular afternoon is no doubt mixed up in my memory with many other afternoons; all sorts of things my father said and did at different times have got themselves referred to it; it filled me at the time with a great unprecedented sense of fellowship and it has become the symbol now for all our intercourse together. If I didn't understand the things he said, I did the mood he was in. He gave me two very broad ideas in that talk and the talks I have mingled with it; he gave them to me very clearly and they have remained fundamental in my mind; one a sense of the extraordinary confusion and waste and planlessness of the human life that went on all about us; and the other of a great ideal of order and economy which he called variously Science and Civilisation, and which, though I do not remember that he ever used that word, I suppose many people nowadays would identify with Socialism,—as the Fabians expound it.

He was not very definite about this Science, you must understand, but he seemed always to be waving his hand towards it,—just as his contemporary Tennyson seems always to be doing—he belonged to his age and mostly his talk was destructive of the limited beliefs of his time, he led me to infer rather than actually told me that this Science was coming, a spirit of light and order, to the rescue of a world groaning and travailing in muddle for the want of it....

5

When I think of Bromstead nowadays I find it inseparably bound up with the disorders of my father's gardening, and the odd patchings and paintings that disfigured his houses. It was all of a piece with that.

Let me try and give something of the quality of Bromstead and something of its history. It is the quality and history of a thousand places round and about London, and round and about the other great centres of population in the world. Indeed it is in a measure the quality of the whole of this modern world from which we who have the statesman's passion struggle to evolve, and dream still of evolving order.

First, then, you must think of Bromstead a hundred and fifty years ago, as a narrow irregular little street of thatched houses strung out on the London and Dover Road, a little mellow sample unit of a social order that had a kind of completeness, at its level, of its own. At that time its population numbered a little under two thousand people, mostly engaged in agricultural work or in trades serving agriculture. There was a blacksmith, a saddler, a chemist, a doctor, a barber, a linen-draper (who brewed his own beer); a veterinary surgeon, a hardware shop, and two capacious inns. Round and about it were a number of pleasant gentlemen's seats, whose owners went frequently to London town in their coaches along the very tolerable high-road. The church was

big enough to hold the whole population, were people minded to go to church, and indeed a large proportion did go, and all who married were married in it, and everybody, to begin with, was christened at its font and buried at last in its yew-shaded graveyard. Everybody knew everybody in the place. It was, in fact, a definite place and a real human community in those days. There was a pleasant old market-house in the middle of the town with a weekly market, and an annual fair at which much cheerful merry making and homely intoxication occurred; there was a pack of hounds which hunted within five miles of London Bridge, and the local gentry would occasionally enliven the place with valiant cricket matches for a hundred guineas a side, to the vast excitement of the entire population. It was very much the same sort of place that it had been for three or four centuries. A Bromstead Rip van Winkle from 1550 returning in 1750 would have found most of the old houses still as he had known them, the same trades a little improved and differentiated one from the other, the same roads rather more carefully tended, the Inns not very much altered, the ancient familiar market-house. The occasional wheeled traffic would have struck him as the most remarkable difference, next perhaps to the swaggering painted stone monuments instead of brasses and the protestant severity of the communion-table in the parish church,—both from the material point of view very little things. A Rip van Winkle from 1350, again, would have noticed scarcely greater changes; fewer clergy, more people, and particularly more people of the middling sort; the glass in the windows of many of the houses, the stylish chimneys springing up everywhere would have impressed him, and suchlike details. The place would have had the same boundaries, the same broad essential features, would have been still itself in the way that a man is still himself after he has “filled out” a little and grown a longer beard and changed his clothes.

But after 1750 something got hold of the world, something that was destined to alter the scale of every human affair.

That something was machinery and a vague energetic disposition to improve material things. In another part of England ingenious people were beginning to use coal in smelting iron, and were producing metal in abundance and metal castings in sizes that had hitherto been unattainable. Without warning or preparation, increment involving countless possibilities of further increment was coming to the strength of horses and men. “Power,” all unsuspected, was flowing like a drug into the veins of the social body.

Nobody seems to have perceived this coming of power, and nobody had calculated its probable consequences. Suddenly, almost inadvertently, people found themselves doing things that would have amazed their ancestors. They began to construct

wheeled vehicles much more easily and cheaply than they had ever done before, to make up roads and move things about that had formerly been esteemed too heavy for locomotion, to join woodwork with iron nails instead of wooden pegs, to achieve all sorts of mechanical possibilities, to trade more freely and manufacture on a larger scale, to send goods abroad in a wholesale and systematic way, to bring back commodities from overseas, not simply spices and fine commodities, but goods in bulk. The new influence spread to agriculture, iron appliances replaced wooden, breeding of stock became systematic, paper-making and printing increased and cheapened. Roofs of slate and tile appeared amidst and presently prevailed over the original Bromstead thatch, the huge space of Common to the south was extensively enclosed, and what had been an ill-defined horse-track to Dover, only passable by adventurous coaches in dry weather, became the Dover Road, and was presently the route first of one and then of several daily coaches. The High Street was discovered to be too tortuous for these awakening energies, and a new road cut off its worst contortions. Residential villas appeared occupied by retired tradesmen and widows, who esteemed the place healthy, and by others of a strange new unoccupied class of people who had money invested in joint-stock enterprises. First one and then several boys' boarding-schools came, drawing their pupils from London,—my grandfather's was one of these. London, twelve miles to the north-west, was making itself felt more and more.

But this was only the beginning of the growth period, the first trickle of the coming flood of mechanical power. Away in the north they were casting iron in bigger and bigger forms, working their way to the production of steel on a large scale, applying power in factories. Bromstead had almost doubted in size again long before the railway came; there was hardly any thatch left in the High Street, but instead were houses with handsome brass-knockered front doors and several windows, and shops with shop-fronts all of square glass panes, and the place was lighted publicly now by oil lamps—previously only one flickering lamp outside each of the coaching inns had broken the nocturnal darkness. And there was talk, it long remained talk,—of gas. The gasworks came in 1834, and about that date my father's three houses must have been built convenient for the London Road. They mark nearly the beginning of the real suburban quality; they were let at first to City people still engaged in business.

And then hard on the gasworks had come the railway and cheap coal; there was a wild outbreak of brickfields upon the claylands to the east, and the Great Growth had begun in earnest. The agricultural placidities that had formerly come to the very borders of the High Street were broken up north, west and south, by new roads. This enterprising person and then that began to “run up” houses, irrespective of every

other enterprising person who was doing the same thing. A Local Board came into existence, and with much hesitation and penny-wise economy inaugurated drainage works. Rates became a common topic, a fact of accumulating importance. Several chapels of zinc and iron appeared, and also a white new church in commercial Gothic upon the common, and another of red brick in the residential district out beyond the brickfields towards Chessington.

The population doubled again and doubled again, and became particularly teeming in the prolific “working-class” district about the deep-rutted, muddy, coal-blackened roads between the gasworks, Blodgett's laundries, and the railway goods-yard. Weekly properties, that is to say small houses built by small property owners and let by the week, sprang up also in the Cage Fields, and presently extended right up the London Road. A single national school in an inconvenient situation set itself inadequately to collect subscriptions and teach the swarming, sniffing, grimy offspring of this dingy new population to read. The villages of Beckington, which used to be three miles to the west, and Blamely four miles to the east of Bromstead, were experiencing similar distensions and proliferations, and grew out to meet us. All effect of locality or community had gone from these places long before I was born; hardly any one knew any one; there was no general meeting place any more, the old fairs were just common nuisances haunted by gypsies, van showmen, Cheap Jacks and London roughs, the churches were incapable of a quarter of the population. One or two local papers of shameless veniality reported the proceedings of the local Bench and the local Board, compelled tradesmen who were interested in these affairs to advertise, used the epithet “Bromstedian” as one expressing peculiar virtues, and so maintained in the general mind a weak tradition of some local quality that embraced us all. Then the parish graveyard filled up and became a scandal, and an ambitious area with an air of appetite was walled in by a Bromstead Cemetery Company, and planted with suitably high-minded and sorrowful varieties of conifer. A stonemason took one of the earlier villas with a front garden at the end of the High Street, and displayed a supply of urns on pillars and headstones and crosses in stone, marble, and granite, that would have sufficed to commemorate in elaborate detail the entire population of Bromstead as one found it in 1750.

The cemetery was made when I was a little boy of five or six; I was in the full tide of building and growth from the first; the second railway with its station at Bromstead North and the drainage followed when I was ten or eleven, and all my childish memories are of digging and wheeling, of woods invaded by building, roads gashed open and littered with iron pipes amidst a fearful smell of gas, of men peeped at and seen toiling away deep down in excavations, of hedges broken down and replaced by

planks, of wheelbarrows and builders' sheds, of rivulets overtaken and swallowed up by drain-pipes. Big trees, and especially elms, cleared of undergrowth and left standing amid such things, acquired a peculiar tattered dinginess rather in the quality of needy widow women who have seen happier days.

The Ravensbrook of my earlier memories was a beautiful stream. It came into my world out of a mysterious Beyond, out of a garden, splashing brightly down a weir which had once been the weir of a mill. (Above the weir and inaccessible there were bulrushes growing in splendid clumps, and beyond that, pampas grass, yellow and crimson spikes of hollyhock, and blue suggestions of wonderland.) From the pool at the foot of this initial cascade it flowed in a leisurely fashion beside a footpath,—there were two pretty thatched cottages on the left, and here were ducks, and there were willows on the right,—and so came to where great trees grew on high banks on either hand and bowed closer, and at last met overhead. This part was difficult to reach because of an old fence, but a little boy might glimpse that long cavern of greenery by wading. Either I have actually seen kingfishers there, or my father has described them so accurately to me that he inserted them into my memory. I remember them there anyhow. Most of that overhung part I never penetrated at all, but followed the field path with my mother and met the stream again, where beyond there were flat meadows, Roper's meadows. The Ravensbrook went meandering across the middle of these, now between steep banks, and now with wide shallows at the bends where the cattle waded and drank. Yellow and purple loose-strife and ordinary rushes grew in clumps along the bank, and now and then a willow. On rare occasions of rapture one might see a rat cleaning his whiskers at the water's edge. The deep places were rich with tangled weeds, and in them fishes lurked—to me they were big fishes—water-boatmen and water-beetles traversed the calm surface of these still deeps; in one pool were yellow lilies and water-soldiers, and in the shoaly places hovering fleets of small fry basked in the sunshine—to vanish in a flash at one's shadow. In one place, too, were Rapids, where the stream woke with a start from a dreamless brooding into foaming panic and babbled and hastened. Well do I remember that half-mile of rivulet; all other rivers and cascades have their reference to it for me. And after I was eleven, and before we left Bromstead, all the delight and beauty of it was destroyed.

The volume of its water decreased abruptly—I suppose the new drainage works that linked us up with Beckington, and made me first acquainted with the geological quality of the London clay, had to do with that—until only a weak uncleansing trickle remained. That at first did not strike me as a misfortune. An adventurous small boy might walk dryshod in places hitherto inaccessible. But hard upon that came the pegs, the planks and carts and devastation. Roper's meadows, being no longer in fear

of floods, were now to be slashed out into parallelograms of untidy road, and built upon with rows of working-class cottages. The roads came,—horribly; the houses followed. They seemed to rise in the night. People moved into them as soon as the roofs were on, mostly workmen and their young wives, and already in a year some of these raw houses stood empty again from defaulting tenants, with windows broken and wood-work warping and rotting. The Ravensbrook became a dump for old iron, rusty cans, abandoned boots and the like, and was a river only when unusual rains filled it for a day or so with an inky flood of surface water....

That indeed was my most striking perception in the growth of Bromstead. The Ravensbrook had been important to my imaginative life; that way had always been my first choice in all my walks with my mother, and its rapid swamping by the new urban growth made it indicative of all the other things that had happened just before my time, or were still, at a less dramatic pace, happening. I realised that building was the enemy. I began to understand why in every direction out of Bromstead one walked past scaffold-poles into litter, why fragments of broken brick and cinder mingled in every path, and the significance of the universal notice-boards, either white and new or a year old and torn and battered, promising sites, proffering houses to be sold or let, abusing and intimidating passers-by for fancied trespass, and protecting rights of way.

It is difficult to disentangle now what I understood at this time and what I have since come to understand, but it seems to me that even in those childish days I was acutely aware of an invading and growing disorder. The serene rhythms of the old established agriculture, I see now, were everywhere being replaced by cultivation under notice and snatch crops; hedges ceased to be repaired, and were replaced by cheap iron railings or chunks of corrugated iron; more and more hoardings sprang up, and contributed more and more to the nomad tribes of filthy paper scraps that flew before the wind and overspread the country. The outskirts of Bromstead were a maze of exploitation roads that led nowhere, that ended in tarred fences studded with nails (I don't remember barbed wire in those days; I think the Zeitgeist did not produce that until later), and in trespass boards that used vehement language. Broken glass, tin cans, and ashes and paper abounded. Cheap glass, cheap tin, abundant fuel, and a free untaxed Press had rushed upon a world quite unprepared to dispose of these blessings when the fulness of enjoyment was past.

I suppose one might have persuaded oneself that all this was but the replacement of an ancient tranquillity, or at least an ancient balance, by a new order. Only to my eyes, quickened by my father's intimations, it was manifestly no order at all. It was a multitude of incoordinated fresh starts, each more sweeping and destructive than the

last, and none of them ever really worked out to a ripe and satisfactory completion. Each left a legacy of products, houses, humanity, or what not, in its wake. It was a sort of progress that had bolted; it was change out of hand, and going at an unprecedented pace nowhere in particular.

No, the Victorian epoch was not the dawn of a new era; it was a hasty, trial experiment, a gigantic experiment of the most slovenly and wasteful kind. I suppose it was necessary; I suppose all things are necessary. I suppose that before men will discipline themselves to learn and plan, they must first see in a hundred convincing forms the folly and muddle that come from headlong, aimless and haphazard methods. The nineteenth century was an age of demonstrations, some of them very impressive demonstrations, of the powers that have come to mankind, but of permanent achievement, what will our descendants cherish? It is hard to estimate what grains of precious metal may not be found in a mud torrent of human production on so large a scale, but will any one, a hundred years from now, consent to live in the houses the Victorians built, travel by their roads or railways, value the furnishings they made to live among or esteem, except for curious or historical reasons, their prevalent art and the clipped and limited literature that satisfied their souls?

That age which bore me was indeed a world full of restricted and undisciplined people, overtaken by power, by possessions and great new freedoms, and unable to make any civilised use of them whatever; stricken now by this idea and now by that, tempted first by one possession and then another to ill-considered attempts; it was my father's exploitation of his villa gardens on the wholesale level. The whole of Bromstead as I remember it, and as I saw it last—it is a year ago now—is a dull useless boiling-up of human activities, an immense clustering of futilities. It is as unfinished as ever; the builders' roads still run out and end in mid-field in their old fashion; the various enterprises jumble in the same hopeless contradiction, if anything intensified. Pretentious villas jostle slums, and public-house and tin tabernacle glower at one another across the cat-haunted lot that intervenes. Roper's meadows are now quite frankly a slum; back doors and sculleries gape towards the railway, their yards are hung with tattered washing unashamed; and there seem to be more boards by the railway every time I pass, advertising pills and pickles, tonics and condiments, and suchlike solicitudes of a people with no natural health nor appetite left in them....

Well, we have to do better. Failure is not failure nor waste wasted if it sweeps away illusion and lights the road to a plan.

Chaotic indiscipline, ill-adjusted effort, spasmodic aims, these give the quality of all my Bromstead memories. The crowning one of them all rises to desolating tragedy. I remember now the wan spring sunshine of that Sunday morning, the stiff feeling of best clothes and aggressive cleanliness and formality, when I and my mother returned from church to find my father dead. He had been pruning the grape vine. He had never had a ladder long enough to reach the sill of the third-floor windows—at house-painting times he had borrowed one from the plumber who mixed his paint—and he had in his own happy-go-lucky way contrived a combination of the garden fruit ladder with a battered kitchen table that served all sorts of odd purposes in an outhouse. He had stayed up this arrangement by means of the garden roller, and the roller had at the critical moment—rolled. He was lying close by the garden door with his head queerly bent back against a broken and twisted rainwater pipe, an expression of pacific contentment on his face, a bamboo curtain rod with a tableknife tied to end of it, still gripped in his hand. We had been rapping for some time at the front door unable to make him hear, and then we came round by the door in the side trellis into the garden and so discovered him.

“Arthur!” I remember my mother crying with the strangest break in her voice, “What are you doing there? Arthur! And—SUNDAY!”

I was coming behind her, musing remotely, when the quality of her voice roused me. She stood as if she could not go near him. He had always puzzled her so, he and his ways, and this seemed only another enigma. Then the truth dawned on her, she shrieked as if afraid of him, ran a dozen steps back towards the trellis door and stopped and clasped her ineffectual gloved hands, leaving me staring blankly, too astonished for feeling, at the carelessly flung limbs.

The same idea came to me also. I ran to her. “Mother!” I cried, pale to the depths of my spirit, “IS HE DEAD?”

I had been thinking two minutes before of the cold fruit pie that glorified our Sunday dinner-table, and how I might perhaps get into the tree at the end of the garden to read in the afternoon. Now an immense fact had come down like a curtain and blotted out all my childish world. My father was lying dead before my eyes.... I perceived that my mother was helpless and that things must be done.

“Mother!” I said, “we must get Doctor Beaseley,—and carry him indoors.”

CHAPTER THE THIRD ~~ SCHOLASTIC

1

My formal education began in a small preparatory school in Bromstead. I went there as a day boy. The charge for my instruction was mainly set off by the periodic visits of my father with a large bag of battered fossils to lecture to us upon geology. I was one of those fortunate youngsters who take readily to school work, I had a good memory, versatile interests and a considerable appetite for commendation, and when I was barely twelve I got a scholarship at the City Merchants School and was entrusted with a scholar's railway season ticket to Victoria. After my father's death a large and very animated and solidly built uncle in tweeds from Staffordshire, Uncle Minter, my mother's sister's husband, with a remarkable accent and remarkable vowel sounds, who had plunged into the Bromstead home once or twice for the night but who was otherwise unknown to me, came on the scene, sold off the three gaunt houses with the utmost gusto, invested the proceeds and my father's life insurance money, and got us into a small villa at Penge within sight of that immense facade of glass and iron, the Crystal Palace. Then he retired in a mood of good-natured contempt to his native habitat again. We stayed at Penge until my mother's death.

School became a large part of the world to me, absorbing my time and interest, and I never acquired that detailed and intimate knowledge of Penge and the hilly villadom round about, that I have of the town and outskirts of Bromstead.

It was a district of very much the same character, but it was more completely urbanised and nearer to the centre of things; there were the same unfinished roads, the same occasional disconcerted hedges and trees, the same butcher's horse grazing under a builder's notice-board, the same incidental lapses into slum. The Crystal Palace grounds cut off a large part of my walking radius to the west with impassable fences and forbiddingly expensive turnstiles, but it added to the ordinary spectacle of meteorology a great variety of gratuitous fireworks which banged and flared away of a night after supper and drew me abroad to see them better. Such walks as I took, to Croydon, Wembledon, West Wickham and Greenwich, impressed upon me the interminable extent of London's residential suburbs; mile after mile one went, between houses, villas, rows of cottages, streets of shops, under railway arches, over railway bridges. I have forgotten the detailed local characteristics—if there were any—of much of that region altogether. I was only there two years, and half my perambulations occurred at dusk or after dark. But with Penge I associate my first realisations of the wonder and beauty of twilight and night, the effect of dark walls reflecting lamplight, and the mystery of blue haze-veiled hillsides of houses, the glare

of shops by night, the glowing steam and streaming sparks of railway trains and railway signals lit up in the darkness. My first rambles in the evening occurred at Penge—I was becoming a big and independent-spirited boy—and I began my experience of smoking during these twilight prowls with the threepenny packets of American cigarettes then just appearing in the world.

My life centred upon the City Merchants School. Usually I caught the eight-eighteen for Victoria, I had a midday meal and tea; four nights a week I stayed for preparation, and often I was not back home again until within an hour of my bedtime. I spent my half holidays at school in order to play cricket and football. This, and a pretty voracious appetite for miscellaneous reading which was fostered by the Penge Middleton Library, did not leave me much leisure for local topography. On Sundays also I sang in the choir at St. Martin's Church, and my mother did not like me to walk out alone on the Sabbath afternoon, she herself slumbered, so that I wrote or read at home. I must confess I was at home as little as I could contrive.

Home, after my father's death, had become a very quiet and uneventful place indeed. My mother had either an unimaginative temperament or her mind was greatly occupied with private religious solicitudes, and I remember her talking to me but little, and that usually upon topics I was anxious to evade. I had developed my own view about low-Church theology long before my father's death, and my meditation upon that event had finished my secret estrangement from my mother's faith. My reason would not permit even a remote chance of his being in hell, he was so manifestly not evil, and this religion would not permit him a remote chance of being out yet. When I was a little boy my mother had taught me to read and write and pray and had done many things for me, indeed she persisted in washing me and even in making my clothes until I rebelled against these things as indignities. But our minds parted very soon. She never began to understand the mental processes of my play, she never interested herself in my school life and work, she could not understand things I said; and she came, I think, quite insensibly to regard me with something of the same hopeless perplexity she had felt towards my father.

Him she must have wedded under considerable delusions. I do not think he deceived her, indeed, nor do I suspect him of mercenariness in their union; but no doubt he played up to her requirements in the half ingenuous way that was and still is the quality of most wooing, and presented himself as a very brisk and orthodox young man. I wonder why nearly all love-making has to be fraudulent. Afterwards he must have disappointed her cruelly by letting one aspect after another of his careless, sceptical, experimental temperament appear. Her mind was fixed and definite, she embodied all that confidence in church and decorum and the assurances of the pulpit

which was characteristic of the large mass of the English people—for after all, the rather low-Church section WAS the largest single mass—in early Victorian times. She had dreams, I suspect, of going to church with him side by side; she in a little poke bonnet and a large flounced crinoline, all mauve and magenta and starched under a little lace-trimmed parasol, and he in a tall silk hat and peg-top trousers and a roll-collar coat, and looking rather like the Prince Consort,—white angels almost visibly raining benedictions on their amiable progress. Perhaps she dreamt gently of much-belaced babies and an interestingly pious (but not too dissenting or fanatical) little girl or boy or so, also angel-haunted. And I think, too, she must have seen herself ruling a seemly "home of taste," with a vivarium in the conservatory that opened out of the drawing-room, or again, making preserves in the kitchen. My father's science-teaching, his diagrams of disembowelled humanity, his pictures of prehistoric beasts that contradicted the Flood, his disposition towards soft shirts and loose tweed suits, his inability to use a clothes brush, his spasmodic reading fits and his bulldog pipes, must have jarred cruelly with her rather unintelligent anticipations. His wild moments of violent temper when he would swear and smash things, absurd almost lovable storms that passed like summer thunder, must have been starkly dreadful to her. She was constitutionally inadaptable, and certainly made no attempt to understand or tolerate these outbreaks. She tried them by her standards, and by her standards they were wrong. Her standards hid him from her. The blazing things he said rankled in her mind unforgettably.

As I remember them together they chafed constantly. Her attitude to nearly all his moods and all his enterprises was a sceptical disapproval. She treated him as something that belonged to me and not to her. "YOUR father," she used to call him, as though I had got him for her.

She had married late and she had, I think, become mentally self-subsisting before her marriage. Even in those Herne Hill days I used to wonder what was going on in her mind, and I find that old speculative curiosity return as I write this. She took a considerable interest in the housework that our generally servantless condition put upon her—she used to have a charwoman in two or three times a week—but she did not do it with any great skill. She covered most of our furniture with flouncey ill-fitting covers, and she cooked plainly and without very much judgment. The Penge house, as it contained nearly all our Bromstead things, was crowded with furniture, and is chiefly associated in my mind with the smell of turpentine, a condiment she used very freely upon the veneered mahogany pieces. My mother had an equal dread of "blacks" by day and the "night air," so that our brightly clean windows were rarely open.

She took a morning paper, and she would open it and glance at the headlines, but she did not read it until the afternoon and then, I think, she was interested only in the more violent crimes, and in railway and mine disasters and in the minutest domesticities of the Royal Family. Most of the books at home were my father's, and I do not think she opened any of them. She had one or two volumes that dated from her own youth, and she tried in vain to interest me in them; there was Miss Strickland's QUEENS OF ENGLAND, a book I remember with particular animosity, and QUEECHY and the WIDE WIDE WORLD. She made these books of hers into a class apart by sewing outer covers upon them of calico and figured muslin. To me in these habiliments they seemed not so much books as confederated old ladies.

My mother was also very punctual with her religious duties, and rejoiced to watch me in the choir.

On winter evenings she occupied an armchair on the other side of the table at which I sat, head on hand reading, and she would be darning stockings or socks or the like. We achieved an effect of rather stuffy comfortableness that was soporific, and in a passive way I think she found these among her happy times. On such occasions she was wont to put her work down on her knees and fall into a sort of thoughtless musing that would last for long intervals and rouse my curiosity. For like most young people I could not imagine mental states without definite forms.

She carried on a correspondence with a number of cousins and friends, writing letters in a slanting Italian hand and dealing mainly with births, marriages and deaths, business starts (in the vaguest terms) and the distresses of bankruptcy.

And yet, you know, she did have a curious intimate life of her own that I suspected nothing of at the time, that only now becomes credible to me. She kept a diary that is still in my possession, a diary of fragmentary entries in a miscellaneous collection of pocket books. She put down the texts of the sermons she heard, and queer stiff little comments on casual visitors,—“Miss G. and much noisy shrieking talk about games and such frivolities and CROQUAY. A. delighted and VERY ATTENTIVE.” Such little human entries abound. She had an odd way of never writing a name, only an initial; my father is always “A.,” and I am always “D.” It is manifest she followed the domestic events in the life of the Princess of Wales, who is now Queen Mother, with peculiar interest and sympathy. “Pray G. all may be well,” she writes in one such crisis.

But there are things about myself that I still find too poignant to tell easily, certain painful and clumsy circumstances of my birth in very great detail, the distresses of my infantile ailments. Then later I find such things as this: “Heard D. s——.” The “s” is evidently “swear “—“G. bless and keep my boy from evil.” And again, with the thin

handwriting shaken by distress: “D. would not go to church, and hardened his heart and said wicked infidel things, much disrespect of the clergy. The anthem is tiresome!!! That men should set up to be wiser than their maker!!!” Then trebly underlined: “I FEAR HIS FATHER'S TEACHING.” Dreadful little tangle of misapprehensions and false judgments! More comforting for me to read, “D. very kind and good. He grows more thoughtful every day.” I suspect myself of forgotten hypocrisies.

At just one point my mother's papers seem to dip deeper. I think the death of my father must have stirred her for the first time for many years to think for herself. Even she could not go on living in any peace at all, believing that he had indeed been flung headlong into hell. Of this gnawing solicitude she never spoke to me, never, and for her diary also she could find no phrases. But on a loose half-sheet of notepaper between its pages I find this passage that follows, written very carefully. I do not know whose lines they are nor how she came upon them. They run:—

“And if there be no meeting past the grave;

If all is darkness, silence, yet 'tis rest.

Be not afraid ye waiting hearts that weep,

For God still giveth His beloved sleep,

And if an endless sleep He wills, so best.”

That scrap of verse amazed me when I read it. I could even wonder if my mother really grasped the import of what she had copied out. It affected me as if a stone-deaf person had suddenly turned and joined in a whispered conversation. It set me thinking how far a mind in its general effect quite hopelessly limited, might range. After that I went through all her diaries, trying to find something more than a conventional term of tenderness for my father. But I found nothing. And yet somehow there grew upon me the realisation that there had been love.... Her love for me, on the other hand, was abundantly expressed.

I knew nothing of that secret life of feeling at the time; such expression as it found was all beyond my schoolboy range. I did not know when I pleased her and I did not know when I distressed her. Chiefly I was aware of my mother as rather dull company, as a mind thorny with irrational conclusions and incapable of explication, as one believing quite wilfully and irritatingly in impossible things. So I suppose it had to be; life was coming to me in new forms and with new requirements. It was essential to our

situation that we should fail to understand. After this space of years I have come to realisations and attitudes that dissolve my estrangement from her, I can pierce these barriers, I can see her and feel her as a loving and feeling and desiring and muddle-headed person. There are times when I would have her alive again, if only that I might be kind to her for a little while and give her some return for the narrow intense affection, the tender desires, she evidently lavished so abundantly on me. But then again I ask how I could make that return? And I realise the futility of such dreaming. Her demand was rigid, and to meet it I should need to act and lie.

So she whose blood fed me, whose body made me, lies in my memory as I saw her last, fixed, still, infinitely intimate, infinitely remote....

My own case with my mother, however, does not awaken the same regret I feel when I think of how she misjudged and irked my father, and turned his weaknesses into thorns for her own tormenting. I wish I could look back without that little twinge to two people who were both in their different quality so good. But goodness that is narrow is a pedestrian and ineffectual goodness. Her attitude to my father seems to me one of the essentially tragic things that have come to me personally, one of those things that nothing can transfigure, that REMAIN sorrowful, that I cannot soothe with any explanation, for as I remember him he was indeed the most lovable of weak spasmodic men. But my mother had been trained in a hard and narrow system that made evil out of many things not in the least evil, and inculcated neither kindliness nor charity. All their estrangement followed from that.

These cramping cults do indeed take an enormous toll of human love and happiness, and not only that but what we Machiavellians must needs consider, they make frightful breaches in human solidarity. I suppose I am a deeply religious man, as men of my quality go, but I hate more and more, as I grow older, the shadow of intolerance cast by religious organisations. All my life has been darkened by irrational intolerance, by arbitrary irrational prohibitions and exclusions. Mahometanism with its fierce proselytism, has, I suppose, the blackest record of uncharitableness, but most of the Christian sects are tainted, tainted to a degree beyond any of the anterior paganisms, with this same hateful quality. It is their exclusive claim that sends them wrong, the vain ambition that inspires them all to teach a uniform one-sided God and be the one and only gateway to salvation. Deprecation of all outside the household of faith, an organised undervaluation of heretical goodness and lovableness, follows, necessarily. Every petty difference is exaggerated to the quality of a saving grace or a damning defect. Elaborate precautions are taken to shield the believer's mind against broad or amiable suggestions; the faithful are deterred by dark allusions, by sinister warnings, from books, from theatres, from worldly conversation, from all the kindly instruments

that mingle human sympathy. For only by isolating its flock can the organisation survive.

Every month there came to my mother a little magazine called, if I remember rightly, the HOME CHURCHMAN, with the combined authority of print and clerical commendation. It was the most evil thing that ever came into the house, a very devil, a thin little pamphlet with one woodcut illustration on the front page of each number; now the uninviting visage of some exponent of the real and only doctrine and attitudes, now some coral strand in act of welcoming the missionaries of God's mysterious preferences, now a new church in the Victorian Gothic. The vile rag it was! A score of vices that shun the policeman have nothing of its subtle wickedness. It was an outrage upon the natural kindliness of men. The contents were all admirably adjusted to keep a spirit in prison. Their force of sustained suggestion was tremendous. There would be dreadful intimations of the swift retribution that fell upon individuals for Sabbath-breaking, and upon nations for weakening towards Ritualism, or treating Roman Catholics as tolerable human beings; there would be great rejoicings over the conversion of alleged Jews, and terrible descriptions of the death-beds of prominent infidels with boldly invented last words,—the most unscrupulous lying; there would be the appallingly edifying careers of “early piety” lusciously described, or stories of condemned criminals who traced their final ruin unerringly to early laxities of the kind that leads people to give up subscribing to the HOME CHURCHMAN.

Every month that evil spirit brought about a slump in our mutual love. My mother used to read the thing and become depressed and anxious for my spiritual welfare, used to be stirred to unintelligent pestering....

2

A few years ago I met the editor of this same HOME CHURCHMAN. It was at one of the weekly dinners of that Fleet Street dining club, the Blackfriars.

I heard the paper's name with a queer little shock and surveyed the man with interest. No doubt he was only a successor of the purveyor of discords who darkened my boyhood. It was amazing to find an influence so terrible embodied in a creature so palpably petty. He was seated some way down a table at right angles to the one at which I sat, a man of mean appearance with a greyish complexion, thin, with a square nose, a heavy wiry moustache and a big Adam's apple sticking out between the wings of his collar. He ate with considerable appetite and unconcealed relish, and as his jaw was underhung, he chummed and made the moustache wave like reeds in the swell of a steamer. It gave him a conscientious look. After dinner he a little forced himself

upon me. At that time, though the shadow of my scandal was already upon me, I still seemed to be shaping for great successes, and he was glad to be in conversation with me and anxious to intimate political sympathy and support. I tried to make him talk of the HOME CHURCHMAN and the kindred publications he ran, but he was manifestly ashamed of his job so far as I was concerned.

“One wants,” he said, pitching himself as he supposed in my key, “to put constructive ideas into our readers, but they are narrow, you know, very narrow. Very.” He made his moustache and lips express judicious regret. “One has to consider them carefully, one has to respect their attitudes. One dare not go too far with them. One has to feel one's way.”

He chummed and the moustache bristled.

A hireling, beyond question, catering for a demand. I gathered there was a home in Tufnell Park, and three boys to be fed and clothed and educated....

I had the curiosity to buy a copy of his magazine afterwards, and it seemed much the same sort of thing that had worried my mother in my boyhood. There was the usual Christian hero, this time with mutton-chop whiskers and a long bare upper lip. The Jesuits, it seemed, were still hard at it, and Heaven frightfully upset about the Sunday opening of museums and the falling birth-rate, and as touchy and vindictive as ever. There were two vigorous paragraphs upon the utter damnableness of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, a contagious damnableness I gathered, one wasn't safe within a mile of Holborn Viaduct, and a foul-mouthed attack on poor little Wilkins the novelist—who was being baited by the moralists at that time for making one of his big women characters, not being in holy wedlock, desire a baby and say so....

The broadening of human thought is a slow and complex process. We do go on, we do get on. But when one thinks that people are living and dying now, quarrelling and sulking, misled and misunderstanding, vaguely fearful, condemning and thwarting one another in the close darknesses of these narrow cults—Oh, God! one wants a gale out of Heaven, one wants a great wind from the sea!

3

While I lived at Penge two little things happened to me, trivial in themselves and yet in their quality profoundly significant. They had this in common, that they pierced the texture of the life I was quietly taking for granted and let me see through it into realities—realities I had indeed known about before but never realised. Each of these experiences left me with a sense of shock, with all the values in my life perplexingly altered, attempting readjustment. One of these disturbing and illuminating events

was that I was robbed of a new pocket-knife and the other that I fell in love. It was altogether surprising to me to be robbed. You see, as an only child I had always been fairly well looked after and protected, and the result was an amazing confidence in the practical goodness of the people one met in the world. I knew there were robbers in the world, just as I knew there were tigers; that I was ever likely to meet robber or tiger face to face seemed equally impossible.

The knife as I remember it was a particularly jolly one with all sorts of instruments in it, tweezers and a thing for getting a stone out of the hoof of a horse, and a corkscrew; it had cost me a carefully accumulated half-crown, and amounted indeed to a new experience in knives. I had had it for two or three days, and then one afternoon I dropped it through a hole in my pocket on a footpath crossing a field between Penge and Anerley. I heard it fall in the way one does without at the time appreciating what had happened, then, later, before I got home, when my hand wandered into my pocket to embrace the still dear new possession I found it gone, and instantly that memory of something hitting the ground sprang up into consciousness. I went back and commenced a search. Almost immediately I was accosted by the leader of a little gang of four or five extremely dirty and ragged boys of assorted sizes and slouching carriage who were coming from the Anerley direction.

“Lost anythink, Matey?” said he.

I explained.

“'E's dropped 'is knife,” said my interlocutor, and joined in the search.

“What sort of 'andle was it, Matey?” said a small white-faced sniffing boy in a big bowler hat.

I supplied the information. His sharp little face scrutinised the ground about us.

“GOT it,” he said, and pounced.

“Give it 'ere,” said the big boy hoarsely, and secured it.

I walked towards him serenely confident that he would hand it over to me, and that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

“No bloomin' fear!” he said, regarding me obliquely. “Oo said it was your knife?”

Remarkable doubts assailed me. “Of course it's my knife,” I said. The other boys gathered round me.

“This ain't your knife,” said the big boy, and spat casually.

“I dropped it just now.”

“Findin's keepin's, I believe,” said the big boy.

“Nonsense,” I said. “Give me my knife.”

“'Ow many blades it got?”

“Three.”

“And what sort of 'andle?”

“Bone.”

“Got a corkscrew like?”

“Yes.”

“Ah! This ain't your knife no'ow. See?”

He made no offer to show it to me. My breath went.

“Look here!” I said. “I saw that kid pick it up. It IS my knife.”

“Rot!” said the big boy, and slowly, deliberately put my knife into his trouser pocket.

I braced my soul for battle. All civilisation was behind me, but I doubt if it kept the colour in my face. I buttoned my jacket and clenched my fists and advanced on my antagonist—he had, I suppose, the advantage of two years of age and three inches of height. “Hand over that knife,” I said.

Then one of the smallest of the band assailed me with extraordinary vigour and swiftness from behind, had an arm round my neck and a knee in my back before I had the slightest intimation of attack, and so got me down. “I got 'im, Bill,” squeaked this amazing little ruffian. My nose was flattened by a dirty hand, and as I struck out and hit something like sacking, some one kicked my elbow. Two or three seemed to be at me at the same time. Then I rolled over and sat up to discover them all making off, a ragged flight, footballing my cap, my City Merchants' cap, amongst them. I leapt to my feet in a passion of indignation and pursued them.

But I did not overtake them. We are beings of mixed composition, and I doubt if mine was a single-minded pursuit. I knew that honour required me to pursue, and I had a vivid impression of having just been down in the dust with a very wiry and active and dirty little antagonist of disagreeable odour and incredible and incalculable unscrupulousness, kneeling on me and gripping my arm and neck. I wanted of course to be even with him, but also I doubted if catching him would necessarily involve that.

They kicked my cap into the ditch at the end of the field, and made off compactly along a cinder lane while I turned aside to recover my dishonoured headdress. As I knocked the dust out of that and out of my jacket, and brushed my knees and readjusted my very crumpled collar, I tried to focus this startling occurrence in my mind.

I had vague ideas of going to a policeman or of complaining at a police station, but some boyish instinct against informing prevented that. No doubt I entertained ideas of vindictive pursuit and murderous reprisals. And I was acutely enraged whenever I thought of my knife. The thing indeed rankled in my mind for weeks and weeks, and altered all the flavour of my world for me. It was the first time I glimpsed the simple brute violence that lurks and peeps beneath our civilisation. A certain kindly complacency of attitude towards the palpably lower classes was qualified for ever.

4

But the other experience was still more cardinal. It was the first clear intimation of a new motif in life, the sex motif, that was to rise and increase and accumulate power and enrichment and interweave with and at last dominate all my life.

It was when I was nearly fifteen this happened. It is inseparably connected in my mind with the dusk of warm September evenings. I never met the girl I loved by daylight, and I have forgotten her name. It was some insignificant name.

Yet the peculiar quality of the adventure keeps it shining darkly like some deep coloured gem in the common setting of my memories. It came as something new and strange, something that did not join on to anything else in my life or connect with any of my thoughts or beliefs or habits; it was a wonder, a mystery, a discovery about myself, a discovery about the whole world. Only in after years did sexual feeling lose that isolation and spread itself out to illuminate and pervade and at last possess the whole broad vision of life.

It was in that phase of an urban youth's development, the phase of the cheap cigarette, that this thing happened. One evening I came by chance on a number of young people promenading by the light of a row of shops towards Beckington, and, with all the glory of a glowing cigarette between my lips, I joined their strolling number. These twilight parades of young people, youngsters chiefly of the lower middle-class, are one of the odd social developments of the great suburban growths—unkindly critics, blind to the inner meanings of things, call them, I believe, Monkeys' Parades—the shop apprentices, the young work girls, the boy clerks and so forth, stirred by mysterious intimations, spend their first-earned money upon collars and ties, chiffon

hats, smart lace collars, walking-sticks, sunshades or cigarettes, and come valiantly into the vague transfiguring mingling of gaslight and evening, to walk up and down, to eye meaningly, even to accost and make friends. It is a queer instinctive revolt from the narrow limited friendless homes in which so many find themselves, a going out towards something, romance if you will, beauty, that has suddenly become a need—a need that hitherto has lain dormant and unsuspected. They promenade.

Vulgar!—it is as vulgar as the spirit that calls the moth abroad in the evening and lights the body of the glow-worm in the night. I made my way through the throng, a little contemptuously as became a public schoolboy, my hands in my pockets—none of your cheap canes for me!—and very careful of the lie of my cigarette upon my lips. And two girls passed me, one a little taller than the other, with dim warm-tinted faces under clouds of dark hair and with dark eyes like pools reflecting stars.

I half turned, and the shorter one glanced back at me over her shoulder—I could draw you now the pose of her cheek and neck and shoulder—and instantly I was as passionately in love with the girl as I have ever been before or since, as any man ever was with any woman. I turned about and followed them, I flung away my cigarette ostentatiously and lifted my school cap and spoke to them.

The girl answered shyly with her dark eyes on my face. What I said and what she said I cannot remember, but I have little doubt it was something absolutely vapid. It really did not matter; the thing was we had met. I felt as I think a new-hatched moth must feel when suddenly its urgent headlong searching brings it in tremulous amazement upon its mate.

We met, covered from each other, with all the nets of civilisation keeping us apart. We walked side by side.

It led to scarcely more than that. I think we met four or five times altogether, and always with her nearly silent elder sister on the other side of her. We walked on the last two occasions arm in arm, furtively caressing each other's hands, we went away from the glare of the shops into the quiet roads of villadom, and there we whispered instead of talking and looked closely into one another's warm and shaded face. “Dear,” I whispered very daringly, and she answered, “Dear!” We had a vague sense that we wanted more of that quality of intimacy and more. We wanted each other as one wants beautiful music again or to breathe again the scent of flowers.

And that is all there was between us. The events are nothing, the thing that matters is the way in which this experience stabbed through the common stuff of life and left it pierced, with a light, with a huge new interest shining through the rent.

When I think of it I can recall even now the warm mystery of her face, her lips a little apart, lips that I never kissed, her soft shadowed throat, and I feel again the sensuous stir of her proximity....

Those two girls never told me their surname nor let me approach their house. They made me leave them at the corner of a road of small houses near Penge Station. And quite abruptly, without any intimation, they vanished and came to the meeting place no more, they vanished as a moth goes out of a window into the night, and left me possessed of an intolerable want....

The affair pervaded my existence for many weeks. I could not do my work and I could not rest at home. Night after night I promenaded up and down that Monkeys' Parade full of an unappeasable desire, with a thwarted sense of something just begun that ought to have gone on. I went backwards and forwards on the way to the vanishing place, and at last explored the forbidden road that had swallowed them up. But I never saw her again, except that later she came to me, my symbol of womanhood, in dreams. How my blood was stirred! I lay awake of nights whispering in the darkness for her. I prayed for her.

Indeed that girl, who probably forgot the last vestiges of me when her first real kiss came to her, ruled and haunted me, gave a Queen to my imagination and a texture to all my desires until I became a man.

I generalised her at last. I suddenly discovered that poetry was about her and that she was the key to all that had hitherto seemed nonsense about love. I took to reading novels, and if the heroine could not possibly be like her, dusky and warm and starlike, I put the book aside....

I hesitate and add here one other confession. I want to tell this thing because it seems to me we are altogether too restrained and secretive about such matters. The cardinal thing in life sneaks in to us darkly and shamefully like a thief in the night.

One day during my Cambridge days—it must have been in my first year before I knew Hatherleigh—I saw in a print-shop window near the Strand an engraving of a girl that reminded me sharply of Penge and its dusky encounter. It was just a half length of a bare-shouldered, bare-breasted Oriental with arms akimbo, smiling faintly. I looked at it, went my way, then turned back and bought it. I felt I must have it. The odd thing is that I was more than a little shamefaced about it. I did not have it framed and hung in my room open to the criticism of my friends, but I kept it in the drawer of my writing-table. And I kept that drawer locked for a year. It speedily merged with and became identified with the dark girl of Penge. That engraving became in a way my mistress.

Often when I had sported my oak and was supposed to be reading, I was sitting with it before me.

Obeying some instinct I kept the thing very secret indeed. For a time nobody suspected what was locked in my drawer nor what was locked in me. I seemed as sexless as my world required.

5

These things stabbed through my life, intimations of things above and below and before me. They had an air of being no more than incidents, interruptions.

The broad substance of my existence at this time was the City Merchants School. Home was a place where I slept and read, and the mooning explorations of the south-eastern postal district which occupied the restless evenings and spare days of my vacations mere interstices, giving glimpses of enigmatical lights and distant spaces between the woven threads of a school-boy's career. School life began for me every morning at Herne Hill, for there I was joined by three or four other boys and the rest of the way we went together. Most of the streets and roads we traversed in our morning's walk from Victoria are still intact, the storms of rebuilding that have submerged so much of my boyhood's London have passed and left them, and I have revived the impression of them again and again in recent years as I have clattered dinnerward in a hansom or hummed along in a motor cab to some engagement. The main gate still looks out with the same expression of ancient well-proportioned kindliness upon St. Margaret's Close. There are imposing new science laboratories in Chambers Street indeed, but the old playing fields are unaltered except for the big electric trams that go droning and spitting blue flashes along the western boundary. I know Ratten, the new Head, very well, but I have not been inside the school to see if it has changed at all since I went up to Cambridge.

I took all they put before us very readily as a boy, for I had a mind of vigorous appetite, but since I have grown mentally to man's estate and developed a more and more comprehensive view of our national process and our national needs, I am more and more struck by the oddity of the educational methods pursued, their aimless disconnectedness from the constructive forces in the community. I suppose if we are to view the public school as anything more than an institution that has just chanced to happen, we must treat it as having a definite function towards the general scheme of the nation, as being in a sense designed to take the crude young male of the more or less responsible class, to correct his harsh egotisms, broaden his outlook, give him a grasp of the contemporary developments he will presently be called upon to influence and control, and send him on to the university to be made a leading and ruling social

man. It is easy enough to carp at schoolmasters and set up for an Educational Reformer, I know, but still it is impossible not to feel how infinitely more effectually—given certain impossibilities perhaps—the job might be done.

My memory of school has indeed no hint whatever of that quality of elucidation it seems reasonable to demand from it. Here all about me was London, a vast inexplicable being, a vortex of gigantic forces, that filled and overwhelmed me with impressions, that stirred my imagination to a perpetual vague enquiry; and my school not only offered no key to it, but had practically no comment to make upon it at all. We were within three miles of Westminster and Charing Cross, the government offices of a fifth of mankind were all within an hour's stroll, great economic changes were going on under our eyes, now the hoardings flamed with election placards, now the Salvation Army and now the unemployed came trailing in procession through the winter-grey streets, now the newspaper placards outside news-shops told of battles in strange places, now of amazing discoveries, now of sinister crimes, abject squalor and poverty, imperial splendour and luxury, Buckingham Palace, Rotten Row, Mayfair, the slums of Pimlico, garbage-littered streets of bawling costermongers, the inky silver of the barge-laden Thames—such was the background of our days. We went across St. Margaret's Close and through the school gate into a quiet puerile world apart from all these things. We joined in the earnest acquirement of all that was necessary for Greek epigrams and Latin verse, and for the rest played games. We dipped down into something clear and elegantly proportioned and time-worn and for all its high resolve of stalwart virility a little feeble, like our blackened and decayed portals by Inigo Jones.

Within, we were taught as the chief subjects of instruction, Latin and Greek. We were taught very badly because the men who taught us did not habitually use either of these languages, nobody uses them any more now except perhaps for the Latin of a few Levantine monasteries. At the utmost our men read them. We were taught these languages because long ago Latin had been the language of civilisation; the one way of escape from the narrow and localised life had lain in those days through Latin, and afterwards Greek had come in as the vehicle of a flood of new and amazing ideas. Once these two languages had been the sole means of initiation to the detached criticism and partial comprehension of the world. I can imagine the fierce zeal of our first Heads, Gardener and Roper, teaching Greek like passionate missionaries, as a progressive Chinaman might teach English to the boys of Pekin, clumsily, impatiently, with rod and harsh urgency, but sincerely, patriotically, because they felt that behind it lay revelations, the irresistible stimulus to a new phase of history. That was long ago. A new great world, a vaster Imperialism had arisen about the school, had assimilated all

these amazing and incredible ideas, had gone on to new and yet more amazing developments of its own. But the City Merchants School still made the substance of its teaching Latin and Greek, still, with no thought of rotating crops, sowed in a dream amidst the harvesting.

There is no fierceness left in the teaching now. Just after I went up to Trinity, Gates, our Head, wrote a review article in defence of our curriculum. In this, among other indiscretions, he asserted that it was impossible to write good English without an illuminating knowledge of the classic tongues, and he split an infinitive and failed to button up a sentence in saying so. His main argument conceded every objection a reasonable person could make to the City Merchants' curriculum. He admitted that translation had now placed all the wisdom of the past at a common man's disposal, that scarcely a field of endeavour remained in which modern work had not long since passed beyond the ancient achievement. He disclaimed any utility. But there was, he said, a peculiar magic in these grammatical exercises no other subjects of instruction possessed. Nothing else provided the same strengthening and orderly discipline for the mind.

He said that, knowing the Senior Classics he did, himself a Senior Classic!

Yet in a dim confused way I think he was making out a case. In schools as we knew them, and with the sort of assistant available, the sort of assistant who has been trained entirely on the old lines, he could see no other teaching so effectual in developing attention, restraint, sustained constructive effort and various yet systematic adjustment. And that was as far as his imagination could go.

It is infinitely easier to begin organised human affairs than end them; the curriculum and the social organisation of the English public school are the crowning instances of that. They go on because they have begun. Schools are not only immortal institutions but reproductive ones. Our founder, Jabez Arvon, knew nothing, I am sure, of Gates' pedagogic values and would, I feel certain, have dealt with them disrespectfully. But public schools and university colleges sprang into existence correlated, the scholars went on to the universities and came back to teach the schools, to teach as they themselves had been taught, before they had ever made any real use of the teaching; the crowd of boys herded together, a crowd perpetually renewed and unbrokenly the same, adjusted itself by means of spontaneously developed institutions. In a century, by its very success, this revolutionary innovation of Renascence public schools had become an immense tradition woven closely into the fabric of the national life. Intelligent and powerful people ceased to talk Latin or read Greek, they had got what was wanted, but that only left the schoolmaster the freer to elaborate his point. Since

most men of any importance or influence in the country had been through the mill, it was naturally a little difficult to persuade them that it was not quite the best and most ennobling mill the wit of man could devise. And, moreover, they did not want their children made strange to them. There was all the machinery and all the men needed to teach the old subjects, and none to teach whatever new the critic might propose. Such science instruction as my father gave seemed indeed the uninviting alternative to the classical grind. It was certainly an altogether inferior instrument at that time.

So it was I occupied my mind with the exact study of dead languages for seven long years. It was the strangest of detachments. We would sit under the desk of such a master as Topham like creatures who had fallen into an enchanted pit, and he would do his considerable best to work us up to enthusiasm for, let us say, a Greek play. If we flagged he would lash himself to revive us. He would walk about the class-room mouthing great lines in a rich roar, and asking us with a flushed face and shining eyes if it was not “GLORIOUS.” The very sight of Greek letters brings back to me the dingy, faded, ink-splashed quality of our class-room, the banging of books, Topham's disordered hair, the sheen of his alpaca gown, his deep unmusical intonations and the wide striding of his creaking boots. Glorious! And being plastic human beings we would consent that it was glorious, and some of us even achieved an answering reverberation and a sympathetic flush. I at times responded freely. We all accepted from him unquestioningly that these melodies, these strange sounds, exceeded any possibility of beauty that lay in the Gothic intricacy, the splash and glitter, the jar and recovery, the stabbing lights, the heights and broad distances of our English tongue. That indeed was the chief sin of him. It was not that he was for Greek and Latin, but that he was fiercely against every beauty that was neither classic nor deferred to classical canons.

And what exactly did we make of it, we seniors who understood it best? We visualised dimly through that dust and the grammatical difficulties, the spectacle of the chorus chanting grotesquely, helping out protagonist and antagonist, masked and buskined, with the telling of incomprehensible parricides, of inexplicable incest, of gods faded beyond symbolism, of that Relentless Law we did not believe in for a moment, that no modern western European can believe in. We thought of the characters in the unconvincing wigs and costumes of our school performance. No Gilbert Murray had come as yet to touch these things to life again. It was like the ghost of an antiquarian's toy theatre, a ghost that crumbled and condensed into a gritty dust of construing as one looked at it.

Marks, shindies, prayers and punishments, all flavoured with the leathery stuffiness of time-worn Big Hall....

And then out one would come through our grey old gate into the evening light and the spectacle of London hurrying like a cataract, London in black and brown and blue and gleaming silver, roaring like the very loom of Time. We came out into the new world no teacher has yet had the power and courage to grasp and expound. Life and death sang all about one, joys and fears on such a scale, in such an intricacy as never Greek nor Roman knew. The interminable procession of horse omnibuses went lumbering past, bearing countless people we knew not whence, we knew not whither. Hansoms clattered, foot passengers jostled one, a thousand appeals of shop and boarding caught the eye. The multi-coloured lights of window and street mingled with the warm glow of the declining day under the softly flushing London skies; the ever-changing placards, the shouting news-vendors, told of a kaleidoscopic drama all about the globe. One did not realise what had happened to us, but the voice of Topham was suddenly drowned and lost, he and his minute, remote gesticulations....

That submerged and isolated curriculum did not even join on to living interests where it might have done so. We were left absolutely to the hints of the newspapers, to casual political speeches, to the cartoons of the comic papers or a chance reading of some Socialist pamphlet for any general ideas whatever about the huge swirling world process in which we found ourselves. I always look back with particular exasperation to the cessation of our modern history at the year 1815. There it pulled up abruptly, as though it had come upon something indelicate....

But, after all, what would Topham or Flack have made of the huge adjustments of the nineteenth century? Flack was the chief cricketer on the staff; he belonged to that great cult which pretends that the place of this or that county in the struggle for the championship is a matter of supreme importance to boys. He obliged us to affect a passionate interest in the progress of county matches, to work up unnatural enthusiasms. What a fuss there would be when some well-trained boy, panting as if from Marathon, appeared with an evening paper! “I say, you chaps, Middlesex all out for a hundred and five!”

Under Flack's pressure I became, I confess, a cricket humbug of the first class. I applied myself industriously year by year to mastering scores and averages; I pretended that Lords or the Oval were the places nearest Paradise for me. (I never went to either.) Through a slight mistake about the county boundary I adopted Surrey for my loyalty, though as a matter of fact we were by some five hundred yards or so in Kent. It did quite as well for my purposes. I bowled rather straight and fast, and spent endless hours acquiring the skill to bowl Flack out. He was a bat in the Corinthian style, rich and voluminous, and succumbed very easily to a low shooter or an unexpected Yorker, but usually he was caught early by long leg. The difficulty was to

bowl him before he got caught. He loved to lift a ball to leg. After one had clean bowled him at the practice nets one deliberately gave him a ball to leg just to make him feel nice again.

Flack went about a world of marvels dreaming of leg hits. He has been observed, going across the Park on his way to his highly respectable club in Piccadilly, to break from profound musings into a strange brief dance that ended with an imaginary swipe with his umbrella, a roofer, over the trees towards Buckingham Palace. The hit accomplished, Flack resumed his way.

Inadequately instructed foreigners would pass him in terror, needlessly alert.

6

These schoolmasters move through my memory as always a little distant and more than a little incomprehensible. Except when they wore flannels, I saw them almost always in old college caps and gowns, a uniform which greatly increased their detachment from the world of actual men. Gates, the head, was a lean loose-limbed man, rather stupid I discovered when I reached the Sixth and came into contact with him, but honest, simple and very eager to be liberal-minded. He was bald, with an almost conical baldness, with a grizzled pointed beard, small featured and, under the stresses of a Zeitgeist that demanded liberality, with an expression of puzzled but resolute resistance to his own unalterable opinions. He made a tall dignified figure in his gown. In my junior days he spoke to me only three or four times, and then he annoyed me by giving me a wrong surname; it was a sore point because I was an outsider and not one of the old school families, the Shoesmiths, the Naylors, the Marklows, the Tophams, the Pevises and suchlike, who came generation after generation. I recall him most vividly against the background of faded brown book-backs in the old library in which we less destructive seniors were trusted to work, with the light from the stained-glass window falling in coloured patches on his face. It gave him the appearance of having no colour of his own. He had a habit of scratching the beard on his cheek as he talked, and he used to come and consult us about things and invariably do as we said. That, in his phraseology, was “maintaining the traditions of the school.”

He had indeed an effect not of a man directing a school, but of a man captured and directed by a school. Dead and gone Elizabethans had begotten a monster that could carry him about in its mouth.

Yet being a man, as I say, with his hair a little stirred by a Zeitgeist that made for change, Gates did at times display a disposition towards developments. City

Merchants had no modern side, and utilitarian spirits were carping in the PALL MALL GAZETTE and elsewhere at the omissions from our curriculum, and particularly at our want of German. Moreover, four classes still worked together with much clashing and uproar in the old Big Hall that had once held in a common tumult the entire school. Gates used to come and talk to us older fellows about these things.

“I don't wish to innovate unduly,” he used to say. “But we ought to get in some German, you know,—for those who like it. The army men will be wanting it some of these days.”

He referred to the organisation of regular evening preparation for the lower boys in Big Hall as a “revolutionary change,” but he achieved it, and he declared he began the replacement of the hacked wooden tables, at which the boys had worked since Tudor days, by sloping desks with safety inkpots and scientifically adjustable seats, “with grave misgivings.” And though he never birched a boy in his life, and was, I am convinced, morally incapable of such a scuffle, he retained the block and birch in the school through all his term of office, and spoke at the Headmasters' Conference in temperate approval of corporal chastisement, comparing it, dear soul! to the power of the sword....

I wish I could, in some measure and without tediousness, convey the effect of his discourses to General Assembly in Big Hall. But that is like trying to draw the obverse and reverse of a sixpence worn to complete illegibility. His tall fine figure stood high on the days, his thoughtful tenor filled the air as he steered his hazardous way through sentences that dragged inconclusive tails and dropped redundant prepositions. And he pleaded ever so urgently, ever so finely, that what we all knew for Sin was sinful, and on the whole best avoided altogether, and so went on with deepening notes and even with short arresting gestures of the right arm and hand, to stir and exhort us towards goodness, towards that modern, unsectarian goodness, goodness in general and nothing in particular, which the Zeitgeist seemed to indicate in those transitional years.

7

The school never quite got hold of me. Partly I think that was because I was a day-boy and so freer than most of the boys, partly because of a temperamental disposition to see things in my own way and have my private dreams, partly because I was a little antagonised by the family traditions that ran through the school. I was made to feel at first that I was a rank outsider, and I never quite forgot it. I suffered very little bullying, and I never had a fight—in all my time there were only three fights—but I followed my own curiosities. I was already a very keen theologian and politician before I was

fifteen. I was also intensely interested in modern warfare. I read the morning papers in the Reading Room during the midday recess, never missed the illustrated weeklies, and often when I could afford it I bought a PALL MALL GAZETTE on my way home.

I do not think that I was very exceptional in that; most intelligent boys, I believe, want naturally to be men, and are keenly interested in men's affairs. There is not the universal passion for a magnified puerility among them it is customary to assume. I was indeed a voracious reader of everything but boys' books—which I detested—and fiction. I read histories, travel, popular science and controversy with particular zest, and I loved maps. School work and school games were quite subordinate affairs for me. I worked well and made a passable figure at games, and I do not think I was abnormally insensitive to the fine quality of our school, to the charm of its mediaeval nucleus, its Gothic cloisters, its scraps of Palladian and its dignified Georgian extensions; the contrast of the old quiet, that in spite of our presence pervaded it everywhere, with the rushing and impending London all about it, was indeed a continual pleasure to me. But these things were certainly not the living and central interests of my life.

I had to conceal my wider outlook to a certain extent—from the masters even more than from the boys. Indeed I only let myself go freely with one boy, Britten, my especial chum, the son of the Agent-General for East Australia. We two discovered in a chance conversation A PROPOS of a map in the library that we were both of us curious why there were Malays in Madagascar, and how the Mecca pilgrims came from the East Indies before steamships were available. Neither of us had suspected that there was any one at all in the school who knew or cared a rap about the Indian Ocean, except as water on the way to India. But Britten had come up through the Suez Canal, and his ship had spoken a pilgrim ship on the way. It gave him a startling quality of living knowledge. From these pilgrims we got to a comparative treatment of religions, and from that, by a sudden plunge, to entirely sceptical and disrespectful confessions concerning Gates' last outbreak of simple piety in School Assembly. We became congenial intimates from that hour.

The discovery of Britten happened to me when we were both in the Lower Fifth. Previously there had been a watertight compartment between the books I read and the thoughts they begot on the one hand and human intercourse on the other. Now I really began my higher education, and aired and examined and developed in conversation the doubts, the ideas, the interpretations that had been forming in my mind. As we were both day-boys with a good deal of control over our time we organised walks and expeditions together, and my habit of solitary and rather vague prowling gave way to much more definite joint enterprises. I went several times to his

house, he was the youngest of several brothers, one of whom was a medical student and let us assist at the dissection of a cat, and once or twice in vacation time he came to Penge, and we went with parcels of provisions to do a thorough day in the grounds and galleries of the Crystal Palace, ending with the fireworks at close quarters. We went in a river steamboat down to Greenwich, and fired by that made an excursion to Margate and back; we explored London docks and Bethnal Green Museum, Petticoat Lane and all sorts of out-of-the-way places together.

We confessed shyly to one another a common secret vice, "Phantom warfare." When we walked alone, especially in the country, we had both developed the same practice of fighting an imaginary battle about us as we walked. As we went along we were generals, and our attacks pushed along on either side, crouching and gathering behind hedges, cresting ridges, occupying copses, rushing open spaces, fighting from house to house. The hillsides about Penge were honeycombed in my imagination with the pits and trenches I had created to check a victorious invader coming out of Surrey. For him West Kensington was chiefly important as the scene of a desperate and successful last stand of insurrectionary troops (who had seized the Navy, the Bank and other advantages) against a royalist army—reinforced by Germans—advancing for reasons best known to themselves by way of Harrow and Ealing. It is a secret and solitary game, as we found when we tried to play it together. We made a success of that only once. All the way down to Margate we schemed defences and assailed and fought them as we came back against the sunset. Afterwards we recapitulated all that conflict by means of a large scale map of the Thames and little paper ironclads in plan cut out of paper.

A subsequent revival of these imaginings was brought about by Britten's luck in getting, through a friend of his father's, admission for us both to the spectacle of volunteer officers fighting the war game in Caxton Hall. We developed a war game of our own at Britten's home with nearly a couple of hundred lead soldiers, some excellent spring cannons that shot hard and true at six yards, hills of books and a constantly elaborated set of rules. For some months that occupied an immense proportion of our leisure. Some of our battles lasted several days. We kept the game a profound secret from the other fellows. They would not have understood.

And we also began, it was certainly before we were sixteen, to write, for the sake of writing. We liked writing. We had discovered Lamb and the best of the middle articles in such weeklies as the SATURDAY GAZETTE, and we imitated them. Our minds were full of dim uncertain things we wanted to drag out into the light of expression. Britten had got hold of IN MEMORIAM, and I had disinterred Pope's ESSAY ON MAN and RABBI BEN EZRA, and these things had set our theological and cosmic solicitudes talking. I

was somewhere between sixteen and eighteen, I know, when he and I walked along the Thames Embankment confessing shamefully to one another that we had never read Lucretius. We thought every one who mattered had read Lucretius.

When I was nearly sixteen my mother was taken ill very suddenly, and died of some perplexing complaint that involved a post-mortem examination; it was, I think, the trouble that has since those days been recognised as appendicitis. This led to a considerable change in my circumstances; the house at Penge was given up, and my Staffordshire uncle arranged for me to lodge during school terms with a needy solicitor and his wife in Vicars Street, S. W., about a mile and a half from the school. So it was I came right into London; I had almost two years of London before I went to Cambridge.

Those were our great days together. Afterwards we were torn apart; Britten went to Oxford, and our circumstances never afterwards threw us continuously together until the days of the BLUE WEEKLY.

As boys, we walked together, read and discussed the same books, pursued the same enquiries. We got a reputation as inseparables and the nickname of the Rose and the Lily, for Britten was short and thick-set with dark close curling hair and a ruddy Irish type of face; I was lean and fair-haired and some inches taller than he. Our talk ranged widely and yet had certain very definite limitations. We were amazingly free with politics and religion, we went to that little meeting-house of William Morris's at Hammersmith and worked out the principles of Socialism pretty thoroughly, and we got up the Darwinian theory with the help of Britten's medical-student brother and the galleries of the Natural History Museum in Cromwell Road. Those wonderful cases on the ground floor illustrating mimicry, dimorphism and so forth, were new in our times, and we went through them with earnest industry and tried over our Darwinism in the light of that. Such topics we did exhaustively. But on the other hand I do not remember any discussion whatever of human sex or sexual relationships. There, in spite of intense secret curiosities, our lips were sealed by a peculiar shyness. And I do not believe we ever had occasion either of us to use the word “love.” It was not only that we were instinctively shy of the subject, but that we were mightily ashamed of the extent of our ignorance and uncertainty in these matters. We evaded them elaborately with an assumption of exhaustive knowledge.

We certainly had no shyness about theology. We marked the emancipation of our spirits from the frightful teachings that had oppressed our boyhood, by much indulgence in blasphemous wit. We had a secret literature of irreverent rhymes, and a secret art of theological caricature. Britten's father had delighted his family by reading

aloud from Dr. Richard Garnett's TWILIGHT OF THE GODS, and Britten conveyed the precious volume to me. That and the BAB BALLADS were the inspiration of some of our earliest lucubrations.

For an imaginative boy the first experience of writing is like a tiger's first taste of blood, and our literary flowerings led very directly to the revival of the school magazine, which had been comatose for some years. But there we came upon a disappointment.

In that revival we associated certain other of the Sixth Form boys, and notably one for whom our enterprise was to lay the foundations of a career that has ended in the House of Lords, Arthur Cossington, now Lord Paddockhurst. Cossington was at that time a rather heavy, rather good-looking boy who was chiefly eminent in cricket, an outsider even as we were and preoccupied no doubt, had we been sufficiently detached to observe him, with private imaginings very much of the same quality and spirit as our own. He was, we were inclined to think, rather a sentimentalist, rather a poseur, he affected a concise emphatic style, played chess very well, betrayed a belief in will-power, and earned Britten's secret hostility, Britten being a sloven, by the invariable neatness of his collars and ties. He came into our magazine with a vigour that we found extremely surprising and unwelcome.

Britten and I had wanted to write. We had indeed figured our project modestly as a manuscript magazine of satirical, liberal and brilliant literature by which in some rather inexplicable way the vague tumult of ideas that teemed within us was to find form and expression; Cossington, it was manifest from the outset, wanted neither to write nor writing, but a magazine. I remember the inaugural meeting in Shoesmith major's study—we had had great trouble in getting it together—and how effectually Cossington bolted with the proposal.

“I think we fellows ought to run a magazine,” said Cossington. “The school used to have one. A school like this ought to have a magazine.”

“The last one died in '84,” said Shoesmith from the hearthrug. “Called the OBSERVER. Rot rather.”

“Bad title,” said Cossington.

“There was a TATLER before that,” said Britten, sitting on the writing table at the window that was closed to deaden the cries of the Lower School at play, and clashing his boots together.

“We want something suggestive of City Merchants.”

“CITY MERCHANDIZE,” said Britten.

“Too fanciful. What of ARVONIAN? Richard Arvon was our founder, and it seems almost a duty—”

“They call them all -usians or -onians,” said Britten.

“I like CITY MERCHANDIZE,” I said. “We could probably find a quotation to suggest—oh! mixed good things.”

Cossington regarded me abstractedly.

“Don't want to put the accent on the City, do we?” said Shoesmith, who had a feeling for county families, and Naylor supported him by a murmur of approval.

“We ought to call it the ARVONIAN,” decided Cossington, “and we might very well have underneath, 'With which is incorporated the OBSERVER.' That picks up the old traditions, makes an appeal to old boys and all that, and it gives us something to print under the title.”

I still held out for CITY MERCHANDIZE, which had taken my fancy. “Some of the chaps' people won't like it,” said Naylor, “certain not to. And it sounds Rum.”

“Sounds Weird,” said a boy who had not hitherto spoken.

“We aren't going to do anything Queer,” said Shoesmith, pointedly not looking at Britten.

The question of the title had manifestly gone against us. “Oh! HAVE it ARVONIAN,” I said.

“And next, what size shall we have?” said Cossington.

“Something like MACMILLAN'S MAGAZINE—or LONGMANS'; LONGMANS' is better because it has a whole page, not columns. It makes no end of difference to one's effects.”

“What effects?” asked Shoesmith abruptly.

“Oh! a pause or a white line or anything. You've got to write closer for a double column. It's nuggetty. You can't get a swing on your prose.” I had discussed this thoroughly with Britten.

“If the fellows are going to write—” began Britten.

“We ought to keep off fine writing,” said Shoesmith. “It's cheek. I vote we don't have any.”

“We sha'n't get any,” said Cossington, and then as an olive branch to me, “unless Remington does a bit. Or Britten. But it's no good making too much space for it.”

“We ought to be very careful about the writing,” said Shoesmith. “We don't want to give ourselves away.”

“I vote we ask old Topham to see us through,” said Naylor.

Britten groaned aloud and every one regarded him. “Greek epigrams on the fellows' names,” he said. “Small beer in ancient bottles. Let's get a stuffed broody hen to SIT on the magazine.”

“We might do worse than a Greek epigram,” said Cossington. “One in each number. It—it impresses parents and keeps up our classical tradition. And the masters CAN help. We don't want to antagonise them. Of course—we've got to departmentalise. Writing is only one section of the thing. The ARVONIAN has to stand for the school. There's questions of space and questions of expense. We can't turn out a great chunk of printed prose like—like wet cold toast and call it a magazine.”

Britten writhed, appreciating the image.

“There's to be a section of sports. YOU must do that.”

“I'm not going to do any fine writing,” said Shoesmith.

“What you've got to do is just to list all the chaps and put a note to their play:—'Naylor minor must pass more. Football isn't the place for extreme individualism.' 'Ammersham shapes well as half-back.' Things like that.”

“I could do that all right,” said Shoesmith, brightening and manifestly becoming pregnant with judgments.

“One great thing about a magazine of this sort,” said Cossington, “is to mention just as many names as you can in each number. It keeps the interest alive. Chaps will turn it over looking for their own little bit. Then it all lights up for them.”

“Do you want any reports of matches?” Shoesmith broke from his meditation.

“Rather. With comments.”

“Naylor surpassed himself and negotiated the lemon safely home,” said Shoesmith.

“Shut it,” said Naylor modestly.

“Exactly,” said Cossington. “That gives us three features,” touching them off on his fingers, “Epigram, Literary Section, Sports. Then we want a section to shove anything into, a joke, a notice of anything that's going on. So on. Our Note Book.”

“Oh, Hell!” said Britten, and clashed his boots, to the silent disapproval of every one.

“Then we want an editorial.”

“A WHAT?” cried Britten, with a note of real terror in his voice.

“Well, don't we? Unless we have our Note Book to begin on the front page. It gives a scrappy effect to do that. We want something manly and straightforward and a bit thoughtful, about Patriotism, say, or ESPRIT DE CORPS, or After-Life.”

I looked at Britten. Hitherto we had not considered Cossington mattered very much in the world.

He went over us as a motor-car goes over a dog. There was a sort of energy about him, a new sort of energy to us; we had never realised that anything of the sort existed in the world. We were hopelessly at a disadvantage. Almost instantly we had developed a clear and detailed vision of a magazine made up of everything that was most acceptable in the magazines that flourished in the adult world about us, and had determined to make it a success. He had by a kind of instinct, as it were, synthetically plagiarised every successful magazine and breathed into this dusty mixture the breath of life. He was elected at his own suggestion managing director, with the earnest support of Shoesmith and Naylor, and conducted the magazine so successfully and brilliantly that he even got a whole back page of advertisements from the big sports shop in Holborn, and made the printers pay at the same rate for a notice of certain books of their own which they said they had inserted by inadvertency to fill up space. The only literary contribution in the first number was a column by Topham in faultless stereotyped English in depreciation of some fancied evil called Utilitarian Studies and ending with that noble old quotation:—

“To the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome.”

And Flack crowded us out of number two with a bright little paper on the “Humours of Cricket,” and the Head himself was profusely thoughtful all over the editorial under the heading of “The School Chapel; and How it Seems to an Old Boy.”

Britten and I found it difficult to express to each other with any grace or precision what we felt about that magazine.

CHAPTER THE FOURTH ~~ ADOLESCENCE

1

I find it very difficult to trace how form was added to form and interpretation followed interpretation in my ever-spreading, ever-deepening, ever-multiplying and enriching vision of this world into which I had been born. Every day added its impressions, its hints, its subtle explications to the growing understanding. Day after day the living interlacing threads of a mind weave together. Every morning now for three weeks and more (for to-day is Thursday and I started on a Tuesday) I have been trying to convey some idea of the factors and early influences by which my particular scrap of subjective tapestry was shaped, to show the child playing on the nursery floor, the son perplexed by his mother, gazing aghast at his dead father, exploring interminable suburbs, touched by first intimations of the sexual mystery, coming in with a sort of confused avidity towards the centres of the life of London. It is only by such an effort to write it down that one realises how marvellously crowded, how marvellously analytical and synthetic those ears must be. One begins with the little child to whom the sky is a roof of blue, the world a screen of opaque and disconnected facts, the home a thing eternal, and “being good” just simple obedience to unquestioned authority; and one comes at last to the vast world of one's adult perception, pierced deep by flaring searchlights of partial understanding, here masked by mists, here refracted and distorted through half translucent veils, here showing broad prospects and limitless vistas and here impenetrably dark.

I recall phases of deep speculation, doubts and even prayers by night, and strange occasions when by a sort of hypnotic contemplation of nothingness I sought to pierce the web of appearances about me. It is hard to measure these things in receding perspective, and now I cannot trace, so closely has mood succeeded and overlaid and obliterated mood, the phases by which an utter horror of death was replaced by the growing realisation of its necessity and dignity. Difficulty of the imagination with infinite space, infinite time, entangled my mind; and moral distress for the pain and suffering of bygone ages that made all thought of reformation in the future seem but the grimmest irony upon now irreparable wrongs. Many an intricate perplexity of these broadening years did not so much get settled as cease to matter. Life crowded me away from it.

I have confessed myself a temerarious theologian, and in that passage from boyhood to manhood I ranged widely in my search for some permanently satisfying Truth. That, too, ceased after a time to be urgently interesting. I came at last into a phase that endures to this day, of absolute tranquillity, of absolute confidence in whatever that Incomprehensible Comprehensive which must needs be the substratum of all things, may be. Feeling OF IT, feeling BY IT, I cannot feel afraid of it. I think I had got quite clearly and finally to that adjustment long before my Cambridge days were done. I am sure that the evil in life is transitory and finite like an accident or distress in the nursery; that God is my Father and that I may trust Him, even though life hurts so that one must needs cry out at it, even though it shows no consequence but failure, no promise but pain....

But while I was fearless of theology I must confess it was comparatively late before I faced and dared to probe the secrecies of sex. I was afraid of sex. I had an instinctive perception that it would be a large and difficult thing in my life, but my early training was all in the direction of regarding it as an irrelevant thing, as something disconnected from all the broad significances of life, as hostile and disgraceful in its quality. The world was never so emasculated in thought, I suppose, as it was in the Victorian time....

I was afraid to think either of sex or (what I have always found inseparable from a kind of sexual emotion) beauty. Even as a boy I knew the thing as a haunting and alluring mystery that I tried to keep away from. Its dim presence obsessed me none the less for all the extravagant decency, the stimulating silences of my upbringing....

The plaster Venuses and Apollos that used to adorn the vast aisle and huge grey terraces of the Crystal Palace were the first intimations of the beauty of the body that ever came into my life. As I write of it I feel again the shameful attraction of those gracious forms. I used to look at them not simply, but curiously and askance. Once at least in my later days at Penge, I spent a shilling in admission chiefly for the sake of them....

The strangest thing of all my odd and solitary upbringing seems to me now that swathing up of all the splendours of the flesh, that strange combination of fanatical terrorism and shyness that fenced me about with prohibitions. It caused me to grow up, I will not say blankly ignorant, but with an ignorance blurred and dishonoured by shame, by enigmatical warnings, by cultivated aversions, an ignorance in which a fascinated curiosity and desire struggled like a thing in a net. I knew so little and I felt so much. There was indeed no Aphrodite at all in my youthful Pantheon, but instead there was a mysterious and minatory gap. I have told how at last a new Venus was

born in my imagination out of gas lamps and the twilight, a Venus with a cockney accent and dark eyes shining out of the dusk, a Venus who was a warm, passion-stirring atmosphere rather than incarnate in a body. And I have told, too, how I bought a picture.

All this was a thing apart from the rest of my life, a locked avoided chamber....

It was not until my last year at Trinity that I really broke down the barriers of this unwholesome silence and brought my secret broodings to the light of day. Then a little set of us plunged suddenly into what we called at first sociological discussion. I can still recall even the physical feeling of those first tentative talks. I remember them mostly as occurring in the rooms of Ted Hatherleigh, who kept at the corner by the Trinity great gate, but we also used to talk a good deal at a man's in King's, a man named, if I remember rightly, Redmayne. The atmosphere of Hatherleigh's rooms was a haze of tobacco smoke against a background brown and deep. He professed himself a socialist with anarchistic leanings—he had suffered the martyrdom of ducking for it—and a huge French May-day poster displaying a splendid proletarian in red and black on a barricade against a flaring orange sky, dominated his decorations. Hatherleigh affected a fine untidiness, and all the place, even the floor, was littered with books, for the most part open and face downward; deeper darknesses were supplied by a discarded gown and our caps, all conscientiously battered, Hatherleigh's flopped like an elephant's ear and inserted quill pens supported the corners of mine; the highlights of the picture came chiefly as reflections from his chequered blue mugs full of audit ale. We sat on oak chairs, except the four or five who crowded on a capacious settle, we drank a lot of beer and were often fuddled, and occasionally quite drunk, and we all smoked reckless-looking pipes,—there was a transient fashion among us for corn cobs for which Mark Twain, I think, was responsible. Our little excesses with liquor were due far more to conscience than appetite, indicated chiefly a resolve to break away from restraints that we suspected were keeping us off the instructive knife-edges of life. Hatherleigh was a good Englishman of the premature type with a red face, a lot of hair, a deep voice and an explosive plunging manner, and it was he who said one evening—Heaven knows how we got to it—"Look here, you know, it's all Rot, this Shutting Up about Women. We OUGHT to talk about them. What are we going to do about them? It's got to come. We're all festering inside about it. Let's out with it. There's too much Decency altogether about this Infernal University!"

We rose to his challenge a little awkwardly and our first talk was clumsy, there were flushed faces and red ears, and I remember Hatherleigh broke out into a monologue on decency. "Modesty and Decency," said Hatherleigh, "are Oriental vices. The Jews

brought them to Europe. They're Semitic, just like our monasticism here and the seclusion of women and mutilating the dead on a battlefield. And all that sort of thing."

Hatherleigh's mind progressed by huge leaps, leaps that were usually wildly inaccurate, and for a time we engaged hotly upon the topic of those alleged mutilations and the Semitic responsibility for decency. Hatherleigh tried hard to saddle the Semitic race with the less elegant war customs of the Soudan and the northwest frontier of India, and quoted Doughty, at that time a little-known author, and Cunninghame Graham to show that the Arab was worse than a county-town spinster in his regard for respectability. But his case was too preposterous, and Esmeer, with his shrill penetrating voice and his way of pointing with all four long fingers flat together, carried the point against him. He quoted Cato and Roman law and the monasteries of Thibet.

"Well, anyway," said Hatherleigh, escaping from our hands like an intellectual frog, "Semitic or not, I've got no use for decency."

We argued points and Hatherleigh professed an unusually balanced and tolerating attitude. "I don't mind a certain refinement and dignity," he admitted generously. "What I object to is this spreading out of decency until it darkens the whole sky, until it makes a man's father afraid to speak of the most important things, until it makes a man afraid to look a frank book in the face or think—even think! until it leads to our coming to—to the business at last with nothing but a few prohibitions, a few hints, a lot of dirty jokes and, and "—he waved a hand and seemed to seek and catch his image in the air—"oh, a confounded buttered slide of sentiment, to guide us. I tell you I'm going to think about it and talk about it until I see a little more daylight than I do at present. I'm twenty-two. Things might happen to me anywhen. You men can go out into the world if you like, to sin like fools and marry like fools, not knowing what you are doing and ashamed to ask. You'll take the consequences, too, I expect, pretty meekly, sniggering a bit, sentimentalising a bit, like—like Cambridge humorists.... I mean to know what I'm doing."

He paused to drink, and I think I cut in with ideas of my own. But one is apt to forget one's own share in a talk, I find, more than one does the clear-cut objectivity of other people's, and I do not know how far I contributed to this discussion that followed. I am, however, pretty certain that it was then that ideal that we were pleased to call aristocracy and which soon became the common property of our set was developed. It was Esmeer, I know, who laid down and maintained the proposition that so far as

minds went there were really only two sorts of man in the world, the aristocrat and the man who subdues his mind to other people's.

“'I couldn't THINK of it, Sir,'” said Esmeer in his elucidatory tones; “that's what a servant says. His mind even is broken in to run between fences, and he admits it. WE'VE got to be able to think of anything. And 'such things aren't for the Likes of Us!' That's another servant's saying. Well, everything IS for the Likes of Us. If we see fit, that is.”

A small fresh-coloured man in grey objected.

“Well,” exploded Hatherleigh, “if that isn't so what the deuce are we up here for? Instead of working in mines? If some things aren't to be thought about ever! We've got the privilege of all these extra years for getting things straight in our heads, and then we won't use 'em. Good God! what do you think a university's for?”...

Esmeer's idea came with an effect of real emancipation to several of us. We were not going to be afraid of ideas any longer, we were going to throw down every barrier of prohibition and take them in and see what came of it. We became for a time even intemperately experimental, and one of us, at the bare suggestion of an eminent psychic investigator, took hashish and very nearly died of it within a fortnight of our great elucidation.

The chief matter of our interchanges was of course the discussion of sex. Once the theme had been opened it became a sore place in our intercourse; none of us seemed able to keep away from it. Our imaginations got astir with it. We made up for lost time and went round it and through it and over it exhaustively. I recall prolonged discussion of polygamy on the way to Royston, muddy November tramps to Madingley, when amidst much profanity from Hatherleigh at the serious treatment of so obsolete a matter, we weighed the reasons, if any, for the institution of marriage. The fine dim night-time spaces of the Great Court are bound up with the inconclusive finales of mighty hot-eared wrangles; the narrows of Trinity Street and Petty Cury and Market Hill have their particular associations for me with that spate of confession and free speech, that almost painful goal delivery of long pent and crappled and sometimes crippled ideas.

And we went on a reading party that Easter to a place called Pulborough in Sussex, where there is a fishing inn and a river that goes under a bridge. It was a late Easter and a blazing one, and we boated and bathed and talked of being Hellenic and the beauty of the body until at moments it seemed to us that we were destined to restore the Golden Age, by the simple abolition of tailors and outfitters.

Those undergraduate talks! how rich and glorious they seemed, how splendidly new the ideas that grew and multiplied in our seething minds! We made long afternoon and evening raids over the Downs towards Arundel, and would come tramping back through the still keen moonlight singing and shouting. We formed romantic friendships with one another, and grieved more or less convincingly that there were no splendid women fit to be our companions in the world. But Hatherleigh, it seemed, had once known a girl whose hair was gloriously red. “My God!” said Hatherleigh to convey the quality of her; just simply and with projectile violence: “My God!”

Benton had heard of a woman who lived with a man refusing to be married to him—we thought that splendid beyond measure,—I cannot now imagine why. She was “like a tender goddess,” Benton said. A sort of shame came upon us in the dark in spite of our liberal intentions when Benton committed himself to that. And after such talk we would fall upon great pauses of emotional dreaming, and if by chance we passed a girl in a governess cart, or some farmer's daughter walking to the station, we became alertly silent or obstreperously indifferent to her. For might she not be just that one exception to the banal decency, the sickly pointless conventionality, the sham modesty of the times in which we lived?

We felt we stood for a new movement, not realising how perennially this same emancipation returns to those ancient courts beside the Cam. We were the anti-decency party, we discovered a catch phrase that we flourished about in the Union and made our watchword, namely, “stark fact.” We hung nude pictures in our rooms much as if they had been flags, to the earnest concern of our bedders, and I disinterred my long-kept engraving and had it framed in fumed oak, and found for it a completer and less restrained companion, a companion I never cared for in the slightest degree....

This efflorescence did not prevent, I think indeed it rather helped, our more formal university work, for most of us took firsts, and three of us got Fellowships in one year or another. There was Benton who had a Research Fellowship and went to Tubingen, there was Esmeer and myself who both became Residential Fellows. I had taken the Mental and Moral Science Tripos (as it was then), and three years later I got a lectureship in political science. In those days it was disguised in the cloak of Political Economy.