Section 2

And one at least of those who were called to this conference of governments came to it on foot. This was King Egbert, the young king of the most venerable kingdom in Europe. He was a rebel, and had always been of deliberate choice a rebel against the magnificence of his position. He affected long pedestrian tours and a disposition to sleep in the open air. He came now over the Pass of Sta Maria Maggiore and by boat up the lake to Brissago; thence he walked up the mountain, a pleasant path set with oaks and sweet chestnut. For provision on the walk, for he did not want to hurry, he carried with him a pocketful of bread and cheese. A certain small retinue that was necessary to his comfort and dignity upon occasions of state he sent on by the cable car, and with him walked his private secretary, Firmin, a man who had thrown up the Professorship of World Politics in the London School of Sociology, Economics, and Political Science, to take up these duties. Firmin was a man of strong rather than rapid thought, he had anticipated great influence in this new position, and after some years he was still only beginning to apprehend how largely his function was to listen. Originally he had been something of a thinker upon international politics, an authority upon tariffs and strategy, and a valued contributor to various of the higher organs of public opinion, but the atomic bombs had taken him by surprise, and he had still to recover completely from his pre-atomic opinions and the silencing effect of those sustained explosives.

The king's freedom from the trammels of etiquette was very complete. In theory—and he abounded in theory—his manners were purely democratic. It was by sheer habit and inadvertency that he permitted Firmin, who had discovered a rucksack in a small shop in the town below, to carry both bottles of beer. The king had never, as a matter of fact, carried anything for himself in his life, and he had never noted that he did not do so.

'We will have nobody with us,' he said, 'at all. We will be perfectly simple.'

So Firmin carried the beer.

As they walked up—it was the king made the pace rather than Firmin—they talked of the conference before them, and Firmin, with a certain want of assurance that would have surprised him in himself in the days of his Professorship, sought to define the policy of his companion. 'In its broader form, sir,' said Firmin; 'I admit a certain plausibility in this project of Leblanc's, but I feel that although it may be advisable to set up some sort of general control for International affairs—a sort of Hague Court with extended powers—that is no reason whatever for losing sight of the principles of national and imperial autonomy.'

‘Firmin,’ said the king, ‘I am going to set my brother kings a good example.’

Firmin intimated a curiosity that veiled a dread.

‘By chucking all that nonsense,’ said the king.

He quickened his pace as Firmin, who was already a little out of breath, betrayed a disposition to reply.

‘I am going to chuck all that nonsense,’ said the king, as Firmin prepared to speak. ‘I am going to fling my royalty and empire on the table—and declare at once I don’t mean to haggle. It’s haggling—about rights—has been the devil in human affairs, for—always. I am going to stop this nonsense.’

Firmin halted abruptly. ‘But, sir!’ he cried.

The king stopped six yards ahead of him and looked back at his adviser’s perspiring visage.

‘Do you really think, Firmin, that I am here as—as an infernal politician to put my crown and my flag and my claims and so forth in the way of peace? That little Frenchman is right. You know he is right as well as I do. Those things are over. We—we kings and rulers and representatives have been at the very heart of the mischief. Of course we imply separation, and of course separation means the threat of war, and of course the threat of war means the accumulation of more and more atomic bombs. The old game’s up. But, I say, we mustn’t stand here, you know. The world waits. Don’t you think the old game’s up, Firmin?’

Firmin adjusted a strap, passed a hand over his wet forehead, and followed earnestly. ‘I admit, sir,’ he said to a receding back, ‘that there has to be some sort of hegemony, some sort of Amphictyonic council——’

‘There’s got to be one simple government for all the world,’ said the king over his shoulder.

‘But as for a reckless, unqualified abandonment, sir——’

‘*Bang!*’ cried the king.

Firmin made no answer to this interruption. But a faint shadow of annoyance passed across his heated features.

‘Yesterday,’ said the king, by way of explanation, ‘the Japanese very nearly got San Francisco.’

‘I hadn’t heard, sir.’

‘The Americans ran the Japanese aeroplane down into the sea and there the bomb got busted.’

‘Under the sea, sir?’

‘Yes. Submarine volcano. The steam is in sight of the Californian coast. It was as near as that. And with things like this happening, you want me to go up this hill and haggle. Consider the effect of that upon my imperial cousin—and all the others!’

‘*He* will haggle, sir.’

‘Not a bit of it,’ said the king.

‘But, sir.’

‘Leblanc won’t let him.’

Firmin halted abruptly and gave a vicious pull at the offending strap. ‘Sir, he will listen to his advisers,’ he said, in a tone that in some subtle way seemed to implicate his master with the trouble of the knapsack.

The king considered him.

‘We will go just a little higher,’ he said. ‘I want to find this unoccupied village they spoke of, and then we will drink that beer. It can’t be far. We will drink the beer and throw away the bottles. And then, Firmin, I shall ask you to look at things in a more generous light…. Because, you know, you must….’

He turned about and for some time the only sound they made was the noise of their boots upon the loose stones of the way and the irregular breathing of Firmin.

At length, as it seemed to Firmin, or quite soon, as it seemed to the king, the gradient of the path diminished, the way widened out, and they found themselves in a very beautiful place indeed. It was one of those upland clusters of sheds and houses that are still to be found in the mountains of North Italy, buildings that were used only in the high summer, and which it was the custom to leave locked up and deserted through all the winter and spring, and up to the middle of June. The buildings were of a soft-toned gray stone, buried in rich green grass, shadowed by chestnut trees and lit by an extraordinary blaze of yellow broom. Never had the king seen broom so glorious; he shouted at the light of it, for it seemed to give out more sunlight even than it received; he sat down impulsively on a lichenous stone, tugged out his bread and cheese, and bade Firmin thrust the beer into the shaded weeds to cool.

‘The things people miss, Firmin,’ he said, ‘who go up into the air in ships!’

Firmin looked around him with an ungenial eye. ‘You see it at its best, sir,’ he said, ‘before the peasants come here again and make it filthy.’

‘It would be beautiful anyhow,’ said the king.

‘Superficially, sir,’ said Firmin. ‘But it stands for a social order that is fast vanishing away. Indeed, judging by the grass between the stones and in the huts, I am inclined to doubt if it is in use even now.’

‘I suppose,’ said the king, ‘they would come up immediately the hay on this flower meadow is cut. It would be those slow, creamy-coloured beasts, I expect, one sees on the roads below, and swarthy girls with red handkerchiefs over their black hair.... It is wonderful to think how long that beautiful old life lasted. In the Roman times and long ages before ever the rumour of the Romans had come into these parts, men drove their cattle up into these places as the summer came on.... How haunted is this place! There have been quarrels here, hopes, children have played here and lived to be old crones and old gaffers, and died, and so it has gone on for thousands of lives. Lovers, innumerable lovers, have caressed amidst this golden broom....’

He meditated over a busy mouthful of bread and cheese.

‘We ought to have brought a tankard for that beer,’ he said.

Firmin produced a folding aluminium cup, and the king was pleased to drink.

‘I wish, sir,’ said Firmin suddenly, ‘I could induce you at least to delay your decision——’

‘It’s no good talking, Firmin,’ said the king. ‘My mind’s as clear as daylight.’

‘Sire,’ protested Firmin, with his voice full of bread and cheese and genuine emotion, ‘have you no respect for your kingship?’

The king paused before he answered with unwonted gravity. ‘It’s just because I have, Firmin, that I won’t be a puppet in this game of international politics.’ He regarded his companion for a moment and then remarked: ‘Kingship!—what do *you* know of kingship, Firmin?

‘Yes,’ cried the king to his astonished counsellor. ‘For the first time in my life I am going to be a king. I am going to lead, and lead by my own authority. For a dozen generations my family has been a set of dummies in the hands of their advisers. Advisers! Now I am going to be a real king—and I am going to—to abolish, dispose of, finish, the crown

to which I have been a slave. But what a world of paralysing shams this roaring stuff has ended! The rigid old world is in the melting-pot again, and I, who seemed to be no more than the stuffing inside a regal robe, I am a king among kings. I have to play my part at the head of things and put an end to blood and fire and idiot disorder.'

'But, sir,' protested Firmin.

'This man Leblanc is right. The whole world has got to be a Republic, one and indivisible. You know that, and my duty is to make that easy. A king should lead his people; you want me to stick on their backs like some Old Man of the Sea. To-day must be a sacrament of kings. Our trust for mankind is done with and ended. We must part our robes among them, we must part our kingship among them, and say to them all, now the king in every one must rule the world.... Have you no sense of the magnificence of this occasion? You want me, Firmin, you want me to go up there and haggle like a damned little solicitor for some price, some compensation, some qualification....'

Firmin shrugged his shoulders and assumed an expression of despair. Meanwhile, he conveyed, one must eat.

For a time neither spoke, and the king ate and turned over in his mind the phrases of the speech he intended to make to the conference. By virtue of the antiquity of his crown he was to preside, and he intended to make his presidency memorable. Reassured of his eloquence, he considered the despondent and sulky Firmin for a space.

'Firmin,' he said, 'you have idealised kingship.'

'It has been my dream, sir,' said Firmin sorrowfully, 'to serve.'

'At the levers, Firmin,' said the king.

'You are pleased to be unjust,' said Firmin, deeply hurt.

'I am pleased to be getting out of it,' said the king.

'Oh, Firmin,' he went on, 'have you no thought for me? Will you never realise that I am not only flesh and blood but an imagination—with its rights. I am a king in revolt against that fetter they put upon my head. I am a king awake. My reverend grandparents never in all their august lives had a waking moment. They loved the job that you, you advisers, gave them; they never had a doubt of it. It was like giving a doll to a woman who ought to have a child. They delighted in processions and opening things and being read addresses to, and visiting triplets and nonagenarians and all

that sort of thing. Incredibly. They used to keep albums of cuttings from all the illustrated papers showing them at it, and if the press-cutting parcels grew thin they were worried. It was all that ever worried them. But there is something atavistic in me; I hark back to unconstitutional monarchs. They christened me too retrogressively, I think. I wanted to get things done. I was bored. I might have fallen into vice, most intelligent and energetic princes do, but the palace precautions were unusually thorough. I was brought up in the purest court the world has ever seen.... Alertly pure.... So I read books, Firmin, and went about asking questions. The thing was bound to happen to one of us sooner or later. Perhaps, too, very likely I'm not vicious. I don't think I am.'

He reflected. 'No,' he said.

Firmin cleared his throat. 'I don't think you are, sir,' he said. 'You prefer——'

He stopped short. He had been going to say 'talking.' He substituted 'ideas.'

'That world of royalty!' the king went on. 'In a little while no one will understand it any more. It will become a riddle....

'Among other things, it was a world of perpetual best clothes. Everything was in its best clothes for us, and usually wearing bunting. With a cinema watching to see we took it properly. If you are a king, Firmin, and you go and look at a regiment, it instantly stops whatever it is doing, changes into full uniform and presents arms. When my august parents went in a train the coal in the tender used to be whitened. It did, Firmin, and if coal had been white instead of black I have no doubt the authorities would have blackened it. That was the spirit of our treatment. People were always walking about with their faces to us. One never saw anything in profile. One got an impression of a world that was insanely focused on ourselves. And when I began to poke my little questions into the Lord Chancellor and the archbishop and all the rest of them, about what I should see if people turned round, the general effect I produced was that I wasn't by any means displaying the Royal Tact they had expected of me....'

He meditated for a time.

'And yet, you know, there is something in the kingship, Firmin. It stiffened up my august little grandfather. It gave my grandmother a kind of awkward dignity even when she was cross—and she was very often cross. They both had a profound sense of responsibility. My poor father's health was wretched during his brief career; nobody outside the circle knows just how he screwed himself up to things. "My people expect it," he used to say of this tiresome duty or that. Most of the things they made him do were silly—it was part of a bad tradition, but there was nothing silly in the way he set

about them.... The spirit of kingship is a fine thing, Firmin; I feel it in my bones; I do not know what I might not be if I were not a king. I could die for my people, Firmin, and you couldn't. No, don't say you could die for me, because I know better. Don't think I forget my kingship, Firmin, don't imagine that. I am a king, a kingly king, by right divine. The fact that I am also a chattering young man makes not the slightest difference to that. But the proper text-book for kings, Firmin, is none of the court memoirs and Welt-Politik books you would have me read; it is old Fraser's *Golden Bough*. Have you read that, Firmin?'

Firmin had. 'Those were the authentic kings. In the end they were cut up and a bit given to everybody. They sprinkled the nations—with Kingship.'

Firmin turned himself round and faced his royal master.

'What do you intend to do, sir?' he asked. 'If you will not listen to me, what do you propose to do this afternoon?'

The king flicked crumbs from his coat.

'Manifestly war has to stop for ever, Firmin. Manifestly this can only be done by putting all the world under one government. Our crowns and flags are in the way. Manifestly they must go.'

'Yes, sir,' interrupted Firmin, 'but *what* government? I don't see what government you get by a universal abdication!'

'Well,' said the king, with his hands about his knees, '*We* shall be the government.'

'The conference?' exclaimed Firmin.

'Who else?' asked the king simply.

'It's perfectly simple,' he added to Firmin's tremendous silence.

'But,' cried Firmin, 'you must have sanctions! Will there be no form of election, for example?'

'Why should there be?' asked the king, with intelligent curiosity.

'The consent of the governed.'

'Firmin, we are just going to lay down our differences and take over government. Without any election at all. Without any sanction. The governed will show their consent by silence. If any effective opposition arises we shall ask it to come in and help. The true sanction of kingship is the grip upon the sceptre. We aren't going to

worry people to vote for us. I'm certain the mass of men does not want to be bothered with such things.... We'll contrive a way for any one interested to join in. That's quite enough in the way of democracy. Perhaps later—when things don't matter.... We shall govern all right, Firmin. Government only becomes difficult when the lawyers get hold of it, and since these troubles began the lawyers are shy. Indeed, come to think of it, I wonder where all the lawyers are.... Where are they? A lot, of course, were bagged, some of the worst ones, when they blew up my legislature. You never knew the late Lord Chancellor....

'Necessities bury rights. And create them. Lawyers live on dead rights disinterred.... We've done with that way of living. We won't have more law than a code can cover and beyond that government will be free....

'Before the sun sets to-day, Firmin, trust me, we shall have made our abdications, all of us, and declared the World Republic, supreme and indivisible. I wonder what my august grandmother would have made of it! All my rights! . . . And then we shall go on governing. What else is there to do? All over the world we shall declare that there is no longer mine or thine, but ours. China, the United States, two-thirds of Europe, will certainly fall in and obey. They will have to do so. What else can they do? Their official rulers are here with us. They won't be able to get together any sort of idea of not obeying us.... Then we shall declare that every sort of property is held in trust for the Republic....'

'But, sir!' cried Firmin, suddenly enlightened. 'Has this been arranged already?'

'My dear Firmin, do you think we have come here, all of us, to talk at large? The talking has been done for half a century. Talking and writing. We are here to set the new thing, the simple, obvious, necessary thing, going.'

He stood up.

Firmin, forgetting the habits of a score of years, remained seated.

'*Well*,' he said at last. 'And I have known nothing!'

The king smiled very cheerfully. He liked these talks with Firmin.

Section 3

That conference upon the Brissago meadows was one of the most heterogeneous collections of prominent people that has ever met together. Principalities and powers, stripped and shattered until all their pride and mystery were gone, met in a marvellous new humility. Here were kings and emperors whose capitals were lakes of flaming

destruction, statesmen whose countries had become chaos, scared politicians and financial potentates. Here were leaders of thought and learned investigators dragged reluctantly to the control of affairs. Altogether there were ninety-three of them, Leblanc's conception of the head men of the world. They had all come to the realisation of the simple truths that the indefatigable Leblanc had hammered into them; and, drawing his resources from the King of Italy, he had provisioned his conference with a generous simplicity quite in accordance with the rest of his character, and so at last was able to make his astonishing and entirely rational appeal. He had appointed King Egbert the president, he believed in this young man so firmly that he completely dominated him, and he spoke himself as a secretary might speak from the president's left hand, and evidently did not realise himself that he was telling them all exactly what they had to do. He imagined he was merely recapitulating the obvious features of the situation for their convenience. He was dressed in ill-fitting white silk clothes, and he consulted a dingy little packet of notes as he spoke. They put him out. He explained that he had never spoken from notes before, but that this occasion was exceptional.

And then King Egbert spoke as he was expected to speak, and Leblanc's spectacles moistened at that flow of generous sentiment, most amiably and lightly expressed. 'We haven't to stand on ceremony,' said the king, 'we have to govern the world. We have always pretended to govern the world and here is our opportunity.'

'Of course,' whispered Leblanc, nodding his head rapidly, 'of course.'

'The world has been smashed up, and we have to put it on its wheels again,' said King Egbert. 'And it is the simple common sense of this crisis for all to help and none to seek advantage. Is that our tone or not?'

The gathering was too old and seasoned and miscellaneous for any great displays of enthusiasm, but that was its tone, and with an astonishment that somehow became exhilarating it began to resign, repudiate, and declare its intentions. Firmin, taking notes behind his master, heard everything that had been foretold among the yellow broom, come true. With a queer feeling that he was dreaming, he assisted at the proclamation of the World State, and saw the message taken out to the wireless operators to be throbbed all round the habitable globe. 'And next,' said King Egbert, with a cheerful excitement in his voice, 'we have to get every atom of Carolinum and all the plant for making it, into our control....'

Firmin was not alone in his incredulity. Not a man there who was not a very amiable, reasonable, benevolent creature at bottom; some had been born to power and some had happened upon it, some had struggled to get it, not clearly knowing what it was

and what it implied, but none was irreconcilably set upon its retention at the price of cosmic disaster. Their minds had been prepared by circumstances and sedulously cultivated by Leblanc; and now they took the broad obvious road along which King Egbert was leading them, with a mingled conviction of strangeness and necessity. Things went very smoothly; the King of Italy explained the arrangements that had been made for the protection of the camp from any fantastic attack; a couple of thousand of aeroplanes, each carrying a sharpshooter, guarded them, and there was an excellent system of relays, and at night all the sky would be searched by scores of lights, and the admirable Leblanc gave luminous reasons for their camping just where they were and going on with their administrative duties forthwith. He knew of this place, because he had happened upon it when holiday-making with Madame Leblanc twenty years and more ago. 'There is very simple fare at present,' he explained, 'on account of the disturbed state of the countries about us. But we have excellent fresh milk, good red wine, beef, bread, salad, and lemons.... In a few days I hope to place things in the hands of a more efficient caterer....'

The members of the new world government dined at three long tables on trestles, and down the middle of these tables Leblanc, in spite of the barrenness of his menu, had contrived to have a great multitude of beautiful roses. There was similar accommodation for the secretaries and attendants at a lower level down the mountain. The assembly dined as it had debated, in the open air, and over the dark crags to the west the glowing June sunset shone upon the banquet. There was no precedency now among the ninety-three, and King Egbert found himself between a pleasant little Japanese stranger in spectacles and his cousin of Central Europe, and opposite a great Bengali leader and the President of the United States of America. Beyond the Japanese was Holsten, the old chemist, and Leblanc was a little way down the other side.

The king was still cheerfully talkative and abounded in ideas. He fell presently into an amiable controversy with the American, who seemed to feel a lack of impressiveness in the occasion.

It was ever the Transatlantic tendency, due, no doubt, to the necessity of handling public questions in a bulky and striking manner, to over-emphasise and over-accentuate, and the president was touched by his national failing. He suggested now that there should be a new era, starting from that day as the first day of the first year.

The king demurred.

'From this day forth, sir, man enters upon his heritage,' said the American.

‘Man,’ said the king, ‘is always entering upon his heritage. You Americans have a peculiar weakness for anniversaries—if you will forgive me saying so. Yes—I accuse you of a lust for dramatic effect. Everything is happening always, but you want to say this or this is the real instant in time and subordinate all the others to it.’

The American said something about an epoch-making day.

‘But surely,’ said the king, ‘you don’t want us to condemn all humanity to a world-wide annual Fourth of July for ever and ever more. On account of this harmless necessary day of declarations. No conceivable day could ever deserve that. Ah! you do not know, as I do, the devastations of the memorable. My poor grandparents were—*rubricated*. The worst of these huge celebrations is that they break up the dignified succession of one’s contemporary emotions. They interrupt. They set back. Suddenly out come the flags and fireworks, and the old enthusiasms are furbished up—and it’s sheer destruction of the proper thing that ought to be going on. Sufficient unto the day is the celebration thereof. Let the dead past bury its dead. You see, in regard to the calendar, I am for democracy and you are for aristocracy. All things I hold, are august, and have a right to be lived through on their merits. No day should be sacrificed on the grave of departed events. What do you think of it, Wilhelm?’

‘For the noble, yes, all days should be noble.’

‘Exactly my position,’ said the king, and felt pleased at what he had been saying.

And then, since the American pressed his idea, the king contrived to shift the talk from the question of celebrating the epoch they were making to the question of the probabilities that lay ahead. Here every one became diffident. They could see the world unified and at peace, but what detail was to follow from that unification they seemed indisposed to discuss. This diffidence struck the king as remarkable. He plunged upon the possibilities of science. All the huge expenditure that had hitherto gone into unproductive naval and military preparations, must now, he declared, place research upon a new footing. ‘Where one man worked we will have a thousand.’ He appealed to Holsten. ‘We have only begun to peep into these possibilities,’ he said. ‘You at any rate have sounded the vaults of the treasure house.’

‘They are unfathomable,’ smiled Holsten.

‘Man,’ said the American, with a manifest resolve to justify and reinstate himself after the flickering contradictions of the king, ‘Man, I say, is only beginning to enter upon his heritage.’

‘Tell us some of the things you believe we shall presently learn, give us an idea of the things we may presently do,’ said the king to Holsten.

Holsten opened out the vistas….

‘Science,’ the king cried presently, ‘is the new king of the world.’

‘*Our* view,’ said the president, ‘is that sovereignty resides with the people.’

‘No!’ said the king, ‘the sovereign is a being more subtle than that. And less arithmetical. Neither my family nor your emancipated people. It is something that floats about us, and above us, and through us. It is that common impersonal will and sense of necessity of which Science is the best understood and most typical aspect. It is the mind of the race. It is that which has brought us here, which has bowed us all to its demands….’

He paused and glanced down the table at Leblanc, and then re-opened at his former antagonist.

‘There is a disposition,’ said the king, ‘to regard this gathering as if it were actually doing what it appears to be doing, as if we ninety-odd men of our own free will and wisdom were unifying the world. There is a temptation to consider ourselves exceptionally fine fellows, and masterful men, and all the rest of it. We are not. I doubt if we should average out as anything abler than any other casually selected body of ninety-odd men. We are no creators, we are consequences, we are salvagers—or salvagees. The thing to-day is not ourselves but the wind of conviction that has blown us hither….’

The American had to confess he could hardly agree with the king’s estimate of their average.

‘Holsten, perhaps, and one or two others, might lift us a little,’ the king conceded. ‘But the rest of us?’

His eyes flitted once more towards Leblanc.

‘Look at Leblanc,’ he said. ‘He’s just a simple soul. There are hundreds and thousands like him. I admit, a certain dexterity, a certain lucidity, but there is not a country town in France where there is not a Leblanc or so to be found about two o’clock in its principal café. It’s just that he isn’t complicated or Super-Mannish, or any of those things that has made all he has done possible. But in happier times, don’t you think, Wilhelm, he would have remained just what his father was, a successful *épicier*, very clean, very accurate, very honest. And on holidays he would have gone out with

Madame Leblanc and her knitting in a punt with a jar of something gentle and have sat under a large reasonable green-lined umbrella and fished very neatly and successfully for gudgeon....'

The president and the Japanese prince in spectacles protested together.

'If I do him an injustice,' said the king, 'it is only because I want to elucidate my argument. I want to make it clear how small are men and days, and how great is man in comparison....'

Section 4

So it was King Egbert talked at Brissago after they had proclaimed the unity of the world. Every evening after that the assembly dined together and talked at their ease and grew accustomed to each other and sharpened each other's ideas, and every day they worked together, and really for a time believed that they were inventing a new government for the world. They discussed a constitution. But there were matters needing attention too urgently to wait for any constitution. They attended to these incidentally. The constitution it was that waited. It was presently found convenient to keep the constitution waiting indefinitely as King Egbert had foreseen, and meanwhile, with an increasing self-confidence, that council went on governing....

On this first evening of all the council's gatherings, after King Egbert had talked for a long time and drunken and praised very abundantly the simple red wine of the country that Leblanc had procured for them, he gathered about him a group of congenial spirits and fell into a discourse upon simplicity, praising it above all things and declaring that the ultimate aim of art, religion, philosophy, and science alike was to simplify. He instanced himself as a devotee to simplicity. And Leblanc he instanced as a crowning instance of the splendour of this quality. Upon that they all agreed.

When at last the company about the tables broke up, the king found himself brimming over with a peculiar affection and admiration for Leblanc, he made his way to him and drew him aside and broached what he declared was a small matter. There was, he said, a certain order in his gift that, unlike all other orders and decorations in the world, had never been corrupted. It was reserved for elderly men of supreme distinction, the acuteness of whose gifts was already touched to mellowness, and it had included the greatest names of every age so far as the advisers of his family had been able to ascertain them. At present, the king admitted, these matters of stars and badges were rather obscured by more urgent affairs, for his own part he had never set any value upon them at all, but a time might come when they would be at least interesting, and in short he wished to confer the Order of Merit upon Leblanc. His sole

motive in doing so, he added, was his strong desire to signalise his personal esteem. He laid his hand upon the Frenchman's shoulder as he said these things, with an almost brotherly affection. Leblanc received this proposal with a modest confusion that greatly enhanced the king's opinion of his admirable simplicity. He pointed out that eager as he was to snatch at the proffered distinction, it might at the present stage appear invidious, and he therefore suggested that the conferring of it should be postponed until it could be made the crown and conclusion of his services. The king was unable to shake this resolution, and the two men parted with expressions of mutual esteem.

The king then summoned Firmin in order to make a short note of a number of things that he had said during the day. But after about twenty minutes' work the sweet sleepiness of the mountain air overcame him, and he dismissed Firmin and went to bed and fell asleep at once, and slept with extreme satisfaction. He had had an active, agreeable day.

Section 5

The establishment of the new order that was thus so humanly begun, was, if one measures it by the standard of any preceding age, a rapid progress. The fighting spirit of the world was exhausted. Only here or there did fierceness linger. For long decades the combative side in human affairs had been monstrously exaggerated by the accidents of political separation. This now became luminously plain. An enormous proportion of the force that sustained armaments had been nothing more aggressive than the fear of war and warlike neighbours. It is doubtful if any large section of the men actually enlisted for fighting ever at any time really hungered and thirsted for bloodshed and danger. That kind of appetite was probably never very strong in the species after the savage stage was past. The army was a profession, in which killing had become a disagreeable possibility rather than an eventful certainty. If one reads the old newspapers and periodicals of that time, which did so much to keep militarism alive, one finds very little about glory and adventure and a constant harping on the disagreeableness of invasion and subjugation. In one word, militarism was funk. The belligerent resolution of the armed Europe of the twentieth century was the resolution of a fiercely frightened sheep to plunge. And now that its weapons were exploding in its hands, Europe was only too eager to drop them, and abandon this fancied refuge of violence.

For a time the whole world had been shocked into frankness; nearly all the clever people who had hitherto sustained the ancient belligerent separations had now been brought to realise the need for simplicity of attitude and openness of mind; and in this

atmosphere of moral renascence, there was little attempt to get negotiable advantages out of resistance to the new order. Human beings are foolish enough no doubt, but few have stopped to haggle in a fire-escape. The council had its way with them. The band of 'patriots' who seized the laboratories and arsenal just outside Osaka and tried to rouse Japan to revolt against inclusion in the Republic of Mankind, found they had miscalculated the national pride and met the swift vengeance of their own countrymen. That fight in the arsenal was a vivid incident in this closing chapter of the history of war. To the last the 'patriots' were undecided whether, in the event of a defeat, they would explode their supply of atomic bombs or not. They were fighting with swords outside the iridium doors, and the moderates of their number were at bay and on the verge of destruction, only ten, indeed, remained unwounded, when the republicans burst in to the rescue....

Section 6

One single monarch held out against the general acquiescence in the new rule, and that was that strange survival of mediaevalism, the 'Slavic Fox,' the King of the Balkans. He debated and delayed his submissions. He showed an extraordinary combination of cunning and temerity in his evasion of the repeated summonses from Brissago. He affected ill-health and a great preoccupation with his new official mistress, for his semi-barbaric court was arranged on the best romantic models. His tactics were ably seconded by Doctor Pestovitch, his chief minister. Failing to establish his claims to complete independence, King Ferdinand Charles annoyed the conference by a proposal to be treated as a protected state. Finally he professed an unconvincing submission, and put a mass of obstacles in the way of the transfer of his national officials to the new government. In these things he was enthusiastically supported by his subjects, still for the most part an illiterate peasantry, passionately if confusedly patriotic, and so far with no practical knowledge of the effect of atomic bombs. More particularly he retained control of all the Balkan aeroplanes.

For once the extreme *naïveté* of Leblanc seems to have been mitigated by duplicity. He went on with the general pacification of the world as if the Balkan submission was made in absolute good faith, and he announced the disbandment of the force of aeroplanes that hitherto guarded the council at Brissago upon the approaching fifteenth of July. But instead he doubled the number upon duty on that eventful day, and made various arrangements for their disposition. He consulted certain experts, and when he took King Egbert into his confidence there was something in his neat and explicit foresight that brought back to that ex-monarch's mind his half-forgotten fantasy of Leblanc as a fisherman under a green umbrella.

About five o'clock in the morning of the seventeenth of July one of the outer sentinels of the Brissago fleet, which was soaring unobtrusively over the lower end of the lake of Garda, sighted and hailed a strange aeroplane that was flying westward, and, failing to get a satisfactory reply, set its wireless apparatus talking and gave chase. A swarm of consorts appeared very promptly over the westward mountains, and before the unknown aeroplane had sighted Como, it had a dozen eager attendants closing in upon it. Its driver seems to have hesitated, dropped down among the mountains, and then turned southward in flight, only to find an intercepting biplane sweeping across his bows. He then went round into the eye of the rising sun, and passed within a hundred yards of his original pursuer.

The sharpshooter therein opened fire at once, and showed an intelligent grasp of the situation by disabling the passenger first. The man at the wheel must have heard his companion cry out behind him, but he was too intent on getting away to waste even a glance behind. Twice after that he must have heard shots. He let his engine go, he crouched down, and for twenty minutes he must have steered in the continual expectation of a bullet. It never came, and when at last he glanced round, three great planes were close upon him, and his companion, thrice hit, lay dead across his bombs. His followers manifestly did not mean either to upset or shoot him, but inexorably they drove him down, down. At last he was curving and flying a hundred yards or less over the level fields of rice and maize. Ahead of him and dark against the morning sunrise was a village with a very tall and slender campanile and a line of cable bearing metal standards that he could not clear. He stopped his engine abruptly and dropped flat. He may have hoped to get at the bombs when he came down, but his pitiless pursuers drove right over him and shot him as he fell.

Three other aeroplanes curved down and came to rest amidst grass close by the smashed machine. Their passengers descended, and ran, holding their light rifles in their hands towards the *débris* and the two dead men. The coffin-shaped box that had occupied the centre of the machine had broken, and three black objects, each with two handles like the ears of a pitcher, lay peacefully amidst the litter.

These objects were so tremendously important in the eyes of their captors that they disregarded the two dead men who lay bloody and broken amidst the wreckage as they might have disregarded dead frogs by a country pathway.

'By God,' cried the first. 'Here they are!'

'And unbroken!' said the second.

'I've never seen the things before,' said the first.

‘Bigger than I thought,’ said the second.

The third comer arrived. He stared for a moment at the bombs and then turned his eyes to the dead man with a crushed chest who lay in a muddy place among the green stems under the centre of the machine.

‘One can take no risks,’ he said, with a faint suggestion of apology.

The other two now also turned to the victims. ‘We must signal,’ said the first man. A shadow passed between them and the sun, and they looked up to see the aeroplane that had fired the last shot. ‘Shall we signal?’ came a megaphone hail.

‘Three bombs,’ they answered together.

‘Where do they come from?’ asked the megaphone.

The three sharpshooters looked at each other and then moved towards the dead men. One of them had an idea. ‘Signal that first,’ he said, ‘while we look.’ They were joined by their aviators for the search, and all six men began a hunt that was necessarily brutal in its haste, for some indication of identity. They examined the men’s pockets, their bloodstained clothes, the machine, the framework. They turned the bodies over and flung them aside. There was not a tattoo mark.... Everything was elaborately free of any indication of its origin.

‘We can’t find out!’ they called at last.

‘Not a sign?’

‘Not a sign.’

‘I’m coming down,’ said the man overhead....

Section 7

The Slavic fox stood upon a metal balcony in his picturesque Art Nouveau palace that gave upon the precipice that overhung his bright little capital, and beside him stood Pestovitch, grizzled and cunning, and now full of an ill-suppressed excitement. Behind them the window opened into a large room, richly decorated in aluminium and crimson enamel, across which the king, as he glanced ever and again over his shoulder with a gesture of inquiry, could see through the two open doors of a little azure walled antechamber the wireless operator in the turret working at his incessant transcription. Two pompously uniformed messengers waited listlessly in this apartment. The room was furnished with a stately dignity, and had in the middle of it a big green baize-covered table with the massive white metal inkpots and antiquated

sandboxes natural to a new but romantic monarchy. It was the king's council chamber and about it now, in attitudes of suspended intrigue, stood the half-dozen ministers who constituted his cabinet. They had been summoned for twelve o'clock, but still at half-past twelve the king loitered in the balcony and seemed to be waiting for some news that did not come.

The king and his minister had talked at first in whispers; they had fallen silent, for they found little now to express except a vague anxiety. Away there on the mountain side were the white metal roofs of the long farm buildings beneath which the bomb factory and the bombs were hidden. (The chemist who had made all these for the king had died suddenly after the declaration of Brissago.) Nobody knew of that store of mischief now but the king and his adviser and three heavily faithful attendants; the aviators who waited now in the midday blaze with their bomb-carrying machines and their passenger bomb-throwers in the exercising grounds of the motor-cyclist barracks below were still in ignorance of the position of the ammunition they were presently to take up. It was time they started if the scheme was to work as Pestovitch had planned it. It was a magnificent plan. It aimed at no less than the Empire of the World. The government of idealists and professors away there at Brissago was to be blown to fragments, and then east, west, north, and south those aeroplanes would go swarming over a world that had disarmed itself, to proclaim Ferdinand Charles, the new Cæsar, the Master, Lord of the Earth. It was a magnificent plan. But the tension of this waiting for news of the success of the first blow was—considerable.

The Slavic fox was of a pallid fairness, he had a remarkably long nose, a thick, short moustache, and small blue eyes that were a little too near together to be pleasant. It was his habit to worry his moustache with short, nervous tugs whenever his restless mind troubled him, and now this motion was becoming so incessant that it irked Pestovitch beyond the limits of endurance.

'I will go,' said the minister, 'and see what the trouble is with the wireless. They give us nothing, good or bad.'

Left to himself, the king could worry his moustache without stint; he leant his elbows forward on the balcony and gave both of his long white hands to the work, so that he looked like a pale dog gnawing a bone. Suppose they caught his men, what should he do? Suppose they caught his men?

The clocks in the light gold-capped belfries of the town below presently intimated the half-hour after midday.

Of course, he and Pestovitch had thought it out. Even if they had caught those men, they were pledged to secrecy.... Probably they would be killed in the catching.... One could deny anyhow, deny and deny.

And then he became aware of half a dozen little shining specks very high in the blue.... Pestovitch came out to him presently. 'The government messages, sire, have all dropped into cipher,' he said. 'I have set a man——'

'*look!*' interrupted the king, and pointed upward with a long, lean finger.

Pestovitch followed that indication and then glanced for one questioning moment at the white face before him.

'We have to face it out, sire,' he said.

For some moments they watched the steep spirals of the descending messengers, and then they began a hasty consultation....

They decided that to be holding a council upon the details of an ultimate surrender to Brissago was as innocent-looking a thing as the king could well be doing, and so, when at last the ex-king Egbert, whom the council had sent as its envoy, arrived upon the scene, he discovered the king almost theatrically posed at the head of his councillors in the midst of his court. The door upon the wireless operators was shut.

The ex-king from Brissago came like a draught through the curtains and attendants that gave a wide margin to King Ferdinand's state, and the familiar confidence of his manner belied a certain hardness in his eye. Firmin trotted behind him, and no one else was with him. And as Ferdinand Charles rose to greet him, there came into the heart of the Balkan king again that same chilly feeling that he had felt upon the balcony—and it passed at the careless gestures of his guest. For surely any one might outwit this foolish talker who, for a mere idea and at the command of a little French rationalist in spectacles, had thrown away the most ancient crown in all the world.

One must deny, deny....

And then slowly and quite tiresomely he realised that there was nothing to deny. His visitor, with an amiable ease, went on talking about everything in debate between himself and Brissago except——.

Could it be that they had been delayed? Could it be that they had had to drop for repairs and were still uncaptured? Could it be that even now while this fool babbled, they were over there among the mountains heaving their deadly charge over the side of the aeroplane?

Strange hopes began to lift the tail of the Slavic fox again.

What was the man saying? One must talk to him anyhow until one knew. At any moment the little brass door behind him might open with the news of Brissago blown to atoms. Then it would be a delightful relief to the present tension to arrest this chatterer forthwith. He might be killed perhaps. What?

The king was repeating his observation. ‘They have a ridiculous fancy that your confidence is based on the possession of atomic bombs.’

King Ferdinand Charles pulled himself together. He protested.

‘Oh, quite so,’ said the ex-king, ‘quite so.’

‘What grounds?’ The ex-king permitted himself a gesture and the ghost of a chuckle—why the devil should he chuckle? ‘Practically none,’ he said. ‘But of course with these things one has to be so careful.’

And then again for an instant something—like the faintest shadow of derision—gleamed out of the envoy’s eyes and recalled that chilly feeling to King Ferdinand’s spine.

Some kindred depression had come to Pestovitch, who had been watching the drawn intensity of Firmin’s face. He came to the help of his master, who, he feared, might protest too much.

‘A search!’ cried the king. ‘An embargo on our aeroplanes.’

‘Only a temporary expedient,’ said the ex-king Egbert, ‘while the search is going on.’

The king appealed to his council.

‘The people will never permit it, sire,’ said a bustling little man in a gorgeous uniform.

‘You’ll have to make ‘em,’ said the ex-king, genially addressing all the councillors.

King Ferdinand glanced at the closed brass door through which no news would come.

‘When would you want to have this search?’

The ex-king was radiant. ‘We couldn’t possibly do it until the day after to-morrow,’ he said.

‘Just the capital?’

‘Where else?’ asked the ex-king, still more cheerfully.

‘For my own part,’ said the ex-king confidentially, ‘I think the whole business ridiculous. Who would be such a fool as to hide atomic bombs? Nobody. Certain hanging if he’s caught—certain, and almost certain blowing up if he isn’t. But nowadays I have to take orders like the rest of the world. And here I am.’

The king thought he had never met such detestable geniality. He glanced at Pestovitch, who nodded almost imperceptibly. It was well, anyhow, to have a fool to deal with. They might have sent a diplomatist. ‘Of course,’ said the king, ‘I recognise the overpowering force—and a kind of logic—in these orders from Brissago.’

‘I knew you would,’ said the ex-king, with an air of relief, ‘and so let us arrange——’

They arranged with a certain informality. No Balkan aeroplane was to adventure into the air until the search was concluded, and meanwhile the fleets of the world government would soar and circle in the sky. The towns were to be placarded with offers of reward to any one who would help in the discovery of atomic bombs….

‘You will sign that,’ said the ex-king.

‘Why?’

‘To show that we aren’t in any way hostile to you.’

Pestovitch nodded ‘yes’ to his master.

‘And then, you see,’ said the ex-king in that easy way of his, ‘we’ll have a lot of men here, borrow help from your police, and run through all your things. And then everything will be over. Meanwhile, if I may be your guest….’ When presently Pestovitch was alone with the king again, he found him in a state of jangling emotions. His spirit was tossing like a wind-whipped sea. One moment he was exalted and full of contempt for ‘that ass’ and his search; the next he was down in a pit of dread. ‘They will find them, Pestovitch, and then he’ll hang us.’

‘Hang us?’

The king put his long nose into his councillor’s face. ‘That grinning brute *wants* to hang us,’ he said. ‘And hang us he will, if we give him a shadow of a chance.’

‘But all their Modern State Civilisation!’

‘Do you think there’s any pity in that crew of Godless, Vivisecting Prigs?’ cried this last king of romance. ‘Do you think, Pestovitch, they understand anything of a high ambition or a splendid dream? Do you think that our gallant and sublime adventure has any appeal to them? Here am I, the last and greatest and most romantic of the

Cæsars, and do you think they will miss the chance of hanging me like a dog if they can, killing me like a rat in a hole? And that renegade! He who was once an anointed king! . . .

‘I hate that sort of eye that laughs and keeps hard,’ said the king.

‘I won’t sit still here and be caught like a fascinated rabbit,’ said the king in conclusion. ‘We must shift those bombs.’

‘Risk it,’ said Pestovitch. ‘Leave them alone.’

‘No,’ said the king. ‘Shift them near the frontier. Then while they watch us here—they will always watch us here now—we can buy an aeroplane abroad, and pick them up....’

The king was in a feverish, irritable mood all that evening, but he made his plans nevertheless with infinite cunning. They must get the bombs away; there must be a couple of atomic hay lorries, the bombs could be hidden under the hay.... Pestovitch went and came, instructing trusty servants, planning and replanning.... The king and the ex-king talked very pleasantly of a number of subjects. All the while at the back of King Ferdinand Charles’s mind fretted the mystery of his vanished aeroplane. There came no news of its capture, and no news of its success. At any moment all that power at the back of his visitor might crumble away and vanish....

It was past midnight, when the king, in a cloak and slouch hat that might equally have served a small farmer, or any respectable middle-class man, slipped out from an inconspicuous service gate on the eastward side of his palace into the thickly wooded gardens that sloped in a series of terraces down to the town. Pestovitch and his guard-valet Peter, both wrapped about in a similar disguise, came out among the laurels that bordered the pathway and joined him. It was a clear, warm night, but the stars seemed unusually little and remote because of the aeroplanes, each trailing a searchlight, that drove hither and thither across the blue. One great beam seemed to rest on the king for a moment as he came out of the palace; then instantly and reassuringly it had swept away. But while they were still in the palace gardens another found them and looked at them.

‘They see us,’ cried the king.

‘They make nothing of us,’ said Pestovitch.

The king glanced up and met a calm, round eye of light, that seemed to wink at him and vanish, leaving him blinded....

The three men went on their way. Near the little gate in the garden railings that Pestovitch had caused to be unlocked, the king paused under the shadow of an ilex and looked back at the place. It was very high and narrow, a twentieth-century rendering of mediaevalism, mediaevalism in steel and bronze and sham stone and opaque glass. Against the sky it splashed a confusion of pinnacles. High up in the eastward wing were the windows of the apartments of the ex-king Egbert. One of them was brightly lit now, and against the light a little black figure stood very still and looked out upon the night.

The king snarled.

‘He little knows how we slip through his fingers,’ said Pestovitch.

And as he spoke they saw the ex-king stretch out his arms slowly, like one who yawns, knuckle his eyes and turn inward—no doubt to his bed.

Down through the ancient winding back streets of his capital hurried the king, and at an appointed corner a shabby atomic-automobile waited for the three. It was a hackney carriage of the lowest grade, with dinted metal panels and deflated cushions. The driver was one of the ordinary drivers of the capital, but beside him sat the young secretary of Pestovitch, who knew the way to the farm where the bombs were hidden.

The automobile made its way through the narrow streets of the old town, which were still lit and uneasy—for the fleet of airships overhead had kept the cafés open and people abroad—over the great new bridge, and so by straggling outskirts to the country. And all through his capital the king who hoped to outdo Cæsar, sat back and was very still, and no one spoke. And as they got out into the dark country they became aware of the searchlights wandering over the country-side like the uneasy ghosts of giants. The king sat forward and looked at these flitting whitenesses, and every now and then peered up to see the flying ships overhead.

‘I don’t like them,’ said the king.

Presently one of these patches of moonlight came to rest about them and seemed to be following their automobile. The king drew back.

‘The things are confoundedly noiseless,’ said the king. ‘It’s like being stalked by lean white cats.’

He peered again. ‘That fellow is watching us,’ he said.

And then suddenly he gave way to panic. ‘Pestovitch,’ he said, clutching his minister’s arm, ‘they are watching us. I’m not going through with this. They are watching us. I’m going back.’

Pestovitch remonstrated. ‘Tell him to go back,’ said the king, and tried to open the window. For a few moments there was a grim struggle in the automobile; a gripping of wrists and a blow. ‘I can’t go through with it,’ repeated the king, ‘I can’t go through with it.’

‘But they’ll hang us,’ said Pestovitch.

‘Not if we were to give up now. Not if we were to surrender the bombs. It is you who brought me into this....’

At last Pestovitch compromised. There was an inn perhaps half a mile from the farm. They could alight there and the king could get brandy, and rest his nerves for a time. And if he still thought fit to go back he could go back.

‘See,’ said Pestovitch, ‘the light has gone again.’

The king peered up. ‘I believe he’s following us without a light,’ said the king.

In the little old dirty inn the king hung doubtful for a time, and was for going back and throwing himself on the mercy of the council. ‘If there is a council,’ said Pestovitch. ‘By this time your bombs may have settled it.

‘But if so, these infernal aeroplanes would go.’

‘They may not know yet.’

‘But, Pestovitch, why couldn’t you do all this without me?’

Pestovitch made no answer for a moment. ‘I was for leaving the bombs in their place,’ he said at last, and went to the window. About their conveyance shone a circle of bright light. Pestovitch had a brilliant idea. ‘I will send my secretary out to make a kind of dispute with the driver. Something that will make them watch up above there. Meanwhile you and I and Peter will go out by the back way and up by the hedges to the farm....’

It was worthy of his subtle reputation and it answered passing well.

In ten minutes they were tumbling over the wall of the farm-yard, wet, muddy, and breathless, but unobserved. But as they ran towards the barns the king gave vent to something between a groan and a curse, and all about them shone the light—and passed.

But had it passed at once or lingered for just a second?

‘They didn’t see us,’ said Peter.

‘I don’t think they saw us,’ said the king, and stared as the light went swooping up the mountain side, hung for a second about a hayrick, and then came pouring back.

‘In the barn!’ cried the king.

He bruised his shin against something, and then all three men were inside the huge steel-girdered barn in which stood the two motor hay lorries that were to take the bombs away. Kurt and Abel, the two brothers of Peter, had brought the lorries thither in daylight. They had the upper half of the loads of hay thrown off, ready to cover the bombs, so soon as the king should show the hiding-place. ‘There’s a sort of pit here,’ said the king. ‘Don’t light another lantern. This key of mine releases a ring....’

For a time scarcely a word was spoken in the darkness of the barn. There was the sound of a slab being lifted and then of feet descending a ladder into a pit. Then whispering and then heavy breathing as Kurt came struggling up with the first of the hidden bombs.

‘We shall do it yet,’ said the king. And then he gasped. ‘Curse that light. Why in the name of Heaven didn’t we shut the barn door?’ For the great door stood wide open and all the empty, lifeless yard outside and the door and six feet of the floor of the barn were in the blue glare of an inquiring searchlight.

‘Shut the door, Peter,’ said Pestovitch.

‘No,’ cried the king, too late, as Peter went forward into the light. ‘Don’t show yourself!’ cried the king. Kurt made a step forward and plucked his brother back. For a time all five men stood still. It seemed that light would never go and then abruptly it was turned off, leaving them blinded. ‘Now,’ said the king uneasily, ‘now shut the door.’

‘Not completely,’ cried Pestovitch. ‘Leave a chink for us to go out by....’

It was hot work shifting those bombs, and the king worked for a time like a common man. Kurt and Abel carried the great things up and Peter brought them to the carts, and the king and Pestovitch helped him to place them among the hay. They made as little noise as they could....

‘Ssh!’ cried the king. ‘What’s that?’

But Kurt and Abel did not hear, and came blundering up the ladder with the last of the load.

‘Ssh!’ Peter ran forward to them with a whispered remonstrance. Now they were still.

The barn door opened a little wider, and against the dim blue light outside they saw the black shape of a man.

‘Any one here?’ he asked, speaking with an Italian accent.

The king broke into a cold perspiration. Then Pestovitch answered: ‘Only a poor farmer loading hay,’ he said, and picked up a huge hay fork and went forward softly.

‘You load your hay at a very bad time and in a very bad light,’ said the man at the door, peering in. ‘Have you no electric light here?’

Then suddenly he turned on an electric torch, and as he did so Pestovitch sprang forward. ‘Get out of my barn!’ he cried, and drove the fork full at the intruder’s chest. He had a vague idea that so he might stab the man to silence. But the man shouted loudly as the prongs pierced him and drove him backward, and instantly there was a sound of feet running across the yard.

‘Bombs,’ cried the man upon the ground, struggling with the prongs in his hand, and as Pestovitch staggered forward into view with the force of his own thrust, he was shot through the body by one of the two new-comers.

The man on the ground was badly hurt but plucky. ‘Bombs,’ he repeated, and struggled up into a kneeling position and held his electric torch full upon the face of the king. ‘Shoot them,’ he cried, coughing and spitting blood, so that the halo of light round the king’s head danced about.

For a moment in that shivering circle of light the two men saw the king kneeling up in the cart and Peter on the barn floor beside him. The old fox looked at them sideways—snared, a white-faced evil thing. And then, as with a faltering suicidal heroism, he leant forward over the bomb before him, they fired together and shot him through the head.

The upper part of his face seemed to vanish.

‘Shoot them,’ cried the man who had been stabbed. ‘Shoot them all!’

And then his light went out, and he rolled over with a groan at the feet of his comrades.

But each carried a light of his own, and in another moment everything in the barn was visible again. They shot Peter even as he held up his hands in sign of surrender.

Kurt and Abel at the head of the ladder hesitated for a moment, and then plunged backward into the pit. ‘If we don’t kill them,’ said one of the sharpshooters, ‘they’ll blow us to rags. They’ve gone down that hatchway. Come! . . .

‘Here they are. Hands up! I say. Hold your light while I shoot....’

Section 8

It was still quite dark when his valet and Firmin came together and told the ex-king Egbert that the business was settled.

He started up into a sitting position on the side of his bed.

‘Did he go out?’ asked the ex-king.

‘He is dead,’ said Firmin. ‘He was shot.’

The ex-king reflected. ‘That’s about the best thing that could have happened,’ he said. ‘Where are the bombs? In that farm-house on the opposite hill-side! Why! the place is in sight! Let us go. I’ll dress. Is there any one in the place, Firmin, to get us a cup of coffee?’

Through the hungry twilight of the dawn the ex-king’s automobile carried him to the farm-house where the last rebel king was lying among his bombs. The rim of the sky flashed, the east grew bright, and the sun was just rising over the hills when King Egbert reached the farm-yard. There he found the hay lorries drawn out from the barn with the dreadful bombs still packed upon them. A couple of score of aviators held the yard, and outside a few peasants stood in a little group and stared, ignorant as yet of what had happened. Against the stone wall of the farm-yard five bodies were lying neatly side by side, and Pestovitch had an expression of surprise on his face and the king was chiefly identifiable by his long white hands and his blonde moustache. The wounded aeronaut had been carried down to the inn. And after the ex-king had given directions in what manner the bombs were to be taken to the new special laboratories above Zurich, where they could be unpacked in an atmosphere of chlorine, he turned to these five still shapes.

Their five pairs of feet stuck out with a curious stiff unanimity....

‘What else was there to do?’ he said in answer to some internal protest.

‘I wonder, Firmin, if there are any more of them?’

‘Bombs, sir?’ asked Firmin.

‘No, such kings....

‘The pitiful folly of it!’ said the ex-king, following his thoughts. ‘Firmin, as an ex-professor of International Politics, I think it falls to you to bury them. There? . . . No, don’t put them near the well. People will have to drink from that well. Bury them over there, some way off in the field.’

CHAPTER THE FOURTH
THE NEW PHASE

Section 1

The task that lay before the Assembly of Brissago, viewed as we may view it now from the clarifying standpoint of things accomplished, was in its broad issues a simple one. Essentially it was to place social organisation upon the new footing that the swift, accelerated advance of human knowledge had rendered necessary. The council was gathered together with the haste of a salvage expedition, and it was confronted with wreckage; but the wreckage was irreparable wreckage, and the only possibilities of the case were either the relapse of mankind to the agricultural barbarism from which it had emerged so painfully or the acceptance of achieved science as the basis of a new social order. The old tendencies of human nature, suspicion, jealousy, particularism, and belligerency, were incompatible with the monstrous destructive power of the new appliances the inhuman logic of science had produced. The equilibrium could be restored only by civilisation destroying itself down to a level at which modern apparatus could no longer be produced, or by human nature adapting itself in its institutions to the new conditions. It was for the latter alternative that the assembly existed.

Sooner or later this choice would have confronted mankind. The sudden development of atomic science did but precipitate and render rapid and dramatic a clash between the new and the customary that had been gathering since ever the first flint was chipped or the first fire built together. From the day when man contrived himself a tool and suffered another male to draw near him, he ceased to be altogether a thing of instinct and untroubled convictions. From that day forth a widening breach can be traced between his egotistical passions and the social need. Slowly he adapted himself to the life of the homestead, and his passionate impulses widened out to the demands of the clan and the tribe. But widen though his impulses might, the latent hunter and wanderer and wonderer in his imagination outstripped their development. He was never quite subdued to the soil nor quite tamed to the home. Everywhere it needed teaching and the priest to keep him within the bounds of the plough-life and the beast-tending. Slowly a vast system of traditional imperatives superposed itself

upon his instincts, imperatives that were admirably fitted to make him that cultivator, that cattle-mincer, who was for twice ten thousand years the normal man.

And, unpremeditated, undesired, out of the accumulations of his tilling came civilisation. Civilisation was the agricultural surplus. It appeared as trade and tracks and roads, it pushed boats out upon the rivers and presently invaded the seas, and within its primitive courts, within temples grown rich and leisurely and amidst the gathering medley of the seaport towns rose speculation and philosophy and science, and the beginning of the new order that has at last established itself as human life. Slowly at first, as we traced it, and then with an accumulating velocity, the new powers were fabricated. Man as a whole did not seek them nor desire them; they were thrust into his hand. For a time men took up and used these new things and the new powers inadvertently as they came to him, recking nothing of the consequences. For endless generations change led him very gently. But when he had been led far enough, change quickened the pace. It was with a series of shocks that he realised at last that he was living the old life less and less and a new life more and more.

Already before the release of atomic energy the tensions between the old way of living and the new were intense. They were far intenser than they had been even at the collapse of the Roman imperial system. On the one hand was the ancient life of the family and the small community and the petty industry, on the other was a new life on a larger scale, with remoter horizons and a strange sense of purpose. Already it was growing clear that men must live on one side or the other. One could not have little tradespeople and syndicated businesses in the same market, sleeping carters and motor trolleys on the same road, bows and arrows and aeroplane sharpshooters in the same army, or illiterate peasant industries and power-driven factories in the same world. And still less it was possible that one could have the ideas and ambitions and greed and jealousy of peasants equipped with the vast appliances of the new age. If there had been no atomic bombs to bring together most of the directing intelligence of the world to that hasty conference at Brissago, there would still have been, extended over great areas and a considerable space of time perhaps, a less formal conference of responsible and understanding people upon the perplexities of this world-wide opposition. If the work of Holsten had been spread over centuries and imparted to the world by imperceptible degrees, it would nevertheless have made it necessary for men to take counsel upon and set a plan for the future. Indeed already there had been accumulating for a hundred years before the crisis a literature of foresight; there was a whole mass of ‘Modern State’ scheming available for the conference to go upon. These bombs did but accentuate and dramatise an already developing problem.

Section 2

This assembly was no leap of exceptional minds and super-intelligences into the control of affairs. It was teachable, its members trailed ideas with them to the gathering, but these were the consequences of the 'moral shock' the bombs had given humanity, and there is no reason for supposing its individual personalities were greatly above the average. It would be possible to cite a thousand instances of error and inefficiency in its proceedings due to the forgetfulness, irritability, or fatigue of its members. It experimented considerably and blundered often. Excepting Holsten, whose gift was highly specialised, it is questionable whether there was a single man of the first order of human quality in the gathering. But it had a modest fear of itself, and a consequent directness that gave it a general distinction. There was, of course, a noble simplicity about Leblanc, but even of him it may be asked whether he was not rather good and honest-minded than in the fuller sense great.

The ex-king had wisdom and a certain romantic dash, he was a man among thousands, even if he was not a man among millions, but his memoirs, and indeed his decision to write memoirs, give the quality of himself and his associates. The book makes admirable but astonishing reading. Therein he takes the great work the council was doing for granted as a little child takes God. It is as if he had no sense of it at all. He tells amusing trivialities about his cousin Wilhelm and his secretary Firmin, he pokes fun at the American president, who was, indeed, rather a little accident of the political machine than a representative American, and he gives a long description of how he was lost for three days in the mountains in the company of the only Japanese member, a loss that seems to have caused no serious interruption of the work of the council....

The Brissago conference has been written about time after time, as though it were a gathering of the very flower of humanity. Perched up there by the freak or wisdom of Leblanc, it had a certain Olympian quality, and the natural tendency of the human mind to elaborate such a resemblance would have us give its members the likenesses of gods. It would be equally reasonable to compare it to one of those enforced meetings upon the mountain-tops that must have occurred in the opening phases of the Deluge. The strength of the council lay not in itself but in the circumstances that had quickened its intelligence, dispelled its vanities, and emancipated it from traditional ambitions and antagonisms. It was stripped of the accumulation of centuries, a naked government with all that freedom of action that nakedness affords. And its problems were set before it with a plainness that was out of all comparison with the complicated and perplexing intimations of the former time.

The world on which the council looked did indeed present a task quite sufficiently immense and altogether too urgent for any wanton indulgence in internal dissension.

It may be interesting to sketch in a few phrases the condition of mankind at the close of the period of warring states, in the year of crisis that followed the release of atomic power. It was a world extraordinarily limited when one measures it by later standards, and it was now in a state of the direst confusion and distress.

It must be remembered that at this time men had still to spread into enormous areas of the land surface of the globe. There were vast mountain wildernesses, forest wildernesses, sandy deserts, and frozen lands. Men still clung closely to water and arable soil in temperate or sub-tropical climates, they lived abundantly only in river valleys, and all their great cities had grown upon large navigable rivers or close to ports upon the sea. Over great areas even of this suitable land flies and mosquitoes, armed with infection, had so far defeated human invasion, and under their protection the virgin forests remained untouched. Indeed, the whole world even in its most crowded districts was filthy with flies and swarming with needless insect life to an extent which is now almost incredible. A population map of the world in 1950 would have followed seashore and river course so closely in its darker shading as to give an impression that *homo sapiens* was an amphibious animal. His roads and railways lay also along the lower contours, only here and there to pierce some mountain barrier or reach some holiday resort did they clamber above 3000 feet. And across the ocean his traffic passed in definite lines; there were hundreds of thousands of square miles of ocean no ship ever traversed except by mischance.

Into the mysteries of the solid globe under his feet he had not yet pierced for five miles, and it was still not forty years since, with a tragic pertinacity, he had clambered to the poles of the earth. The limitless mineral wealth of the Arctic and Antarctic circles was still buried beneath vast accumulations of immemorial ice, and the secret riches of the inner zones of the crust were untapped and indeed unsuspected. The higher mountain regions were known only to a sprinkling of guide-led climbers and the frequenters of a few gaunt hotels, and the vast rainless belts of land that lay across the continental masses, from Gobi to Sahara and along the backbone of America, with their perfect air, their daily baths of blazing sunshine, their nights of cool serenity and glowing stars, and their reservoirs of deep-lying water, were as yet only desolations of fear and death to the common imagination.

And now under the shock of the atomic bombs, the great masses of population which had gathered into the enormous dingy town centres of that period were dispossessed and scattered disastrously over the surrounding rural areas. It was as if some brutal force, grown impatient at last at man's blindness, had with the deliberate intention of a rearrangement of population upon more wholesome lines, shaken the world. The great industrial regions and the large cities that had escaped the bombs were,

because of their complete economic collapse, in almost as tragic plight as those that blazed, and the country-side was disordered by a multitude of wandering and lawless strangers. In some parts of the world famine raged, and in many regions there was plague.... The plains of north India, which had become more and more dependent for the general welfare on the railways and that great system of irrigation canals which the malignant section of the patriots had destroyed, were in a state of peculiar distress, whole villages lay dead together, no man heeding, and the very tigers and panthers that preyed upon the emaciated survivors crawled back infected into the jungle to perish. Large areas of China were a prey to brigand bands....

It is a remarkable thing that no complete contemporary account of the explosion of the atomic bombs survives. There are, of course, innumerable allusions and partial records, and it is from these that subsequent ages must piece together the image of these devastations.

The phenomena, it must be remembered, changed greatly from day to day, and even from hour to hour, as the exploding bomb shifted its position, threw off fragments or came into contact with water or a fresh texture of soil. Barnet, who came within forty miles of Paris early in October, is concerned chiefly with his account of the social confusion of the country-side and the problems of his command, but he speaks of heaped cloud masses of steam. 'All along the sky to the south-west' and of a red glare beneath these at night. Parts of Paris were still burning, and numbers of people were camped in the fields even at this distance watching over treasured heaps of salvaged loot. He speaks too of the distant rumbling of the explosion—'like trains going over iron bridges.'

Other descriptions agree with this; they all speak of the 'continuous reverberations,' or of the 'thudding and hammering,' or some such phrase; and they all testify to a huge pall of steam, from which rain would fall suddenly in torrents and amidst which lightning played. Drawing nearer to Paris an observer would have found the salvage camps increasing in number and blocking up the villages, and large numbers of people, often starving and ailing, camping under improvised tents because there was no place for them to go. The sky became more and more densely overcast until at last it blotted out the light of day and left nothing but a dull red glare 'extraordinarily depressing to the spirit.' In this dull glare, great numbers of people were still living, clinging to their houses and in many cases subsisting in a state of partial famine upon the produce in their gardens and the stores in the shops of the provision dealers.

Coming in still closer, the investigator would have reached the police cordon, which was trying to check the desperate enterprise of those who would return to their homes or rescue their more valuable possessions within the ‘zone of imminent danger.’

That zone was rather arbitrarily defined. If our spectator could have got permission to enter it, he would have entered also a zone of uproar, a zone of perpetual thunderings, lit by a strange purplish-red light, and quivering and swaying with the incessant explosion of the radio-active substance. Whole blocks of buildings were alight and burning fiercely, the trembling, ragged flames looking pale and ghastly and attenuated in comparison with the full-bodied crimson glare beyond. The shells of other edifices already burnt rose, pierced by rows of window sockets against the red-lit mist.

Every step farther would have been as dangerous as a descent within the crater of an active volcano. These spinning, boiling bomb centres would shift or break unexpectedly into new regions, great fragments of earth or drain or masonry suddenly caught by a jet of disruptive force might come flying by the explorer’s head, or the ground yawn a fiery grave beneath his feet. Few who adventured into these areas of destruction and survived attempted any repetition of their experiences. There are stories of puffs of luminous, radio-active vapour drifting sometimes scores of miles from the bomb centre and killing and scorching all they overtook. And the first conflagrations from the Paris centre spread westward half-way to the sea.

Moreover, the air in this infernal inner circle of red-lit ruins had a peculiar dryness and a blistering quality, so that it set up a soreness of the skin and lungs that was very difficult to heal....

Such was the last state of Paris, and such on a larger scale was the condition of affairs in Chicago, and the same fate had overtaken Berlin, Moscow, Tokio, the eastern half of London, Toulon, Kiel, and two hundred and eighteen other centres of population or armament. Each was a flaming centre of radiant destruction that only time could quench, that indeed in many instances time has still to quench. To this day, though indeed with a constantly diminishing uproar and vigour, these explosions continue. In the map of nearly every country of the world three or four or more red circles, a score of miles in diameter, mark the position of the dying atomic bombs and the death areas that men have been forced to abandon around them. Within these areas perished museums, cathedrals, palaces, libraries, galleries of masterpieces, and a vast accumulation of human achievement, whose charred remains lie buried, a legacy of curious material that only future generations may hope to examine....

Section 3

The state of mind of the dispossessed urban population which swarmed and perished so abundantly over the country-side during the dark days of the autumnal months that followed the Last War, was one of blank despair. Barnet gives sketch after sketch of groups of these people, camped among the vineyards of Champagne, as he saw them during his period of service with the army of pacification.

There was, for example, that 'man-milliner' who came out from a field beside the road that rises up eastward out of Epernay, and asked how things were going in Paris. He was, says Barnet, a round-faced man, dressed very neatly in black—so neatly that it was amazing to discover he was living close at hand in a tent made of carpets—and he had 'an urbane but insistent manner,' a carefully trimmed moustache and beard, expressive eyebrows, and hair very neatly brushed.

'No one goes into Paris,' said Barnet.

'But, Monsieur, that is very unenterprising,' the man by the wayside submitted.

'The danger is too great. The radiations eat into people's skins.'

The eyebrows protested. 'But is nothing to be done?'

'Nothing can be done.'

'But, Monsieur, it is extraordinarily inconvenient, this living in exile and waiting. My wife and my little boy suffer extremely. There is a lack of amenity. And the season advances. I say nothing of the expense and difficulty in obtaining provisions.... When does Monsieur think that something will be done to render Paris—possible?'

Barnet considered his interlocutor.

'I'm told,' said Barnet, 'that Paris is not likely to be possible again for several generations.'

'Oh! but this is preposterous! Consider, Monsieur! What are people like ourselves to do in the meanwhile? I am a costumier. All my connections and interests, above all my style, demand Paris....'

Barnet considered the sky, from which a light rain was beginning to fall, the wide fields about them from which the harvest had been taken, the trimmed poplars by the wayside.

'Naturally,' he agreed, 'you want to go to Paris. But Paris is over.'

'Over!'

‘Finished.’

‘But then, Monsieur—what is to become—of *me?*’

Barnet turned his face westward, whither the white road led.

‘Where else, for example, may I hope to find—opportunity?’

Barnet made no reply.

‘Perhaps on the Riviera. Or at some such place as Homburg. Or some place perhaps.’

‘All that,’ said Barnet, accepting for the first time facts that had lain evident in his mind for weeks; ‘all that must be over, too.’

There was a pause. Then the voice beside him broke out. ‘But, Monsieur, it is impossible! It leaves—nothing.’

‘No. Not very much.’

‘One cannot suddenly begin to grow potatoes!’

‘It would be good if Monsieur could bring himself——’

‘To the life of a peasant! And my wife——You do not know the distinguished delicacy of my wife, a refined helplessness, a peculiar dependent charm. Like some slender tropical creeper—with great white flowers…. But all this is foolish talk. It is impossible that Paris, which has survived so many misfortunes, should not presently revive.’

‘I do not think it will ever revive. Paris is finished. London, too, I am told—Berlin. All the great capitals were stricken….’

‘But——! Monsieur must permit me to differ.’

‘It is so.’

‘It is impossible. Civilisations do not end in this manner. Mankind will insist.’

‘On Paris?’

‘On Paris.’

‘Monsieur, you might as well hope to go down the Maelstrom and resume business there.’

‘I am content, Monsieur, with my own faith.’

‘The winter comes on. Would not Monsieur be wiser to seek a house?’

‘Farther from Paris? No, Monsieur. But it is not possible, Monsieur, what you say, and you are under a tremendous mistake.... Indeed you are in error.... I asked merely for information....’

‘When last I saw him,’ said Barnet, ‘he was standing under the signpost at the crest of the hill, gazing wistfully, yet it seemed to me a little doubtfully, now towards Paris, and altogether heedless of a drizzling rain that was wetting him through and through....’

Section 4

This effect of chill dismay, of a doom as yet imperfectly apprehended deepens as Barnet’s record passes on to tell of the approach of winter. It was too much for the great mass of those unwilling and incompetent nomads to realise that an age had ended, that the old help and guidance existed no longer, that times would not mend again, however patiently they held out. They were still in many cases looking to Paris when the first snowflakes of that pitiless January came swirling about them. The story grows grimmer....

If it is less monstrously tragic after Barnet’s return to England, it is, if anything, harder. England was a spectacle of fear-embittered householders, hiding food, crushing out robbery, driving the starving wanderers from every faltering place upon the roads lest they should die inconveniently and reproachfully on the doorsteps of those who had failed to urge them onward....

The remnants of the British troops left France finally in March, after urgent representations from the provisional government at Orleans that they could be supported no longer. They seem to have been a fairly well-behaved, but highly parasitic force throughout, though Barnet is clearly of opinion that they did much to suppress sporadic brigandage and maintain social order. He came home to a famine-stricken country, and his picture of the England of that spring is one of miserable patience and desperate expedients. The country was suffering much more than France, because of the cessation of the overseas supplies on which it had hitherto relied. His troops were given bread, dried fish, and boiled nettles at Dover, and marched inland to Ashford and paid off. On the way thither they saw four men hanging from the telegraph posts by the roadside, who had been hung for stealing swedes. The labour refuges of Kent, he discovered, were feeding their crowds of casual wanderers on bread into which clay and sawdust had been mixed. In Surrey there was a shortage of even such fare as that. He himself struck across country to Winchester, fearing to approach the bomb-poisoned district round London, and at Winchester he had the luck to be taken on as one of the wireless assistants at the central station and given

regular rations. The station stood in a commanding position on the chalk hill that overlooks the town from the east....

Thence he must have assisted in the transmission of the endless cipher messages that preceded the gathering at Brissago, and there it was that the Brissago proclamation of the end of the war and the establishment of a world government came under his hands.

He was feeling ill and apathetic that day, and he did not realise what it was he was transcribing. He did it mechanically, as a part of his tedious duty.

Afterwards there came a rush of messages arising out of the declaration that strained him very much, and in the evening when he was relieved, he ate his scanty supper and then went out upon the little balcony before the station, to smoke and rest his brains after this sudden and as yet inexplicable press of duty. It was a very beautiful, still evening. He fell talking to a fellow operator, and for the first time, he declares, 'I began to understand what it was all about. I began to see just what enormous issues had been under my hands for the past four hours. But I became incredulous after my first stimulation. "This is some sort of Bunkum," I said very sagely.

'My colleague was more hopeful. "It means an end to bomb-throwing and destruction," he said. "It means that presently corn will come from America."

"'Who is going to send corn when there is no more value in money?" I asked.

'Suddenly we were startled by a clashing from the town below. The cathedral bells, which had been silent ever since I had come into the district, were beginning, with a sort of rheumatic difficulty, to ring. Presently they warmed a little to the work, and we realised what was going on. They were ringing a peal. We listened with an unbelieving astonishment and looking into each other's yellow faces.

"'They mean it," said my colleague.

"'But what can they do now?" I asked. "Everything is broken down...."'

And on that sentence, with an unexpected artistry, Barnet abruptly ends his story.

Section 5

From the first the new government handled affairs with a certain greatness of spirit. Indeed, it was inevitable that they should act greatly. From the first they had to see the round globe as one problem; it was impossible any longer to deal with it piece by piece. They had to secure it universally from any fresh outbreak of atomic destruction, and they had to ensure a permanent and universal pacification. On this capacity to

grasp and wield the whole round globe their existence depended. There was no scope for any further performance.

So soon as the seizure of the existing supplies of atomic ammunition and the apparatus for synthesising Carolinum was assured, the disbanding or social utilisation of the various masses of troops still under arms had to be arranged, the salvation of the year's harvests, and the feeding, housing, and employment of the drifting millions of homeless people. In Canada, in South America, and Asiatic Russia there were vast accumulations of provision that was immovable only because of the breakdown of the monetary and credit systems. These had to be brought into the famine districts very speedily if entire depopulation was to be avoided, and their transportation and the revival of communications generally absorbed a certain proportion of the soldiery and more able unemployed. The task of housing assumed gigantic dimensions, and from building camps the housing committee of the council speedily passed to constructions of a more permanent type. They found far less friction than might have been expected in turning the loose population on their hands to these things. People were extraordinarily tamed by that year of suffering and death; they were disillusioned of their traditions, bereft of once obstinate prejudices; they felt foreign in a strange world, and ready to follow any confident leadership. The orders of the new government came with the best of all credentials, rations. The people everywhere were as easy to control, one of the old labour experts who had survived until the new time witnesses, 'as gangs of emigrant workers in a new land.' And now it was that the social possibilities of the atomic energy began to appear. The new machinery that had come into existence before the last wars increased and multiplied, and the council found itself not only with millions of hands at its disposal but with power and apparatus that made its first conceptions of the work it had to do seem pitifully timid. The camps that were planned in iron and deal were built in stone and brass; the roads that were to have been mere iron tracks became spacious ways that insisted upon architecture; the cultivations of foodstuffs that were to have supplied emergency rations, were presently, with synthesisers, fertilisers, actinic light, and scientific direction, in excess of every human need.

The government had begun with the idea of temporarily reconstituting the social and economic system that had prevailed before the first coming of the atomic engine, because it was to this system that the ideas and habits of the great mass of the world's dispossessed population was adapted. Subsequent rearrangement it had hoped to leave to its successors—whoever they might be. But this, it became more and more manifest, was absolutely impossible. As well might the council have proposed a revival of slavery. The capitalist system had already been smashed beyond

repair by the onset of limitless gold and energy; it fell to pieces at the first endeavour to stand it up again. Already before the war half of the industrial class had been out of work, the attempt to put them back into wages employment on the old lines was futile from the outset—the absolute shattering of the currency system alone would have been sufficient to prevent that, and it was necessary therefore to take over the housing, feeding, and clothing of this worldwide multitude without exacting any return in labour whatever. In a little while the mere absence of occupation for so great a multitude of people everywhere became an evident social danger, and the government was obliged to resort to such devices as simple decorative work in wood and stone, the manufacture of hand-woven textiles, fruit-growing, flower-growing, and landscape gardening on a grand scale to keep the less adaptable out of mischief, and of paying wages to the younger adults for attendance at schools that would equip them to use the new atomic machinery.... So quite insensibly the council drifted into a complete reorganisation of urban and industrial life, and indeed of the entire social system.

Ideas that are unhampered by political intrigue or financial considerations have a sweeping way with them, and before a year was out the records of the council show clearly that it was rising to its enormous opportunity, and partly through its own direct control and partly through a series of specific committees, it was planning a new common social order for the entire population of the earth. ‘There can be no real social stability or any general human happiness while large areas of the world and large classes of people are in a phase of civilisation different from the prevailing mass. It is impossible now to have great blocks of population misunderstanding the generally accepted social purpose or at an economic disadvantage to the rest.’ So the council expressed its conception of the problem it had to solve. The peasant, the field-worker, and all barbaric cultivators were at an ‘economic disadvantage’ to the more mobile and educated classes, and the logic of the situation compelled the council to take up systematically the supersession of this stratum by a more efficient organisation of production. It developed a scheme for the progressive establishment throughout the world of the ‘modern system’ in agriculture, a system that should give the full advantages of a civilised life to every agricultural worker, and this replacement has been going on right up to the present day. The central idea of the modern system is the substitution of cultivating guilds for the individual cultivator, and for cottage and village life altogether. These guilds are associations of men and women who take over areas of arable or pasture land, and make themselves responsible for a certain average produce. They are bodies small enough as a rule to be run on a strictly democratic basis, and large enough to supply all the labour, except for a certain

assistance from townspeople during the harvest, needed upon the land farmed. They have watchers' bungalows or chalets on the ground cultivated, but the ease and the costlessness of modern locomotion enables them to maintain a group of residences in the nearest town with a common dining-room and club house, and usually also a guild house in the national or provincial capital. Already this system has abolished a distinctively 'rustic' population throughout vast areas of the old world, where it has prevailed immemorially. That shy, unstimulated life of the lonely hovel, the narrow scandals and petty spites and persecutions of the small village, that hoarding, half inanimate existence away from books, thought, or social participation and in constant contact with cattle, pigs, poultry, and their excrement, is passing away out of human experience. In a little while it will be gone altogether. In the nineteenth century it had already ceased to be a necessary human state, and only the absence of any collective intelligence and an imagined need for tough and unintelligent soldiers and for a prolific class at a low level, prevented its systematic replacement at that time....

And while this settlement of the country was in progress, the urban camps of the first phase of the council's activities were rapidly developing, partly through the inherent forces of the situation and partly through the council's direction, into a modern type of town....

Section 6

It is characteristic of the manner in which large enterprises forced themselves upon the Brissago council, that it was not until the end of the first year of their administration and then only with extreme reluctance that they would take up the manifest need for a *lingua franca* for the world. They seem to have given little attention to the various theoretical universal languages which were proposed to them. They wished to give as little trouble to hasty and simple people as possible, and the world-wide distribution of English gave them a bias for it from the beginning. The extreme simplicity of its grammar was also in its favour.

It was not without some sacrifices that the English-speaking peoples were permitted the satisfaction of hearing their speech used universally. The language was shorn of a number of grammatical peculiarities, the distinctive forms for the subjunctive mood for example and most of its irregular plurals were abolished; its spelling was systematised and adapted to the vowel sounds in use upon the continent of Europe, and a process of incorporating foreign nouns and verbs commenced that speedily reached enormous proportions. Within ten years from the establishment of the World Republic the New English Dictionary had swelled to include a vocabulary of 250,000 words, and a man of 1900 would have found considerable difficulty in reading an

ordinary newspaper. On the other hand, the men of the new time could still appreciate the older English literature.... Certain minor acts of uniformity accompanied this larger one. The idea of a common understanding and a general simplification of intercourse once it was accepted led very naturally to the universal establishment of the metric system of weights and measures, and to the disappearance of the various makeshift calendars that had hitherto confused chronology. The year was divided into thirteen months of four weeks each, and New Year's Day and Leap Year's Day were made holidays, and did not count at all in the ordinary week. So the weeks and the months were brought into correspondence. And moreover, as the king put it to Firmin, it was decided to 'nail down Easter.' . . . In these matters, as in so many matters, the new civilisation came as a simplification of ancient complications; the history of the calendar throughout the world is a history of inadequate adjustments, of attempts to fix seed-time and midwinter that go back into the very beginning of human society; and this final rectification had a symbolic value quite beyond its practical convenience. But the council would have no rash nor harsh innovations, no strange names for the months, and no alteration in the numbering of the years.

The world had already been put upon one universal monetary basis. For some months after the accession of the council, the world's affairs had been carried on without any sound currency at all. Over great regions money was still in use, but with the most extravagant variations in price and the most disconcerting fluctuations of public confidence. The ancient rarity of gold upon which the entire system rested was gone. Gold was now a waste product in the release of atomic energy, and it was plain that no metal could be the basis of the monetary system again. Henceforth all coins must be token coins. Yet the whole world was accustomed to metallic money, and a vast proportion of existing human relationships had grown up upon a cash basis, and were almost inconceivable without that convenient liquidating factor. It seemed absolutely necessary to the life of the social organisation to have some sort of currency, and the council had therefore to discover some real value upon which to rest it. Various such apparently stable values as land and hours of work were considered. Ultimately the government, which was now in possession of most of the supplies of energy-releasing material, fixed a certain number of units of energy as the value of a gold sovereign, declared a sovereign to be worth exactly twenty marks, twenty-five francs, five dollars, and so forth, with the other current units of the world, and undertook, under various qualifications and conditions, to deliver energy upon demand as payment for every sovereign presented. On the whole, this worked satisfactorily. They saved the face of the pound sterling. Coin was rehabilitated, and after a phase of price fluctuations,

began to settle down to definite equivalents and uses again, with names and everyday values familiar to the common run of people....

Section 7

As the Brissago council came to realise that what it had supposed to be temporary camps of refugees were rapidly developing into great towns of a new type, and that it was remoulding the world in spite of itself, it decided to place this work of redistributing the non-agricultural population in the hands of a compactor and better qualified special committee. That committee is now, far more than the council of any other of its delegated committees, the active government of the world. Developed from an almost invisible germ of 'town-planning' that came obscurely into existence in Europe or America (the question is still in dispute) somewhere in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, its work, the continual active planning and replanning of the world as a place of human habitation, is now so to speak the collective material activity of the race. The spontaneous, disorderly spreadings and recessions of populations, as aimless and mechanical as the trickling of spilt water, which was the substance of history for endless years, giving rise here to congestions, here to chronic devastating wars, and everywhere to a discomfort and disorderliness that was at its best only picturesque, is at an end. Men spread now, with the whole power of the race to aid them, into every available region of the earth. Their cities are no longer tethered to running water and the proximity of cultivation, their plans are no longer affected by strategic considerations or thoughts of social insecurity. The aeroplane and the nearly costless mobile car have abolished trade routes; a common language and a universal law have abolished a thousand restraining inconveniences, and so an astonishing dispersal of habitations has begun. One may live anywhere. And so it is that our cities now are true social gatherings, each with a character of its own and distinctive interests of its own, and most of them with a common occupation. They lie out in the former deserts, these long wasted sun-baths of the race, they tower amidst eternal snows, they hide in remote islands, and bask on broad lagoons. For a time the whole tendency of mankind was to desert the river valleys in which the race had been cradled for half a million years, but now that the War against Flies has been waged so successfully that this pestilential branch of life is nearly extinct, they are returning thither with a renewed appetite for gardens laced by watercourses, for pleasant living amidst islands and houseboats and bridges, and for nocturnal lanterns reflected by the sea.

Man who is ceasing to be an agricultural animal becomes more and more a builder, a traveller, and a maker. How much he ceases to be a cultivator of the soil the returns of the Redistribution Committee showed. Every year the work of our scientific

laboratories increases the productivity and simplifies the labour of those who work upon the soil, and the food now of the whole world is produced by less than one per cent. of its population, a percentage which still tends to decrease. Far fewer people are needed upon the land than training and proclivity dispose towards it, and as a consequence of this excess of human attention, the garden side of life, the creation of groves and lawns and vast regions of beautiful flowers, has expanded enormously and continues to expand. For, as agricultural method intensifies and the quota is raised, one farm association after another, availing itself of the 1975 regulations, elects to produce a public garden and pleasaunce in the place of its former fields, and the area of freedom and beauty is increased. And the chemists' triumphs of synthesis, which could now give us an entirely artificial food, remain largely in abeyance because it is so much more pleasant and interesting to eat natural produce and to grow such things upon the soil. Each year adds to the variety of our fruits and the delightfulness of our flowers.

Section 8

The early years of the World Republic witnessed a certain recrudescence of political adventure. There was, it is rather curious to note, no revival of separatism after the face of King Ferdinand Charles had vanished from the sight of men, but in a number of countries, as the first urgent physical needs were met, there appeared a variety of personalities having this in common, that they sought to revive political trouble and clamber by its aid to positions of importance and satisfaction. In no case did they speak in the name of kings, and it is clear that monarchy must have been far gone in obsolescence before the twentieth century began, but they made appeals to the large survivals of nationalist and racial feeling that were everywhere to be found, they alleged with considerable justice that the council was overriding racial and national customs and disregarding religious rules. The great plain of India was particularly prolific in such agitators. The revival of newspapers, which had largely ceased during the terrible year because of the dislocation of the coinage, gave a vehicle and a method of organisation to these complaints. At first the council disregarded this developing opposition, and then it recognised it with an entirely devastating frankness.

Never, of course, had there been so provisional a government. It was of an extravagant illegality. It was, indeed, hardly more than a club, a club of about a hundred persons. At the outset there were ninety-three, and these were increased afterwards by the issue of invitations which more than balanced its deaths, to as many at one time as one hundred and nineteen. Always its constitution has been miscellaneous. At no time were these invitations issued with an admission that they recognised a right. The

old institution or monarchy had come out unexpectedly well in the light of the new *régime*. Nine of the original members of the first government were crowned heads who had resigned their separate sovereignty, and at no time afterwards did the number of its royal members sink below six. In their case there was perhaps a kind of attenuated claim to rule, but except for them and the still more infinitesimal pretensions of one or two ex-presidents of republics, no member of the council had even the shade of a right to his participation in its power. It was natural, therefore, that its opponents should find a common ground in a clamour for representative government, and build high hopes upon a return, to parliamentary institutions.

The council decided to give them everything they wanted, but in a form that suited ill with their aspirations. It became at one stroke a representative body. It became, indeed, magnificently representative. It became so representative that the politicians were drowned in a deluge of votes. Every adult of either sex from pole to pole was given a vote, and the world was divided into ten constituencies, which voted on the same day by means of a simple modification of the world post. Membership of the government, it was decided, must be for life, save in the exceptional case of a recall; but the elections, which were held quinquennially, were arranged to add fifty members on each occasion. The method of proportional representation with one transferable vote was adopted, and the voter might also write upon his voting paper in a specially marked space, the name of any of his representatives that he wished to recall. A ruler was recallable by as many votes as the quota by which he had been elected, and the original members by as many votes in any constituency as the returning quotas in the first election.

Upon these conditions the council submitted itself very cheerfully to the suffrages of the world. None of its members were recalled, and its fifty new associates, which included twenty-seven which it had seen fit to recommend, were of an altogether too miscellaneous quality to disturb the broad trend of its policy. Its freedom from rules or formalities prevented any obstructive proceedings, and when one of the two newly arrived Home Rule members for India sought for information how to bring in a bill, they learnt simply that bills were not brought in. They asked for the speaker, and were privileged to hear much ripe wisdom from the ex-king Egbert, who was now consciously among the seniors of the gathering. Thereafter they were baffled men....

But already by that time the work of the council was drawing to an end. It was concerned not so much for the continuation of its construction as for the preservation of its accomplished work from the dramatic instincts of the politician.

The life of the race becomes indeed more and more independent of the formal government. The council, in its opening phase, was heroic in spirit; a dragon-slaying body, it slashed out of existence a vast, knotted tangle of obsolete ideas and clumsy and jealous proprietorships; it secured by a noble system of institutional precautions, freedom of inquiry, freedom of criticism, free communications, a common basis of education and understanding, and freedom from economic oppression. With that its creative task was accomplished. It became more and more an established security and less and less an active intervention. There is nothing in our time to correspond with the continual petty making and entangling of laws in an atmosphere of contention that is perhaps the most perplexing aspect of constitutional history in the nineteenth century. In that age they seem to have been perpetually making laws when we should alter regulations. The work of change which we delegate to these scientific committees of specific general direction which have the special knowledge needed, and which are themselves dominated by the broad intellectual process of the community, was in those days inextricably mixed up with legislation. They fought over the details; we should as soon think of fighting over the arrangement of the parts of a machine. We know nowadays that such things go on best within laws, as life goes on between earth and sky. And so it is that government gathers now for a day or so in each year under the sunshine of Brissago when Saint Bruno's lilies are in flower, and does little more than bless the work of its committees. And even these committees are less originative and more expressive of the general thought than they were at first. It becomes difficult to mark out the particular directive personalities of the world. Continually we are less personal. Every good thought contributes now, and every able brain falls within that informal and dispersed kingship which gathers together into one purpose the energies of the race.

Section 9

It is doubtful if we shall ever see again a phase of human existence in which 'politics,' that is to say a partisan interference with the ruling sanities of the world, will be the dominant interest among serious men. We seem to have entered upon an entirely new phase in history in which contention as distinguished from rivalry, has almost abruptly ceased to be the usual occupation, and has become at most a subdued and hidden and discredited thing. Contentious professions cease to be an honourable employment for men. The peace between nations is also a peace between individuals. We live in a world that comes of age. Man the warrior, man the lawyer, and all the bickering aspects of life, pass into obscurity; the grave dreamers, man the curious learner, and man the creative artist, come forward to replace these barbaric aspects of existence by a less ignoble adventure.

There is no natural life of man. He is, and always has been, a sheath of varied and even incompatible possibilities, a palimpsest of inherited dispositions. It was the habit of many writers in the early twentieth century to speak of competition and the narrow, private life of trade and saving and suspicious isolation as though such things were in some exceptional way proper to the human constitution, and as though openness of mind and a preference for achievement over possession were abnormal and rather unsubstantial qualities. How wrong that was the history of the decades immediately following the establishment of the world republic witnesses. Once the world was released from the hardening insecurities of a needless struggle for life that was collectively planless and individually absorbing, it became apparent that there was in the vast mass of people a long, smothered passion to make things. The world broke out into making, and at first mainly into æsthetic making. This phase of history, which has been not inaptly termed the 'Efflorescence,' is still, to a large extent, with us. The majority of our population consists of artists, and the bulk of activity in the world lies no longer with necessities but with their elaboration, decoration, and refinement. There has been an evident change in the quality of this making during recent years. It becomes more purposeful than it was, losing something of its first elegance and prettiness and gaining in intensity; but that is a change rather of hue than of nature. That comes with a deepening philosophy and a sounder education. For the first joyous exercises of fancy we perceive now the deliberation of a more constructive imagination. There is a natural order in these things, and art comes before science as the satisfaction of more elemental needs must come before art, and as play and pleasure come in a human life before the development of a settled purpose....

For thousands of years this gathering impulse to creative work must have struggled in man against the limitations imposed upon him by his social ineptitude. It was a long smouldering fire that flamed out at last in all these things. The evidence of a pathetic, perpetually thwarted urgency to make something, is one of the most touching aspects of the relics and records of our immediate ancestors. There exists still in the death area about the London bombs, a region of deserted small homes that furnish the most illuminating comment on the old state of affairs. These homes are entirely horrible, uniform, square, squat, hideously proportioned, uncomfortable, dingy, and in some respects quite filthy, only people in complete despair of anything better could have lived in them, but to each is attached a ridiculous little rectangle of land called 'the garden,' containing usually a prop for drying clothes and a loathsome box of offal, the dustbin, full of egg-shells, cinders, and such-like refuse. Now that one may go about this region in comparative security—for the London radiations have dwindled to

inconsiderable proportions—it is possible to trace in nearly every one of these gardens some effort to make. Here it is a poor little plank summer-house, here it is a ‘fountain’ of bricks and oyster-shells, here a ‘rockery,’ here a ‘workshop.’ And in the houses everywhere there are pitiful little decorations, clumsy models, feeble drawings. These efforts are almost incredibly inept, like the drawings of blindfolded men, they are only one shade less harrowing to a sympathetic observer than the scratchings one finds upon the walls of the old prisons, but there they are, witnessing to the poor buried instincts that struggled up towards the light. That god of joyous expression our poor fathers ignorantly sought, our freedom has declared to us....

In the old days the common ambition of every simple soul was to possess a little property, a patch of land, a house uncontrolled by others, an ‘independence’ as the English used to put it. And what made this desire for freedom and prosperity so strong, was very evidently the dream of self-expression, of doing something with it, of playing with it, of making a personal delightfulness, a distinctiveness. Property was never more than a means to an end, nor avarice more than a perversion. Men owned in order to do freely. Now that every one has his own apartments and his own privacy secure, this disposition to own has found its release in a new direction. Men study and save and strive that they may leave behind them a series of panels in some public arcade, a row of carven figures along a terrace, a grove, a pavilion. Or they give themselves to the penetration of some still opaque riddle in phenomena as once men gave themselves to the accumulation of riches. The work that was once the whole substance of social existence—for most men spent all their lives in earning a living—is now no more than was the burden upon one of those old climbers who carried knapsacks of provisions on their backs in order that they might ascend mountains. It matters little to the easy charities of our emancipated time that most people who have made their labour contribution produce neither new beauty nor new wisdom, but are simply busy about those pleasant activities and enjoyments that reassure them that they are alive. They help, it may be, by reception and reverberation, and they hinder nothing. ...

Section 10

Now all this phase of gigantic change in the contours and appearances of human life which is going on about us, a change as rapid and as wonderful as the swift ripening of adolescence to manhood after the barbaric boyish years, is correlated with moral and mental changes at least as unprecedented. It is not as if old things were going out of life and new things coming in, it is rather that the altered circumstances of men are making an appeal to elements in his nature that have hitherto been suppressed, and checking tendencies that have hitherto been over-stimulated and over-developed. He

has not so much grown and altered his essential being as turned new aspects to the light. Such turnings round into a new attitude the world has seen on a less extensive scale before. The Highlanders of the seventeenth century, for example, were cruel and bloodthirsty robbers, in the nineteenth their descendants were conspicuously trusty and honourable men. There was not a people in Western Europe in the early twentieth century that seemed capable of hideous massacres, and none that had not been guilty of them within the previous two centuries. The free, frank, kindly, gentle life of the prosperous classes in any European country before the years of the last wars was in a different world of thought and feeling from that of the dingy, suspicious, secretive, and uncharitable existence of the respectable poor, or the constant personal violence, the squalor and naïve passions of the lowest stratum. Yet there were no real differences of blood and inherent quality between these worlds; their differences were all in circumstances, suggestion, and habits of mind. And turning to more individual instances the constantly observed difference between one portion of a life and another consequent upon a religious conversion, were a standing example of the versatile possibilities of human nature.

The catastrophe of the atomic bombs which shook men out of cities and businesses and economic relations shook them also out of their old established habits of thought, and out of the lightly held beliefs and prejudices that came down to them from the past. To borrow a word from the old-fashioned chemists, men were made nascent; they were released from old ties; for good or evil they were ready for new associations. The council carried them forward for good; perhaps if his bombs had reached their destination King Ferdinand Charles might have carried them back to an endless chain of evils. But his task would have been a harder one than the council's. The moral shock of the atomic bombs had been a profound one, and for a while the cunning side of the human animal was overpowered by its sincere realisation of the vital necessity for reconstruction. The litigious and trading spirits cowered together, scared at their own consequences; men thought twice before they sought mean advantages in the face of the unusual eagerness to realise new aspirations, and when at last the weeds revived again and 'claims' began to sprout, they sprouted upon the stony soil of law-courts reformed, of laws that pointed to the future instead of the past, and under the blazing sunshine of a transforming world. A new literature, a new interpretation of history were springing into existence, a new teaching was already in the schools, a new faith in the young. The worthy man who forestalled the building of a research city for the English upon the Sussex downs by buying up a series of estates, was dispossessed and laughed out of court when he made his demand for some preposterous compensation; the owner of the discredited Dass patents makes his

last appearance upon the scroll of history as the insolvent proprietor of a paper called *The Cry for Justice*, in which he duns the world for a hundred million pounds. That was the ingenuous Dass's idea of justice, that he ought to be paid about five million pounds annually because he had annexed the selvage of one of Holsten's discoveries. Dass came at last to believe quite firmly in his right, and he died a victim of conspiracy mania in a private hospital at Nice. Both of these men would probably have ended their days enormously wealthy, and of course ennobled in the England of the opening twentieth century, and it is just this novelty of their fates that marks the quality of the new age.

The new government early discovered the need of a universal education to fit men to the great conceptions of its universal rule. It made no wrangling attacks on the local, racial, and sectarian forms of religious profession that at that time divided the earth into a patchwork of hatreds and distrusts; it left these organisations to make their peace with God in their own time; but it proclaimed as if it were a mere secular truth that sacrifice was expected from all, that respect had to be shown to all; it revived schools or set them up afresh all around the world, and everywhere these schools taught the history of war and the consequences and moral of the Last War; everywhere it was taught not as a sentiment but as a matter of fact that the salvation of the world from waste and contention was the common duty and occupation of all men and women. These things which are now the elementary commonplaces of human intercourse seemed to the councillors of Brissago, when first they dared to proclaim them, marvellously daring discoveries, not untouched by doubt, that flushed the cheek and fired the eye.

The council placed all this educational reconstruction in the hands of a committee of men and women, which did its work during the next few decades with remarkable breadth and effectiveness. This educational committee was, and is, the correlative upon the mental and spiritual side of the redistribution committee. And prominent upon it, and indeed for a time quite dominating it, was a Russian named Karenin, who was singular in being a congenital cripple. His body was bent so that he walked with difficulty, suffered much pain as he grew older, and had at last to undergo two operations. The second killed him. Already malformation, which was to be seen in every crowd during the middle ages so that the crippled beggar was, as it were, an essential feature of the human spectacle, was becoming a strange thing in the world. It had a curious effect upon Karenin's colleagues; their feeling towards him was mingled with pity and a sense of inhumanity that it needed usage rather than reason to overcome. He had a strong face, with little bright brown eyes rather deeply sunken and a large resolute thin-lipped mouth. His skin was very yellow and wrinkled, and his hair

iron gray. He was at all times an impatient and sometimes an angry man, but this was forgiven him because of the hot wire of suffering that was manifestly thrust through his being. At the end of his life his personal prestige was very great. To him far more than to any contemporary is it due that self-abnegation, self-identification with the world spirit, was made the basis of universal education. That general memorandum to the teachers which is the key-note of the modern educational system, was probably entirely his work.

'Whosoever would save his soul shall lose it,' he wrote. 'That is the device upon the seal of this document, and the starting point of all we have to do. It is a mistake to regard it as anything but a plain statement of fact. It is the basis for your work. You have to teach self-forgetfulness, and everything else that you have to teach is contributory and subordinate to that end. Education is the release of man from self. You have to widen the horizons of your children, encourage and intensify their curiosity and their creative impulses, and cultivate and enlarge their sympathies. That is what you are for. Under your guidance and the suggestions you will bring to bear on them, they have to shed the old Adam of instinctive suspicions, hostilities, and passions, and to find themselves again in the great being of the universe. The little circles of their egotisms have to be opened out until they become arcs in the sweep of the racial purpose. And this that you teach to others you must learn also sedulously yourselves. Philosophy, discovery, art, every sort of skill, every sort of service, love: these are the means of salvation from that narrow loneliness of desire, that brooding preoccupation with self and egotistical relationships, which is hell for the individual, treason to the race, and exile from God....'

Section 11

As things round themselves off and accomplish themselves, one begins for the first time to see them clearly. From the perspectives of a new age one can look back upon the great and widening stream of literature with a complete understanding. Things link up that seemed disconnected, and things that were once condemned as harsh and aimless are seen to be but factors in the statement of a gigantic problem. An enormous bulk of the sincerer writing of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries falls together now into an unanticipated unanimity; one sees it as a huge tissue of variations upon one theme, the conflict of human egotism and personal passion and narrow imaginations on the one hand, against the growing sense of wider necessities and a possible, more spacious life.

That conflict is in evidence in so early a work as Voltaire's *Candide*, for example, in which the desire for justice as well as happiness beats against human contrariety and

takes refuge at last in a forced and inconclusive contentment with little things. *Candide* was but one of the pioneers of a literature of uneasy complaint that was presently an innumerable multitude of books. The novels more particularly of the nineteenth century, if one excludes the mere story-tellers from our consideration, witness to this uneasy realisation of changes that call for effort and of the lack of that effort. In a thousand aspects, now tragically, now comically, now with a funny affectation of divine detachment, a countless host of witnesses tell their story of lives fretting between dreams and limitations. Now one laughs, now one weeps, now one reads with a blank astonishment at this huge and almost unpremeditated record of how the growing human spirit, now warily, now eagerly, now furiously, and always, as it seems, unsuccessfully, tried to adapt itself to the maddening misfit of its patched and ancient garments. And always in these books as one draws nearer to the heart of the matter there comes a disconcerting evasion. It was the fantastic convention of the time that a writer should not touch upon religion. To do so was to rouse the jealous fury of the great multitude of professional religious teachers. It was permitted to state the discord, but it was forbidden to glance at any possible reconciliation. Religion was the privilege of the pulpit....

It was not only from the novels that religion was omitted. It was ignored by the newspapers; it was pedantically disregarded in the discussion of business questions, it played a trivial and apologetic part in public affairs. And this was done not out of contempt but respect. The hold of the old religious organisations upon men's respect was still enormous, so enormous that there seemed to be a quality of irreverence in applying religion to the developments of every day. This strange suspension of religion lasted over into the beginnings of the new age. It was the clear vision of Marcus Karenin much more than any other contemporary influence which brought it back into the texture of human life. He saw religion without hallucinations, without superstitious reverence, as a common thing as necessary as food and air, as land and energy to the life of man and the well-being of the Republic. He saw that indeed it had already percolated away from the temples and hierarchies and symbols in which men had sought to imprison it, that it was already at work anonymously and obscurely in the universal acceptance of the greater state. He gave it clearer expression, rephrased it to the lights and perspectives of the new dawn....

But if we return to our novels for our evidence of the spirit of the times it becomes evident as one reads them in their chronological order, so far as that is now ascertainable, that as one comes to the latter nineteenth and the earlier twentieth century the writers are much more acutely aware of secular change than their predecessors were. The earlier novelists tried to show 'life as it is,' the latter showed

life as it changes. More and more of their characters are engaged in adaptation to change or suffering from the effects of world changes. And as we come up to the time of the Last Wars, this newer conception of the everyday life as a reaction to an accelerated development is continually more manifest. Barnet's book, which has served us so well, is frankly a picture of the world coming about like a ship that sails into the wind. Our later novelists give a vast gallery of individual conflicts in which old habits and customs, limited ideas, ungenerous temperaments, and innate obsessions are pitted against this great opening out of life that has happened to us. They tell us of the feelings of old people who have been wrenched away from familiar surroundings, and how they have had to make peace with uncomfortable comforts and conveniences that are still strange to them. They give us the discord between the opening egotisms of youths and the ill-defined limitations of a changing social life. They tell of the universal struggle of jealousy to capture and cripple our souls, of romantic failures and tragical misconceptions of the trend of the world, of the spirit of adventure, and the urgency of curiosity, and how these serve the universal drift. And all their stories lead in the end either to happiness missed or happiness won, to disaster or salvation. The clearer their vision and the subtler their art, the more certainly do these novels tell of the possibility of salvation for all the world. For any road in life leads to religion for those upon it who will follow it far enough....

It would have seemed a strange thing to the men of the former time that it should be an open question as it is to-day whether the world is wholly Christian or not Christian at all. But assuredly we have the spirit, and as surely have we left many temporary forms behind. Christianity was the first expression of world religion, the first complete repudiation of tribalism and war and disputation. That it fell presently into the ways of more ancient rituals cannot alter that. The common sense of mankind has toiled through two thousand years of chastening experience to find at last how sound a meaning attaches to the familiar phrases of the Christian faith. The scientific thinker as he widens out to the moral problems of the collective life, comes inevitably upon the words of Christ, and as inevitably does the Christian, as his thought grows clearer, arrive at the world republic. As for the claims of the sects, as for the use of a name and successions, we live in a time that has shaken itself free from such claims and consistencies.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH
THE LAST DAYS OF MARCUS KARENIN

Section 1

The second operation upon Marcus Karenin was performed at the new station for surgical work at Paran, high in the Himalayas above the Sutlej Gorge, where it comes down out of Thibet.

It is a place of such wildness and beauty as no other scenery in the world affords. The granite terrace which runs round the four sides of the low block of laboratories looks out in every direction upon mountains. Far below in the hidden depths of a shadowy blue cleft, the river pours down in its tumultuous passage to the swarming plains of India. No sound of its roaring haste comes up to those serenities. Beyond that blue gulf, in which whole forests of giant deodars seem no more than small patches of moss, rise vast precipices of many-coloured rock, fretted above, lined by snowfalls, and jagged into pinnacles. These are the northward wall of a towering wilderness of ice and snow which clambers southward higher and wilder and vaster to the culminating summits of our globe, to Dhaulagiri and Everest. Here are cliffs of which no other land can show the like, and deep chasms in which Mt. Blanc might be plunged and hidden. Here are icefields as big as inland seas on which the tumbled boulders lie so thickly that strange little flowers can bloom among them under the untempered sunshine. To the northward, and blocking out any vision of the uplands of Thibet, rises that citadel of porcelain, that gothic pile, the Lio Porgyul, walls, towers, and peaks, a clear twelve thousand feet of veined and splintered rock above the river. And beyond it and eastward and westward rise peaks behind peaks, against the dark blue Himalayan sky. Far away below to the south the clouds of the Indian rains pile up abruptly and are stayed by an invisible hand.

Hither it was that with a dreamlike swiftness Karenin flew high over the irrigations of Rajputana and the towers and cupolas of the ultimate Delhi; and the little group of buildings, albeit the southward wall dropped nearly five hundred feet, seemed to him as he soared down to it like a toy lost among these mountain wildernesses. No road came up to this place; it was reached only by flight.

His pilot descended to the great courtyard, and Karenin assisted by his secretary clambered down through the wing fabric and made his way to the officials who came out to receive him.

In this place, beyond infections and noise and any distractions, surgery had made for itself a house of research and a healing fastness. The building itself would have seemed very wonderful to eyes accustomed to the flimsy architecture of an age when power was precious. It was made of granite, already a little roughened on the outside by frost, but polished within and of a tremendous solidity. And in a honeycomb of subtly lit apartments, were the spotless research benches, the operating tables, the

instruments of brass, and fine glass and platinum and gold. Men and women came from all parts of the world for study or experimental research. They wore a common uniform of white and ate at long tables together, but the patients lived in an upper part of the buildings, and were cared for by nurses and skilled attendants....

The first man to greet Karenin was Ciana, the scientific director of the institution. Beside him was Rachel Borken, the chief organiser. 'You are tired?' she asked, and old Karenin shook his head.

'Cramped,' he said. 'I have wanted to visit such a place as this.'

He spoke as if he had no other business with them.

There was a little pause.

'How many scientific people have you got here now?' he asked.

'Just three hundred and ninety-two,' said Rachel Borken.

'And the patients and attendants and so on?'

'Two thousand and thirty.'

'I shall be a patient,' said Karenin. 'I shall have to be a patient. But I should like to see things first. Presently I will be a patient.'

'You will come to my rooms?' suggested Ciana.

'And then I must talk to this doctor of yours,' said Karenin. 'But I would like to see a bit of this place and talk to some of your people before it comes to that.'

He winced and moved forward.

'I have left most of my work in order,' he said.

'You have been working hard up to now?' asked Rachel Borken.

'Yes. And now I have nothing more to do—and it seems strange.... And it's a bother, this illness and having to come down to oneself. This doorway and the row of windows is well done; the gray granite and just the line of gold, and then those mountains beyond through that arch. It's very well done....'

Section 2

Karenin lay on the bed with a soft white rug about him, and Fowler, who was to be his surgeon sat on the edge of the bed and talked to him. An assistant was seated quietly

in the shadow behind the bed. The examination had been made, and Karenin knew what was before him. He was tired but serene.

‘So I shall die,’ he said, ‘unless you operate?’

Fowler assented. ‘And then,’ said Karenin, smiling, ‘probably I shall die.’

‘Not certainly.’

‘Even if I do not die; shall I be able to work?’

‘There is just a chance....’

‘So firstly I shall probably die, and if I do not, then perhaps I shall be a useless invalid?’

‘I think if you live, you may be able to go on—as you do now.’

‘Well, then, I suppose I must take the risk of it. Yet couldn’t you, Fowler, couldn’t you drug me and patch me instead of all this—vivisection? A few days of drugged and active life—and then the end?’

Fowler thought. ‘We are not sure enough yet to do things like that,’ he said.

‘But a day is coming when you will be certain.’

Fowler nodded.

‘You make me feel as though I was the last of deformity—Deformity is uncertainty—inaccuracy. My body works doubtfully, it is not even sure that it will die or live. I suppose the time is not far off when such bodies as mine will no longer be born into the world.’

‘You see,’ said Fowler, after a little pause, ‘it is necessary that spirits such as yours should be born into the world.’

‘I suppose,’ said Karenin, ‘that my spirit has had its use. But if you think that is because my body is as it is I think you are mistaken. There is no peculiar virtue in defect. I have always chafed against—all this. If I could have moved more freely and lived a larger life in health I could have done more. But some day perhaps you will be able to put a body that is wrong altogether right again. Your science is only beginning. It’s a subtler thing than physics and chemistry, and it takes longer to produce its miracles. And meanwhile a few more of us must die in patience.’

‘Fine work is being done and much of it,’ said Fowler. ‘I can say as much because I have nothing to do with it. I can understand a lesson, appreciate the discoveries of abler men and use my hands, but those others, Pigou, Masterton, Lie, and the others,

they are clearing the ground fast for the knowledge to come. Have you had time to follow their work?'

Karenin shook his head. 'But I can imagine the scope of it,' he said.

'We have so many men working now,' said Fowler. 'I suppose at present there must be at least a thousand thinking hard, observing, experimenting, for one who did so in nineteen hundred.'

'Not counting those who keep the records?'

'Not counting those. Of course, the present indexing of research is in itself a very big work, and it is only now that we are getting it properly done. But already we are feeling the benefit of that. Since it ceased to be a paid employment and became a devotion we have had only those people who obeyed the call of an aptitude at work upon these things. Here—I must show you it to-day, because it will interest you—we have our copy of the encyclopaedic index—every week sheets are taken out and replaced by fresh sheets with new results that are brought to us by the aeroplanes of the Research Department. It is an index of knowledge that grows continually, an index that becomes continually truer. There was never anything like it before.'

'When I came into the education committee,' said Karenin, 'that index of human knowledge seemed an impossible thing. Research had produced a chaotic mountain of results, in a hundred languages and a thousand different types of publication....' He smiled at his memories. 'How we groaned at the job!'

'Already the ordering of that chaos is nearly done. You shall see.'

'I have been so busy with my own work——Yes, I shall be glad to see.'

The patient regarded the surgeon for a time with interested eyes.

'You work here always?' he asked abruptly.

'No,' said Fowler.

'But mostly you work here?'

'I have worked about seven years out of the past ten. At times I go away—down there. One has to. At least I have to. There is a sort of grayness comes over all this, one feels hungry for life, real, personal passionate life, love-making, eating and drinking for the fun of the thing, jostling crowds, having adventures, laughter—above all laughter——'

'Yes,' said Karenin understandingly.

‘And then one day, suddenly one thinks of these high mountains again….’

‘That is how I would have lived, if it had not been for my—defects,’ said Karenin. ‘Nobody knows but those who have borne it the exasperation of abnormality. It will be good when you have nobody alive whose body cannot live the wholesome everyday life, whose spirit cannot come up into these high places as it wills.’

‘We shall manage that soon,’ said Fowler.

‘For endless generations man has struggled upward against the indignities of his body—and the indignities of his soul. Pains, incapacities, vile fears, black moods, despairs. How well I’ve known them. They’ve taken more time than all your holidays. It is true, is it not, that every man is something of a cripple and something of a beast? I’ve dipped a little deeper than most; that’s all. It’s only now when he has fully learnt the truth of that, that he can take hold of himself to be neither beast nor cripple. Now that he overcomes his servitude to his body, he can for the first time think of living the full life of his body…. Before another generation dies you’ll have the thing in hand. You’ll do as you please with the old Adam and all the vestiges from the brutes and reptiles that lurk in his body and spirit. Isn’t that so?’

‘You put it boldly,’ said Fowler.

Karenin laughed cheerfully at his caution…. ‘When,’ asked Karenin suddenly, ‘when will you operate?’

‘The day after to-morrow,’ said Fowler. ‘For a day I want you to drink and eat as I shall prescribe. And you may think and talk as you please.’

‘I should like to see this place.’

‘You shall go through it this afternoon. I will have two men carry you in a litter. And to-morrow you shall lie out upon the terrace. Our mountains here are the most beautiful in the world….’

Section 3

The next morning Karenin got up early and watched the sun rise over the mountains, and breakfasted lightly, and then young Gardener, his secretary, came to consult him upon the spending of his day. Would he care to see people? Or was this gnawing pain within him too much to permit him to do that?

‘I’d like to talk,’ said Karenin. ‘There must be all sorts of lively-minded people here. Let them come and gossip with me. It will distract me—and I can’t tell you how interesting it makes everything that is going on to have seen the dawn of one’s own last day.’

‘Your last day!’

‘Fowler will kill me.’

‘But he thinks not.’

‘Fowler will kill me. If he does not he will not leave very much of me. So that this is my last day anyhow, the days afterwards if they come at all to me, will be refuse. I know....’

Gardener was about to speak when Karenin went on again.

‘I hope he kills me, Gardener. Don’t be—old-fashioned. The thing I am most afraid of is that last rag of life. I may just go on—a scarred salvage of suffering stuff. And then—all the things I have hidden and kept down or discounted or set right afterwards will get the better of me. I shall be peevish. I may lose my grip upon my own egotism. It’s never been a very firm grip. No, no, Gardener, don’t say that! You know better, you’ve had glimpses of it. Suppose I came through on the other side of this affair, belittled, vain, and spiteful, using the prestige I have got among men by my good work in the past just to serve some small invalid purpose....’

He was silent for a time, watching the mists among the distant precipices change to clouds of light, and drift and dissolve before the searching rays of the sunrise.

‘Yes,’ he said at last, ‘I am afraid of these anæsthetics and these fag ends of life. It’s life we are all afraid of. Death!—nobody minds just death. Fowler is clever—but some day surgery will know its duty better and not be so anxious just to save something . . . provided only that it quivers. I’ve tried to hold my end up properly and do my work. After Fowler has done with me I am certain I shall be unfit for work—and what else is there for me? . . . I know I shall not be fit for work....

‘I do not see why life should be judged by its last trailing thread of vitality.... I know it for the splendid thing it is—I who have been a diseased creature from the beginning. I know it well enough not to confuse it with its husks. Remember that, Gardener, if presently my heart fails me and I despair, and if I go through a little phase of pain and ingratitude and dark forgetfulness before the end.... Don’t believe what I may say at the last.... If the fabric is good enough the selvage doesn’t matter. It can’t matter. So long as you are alive you are just the moment, perhaps, but when you are dead then you are all your life from the first moment to the last....’

Section 4

Presently, in accordance with his wish, people came to talk to him, and he could forget himself again. Rachel Borken sat for a long time with him and talked chiefly of

women in the world, and with her was a girl named Edith Haydon who was already very well known as a cytologist. And several of the younger men who were working in the place and a patient named Kahn, a poet, and Edwards, a designer of plays and shows, spent some time with him. The talk wandered from point to point and came back upon itself, and became now earnest and now trivial as the chance suggestions determined. But soon afterwards Gardener wrote down notes of things he remembered, and it is possible to put together again the outlook of Karenin upon the world and how he thought and felt about many of the principal things in life.

'Our age,' he said, 'has been so far an age of scene-shifting. We have been preparing a stage, clearing away the setting of a drama that was played out and growing tiresome.... If I could but sit out the first few scenes of the new spectacle....

'How encumbered the world had become! It was ailing as I am ailing with a growth of unmeaning things. It was entangled, feverish, confused. It was in sore need of release, and I suppose that nothing less than the violence of those bombs could have released it and made it a healthy world again. I suppose they were necessary. Just as everything turns to evil in a fevered body so everything seemed turning to evil in those last years of the old time. Everywhere there were obsolete organisations seizing upon all the new fine things that science was giving to the world, nationalities, all sorts of political bodies, the churches and sects, proprietorship, seizing upon those treat powers and limitless possibilities and turning them to evil uses. And they would not suffer open speech, they would not permit of education, they would let no one be educated to the needs of the new time.... You who are younger cannot imagine the mixture of desperate hope and protesting despair in which we who could believe in the possibilities of science lived in those years before atomic energy came....

'It was not only that the mass of people would not attend, would not understand, but that those who did understand lacked the power of real belief. They said the things, they saw the things, and the things meant nothing to them....

'I have been reading some old papers lately. It is wonderful how our fathers bore themselves towards science. They hated it. They feared it. They permitted a few scientific men to exist and work—a pitiful handful.... "Don't find out anything about us," they said to them; "don't inflict vision upon us, spare our little ways of life from the fearful shaft of understanding. But do tricks for us, little limited tricks. Give us cheap lighting. And cure us of certain disagreeable things, cure us of cancer, cure us of consumption, cure our colds and relieve us after repletion...." We have changed all that, Gardener. Science is no longer our servant. We know it for something greater than our little individual selves. It is the awakening mind of the race, and in a little

while——In a little while——I wish indeed I could watch for that little while, now that the curtain has risen....

'While I lie here they are clearing up what is left of the bombs in London,' he said. 'Then they are going to repair the ruins and make it all as like as possible to its former condition before the bombs fell. Perhaps they will dig out the old house in St John's Wood to which my father went after his expulsion from Russia.... That London of my memories seems to me like a place in another world. For you younger people it must seem like a place that could never have existed.'

'Is there much left standing?' asked Edith Haydon.

'Square miles that are scarcely shaken in the south and north-west, they say; and most of the bridges and large areas of dock. Westminster, which held most of the government offices, suffered badly from the small bomb that destroyed the Parliament, there are very few traces of the old thoroughfare of Whitehall or the Government region thereabout, but there are plentiful drawings to scale of its buildings, and the great hole in the east of London scarcely matters. That was a poor district and very like the north and the south.... It will be possible to reconstruct most of it.... It is wanted. Already it becomes difficult to recall the old time—even for us who saw it.'

'It seems very distant to me,' said the girl.

'It was an unwholesome world,' reflected Karenin. 'I seem to remember everybody about my childhood as if they were ill. They were ill. They were sick with confusion. Everybody was anxious about money and everybody was doing uncongenial things. They ate a queer mixture of foods, either too much or too little, and at odd hours. One sees how ill they were by their advertisements. All this new region of London they are opening up now is plastered with advertisements of pills. Everybody must have been taking pills. In one of the hotel rooms in the Strand they have found the luggage of a lady covered up by falling rubble and unburnt, and she was equipped with nine different sorts of pill and tabloid. The pill-carrying age followed the weapon-carrying age. They are equally strange to us. People's skins must have been in a vile state. Very few people were properly washed; they carried the filth of months on their clothes. All the clothes they wore were old clothes; our way of pulping our clothes again after a week or so of wear would have seemed fantastic to them. Their clothing hardly bears thinking about. And the congestion of them! Everybody was jostling against everybody in those awful towns. In an uproar. People were run over and crushed by the hundred; every year in London the cars and omnibuses alone killed or disabled twenty thousand people, in Paris it was worse; people used to fall dead for want of air in the

crowded ways. The irritation of London, internal and external, must have been maddening. It was a maddened world. It is like thinking of a sick child. One has the same effect of feverish urgencies and acute irrational disappointments.

‘All history,’ he said, ‘is a record of a childhood....

‘And yet not exactly a childhood. There is something clean and keen about even a sick child—and something touching. But so much of the old times makes one angry. So much they did seems grossly stupid, obstinately, outrageously stupid, which is the very opposite to being fresh and young.

‘I was reading only the other day about Bismarck, that hero of nineteenth-century politics, that sequel to Napoleon, that god of blood and iron. And he was just a beery, obstinate, dull man. Indeed, that is what he was, the commonest, coarsest man, who ever became great. I looked at his portraits, a heavy, almost froggish face, with projecting eyes and a thick moustache to hide a poor mouth. He aimed at nothing but Germany, Germany emphasised, indurated, enlarged; Germany and his class in Germany; beyond that he had no ideas, he was inaccessible to ideas; his mind never rose for a recorded instant above a bumpkin’s elaborate cunning. And he was the most influential man in the world, in the whole world, no man ever left so deep a mark on it, because everywhere there were gross men to resonate to the heavy notes he emitted. He trampled on ten thousand lovely things, and a kind of malice in these louts made it pleasant to them to see him trample. No—he was no child; the dull, national aggressiveness he stood for, no childishness. Childhood is promise. He was survival.

‘All Europe offered its children to him, it sacrificed education, art, happiness and all its hopes of future welfare to follow the clatter of his sabre. The monstrous worship of that old fool’s “blood and iron” passed all round the earth. Until the atomic bombs burnt our way to freedom again....’

‘One thinks of him now as one thinks of the megatherium,’ said one of the young men.

‘From first to last mankind made three million big guns and a hundred thousand complicated great ships for no other purpose but war.’

‘Were there no sane men in those days,’ asked the young man, ‘to stand against that idolatry?’

‘In a state of despair,’ said Edith Haydon.

‘He is so far off—and there are men alive still who were alive when Bismarck died!’ . . . said the young man....

Section 5

‘And yet it may be I am unjust to Bismarck,’ said Karenin, following his own thoughts. ‘You see, men belong to their own age; we stand upon a common stock of thought and we fancy we stand upon the ground. I met a pleasant man the other day, a Maori, whose great-grandfather was a cannibal. It chanced he had a daguerreotype of the old sinner, and the two were marvellously alike. One felt that a little juggling with time and either might have been the other. People are cruel and stupid in a stupid age who might be gentle and splendid in a gracious one. The world also has its moods. Think of the mental food of Bismarck’s childhood; the humiliations of Napoleon’s victories, the crowded, crowning victory of the Battle of the Nations.... Everybody in those days, wise or foolish, believed that the division of the world under a multitude of governments was inevitable, and that it was going on for thousands of years more. It *was* inevitable until it was impossible. Any one who had denied that inevitability publicly would have been counted—oh! a *silly* fellow. Old Bismarck was only just a little—forcible, on the lines of the accepted ideas. That is all. He thought that since there had to be national governments he would make one that was strong at home and invincible abroad. Because he had fed with a kind of rough appetite upon what we can see now were very stupid ideas, that does not make him a stupid man. We’ve had advantages; we’ve had unity and collectivism blasted into our brains. Where should we be now but for the grace of science? I should have been an embittered, spiteful, downtrodden member of the Russian Intelligenza, a conspirator, a prisoner, or an assassin. You, my dear, would have been breaking dingy windows as a suffragette.’

‘*Never*,’ said Edith stoutly....

For a time the talk broke into humorous personalities, and the young people gibed at each other across the smiling old administrator, and then presently one of the young scientific men gave things a new turn. He spoke like one who was full to the brim.

‘You know, sir, I’ve a fancy—it is hard to prove such things—that civilisation was very near disaster when the atomic bombs came banging into it, that if there had been no Holsten and no induced radio-activity, the world would have—smashed—much as it did. Only instead of its being a smash that opened a way to better things, it might have been a smash without a recovery. It is part of my business to understand economics, and from that point of view the century before Holsten was just a hundred years’ crescendo of waste. Only the extreme individualism of that period, only its utter want of any collective understanding or purpose can explain that waste. Mankind used up material—insanely. They had got through three-quarters of all the coal in the planet, they had used up most of the oil, they had swept away their forests, and they were

running short of tin and copper. Their wheat areas were getting weary and populous, and many of the big towns had so lowered the water level of their available hills that they suffered a drought every summer. The whole system was rushing towards bankruptcy. And they were spending every year vaster and vaster amounts of power and energy upon military preparations, and continually expanding the debt of industry to capital. The system was already staggering when Holsten began his researches. So far as the world in general went there was no sense of danger and no desire for inquiry. They had no belief that science could save them, nor any idea that there was a need to be saved. They could not, they would not, see the gulf beneath their feet. It was pure good luck for mankind at large that any research at all was in progress. And as I say, sir, if that line of escape hadn't opened, before now there might have been a crash, revolution, panic, social disintegration, famine, and—it is conceivable—complete disorder.... The rails might have rusted on the disused railways by now, the telephone poles have rotted and fallen, the big liners dropped into sheet-iron in the ports; the burnt, deserted cities become the ruinous hiding-places of gangs of robbers. We might have been brigands in a shattered and attenuated world. Ah, you may smile, but that had happened before in human history. The world is still studded with the ruins of broken-down civilisations. Barbaric bands made their fastness upon the Acropolis, and the tomb of Hadrian became a fortress that warred across the ruins of Rome against the Colosseum.... Had all that possibility of reaction ended so certainly in 1940? Is it all so very far away even now?'

'It seems far enough away now,' said Edith Haydon.

'But forty years ago?'

'No,' said Karenin with his eyes upon the mountains, 'I think you underrate the available intelligence in those early decades of the twentieth century. Officially, I know, politically, that intelligence didn't tell—but it was there. And I question your hypothesis. I doubt if that discovery could have been delayed. There is a kind of inevitable logic now in the progress of research. For a hundred years and more thought and science have been going their own way regardless of the common events of life. You see—*they have got loose*. If there had been no Holsten there would have been some similar man. If atomic energy had not come in one year it would have come in another. In decadent Rome the march of science had scarcely begun.... Nineveh, Babylon, Athens, Syracuse, Alexandria, these were the first rough experiments in association that made a security, a breathing-space, in which inquiry was born. Man had to experiment before he found out the way to begin. But already two hundred years ago he had fairly begun.... The politics and dignities and wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were only the last phoenix blaze of the former

civilisation flaring up about the beginnings of the new. Which we serve.... ‘Man lives in the dawn for ever,’ said Karenin. ‘Life is beginning and nothing else but beginning. It begins everlastingly. Each step seems vaster than the last, and does but gather us together for the nest. This Modern State of ours, which would have been a Utopian marvel a hundred years ago, is already the commonplace of life. But as I sit here and dream of the possibilities in the mind of man that now gather to a head beneath the shelter of its peace, these great mountains here seem but little things....’

Section 6

About eleven Karenin had his midday meal, and afterwards he slept among his artificial furs and pillows for two hours. Then he awoke and some tea was brought to him, and he attended to a small difficulty in connection with the Moravian schools in the Labrador country and in Greenland that Gardener knew would interest him. He remained alone for a little while after that, and then the two women came to him again. Afterwards Edwards and Kahn joined the group, and the talk fell upon love and the place of women in the renascent world. The cloudbanks of India lay under a quivering haze, and the blaze of the sun fell full upon the eastward precipices. Ever and again as they talked, some vast splinter of rock would crack and come away from these, or a wild rush of snow and ice and stone, pour down in thunder, hang like a wet thread into the gulfs below, and cease....

Section 7

For a time Karenin said very little, and Kahn, the popular poet, talked of passionate love. He said that passionate, personal love had been the abiding desire of humanity since ever humanity had begun, and now only was it becoming a possible experience. It had been a dream that generation after generation had pursued, that always men had lost on the verge of attainment. To most of those who had sought it obstinately it had brought tragedy. Now, lifted above sordid distresses, men and women might hope for realised and triumphant love. This age was the Dawn of Love....

Karenin remained downcast and thoughtful while Kahn said these things. Against that continued silence Kahn’s voice presently seemed to beat and fail. He had begun by addressing Karenin, but presently he was including Edith Haydon and Rachel Borken in his appeal. Rachel listened silently; Edith watched Karenin and very deliberately avoided Kahn’s eyes.

‘I know,’ said Karenin at last, ‘that many people are saying this sort of thing. I know that there is a vast release of love-making in the world. This great wave of decoration and elaboration that has gone about the world, this Efflorescence, has of course laid hold

of that. I know that when you say that the world is set free, you interpret that to mean that the world is set free for love-making. Down there,—under the clouds, the lovers foregather. I know your songs, Kahn, your half-mystical songs, in which you represent this old hard world dissolving into a luminous haze of love—sexual love.... I don't think you are right or true in that. You are a young, imaginative man, and you see life—ardently—with the eyes of youth. But the power that has brought man into these high places under this blue-veiled blackness of the sky and which beckons us on towards the immense and awful future of our race, is riper and deeper and greater than any such emotions....

'All through my life—it has been a necessary part of my work—I have had to think of this release of sexual love and the riddles that perfect freedom and almost limitless power will put to the soul of our race. I can see now, all over the world, a beautiful ecstasy of waste; "Let us sing and rejoice and be lovely and wonderful." . . . The orgy is only beginning, Kahn.... It was inevitable—but it is not the end of mankind....

'Think what we are. It is but a yesterday in the endlessness of time that life was a dreaming thing, dreaming so deeply that it forgot itself as it dreamt, its lives, its individual instincts, its moments, were born and wondered and played and desired and hungered and grew weary and died. Incalculable successions of vision, visions of sunlit jungle, river wilderness, wild forest, eager desire, beating hearts, soaring wings and creeping terror flamed hotly and then were as though they had never been. Life was an uneasiness across which lights played and vanished. And then we came, man came, and opened eyes that were a question and hands that were a demand and began a mind and memory that dies not when men die, but lives and increases for ever, an over-mind, a dominating will, a question and an aspiration that reaches to the stars.... Hunger and fear and this that you make so much of, this sex, are but the elementals of life out of which we have arisen. All these elementals, I grant you, have to be provided for, dealt with, satisfied, but all these things have to be left behind.'

'But Love,' said Kahn.

'I speak of sexual love and the love of intimate persons. And that is what you mean, Kahn.'

Karenin shook his head. 'You cannot stay at the roots and climb the tree,' he said....

'No,' he said after a pause, 'this sexual excitement, this love story, is just a part of growing up and we grow out of it. So far literature and art and sentiment and all our emotional forms have been almost altogether adolescent, plays and stories, delights and hopes, they have all turned on that marvellous discovery of the love interest, but

life lengthens out now and the mind of adult humanity detaches itself. Poets who used to die at thirty live now to eighty-five. You, too, Kahn! There are endless years yet for you—and all full of learning.... We carry an excessive burden of sex and sexual tradition still, and we have to free ourselves from it. We do free ourselves from it. We have learnt in a thousand different ways to hold back death, and this sex, which in the old barbaric days was just sufficient to balance our dying, is now like a hammer that has lost its anvil, it plunges through human life. You poets, you young people want to turn it to delight. Turn it to delight. That may be one way out. In a little while, if you have any brains worth thinking about, you will be satisfied, and then you will come up here to the greater things. The old religions and their new offsets want still, I see, to suppress all these things. Let them suppress. If they can suppress. In their own people. Either road will bring you here at last to the eternal search for knowledge and the great adventure of power.'

'But incidentally,' said Rachel Borken; 'incidentally you have half of humanity, you have womankind, very much specialised for—for this love and reproduction that is so much less needed than it was.'

'Both sexes are specialised for love and reproduction,' said Karenin.

'But the women carry the heavier burden.'

'Not in their imaginations,' said Edwards.

'And surely,' said Kahn, 'when you speak of love as a phase—isn't it a necessary phase? Quite apart from reproduction the love of the sexes is necessary. Isn't it love, sexual love, which has released the imagination? Without that stir, without that impulse to go out from ourselves, to be reckless of ourselves and wonderful, would our lives be anything more than the contentment of the stalled ox?'

'The key that opens the door,' said Karenin, 'is not the goal of the journey.'

'But women!' cried Rachel. 'Here we are! What is our future—as women? Is it only that we have unlocked the doors of the imagination for you men? Let us speak of this question now. It is a thing constantly in my thoughts, Karenin. What do you think of us? You who must have thought so much of these perplexities.'

Karenin seemed to weigh his words. He spoke very deliberately. 'I do not care a rap about your future—as women. I do not care a rap about the future of men—as males. I want to destroy these peculiar futures. I care for your future as intelligences, as parts of and contribution to the universal mind of the race. Humanity is not only naturally over-specialised in these matters, but all its institutions, its customs, everything,

exaggerate, intensify this difference. I want to unspecialise women. No new idea. Plato wanted exactly that. I do not want to go on as we go now, emphasising this natural difference; I do not deny it, but I want to reduce it and overcome it.'

'And—we remain women,' said Rachel Borken. 'Need you remain thinking of yourselves as women?'

'It is forced upon us,' said Edith Haydon.

'I do not think a woman becomes less of a woman because she dresses and works like a man,' said Edwards. 'You women here, I mean you scientific women, wear white clothing like the men, twist up your hair in the simplest fashion, go about your work as though there was only one sex in the world. You are just as much women, even if you are not so feminine, as the fine ladies down below there in the plains who dress for excitement and display, whose only thoughts are of lovers, who exaggerate every difference.... Indeed we love you more.'

'But we go about our work,' said Edith Haydon.

'So does it matter?' asked Rachel.

'If you go about your work and if the men go about their work then for Heaven's sake be as much woman as you wish,' said Karenin. 'When I ask you to unspecialise, I am thinking not of the abolition of sex, but the abolition of the irksome, restricting, obstructive obsession with sex. It may be true that sex made society, that the first society was the sex-cemented family, the first state a confederacy of blood relations, the first laws sexual taboos. Until a few years ago morality meant proper sexual behaviour. Up to within a few years of us the chief interest and motive of an ordinary man was to keep and rule a woman and her children and the chief concern of a woman was to get a man to do that. That was the drama, that was life. And the jealousy of these demands was the master motive in the world. You said, Kahn, a little while ago that sexual love was the key that let one out from the solitude of self, but I tell you that so far it has only done so in order to lock us all up again in a solitude of two.... All that may have been necessary but it is necessary no longer. All that has changed and changes still very swiftly. Your future, Rachel, *as women*, is a diminishing future.'

'Karenin?' asked Rachel, 'do you mean that women are to become men?'

'Men and women have to become human beings.'

'You would abolish women? But, Karenin, listen! There is more than sex in this. Apart from sex we are different from you. We take up life differently. Forget we are—females,

Karenin, and still we are a different sort of human being with a different use. In some things we are amazingly secondary. Here am I in this place because of my trick of management, and Edith is here because of her patient, subtle hands. That does not alter the fact that nearly the whole body of science is man made; that does not alter the fact that men do so predominatingly make history, that you could nearly write a complete history of the world without mentioning a woman's name. And on the other hand we have a gift of devotion, of inspiration, a distinctive power for truly loving beautiful things, a care for life and a peculiar keen close eye for behaviour. You know men are blind beside us in these last matters. You know they are restless—and fitful. We have a steadfastness. We may never draw the broad outlines nor discover the new paths, but in the future isn't there a confirming and sustaining and supplying *rôle* for us? As important, perhaps, as yours? Equally important. We hold the world up, Karenin, though you may have raised it.'

'You know very well, Rachel, that I believe as you believe. I am not thinking of the abolition of woman. But I do want to abolish—the heroine, the sexual heroine. I want to abolish the woman whose support is jealousy and whose gift possession. I want to abolish the woman who can be won as a prize or locked up as a delicious treasure. And away down there the heroine flares like a divinity.'

'In America,' said Edwards, 'men are fighting duels over the praises of women and holding tournaments before Queens of Beauty.'

'I saw a beautiful girl in Lahore,' said Kahn, 'she sat under a golden canopy like a goddess, and three fine men, armed and dressed like the ancient paintings, sat on steps below her to show their devotion. And they wanted only her permission to fight for her.'

'That is the men's doing,' said Edith Haydon.

'I *said*,' cried Edwards, 'that man's imagination was more specialised for sex than the whole being of woman. What woman would do a thing like that? Women do but submit to it or take advantage of it.'

'There is no evil between men and women that is not a common evil,' said Karenin. 'It is you poets, Kahn, with your love songs which turn the sweet fellowship of comrades into this woman-centred excitement. But there is something in women, in many women, which responds to these provocations; they succumb to a peculiarly self-cultivating egotism. They become the subjects of their own artistry. They develop and elaborate themselves as scarcely any man would ever do. They *look* for golden canopies. And even when they seem to react against that, they may do it still. I have

been reading in the old papers of the movements to emancipate women that were going on before the discovery of atomic force. These things which began with a desire to escape from the limitations and servitude of sex, ended in an inflamed assertion of sex, and women more heroines than ever. Helen of Holloway was at last as big a nuisance in her way as Helen of Troy, and so long as you think of yourselves as women'—he held out a finger at Rachel and smiled gently—'instead of thinking of yourselves as intelligent beings, you will be in danger of—Helenism. To think of yourselves as women is to think of yourselves in relation to men. You can't escape that consequence. You have to learn to think of yourselves—for our sakes and your own sakes—in relation to the sun and stars. You have to cease to be our adventure, Rachel, and come with us upon our adventures. …' He waved his hand towards the dark sky above the mountain crests.

Section 8

'These questions are the next questions to which research will bring us answers,' said Karenin. 'While we sit here and talk idly and inexactly of what is needed and what may be, there are hundreds of keen-witted men and women who are working these things out, dispassionately and certainly, for the love of knowledge. The next sciences to yield great harvests now will be psychology and neural physiology. These perplexities of the situation between man and woman and the trouble with the obstinacy of egotism, these are temporary troubles, the issue of our own times. Suddenly all these differences that seem so fixed will dissolve, all these incompatibles will run together, and we shall go on to mould our bodies and our bodily feelings and personal reactions as boldly as we begin now to carve mountains and set the seas in their places and change the currents of the wind.'

'It is the next wave,' said Fowler, who had come out upon the terrace and seated himself silently behind Karenin's chair.

'Of course, in the old days,' said Edwards, 'men were tied to their city or their country, tied to the homes they owned or the work they did….'

'I do not see,' said Karenin, 'that there is any final limit to man's power of self-modification.

'There is none,' said Fowler, walking forward and sitting down upon the parapet in front of Karenin so that he could see his face. 'There is no absolute limit to either knowledge or power…. I hope you do not tire yourself talking.'

'I am interested,' said Karenin. 'I suppose in a little while men will cease to be tired. I suppose in a little time you will give us something that will hurry away the fatigue

products and restore our jaded tissues almost at once. This old machine may be made to run without slacking or cessation.'

'That is possible, Karenin. But there is much to learn.'

'And all the hours we give to digestion and half living; don't you think there will be some way of saving these?'

Fowler nodded assent.

'And then sleep again. When man with his blazing lights made an end to night in his towns and houses—it is only a hundred years or so ago that that was done—then it followed he would presently resent his eight hours of uselessness. Shan't we presently take a tabloid or lie in some field of force that will enable us to do with an hour or so of slumber and rise refreshed again?'

'Frobisher and Ameer Ali have done work in that direction.'

'And then the inconveniences of age and those diseases of the system that come with years; steadily you drive them back and you lengthen and lengthen the years that stretch between the passionate tumults of youth and the contractions of senility. Man who used to weaken and die as his teeth decayed now looks forward to a continually lengthening, continually fuller term of years. And all those parts of him that once gathered evil against him, the vestigial structures and odd, treacherous corners of his body, you know better and better how to deal with. You carve his body about and leave it re-modelled and unscarred. The psychologists are learning how to mould minds, to reduce and remove bad complexes of thought and motive, to relieve pressures and broaden ideas. So that we are becoming more and more capable of transmitting what we have learnt and preserving it for the race. The race, the racial wisdom, science, gather power continually to subdue the individual man to its own end. Is that not so?'

Fowler said that it was, and for a time he was telling Karenin of new work that was in progress in India and Russia. 'And how is it with heredity?' asked Karenin.

Fowler told them of the mass of inquiry accumulated and arranged by the genius of Tchen, who was beginning to define clearly the laws of inheritance and how the sex of children and the complexions and many of the parental qualities could be determined.

'He can actually *do*——?'

'It is still, so to speak, a mere laboratory triumph,' said Fowler, 'but to-morrow it will be practicable.'

‘You see,’ cried Karenin, turning a laughing face to Rachel and Edith, ‘while we have been theorising about men and women, here is science getting the power for us to end that old dispute for ever. If woman is too much for us, we’ll reduce her to a minority, and if we do not like any type of men and women, we’ll have no more of it. These old bodies, these old animal limitations, all this earthly inheritance of gross inevitabilities falls from the spirit of man like the shrivelled cocoon from an imago. And for my own part, when I hear of these things I feel like that—like a wet, crawling new moth that still fears to spread its wings. Because where do these things take us?’

‘Beyond humanity,’ said Kahn.

‘No,’ said Karenin. ‘We can still keep our feet upon the earth that made us. But the air no longer imprisons us, this round planet is no longer chained to us like the ball of a galley slave....

‘In a little while men who will know how to bear the strange gravitations, the altered pressures, the attenuated, unfamiliar gases and all the fearful strangenesses of space will be venturing out from this earth. This ball will be no longer enough for us; our spirit will reach out.... Cannot you see how that little argosy will go glittering up into the sky, twinkling and glittering smaller and smaller until the blue swallows it up. They may succeed out there; they may perish, but other men will follow them....

‘It is as if a great window opened,’ said Karenin.

Section 9

As the evening drew on Karenin and those who were about him went up upon the roof of the buildings, so that they might the better watch the sunset and the flushing of the mountains and the coming of the afterglow. They were joined by two of the surgeons from the laboratories below, and presently by a nurse who brought Karenin refreshment in a thin glass cup. It was a cloudless, windless evening under the deep blue sky, and far away to the north glittered two biplanes on the way to the observatories on Everest, two hundred miles distant over the precipices to the east. The little group of people watched them pass over the mountains and vanish into the blue, and then for a time they talked of the work that the observatory was doing. From that they passed to the whole process of research about the world, and so Karenin’s thoughts returned again to the mind of the world and the great future that was opening upon man’s imagination. He asked the surgeons many questions upon the detailed possibilities of their science, and he was keenly interested and excited by the things they told him. And as they talked the sun touched the mountains, and became very swiftly a blazing and indented hemisphere of liquid flame and sank.

Karenin looked blinking at the last quivering rim of incandescence, and shaded his eyes and became silent.

Presently he gave a little start.

‘What?’ asked Rachel Borken.

‘I had forgotten,’ he said.

‘What had you forgotten?’

‘I had forgotten about the operation to-morrow. I have been so interested as Man to-day that I have nearly forgotten Marcus Karenin. Marcus Karenin must go under your knife to-morrow, Fowler, and very probably Marcus Karenin will die.’ He raised his slightly shrivelled hand. ‘It does not matter, Fowler. It scarcely matters even to me. For indeed is it Karenin who has been sitting here and talking; is it not rather a common mind, Fowler, that has played about between us? You and I and all of us have added thought to thought, but the thread is neither you nor me. What is true we all have; when the individual has altogether brought himself to the test and winnowing of expression, then the individual is done. I feel as though I had already been emptied out of that little vessel, that Marcus Karenin, which in my youth held me so tightly and completely. Your beauty, dear Edith, and your broad brow, dear Rachel, and you, Fowler, with your firm and skilful hands, are now almost as much to me as this hand that beats the arm of my chair. And as little me. And the spirit that desires to know, the spirit that resolves to do, that spirit that lives and has talked in us to-day, lived in Athens, lived in Florence, lives on, I know, for ever....

‘And you, old Sun, with your sword of flame searing these poor eyes of Marcus for the last time of all, beware of me! You think I die—and indeed I am only taking off one more coat to get at you. I have threatened you for ten thousand years, and soon I warn you I shall be coming. When I am altogether stripped and my disguises thrown away. Very soon now, old Sun, I shall launch myself at you, and I shall reach you and I shall put my foot on your spotted face and tug you about by your fiery locks. One step I shall take to the moon, and then I shall leap at you. I’ve talked to you before, old Sun, I’ve talked to you a million times, and now I am beginning to remember. Yes—long ago, long ago, before I had stripped off a few thousand generations, dust now and forgotten, I was a hairy savage and I pointed my hand at you and—clearly I remember it!—I saw you in a net. Have you forgotten that, old Sun? . . .

‘Old Sun, I gather myself together out of the pools of the individual that have held me dispersed so long. I gather my billion thoughts into science and my million wills into a

common purpose. Well may you slink down behind the mountains from me, well may you cower....'

Section 10

Karenin desired that he might dream alone for a little while before he returned to the cell in which he was to sleep. He was given relief for a pain that began to trouble him and wrapped warmly about with furs, for a great coldness was creeping over all things, and so they left him, and he sat for a long time watching the afterglow give place to the darkness of night.

It seemed to those who had to watch over him unobtrusively lest he should be in want of any attention, that he mused very deeply.

The white and purple peaks against the golden sky sank down into cold, blue remoteness, glowed out again and faded again, and the burning cressets of the Indian stars, that even the moonrise cannot altogether quench, began their vigil. The moon rose behind the towering screen of dark precipices to the east, and long before it emerged above these, its slanting beams had filled the deep gorges below with luminous mist and turned the towers and pinnacles of Lio Porgyul to a magic dreamcastle of radiance and wonder....

Came a great uprush of ghostly light above the black rim of rocks, and then like a bubble that is blown and detaches itself the moon floated off clear into the unfathomable dark sky....

And then Karenin stood up. He walked a few paces along the terrace and remained for a time gazing up at that great silver disc, that silvery shield that must needs be man's first conquest in outer space....

Presently he turned about and stood with his hands folded behind him, looking at the northward stars....

At length he went to his own cell. He lay down there and slept peacefully till the morning. And early in the morning they came to him and the anæsthetic was given him and the operation performed.

It was altogether successful, but Karenin was weak and he had to lie very still; and about seven days later a blood clot detached itself from the healing scar and travelled to his heart, and he died in an instant in the night.