CHAPTER XLIII

"I shall walk," said Rollo, as he and Dawson left the flat together: "Do you come my way at all?"

"Yes, if you are still in the same place."

"I am."

"You are still carrying on with that group then?"

"I have been — yes." Dawson said nothing, and after they had walked on about a hundred yards in silence Rollo added: "I shall give it up from now. I made the decision this evening, while they were talking. While they were talking, I discovered something and made a decision."

Dawson carefully refrained from asking what he had discovered.

"I discovered," went on Rollo: "that I am not a <u>whole</u>. We are neither of us wholes; and that is why we cannot act. Instead, we only go on talking. When you are not a whole yourself, you must find a whole to which you attach yourself. That is a Law. That is what we are to do." Once again Dawson made no comment.

"Only," Rollo continued "This whole that you find must be bigger than yourself. I have never yet seen such a whole. The political parties — they are jokes. The psychological and religious movements — they have no centre. The Freemasons — are very excellent eaters. One might say there are no such wholes to be found. And that was what I thought, when I started my group. Not being a whole myself. But now I, too, have failed to create a whole with a centre. But now I do not any longer believe that there <u>are</u> no other such wholes."

"What has made you change your mind?"

"Look: Behind what happens in the world — and perfectly distinct from the <u>words</u>, the abstract, <u>meaningless</u> words, that are babbled by all these children, who are not wholes, and who do not belong to wholes — the politicians, and the clergymen, and the university professors, and the literary men, and the scientific men, and the wonderfully practical business men — behind all these (and completely ignoring all the very important things they say) you can, if you look, see a <u>wisdom</u> at work — you can see definite purpose being steadily and silently turned into <u>acts</u>. Definite purposes being turned into acts — yes — and that is exactly the opposite of the character of the parties and movements. From now I shall begin to seek for my whole, till I have found it." He paused. "Have you understood me?" he asked.

"It would interest me most," said Dawson: "to know <u>why</u> you no longer think you yourself can become a whole. You will of course claim to know this yourself."

"That," said Rollo: "is an intuition." And after a pause he added: "You speak of my claiming to know my own mind and my own meaning. <u>Not</u> altogether. We cannot either of us make that claim yet, Dawson, if we are really honest. But, listen: in order to know oneself, one must first attach oneself to a whole that knows itself — that knows itself and its purposes, so clearly that it can carry them tranquilly into effect. <u>That</u> is my intuition of this evening. And I shall act on it."

"And you?" he added, when Dawson made no reply.

"I still think," said Dawson, "that you have not allowed nearly enough for the insidious tendency to underrate one's own powers."

Neither of them spoke again, until they reached the Temple, which was the parting of their ways.

"Then you don't come with me?"

"What, and throw away the whole of my life up to this point?" There was a positive tartness in Dawson's voice. They shook hands, and Rollo turned in under the arch that leads from the new London to the old, and went down towards the Thames.

Dawson turned up North towards his mother's house. Having come a little out of his way, he took a zigzag course that led him at one point through a narrow cañon between the blank brick sides of two detached buildings. Half way through it he overtook a decrepit old man wheezing and shuffling along with the help of a stick. The passage was too narrow for him to get past. After he had walked slowly along behind this old man for a few yards, Dawson began to feel extremely angry. Nevertheless he subdued his passion, and only when they came to a lamp, coughed loud enough to be heard through the old man's deafness. The latter turned and immediately began whining:—

"'Elp a fellow as is down and out, Guv'nor!" Dawson made to push past, but the fellow was importunate. He thrust his face into Dawson's, so that he could smell his bad breath. "Look 'ere, Sir. I've got some real 'ot ones 'ere!" And he thrust a collection of postcards into Dawson's hand. Dawson hesitated for a moment. Then he looked swiftly through the postcards and selected two or three in which the photographer had managed to achieve his obscenity rather less coarsely than in the others. These he put into his pocket, while he handed the remainder back to the man with a coin large enough to pay for the whole stock.

"That ought to solve some of your problems," he said, and began to walk on.

"Ah, Guv'nor, you're a gent proper and no mistake. But it won't solve the problem of where I'm to lay me old 'ead ternight." The man was following him now, walking faster than Dawson would have thought possible. Dawson felt afraid. He stopped suddenly, therefore, so that the man nearly fell into him. Then he turned sharp on his heel. In the dim light he could just see the half-open lips, the dripping nose, and the grey watery eyes which were fixed on his own with all the idiotic earnestness of appeal. Once again the furious fit of anger began to rise in him, and this time he gave it free play, because it drove away the fear. 'You horrid disgusting old man,' he thought suddenly to himself: "With your dirty postcards and your dirty face and your filthy-smelling clothes and breath — making claims on <u>me</u>. Asking for <u>my</u> time and thought and feeling to be spent on you. You beast!" The two stood facing one another in silence, while Dawson, with the skill born of practice, took these emotions, so to speak, between his hands and slowly throttled them.

"So that's your problem!" he said slowly — speaking to gain time.

"Yus," said the man hopefully. He began to rub his hands and hunch his shoulders. "It's perishin' cold to-night, Sir, when you ain't ser young neither!" But now Dawson hardly heard what the old man said. His thoughts tumbled rapidly one on top of the other, and his heart began to beat faster. He suddenly recollected Rollo's gibes, and how he had been talking or listening to talk for the last four hours — or rather, the last four years! Always talk, talk, talk-and-nothing ever came of it. Dawson wondered if he had advanced a single step. After all, was not <u>this</u> just

exactly the kind of unexpected emergency that showed up the empty talker, that distinguished him from the doer! The empty talker, who never got anywhere — who never 'became a whole!' He made up his mind.

"No!" he said in a bantering tone to the man: "You look as if you needed a few repairs." And while he spoke, he was gaining time, examining his heart, to make sure that the last traces of weak resentment had vanished from it. At last he leaned forward to the old man and looked at him in such a way that the brightness of his own eyes seemed to leap out of them and take hold of their object.

"I think I can solve that problem for you all right" he said with a slight chuckle:

"What's that Gov'ner?"

"Where you're to lay your head to-night!" explained Dawson and at the same time took a deep breath and deliberately summoned to his heart all the warmth of which it was capable.

The old man stared at him in a silly way.

Dawson's fist, with the whole of Dawson's strength, such as it was, behind it, caught the old man under the chin and almost lifted him into the air. A second later the vendor of postcards was lying on the stones, with the blood trickling slowly and foolishly from his mouth, while Dawson knelt anxiously to make sure that he was alive. The man was unconscious but breathing fairly regularly.

With a faint sigh of relief Dawson rose and, without looking again at his victim, walked on. His breast heaved. It appeared that he was after all among the number of those who can entertain definite purposes and translate them into acts! The warmth and elation had still not subsided from his heart by the time he reached home. He opened the front door and went upstairs. Late as it was, his mother's voice called to him from her bedroom, as he passed it: "Is that you, Leslie?" Dawson switched on the light and went in to where the peaceful, grey-haired woman was lying awake in bed. She turned her head towards him, as he came in; and he smiled gravely at her.

"Don't look so solemn!" said Mrs. Dawson impatiently, and her eyes fastened themselves sharply and a little contemptuously on her son. "Why will you go on trying to take yourself seriously, my dear boy?"

Once again Dawson chuckled. Then he knelt down by the bedside and kissed his mother long and affectionately, saying with a degree of emotion that astonished her:

"Oh Mother, I really believe I owe you everything after all!"

CHAPTER XLIV

The moment Humphrey came back into the room after seeing his guests out of the house, Gerald said to him:

"I can't possibly go to bed — all alone — straight away!" And there was a half truculent note in his voice.

"Why should you? Do exactly as you please."

"Yes, but you've got to stay up too."

"Well, I'll have a cup of tea anyhow."

“That friend Dawson of yours,” said Gerald reflectively, when he had put a kettle on the fire and they were both sitting watching it fail to boil: “seems to have succeeded in making up his mind. That in itself is something of an achievement nowadays!”

“Yes,” said Humphrey. “He’s changed tremendously.”

“Do you know what puts me off that sort of attitude most? In spite of all this parade of kicking off old prejudices and complexes and modesty and “clearing our minds of cant” and so forth, these people never seem to escape the prevailing obsession any better than the rest of us.” All the time Gerald spoke, the two phrases ‘you know, I mean that ghastly feeling of slipping away into an ocean of nothingness’ and ‘Tolstoy knew this and was terrified’ kept echoing dimly on somewhere at the back of his mind.

“Tell me” said Humphrey, “what you mean by ‘prevailing obsession.’ Gerald reflected for a moment, and, as he did so, his memory flickered rapidly over the curious conversation he had had with Janet on the occasion of his first visit to the boarding-house. “I mean obsession with — the relation between body and mind. Look at the way he suddenly cut in on John over that Tolstoy business — and quite off the point really! He’s obviously just as badly obsessed — probably worse, really — only he uses a kind of bluster, to hide it, instead of our methods of — humour, or whatever they may be.”

“Go on! I believe you’re absolutely right!”

“It’s all very well to pooh-pooh Sex — I’ve arrived at the conclusion that it is quite honestly impossible for human beings, in their heart of hearts, to regard it as anything but a ‘temptation’. Those who shout loudest about not seeing it in this light are just the ones who give themselves away with every word. They cannot open their mouths without some footling remark — you know — ‘the best way to overcome temptation is to give way to it,’ and so forth.” The kettle had begun to boil. Humphrey got up and made the tea without saying anything. Five minutes later, when they both had a steaming cup in their hands, he began:

“Listen, old man! It’s impossible to understand the relation between body and mind — or body and soul, if you like — as long as one thinks of them as two only. That’s why you’re up a tree. The muddle about this really dates right back to the Ninth Century, when the Church told people they mustn’t go on thinking any more that the human being consists of Body, Soul and Spirit. The Eighth Oecumenical Council. That made it impossible to understand the Trinity any longer. Now: it’s only by getting back to an understanding of the third thing, Spirit, that the man of to-day will ever manage to understand the relation between soul and body.”

“This sounds suspiciously like Brockmann!”

“Why ‘suspiciously’?” asked Humphrey. “Of course it’s Brockmann! I wish to God I could give you some idea of what Brockmann means, Gerald!” he added eagerly: “Since I’ve been working at him from the medical side — I’ve found — you remember what I once said about Black’s Head, Heart and Loins? — It’s absolutely amazing!” Humphrey became inarticulate, and then gradually lost himself in thought. “The Trinity” he added at last: “It’s simply a matter of seeing the Trinity everywhere — first in the human being, and then you begin to see it in the Cosmos; you even understand what’s behind the creeds!”

"Oh yes!" Gerald was disappointed to see the conversation degenerating into a lecture on Brockmann: "But you know how I feel about all that. As a matter of fact I thought Rollo was quite good on that very point."

"Yes, but what's *your* objection to it?"

"Well, I thought I explained that I distrust these exaggerated cults of the individual soul that arise in reaction to a decadent society. The mere regularity with which they have occurred in all known civilisations is enough to discredit them. And then there is a certain fundamental egotism behind them all, which I dislike very much."

"But you don't know anything about Brockmann!"

"Oh nonsense! I can diagnose a disease from well-known symptoms just as much as you can."

"You say that movements making much of the inner life and of moral development, and of reunion with the spiritual world, have always tended to arise in civilisations that have passed their prime?"

"Certainly! And I give Neoplatonism as an example."

"But, Gerald, can't you see that all this is an argument *for* them? How do you know that these very movements may not be engaged in gathering together the spiritual fruits of the whole civilisation, in order to carry them on to the next? How do you know that it wasn't the main purpose of the civilisation to produce these very movements?"

"Well — because I'd rather have the civilisations. I really can't conceive of a few bulge-heads sitting and thinking as a "fruit" of Athens in the days of Pheidias and Pericles."

"Simply because there's less in the bulge-heads than you can *see* and handle. That's rank materialism! The rest may be there all the same. It's like a seed. After the blossom is over, the seed is the only important part of the plant. Yet it's nothing to *look* at — unless you can see the spiritual part of it."

"Which is an elementary contradiction in terms," commented Gerald cheerfully: "How can I 'see' a spiritual part? It's no use, Humphrey! You'll never persuade me that a few people shutting themselves off from the world and doing mystical stunts is the end of all creation!"

"Who said anything about shutting oneself off from the world? Am I shutting myself off from the world? A jolly sight less than I did before I heard of Brockmann."

"That's because you have a natural unselfishness, which it will take a long time to kill. The fact remains that all this Rosicrucian stuff about the individual Ego, and its colossal importance in the scheme of things, is thoroughly unhealthy; and — to be perfectly frank — I should be glad to see you out of it."

"Oh, but the individual Ego doesn't mean what you think it does. You don't understand." Humphrey paused: "Yes, and it was *you yourself* who explained to me the difference between 'men' and 'Man'! By Gum! It's simply amazing how things are mixed up just now!"

"When did I explain to you the difference between 'men' and 'Man'?"

"Just now, when you were arguing with Rollo. You didn't know you did — but you did!" He paused. "Selfless self-consciousness!" he went on: "Can't you get that idea? Look here! The whole trouble is that old idea of 'subjective' and 'objective' that

keeps knocking about at the back of your head. That's why I want to get your mind over to Central Europe. You'll never find out anywhere else how to take the strain between body and mind and live on it. They're the only people who understand the heart." Gerald put his hand up to his forehead:

"You seem to me," he protested, "to be saying about five different things at once, and all of them wrong. In the first place why in the name of thunder should Central Europe be designated as the proper place for 'getting rid' of the 'old' idea of subjective and objective?"

"Because it stands midway between East and West."

"Does it? Presumably Kant was a Central European, and yet it was Kant who —"

"I'm not talking of Kant! I'm talking of Goethe — and Brockmann. If you won't read Brockmann, read Goethe — I mean the scientific works. He has overcome the split between subject and object."

"Well — even if he has, I don't see that it gets us any further. Why has all this been tacked on anyway to our original problem about the 'strain', as you call it, between body and mind? If overcoming the split between subject and object takes away the strain or the obsession, and Goethe, on behalf of Central Europe, has overcome it, then things ought to be much better in Central Europe? But are they? Isn't the obsession practically universal?"

"Yes," said Humphrey. "I'm not going to say things are any better in Central Europe to-day. But the point is, they don't really need to have the obsession; they get it because it's the spirit of the Age, and the spirit of the Age comes from us. Whereas it's in the very soul of the English culture. That's why I say, you ought to try and understand the soul of the German culture — as a sort of corrective."

"Sometimes," said Gerald, "and probably by accident, you say extraordinarily profound things. As a matter of fact I suppose it is peculiarly a part of the English make-up — to be uneasy about the body. There was Puritanism . . . Milton . . . the Victorians —" and he added mentally, 'and your sister!'

"There you are!" exclaimed Humphrey triumphantly, "I knew you'd understand better than I do, if you understood at all! Don't you see, the English people can't understand the heart? They don't know about it; they can't find it; consequently, when they get too much self-knowledge to go on feeling instinctively — they are lost. Look at Hamlet — always hunting about for his heart, and never found it! Whereas a man like Goethe could get any amount of self-knowledge and keep a rich life of feeling going at the same time. Look how he managed to keep himself young all his life!"

"Yes," said Gerald grimly, "he kept himself young all right — by the simple process of eating up other people's affections — I daresay I could do it that way myself. There's nothing like a 'rich life of feeling' — if you can get it."

"I've never heard it put that way! You probably know more about him than I do!"

"No. I don't know much. But it's absurd to describe him as having 'any amount of self-knowledge.' Or at least, if he had it, he deliberately refused to act on it. Really, some things are simply unforgivable."

"What sort of things?"

“Well, for instance, in the very height of his ecstasy as a lover, Goethe couldn’t manage to forget that it was all good <u>business</u> for making him more sensitive to nature. How does it go?

Wie herrlich leuchtet
Mir die Natur!
Wie glantzt die Sonne!
Wie lacht die Flur!

Wie ich dich liebe
Mit warmen Blut,
Die du mir Jugend
Und Freud’ und Mut.

Zu neuen Liedern
Und Tanzen gibst.
(Good business for poetry too!)
Sie ewig glücklich,
Wie du mich liebst!

“‘Thank you dear! Run away and play, now, like a good girl!’”

“I’m afraid I don’t know what it means.” Gerald began to translate:

“How gloriously Nature glitters to me, how the sun sparkles, how the earth laughs! How I love —”

“But, dash it!” interrupted Humphrey, “isn’t that just what you — your poems — you explained once —”

“Yes, but <u>I WASN’T CONSCIOUS OF IT!</u>” shouted Gerald from the other side of the fireplace in an enormously loud and aggressive voice and at the same moment he jumped up on his feet and began to walk about the room. “Not at the time,” he went on: “At least — No, certainly <u>not</u>! Besides, that’s the whole point! I never pretended to have ‘any amount of self-knowledge.’ Now I’ve got the self-knowledge, I’ve stopped writing poetry! . . . . Oh yes, I see, that’s just your point! . . . . But can’t you see, what I object to in Goethe — you can’t have <u>both</u> — it’s one thing to — oh, damn you! — learn your lesson — from unrequited love, but you can’t play the same game with requited — My God, Trinder, what absolute <u>piffle</u> I’m talking! For God’s sake leave me alone!”

Humphrey said nothing, and Gerald continued pacing up and down the room. ‘You know, I mean that ghastly feeling of slipping away into an ocean of nothingness,’ whispered the echo of Humphrey’s voice in his heart. ‘Tolstoy knew this and was terrified,’ chimed in the echo of Dawson’s. And for a moment he seemed to himself to be standing at a loss astride a dark abyss, out of which a cold wind blew up and chilled him to the marrow. “I see,” said Humphrey, “you don’t like Goethe! I tell you what, I wish you’d read some Novalis!” Gerald turned on his heel.

"Are you qualifying for an advisory post in a free library? Why on earth do you keep on telling me to read things and trying to 'carry my mind over to Central Europe' and Lord knows what?"

"Because you're an Englishman, and you can't find your heart," said Humphrey. "You wrote to me, you know!" he added.

"Yes, but what do you know about it, to prescribe with such authority?" Gerald spoke more quietly — "That's what I mean. Have you read all these people — and found yours? You didn't seem to have, when I was last up!" A peculiarly gloomy frown had taken possession of Humphrey's face.

"I know what I'm telling you is true," he said, "but I only know it theoretically. You are quite right. I have never been able to find mine — since the War. I was trying — absolutely desperately — but more or less without knowing it — when we were together. And then, I think I scotched it altogether, experimenting with women — you know — all body and mind. Jumping backward and forward. To be perfectly frank, I feel pretty sure I shall never find it at all now — not — this journey. But there's no reason why you shouldn't. You have all sorts of qualifications — the artistic temperament, for one thing. That's a tremendous start." There was a long silence. And then:

"I see," said Gerald in a voice that was all the softer for the loud aggressive tone in which he had just been speaking. "The Heart-doctor, who couldn't find his own heart!" He sat down and neither of them spoke for some time.

"How do you know?" asked Gerald at last, speaking very slowly, without looking up from the blackened hearth: "Are you sure we are not talking rather sentimental nonsense? You are not selfish — and you are quite fond of other people — I don't really quite see what it means to say you 'haven't found your heart.'"

"Well, if I had found it, I imagine I shouldn't want to die?" This time Gerald slowly raised his head until he was looking at the speaker. He compressed his lips and took in a deep breath:

"It's such an equivocal phrase. In a sense I suppose all sensible men want to die — certainly all philosophers. Do you mean you want to die desperately?"

"No. Not desperately. Simply that at any given moment I would prefer not to be conscious." Gerald suddenly began to pity him intensely.

"Ah! I understand that all right!" he said, directing at Humphrey a specially sad and familiar smile — which the latter disconcertingly failed to return.

Neither of them spoke any more, and Gerald, growing colder and colder, became aware that the moment he had been trying to put off was at last at hand. Rising reluctantly from his chair, he walked slowly to the door, where he turned, with his fingers on the handle. Humphrey still sat gazing thoughtfully into the chilly remains of the fire, apparently no longer aware of his existence. Gerald longed to get into touch with him again; and yet there seemed nothing to say.

"Physician, heal thyself!" he murmured half-involuntarily, and with a note of mockery in his voice that suited ill enough with the desolation in his heart.

"Ah," said Humphrey quickly, "who's frightened to go to bed alone?" Gerald turned and left the room.

In the cold bedroom he paused, standing so still with nearly all his weight on one foot that at the end of five minutes he could hardly move for cramp. Then,

instead of going to bed, he limped back, shivering slightly, to the door of the sitting-room and paused again outside it. At last he opened the door. Humphrey was moving about the room, collecting things.

"Read something to me!" he said, and Humphrey betrayed no surprise, but only pondered for a moment over what he would choose. At last he went to his desk and drew out two type-written sheets. They sat down in their old places, one on each side of the empty hearth, while Humphrey read, very slowly and impressively, the contents of the sheets. Neither of them spoke for one or two minutes after he had done. And then:

"How much do you understand of that?" asked Gerald.

"About a hundredth part, I suppose!"

"And what was it?"

"Oh, a kind of effusion — by a member — inspired by various things of Brockmann's. Of course it's far weaker than any of the originals. But I can't read German — and I thought the Germanised English of the translations might offend you!"

"I'm not really so easily offended," said Gerald softly. A little later he got up, and, as Humphrey rose too, held out his hand with a shy look.

"Good night!" he said, "I'll read your Brockmann — and your Novalis."

They shook hands, but after they had done so, remained standing opposite one another, with a curious look on their faces.

"I still don't understand," said Gerald slowly, "why you are so concerned about my literary tastes! I have a sort of feeling there is something more behind it than just — friendly benevolence."

"Sooner or later," said Humphrey after a slight pause, "probably not in this incarnation — there must be a colossal battle . . . . everyone will be wanted then . . . everyone . . . literary tastes may be only a symptom of what's underneath. If I didn't feel this so desperately, Gerald, I should never have dared to butt in on your preserves the way I have — with all my ignorance."

"I see!" said Gerald, as an entirely new light began to break in on him. "You want me to be one of the — well, one of the fellows who say "Wup!" in fact!" Humphrey nodded vehemently.

"You've said it!" he exclaimed. And they both laughed.

Many times, before he fell asleep that night, Gerald lay on his back, repeating to himself the five or six lines of the meditation which had particularly struck him. Struck him not so much by any superiority to the rest, as because they seemed to have been addressed to him personally — just as earlier in the evening Dawson's words had seemed for a moment to have been addressed to him. As far as he could recollect, they ran like this:

Know thou thyself, Oh Man — and thou shalt feel
Deep in the darkness of the darkest depths
The force of the Father love — begetting life:
And even in thine own terror of the depths
Work of the Father wisdom in thine heart
Tempering life with death — forging steel strength

And glowing love . . .

CHAPTER XLV

More than six months elapsed before Gerald saw anything more of John Trinder. He received no letter and was himself far too preoccupied and overdone to write. For all this time his father's illness grew steadily worse. There was one brief respite, immediately following the fourth operation, and then the malignant growth appeared again in the same place and proceeded more rapidly than ever. Mr. Marston refused to undergo a fifth operation, and his wife and son were obliged accordingly to set their teeth to the prospect of watching him slowly die. It was a terrible ordeal, for he was in pain much of the time, and Gerald's mother had neither the physical nor the spiritual strength which would have enable her to meet such a strain. Moreover Gerald himself was just at that time at the lowest ebb of his faith in humanity, in himself, or indeed in anything; and, to crown all, there was the painful veil of misunderstanding between himself and the dying man (whose head he nevertheless both loved and honoured) — a misunderstanding which was rendered almost exquisite when he realised that one of its chief causes was precisely his own absence of faith. Often when the two had been silent together for a long time the son's sense of the father's accusing eye became unbearable. "You," the lack-lustre eye seemed to say, "you with your flimsy mood of doubt and despondency and metaphysical chaos (of which I am perfectly well aware, though we never speak about it) you are making this last trial much harder for me than it need have been — you, who, above all others, should be lightening the load, who should be bringing me the fruits of that wisdom of the ages, withheld from my own youth, which my toil and sacrifice made accessible to yours — who should be speaking words of comfort to me now, as I comforted you, when you were a little boy and fell and bruised your head!"

As is often the case with those who are compelled to watch a long illness, Gerald underrated the extent to which his father's mind was preoccupied with his own physical discomfort. Often after a long silence, a murmur from the bed, a word of weak complaint, or a request for some assistance would suddenly dispel all the subtle reproaches which he was imagining into the sick man's heart. Nevertheless the causes for reproach remained and, if they were unspoken and even unfelt — that made the thought of them sometimes more unbearable still. The presence of them in the background certainly made Gerald take to heart very much more than he would otherwise have done these other quite unjustified reproaches, when the old man — even in health of a somewhat difficult disposition — would take for callousness, for lack of sympathy, what was in fact the helpless silence of pity and despair. Despair! But that was just where his guilt lay. More and more intensely, as the weeks passed, Gerald realised that this mood of spiritual despair was at the back of his own helplessness beside the sick bed. With all the will in the world, he had nothing to offer! That was the trouble. Humphrey was right. He was suffering from a sort of sclerosis of the heart.

And so, in the last few terrible days, it seemed to him as though death had veritably trampled the whole household underfoot. There was a flavour, almost a

smell, of it in the air. The white emaciated face in the bed, with its protruding cheek-bones and two dark caverns of eyes, hovered perpetually before his fancy as an incarnate symbol of the appalling experience which its owner must shortly suffer. And when it was over, and he had suffered the last insult, then this same image began to mingle with the son's dreams in grim and even macabre fantasies that were terrifying to one who had from childhood feared to be even alone in the dark. He had dreams at this time, of which he would never have dared to speak to anyone.

Gerald and his mother found their monetary position practically unchanged, but a certain patriarchal secretiveness of Mr. Marston's on matters of business had left them in doubt on this point up to the last. Consequently Gerald had felt obliged to keep up all through the illness, the course in 'scientific salesmanship' which he had begun just before. He had rather protracted its length by cutting down the frequency of his attendance at the classes. Nor had it been altogether a bad thing for him to get away occasionally from the house of gloom into the atmosphere of smart American hustle, which the director of his commercial academy insisted on inculcating into staff and students alike. It was at any rate alive, this brisk pursuit of other people's money; and the occasional excursions into an excruciatingly naive philosophy — the talk of 'personality' and 'will-power' and the quotation from Milton, culled from a quotation-dictionary and pasted up in the director's office — all these seemed to amuse and distract, more than they offended him.

It was not till after his father's death, when his sensibilities were less wholly bespoken elsewhere, that he began to feel any serious distaste for the work he had taken up. And then he tried hard to suppress it.

The third feature of these extraordinary months — one to which Gerald paid but little attention at the time — was his reading of one of Brockmann's books. It was one of those which purported to give directions for the acquisition of self-knowledge and 'higher knowledge' (one and the same thing, according to the author) and Gerald had brought it back from London under the impulse which had been aroused in him by his conversation with Humphrey and its nocturnal sequel. Gerald not only read this book through, but made a conscientious attempt — whenever his state of mind allowed him to contemplate any future at all — to follow out the advice and instructions it contained. What dissatisfied him most about the book itself was his inability to determine the nature, the plane, so to speak, of many of the experiences and activities which it described. At one time they would appear to be descriptions, picturesquely couched, it is true, and in a strange symbolic language, of experiences which he <u>had already had</u>. Such, for example, was Brockmann's dictum that ninety-nine per cent of what is ordinarily called 'love' is disguised egotism, and, again, his description of the manner in which this discovery comes at a certain point to those who are seeking self-knowledge, making them feel as if imprisoned within an evil reflection of themselves. At other times the same descriptions would seem to apply in reality to remote, advanced, 'occult' phenomena of which he had no notion whatever, and did not particularly wish to have. And then he would feel that he had been deceiving himself, and that the interpretation he had previously placed on them was probably as pitifully naive in its way as the interpretation placed by his valiant band of philosophic salesmen on such terms as 'will' and 'success'.

John and (to his surprise) Janet both wrote to him very briefly after his father's death, the former from a new address — a northern town not so very far from his own home. But it was not until he received, a month later, a second letter in John's handwriting, that Gerald realised how completely the last sombre months had cut him off from the life he had lived before and from the movements and interests of his friends. It was an unusually fat envelope, and as soon as he opened it, two packets fell out, upon the thinner of which was written: "Read this first!" He unfolded it obediently:

> Dear Gerald,
>
> I am very sorry I haven't written to you before, especially as I am going to ask a favour — for I am afraid you may think I only write to you when I want something! Will you please read the enclosed and tell me absolutely frankly what you think of it? You will be surprised to find me poaching on your preserves; but there is something I want to say very badly — or rather a picture I want to paint — in people's minds — and after thinking about it a good deal, I decided to try and do it in verse, though I have had next to no practice at the game. So if you think that the thing, as far as it has gone, is absolutely worthless, please say so quite frankly. If not, I shall try and finish it and perhaps you may be able to help me to get it printed. I won't explain now how it is meant to go on. Margaret and I both hope you will come over and see us now that we are so much nearer. Then I could tell you more and get your advice over some details.
>
> I have been hopelessly busy since we last met, and, after that, too much preoccupied with my own affairs to produce a decent letter. First, there was the move, which I had had in mind for some time, but finally decided on that evening on my way home from Humphrey's. The opportunity came sooner than I expected and we had to bundle up here pretty quick. I am sorry to say that the change does not so far seem to be suiting Margaret, who was not up to much in any case before we came away from Onslow. I expect she will gradually get used to the new surroundings, but in the meantime it is disturbing.
>
> The new parish is very different from the old. Nearly all the people are poor (which is what I wanted) and getting poorer (which is not what I wanted at all). They are mostly employees in the Textile and Steel trades, and the whole district is becoming absolutely paralysed by unemployment. Incidentally the state of affairs here has opened my eyes to a lot of things about which I want to talk to you. Do you know, there are stacks of cloth piled up in some of the factories waiting to be used, and at the same time the factories themselves are idle and the men who used to work in them going about unemployed, without shirts! You remember the sort of weather we had last February! You can judge of the impression it made on me, when I came up here just after that and saw what is going on with my own eyes.

At present I am doing a good deal more relief-work than ordinary Church work — and so are most of the other parsons in the neighbourhood. Our job is to provide a channel through which clothing, shirts etc. sent up from charitable souls in the south may be distributed among the unemployed workers in this district. When I see my unemployed parishioners loafing about and shivering, I often think of those busy working-parties in Onslow, where the good ladies are no doubt sewing away for dear life. Besides, think of the 'employment' it 'gives' to engine-drivers and porters carrying the raw material from here to London and the finished articles back here again!

Well, I must stop this, or you will think I have turned into a social reformer. Perhaps I have. I certainly don't seem able to think of much else but this ghastly, absurd tragedy.

You must come over and see us again. Have you realised that the Constituency Dodge is putting up for at this election is our constituency? His much advertised "return to the political arena." (Did you see Punch's cartoon, Cincinnatus Dodge?) will at any rate do one good thing, for it will bring Janet up here for the period of the campaign. Do you know, I have only seen her once since she first went abroad. Why not come over in a fortnight's time, when she will be in Loomfield? We can put you up.

I hope your mother is recovering from the shock of her bereavement — and you too. I had already guessed something of what you told me in your letter.

Yours ever,
John Trinder.

Gerald now unfolded the second packet, which consisted of a few type-written sheets. "Spenserian stanzas!" he exclaimed, and added to himself: "But of course — he would!" Then, after a preliminary glance through the manuscript, to see how much there was of it, he began to read:

THE NEW SCAPEGOAT

It was a Sunday morning: large and sweet
As a round dewdrop trembling from a spray
Hung the bright air: the dust, which on the street
Behind pale water-carts in pellets lay,
Steamed an intoxicating scent — my way
Led past a large cathedral, whose tall tower
Against the blue air seemed more softly grey
Than ever I had known — more like a flower
Bursting apart for ever, filled with dreaming power.

Round its high portal rayed strange shapes of stone,

A double bunch of beaks, whose sharp points blended
Harmoniously together into one
Most glorious arch; before which I suspended
My course and mused (the service was not ended).
When the stout, studded door, seeming to float,
Was sidled just ajar, and there ascended —
Like an obscene laugh from a lovely throat —
Into the sun an old, bewildered, shambling Goat.

With two quick glances up the road and down
He hung his head: then off with furtive gait
He shuffled down a track that led from town,
And I, whom horror first made hesitate,
Soon hurried after him to know his fate.
And ever as we ran, I saw and heard
Loud, sickening sobs of misery and hate
Which shook his knees and wagged his silly beard,
Like an old man's, whose anger is no longer feared.

Gerald, who had been standing ever since he first opened the letter, felt about for a chair. He sat down, smoothed out some of the creases in the manuscript and went on reading:

We turned a corner, and a loud hallooing
Burst on the Sunday silence of the street:
Behind us came a hissing and a booing
And the dread threatening noise of many feet
Trampling, at which the Goat began to bleat
Louder and louder, till his piteous thoughts
Furrowed his face with trickling tears and sweat,
Which caked the dust upon his nose in spots,
Hearing those cracks of whips, and shouts, and pistol shots.

Never saw I yet beast or man forlorner:
The noise crept nearer: now I deemed him doomed,
When in the nick we turned another corner
Into a quiet mews. We lay entombed
In a dark stable. Heark! the hubbub boomed
And walloped past the place all unaware!
And long that brute lay quivering — then he combed
His cheek with cloven hoof and strove to tear
With jerking teeth the bunches of his clotted hair.

"Not so good!" said Gerald to himself — "except the last two lines. He really can't say 'walloped'."

I stirred: He stopped and listened in surprise:
First both the ears rose, then the nostrils spread
And quivered, then he turned and in his eyes,
Deep as the double root of Hell, I read
That the old brain within that hideous head
Would understand my speech. Whereat great fear
Smote me there in the dim light, and I said!—
“Who are you? Why are we alone in here?”
Over his pointed face there writhed a hateful sneer.

“Too much ‘hideous’ and ‘hateful’,” thought Gerald. “I suppose that’s the Spenserian touch!” He turned over the page and went on reading:

Like a sleek martinet, whose self-respect
Borrows its life from his authority,
The Goat began to perk and recollect
His own importance.

“Frightfully bald!” thought Gerald.

His own importance. Then he spat at me
Two pompous haughty phrases:— “When I see
The head of one who puts a question bended
In humble supplication, *and* the knee,
I sometimes answer it.” *And I pretended*
To hang my head in fear, though all my fear was ended.

“What’s he put that in italics for?” murmured Gerald.

I raised my head to listen — but his eyes
Were as the eyes of one who sits alone
Looking not out but in, where he descries
Bright pictures by the memory upthrown;
And his voice trailed into an ancient one:
And, like a dream, his tail and beard and horns
Pointed:— “I sat of old upon my throne;
“I was their lord; the nations were my scorns;
“I pierced the stretched-out necks of froward men with thorns.

“I was no beast then, but most nobly shaped;
“The tempests gathered when I shook my fist;
“I stamped upon the ground, and the ground gaped;
“I puffed, and habitations were a mist
“That passes; as for my antagonist,
“He was not in his place, his reins were shed
“Like water-drops. Where was he when I hissed?

"Aha! I broke his teeth within his head,
"I smote him sore with rotten boils and he was dead.

"He's got the Psalms all right!" Gerald said to himself with a grin. "But what on earth's he up to?" He read the rest through quickly and without pausing.

"My hatred," flashed the Goat, "was as a flame
"That shrivels utterly: it shrivelled vice,
"But most it shrivelled pride. I gave a name
"To fear — 'twas 'virtue'" — and the little eyes
Gleamed lustful:— "Therefore did I fix the price
"That men must pay for hope; my recompense
"Was blood, the burnt smell of the sacrifice,
"Flesh writhing upon altars, hot incense,
"And fear — above all fear, and stark obedience.

"I split the hard rocks and heaped up the waves,
"That men should fear me — but more oft I sent
"Nations to turn whole nations into slaves,
"That men might learn to be obedient.
"The Law is that ye praise Me and repent —
"Verily I forgave him in my heart
"All other sins; but I would not consent
"TO BE IGNORED — that he should turn apart,
"Admitting other gods . . . ."
"I know thee who thou art!

I shouted suddenly, amazed, aloud:—
"Ialdabaoth, Lord of the Hebrews,
"Mighty Jehovah, brutal, fierce and proud —
"Prince of the cradle of the world, what news?
"What? Have you still some glory, then, to lose?
"Did you not know that through two thousand years
"The blood and strength and life out of those thews
"Must drain away? Ah, whence these angry tears.
"Long, long dethroned already from men's minds and fears?"

His passionate thoughts received a sudden check
From my unguarded questions: a blue vein
Swelled on his forehead and all down his neck,
As though his patience might no more contain
The bloody pressure of a bursting brain.
And much I feared: but even as he decided
(Thus I believed) to rush with ire insane
Head down upon me — lo! his wrath subsided,
And a most subtle change through all his body glided.

As frozen shapes, when first the weather thaws,
  Pass and dissolve, his body mid the hay
Squatting erect and stiff on folded paws,
  Like some old idol motionless in clay,
  Melted all into curves, such curves as play
About a slippery mouth, or down the chin
  Of one in a black coat and trousers grey
Who talks with ease, because his thoughts are thin,
And smiles because his money brings more money in.

And thus he spoke:— "Ay, from their minds indeed
  "Dethroned already — and with that contempt
"Which on this sweet earth ever is the meed
  "Of <u>strength</u> and <u>wisdom</u> . . . Yet the same attempt
  "Had failed so many times . . . I scarcely dreamt
"That he would trip me up — the wily one,
  "Who, that his feebleness may be exempt
"From my just wrath, gives himself out My son,
"And keeps all My commandments meekly — till he won

"Men's hearts by that same meekness — O Saturn!
  "O Jupiter, Osiris, and the line
"Of ruin'd Fathers! — yet I could not learn —"
  His voice brake for a moment with divine
  Intensity, but straightway upon mine
He turned his slits of eyes, and the sly arts
  Returned to his old brain: all serpentine
He grows, and with a dapper smirk he starts:—
"Dethroned, Sir, from men's <u>minds</u>, but not yet from their hearts!

"Like Arethusa 'neath the Grecian stones,
  "Driven from their clear thoughts I run underground,
"Till in the very marrow of their bones
  "I work unseen . . . to-day I may be found
  "Wherever man to fellow man is bound
"By ties of love or duty — between brothers
  "I crawl, and round that husband's heart am wound
"Who rules by purse; the tenderest love of mothers
"I rot. <u>I am the Pleasure of Controlling Others</u>!"

By now the stable seemèd still more dim,
  His eyes glowed in the dark like sparks of fire,
And shapeless was the shadowy shape of him
  As little clouds of vapour men respire
  On frosty mornings — or some baulked desire

Creeping across the soul in livid forms
          Obscenely vegetable: I enquire
His meaning: but a voice forbids and warns:
"Look on these scenes! Mark, mark the ghostly beard and horns!"

A tiny glimmer grew upon the dark,
          Such as at night across an empty room
We watch when the wind blows a wasted spark
          To glory in the grate . . . And through the gloom
          I gazed — of what? the past — some cave — a tomb?
Where one in reverend robes of rusty black
          Read in low tones out of a tome a doom,
And two dark-hooded men, demoniac,
Stooped to a fourth, and he was stretched upon his back.

But <u>I</u> knew how that heart was all alone
          In the wide universe, for I was he
Lying there strained and still, while:— "Three in One"
          The torturers cried, "Acknowledge, and be free!"
          But, mad with fear and pain:— "Nay One in Three",
I croaked, "such is the true God and my Lord."
          I saw those minions grasp relentlessly
Two handles. The tall figure spoke one word:
Ah Christ, let me forget the sounds which then I heard!

Yet even then, when frightful scream on scream
          Drummed most appallingly on these frail ears,
I remembered how life is all a dream,
          And a strange power crushed back my wild tears,
          And strength and knowledge came, using my fears
To force me face the Goat's eye steadily:—
          "Since these things happened are five hundred years:
"Men are not devils: such woes had to be
"That they might learn to think, and love, and still be free."

He answered not; but by the way his eyes
          Glowered from narrower slits, I knew his glance
Was in the dark contemptuously wise
          As that of some bald cynic out of France,
          Who makes his intellectual puppets dance
With lust for their sole motive.

Good! thought Gerald: Excellent! . . . but he got it from me!

With lust for their sole motive. "Look behind!"
          He grinned at last, "Behold the countenance

Of Sir Inquisitor!" Then I divined
Shadows like curtain-windows waving in the wind,

On the sharp forehead and the pointed chin,
 Yea, on that priestly visage, grave and keen,
Which carnal was and uglier than sin.
 When ghostly beard and ghostly horns were seen
 Wavering and pointing back: "What may this mean?"
I asked my brute companion, and his voice
 Made answer:— "That his conscience is serene
"As yours — and yet his inmost soul enjoys
"The music of surrender lurking in that noise!"

I shuddered then — and even as I shuddered,
 Horror was choked by furious indignation,
Till indignation ebbed, and firmly ruddered
 By the hard carbon of exploded passion
 My soul drove on to seek out the relation
Between this thought and other thoughts, which, found,
 Might lead to acts: 'Surely civilisation',
I mused aloud, 'Such shapes of soul has drowned.'
"Say rather," snarled the Goat, "driven them underground."

"As a good cancer, cut off by the knife,
 "Returns and spreads and deepens, eating fast
"Into the blood, till all the stream of life
 "Is sucked and wasted,

Gerald shuddered: "He must have forgotten this stanza," he said to himself, "or he'd hardly have sent it to me!"

 "Is sucked and wasted, I — and now at last
 "I was — Ah, tell the proud iconoclast
"Who cries that I am knocked off from my perch
 "And tells complacently what years have passed
"Since I was wholly banished from the Church —
"The wider I am spread, the deeper he must search!"

This is as far as I have got at present! J. T.

Gerald put the manuscript down slowly on to his knee and looked up: "God save us and bless us!" he said: "What on earth is the man up to now?"

CHAPTER XLVI

At the time of John's arrival in Loomfield, large numbers of its population had been reduced to an intensely dissatisfied and demoralised condition, by prolonged unemployment. Many of them had been out of regular work for five years and more, and among the youths under nineteen, it was the exception rather than the rule to find one who had known any occupation since he left school. They lounged for the most part aimlessly about the streets, subsisting on reliefs of various kinds, reliefs which were now rapidly becoming more difficult to obtain. The result was a situation pointing no one could say whither. It was beginning to cause anxiety among the more responsible sort of people all over the country. Many new organisations had sprung up, and many existing ones had sent down representatives, to make some attempt to cope with the physical and moral distress. And one of these organisations, which had instituted a series of educational classes, had invited John to take charge of the religious discussions. These were to be strictly 'undenominational'. Otherwise he had an entirely free hand.

His audience consisted chiefly of men who had done, when they could get it, the most mechanical and unskilled sort of factory-work, and he was just beginning to get some grasp of their mental quality. What put him more at a loss than anything else was the sublime absence in them of the most rudimentary historical sense. The eight or nine years which they had passed at school seemed in most cases to have left them with the power to read the newspaper, to spell indifferently, and to write, and after that — the dark. It was an apparently hopeless task, therefore, to get them to feel, not merely the Gospel events, but anything which had happened more than fifty years ago, as connected in any living way with their own lives and interests. And this hopeless task was precisely the one on which John was at present engaged.

An exception to the general rule was presented by a little group of Communists and disciples of Karl Marx. These men were interested in any historical phenomenon, which could be made to demonstrate the Marxian thesis, and one or two of them were also beginning to be genuinely interested. It was axiomatic with them that the Church was an instrument of organised oppression, which had, however, had its teeth drawn by the general decay of religion in the Nineteenth Century.

The attitude of the rest towards religion was quite indeterminate, the doctrines of the Church being not so much actually distasteful as perfectly remote and exotic. Having been neither gradually acclimatized to, nor violently repelled by, the strange language and the still stranger motions of the body as children, they now found these mildly interesting. If, on some unusual occasion, they found themselves inside a church, they watched and listened respectfully to whatever was going on, but without the faintest sense of taking any personal part in it. 'Religion', if it was anything at all, was merely one more of the many incomprehensible amusements of the wealthier classes — something they might take up themselves (as they would probably take up golf), if they ever came into a little money.

John's plan was to begin by trying to give them an idea of the man, Christ — not in His exotic eastern setting — but as He would have appeared to themselves if He had gone among them. From this he hoped gradually to lead on to a living

conception of Christ the Holy Spirit, hidden somewhere in their hearts — in the heart of each one of them — ready at any moment to blaze up into flames of love and liberty. This was his plan — and yet, when he came to think of it in cold blood, how hopeless it seemed! Walking home one evening from one of these classes, he heard again his own voice saying to them, as it had just now said: "If we had known Him, we should probably have thought of Him as first as — what shall I say? — as a 'decent sort of chap'. That's all. Nothing more — at first . . ." And in spite of his excellent intentions, John felt a sort of misery and shame to think that he had used such cheap words.

From perplexities of this kind, as was often the case nowadays, his mind passed on to the cause of this detested gulf between himself and the other souls. Nine tenths of it, he firmly believed, was to be found in those relentless economic conditions which had predetermined their nature, long before they had come into existence. The cramped ugly environment in which they first awoke to consciousness, the scanty utilitarian education, the absence of leisure and above all of space in which to employ any such leisure as they achieved in a way that would develop the spirit — grime, vulgarity, ugly and lascivious forms, wherever they looked — what possibility was there for these souls to stand up against it all? Nay, what possibility was there of anything coming into existence at all, to stand up? What a mockery, for instance, to use the word 'beauty' before these people! And if beauty meant nothing, what should the Christ mean?

Yet all this soul-wastage, all this cramping penury, was unnecessary! That was the crucial thought, and as it came back to him once more, a sort of warmth and impatience filled his heart and swelled out his breast. He felt as if it were difficult to breathe, and began to walk faster. Not only was it unnecessary, but in a dreadful vicious circle of factory, market and shop, shop, market and factory, poverty maintains itself — increases itself! These people, who cannot buy the things they desperately need, these people not only suffer privation themselves, but they inflict it on those others, from whom they would have bought, and these in their helpless turn pass it on to those who would have made the goods. Poverty increases unemployment and unemployment increases poverty. Where is it to end?

Before he reached home his mind was already groping and feeling its way down the familiar intricacies of certain economic theories in which he had lately become interested, carrying along with it all the passion which was aroused in his soul by the name of Christ and the longing to be at one with his fellow men. Only as he stood on the door-step did he suddenly recollect with a cold, boding sensation, that other people could not be expected to feel the connection between these two sets of thoughts as readily and as intimately as himself. There were certain people whom the mere utterance of such terms as 'purchasing-power', 'goods and services', 'bank-credit' and so forth seemed to put at a distance, to chill, even to exasperate. And, alas, one of these people was Margaret.

A feeling of loneliness descended on John at this point, as he foresaw the chilling apathetic manner in which she would receive any account he might try to give of the thoughts which had just been passing through his mind. He felt faint at the prospect of standing quite alone before those dark forces with which he believed himself to be grappling — not only alone, not only without support, but even with

an extra burden of effort added. For Margaret was not simply ceasing to be a fountain of recuperation; she was rapidly becoming the principal cause of his exhaustion. And exhaustion of the most desperately intimate kind! It was as though, with every step he took, he had to nerve himself afresh to the thought of treading on her body.

In the moment during which he hesitated, key in hand, before his front door, a familiar train of antagonistic ideas passed rapidly through his mind. First of all, in sympathy with Margaret's supposed attitude, he himself began to feel chilled and indifferent towards the technical notions into which he had just been pouring the warmth of his heart. But then he recalled vividly to his memory, as he had often done before, the white washed-out face of a certain motor-mechanic, a youth whose whole life appeared to pass in a kind of apathetic fatigue in a garage, amid objects just too heavy for him to handle and too inhuman to interest him. John set his teeth. If necessary, he could go on alone without Margaret, even carrying her on his back. But then almost immediately the question presented itself: <u>Why</u> should I 'go on'? Why should I cripple all the repose and dignity of our life, because some people are unfortunate? No doubt it is a good thing to do; but life in a country parish amid books and beauty, a life dedicated to study and art, that is also a good life. Why should I give it up? It was study and art which gave me all I value in the way of religious experience. It was art that brought Margaret and me together. It is among beautiful things and beautiful sights that the ecstatic sense of living in the light and of being one with it, and with her comes to me. Why should I give up all these pleasures — which are not the pleasures of a materialist — and together with them, perhaps, the pleasure of seeing Margaret happy and at ease? And then into the pang of envious misgiving which accompanied these thoughts there played, as usual, the faint clear echo of Dawson's voice, as he had spoken that evening at Humphrey's.

"Why? <u>Why</u> must I interest myself in the weaker?"

A <u>frisson</u> of elation passed though him, and once more he set his teeth with a stern look. There was no reason whatever. Beauty developed the spirit quite as much as renunciation — perhaps more (and that was indeed the whole tragedy of poverty, which would not let him rest). Beauty developed the spirit quite as much as renunciation. A tranquil harmonious life at one with the lovely soul of a good woman, bringing her happiness and receiving it again from her — that too developed the spirit and brought <u>both</u> souls nearer to God! . . . . <u>but</u> . . . . he had chosen! And after all the choice was not quite as Roman as it appeared when put that way. For what real evidence had he that a different mode of life <u>would</u> make them one? On the contrary it would very likely bring out all the more acutely those seemingly trivial artistic differences, which he sometimes suspected were really the most pertinent of all — tender little suckers in themselves, but sprouting straight up from divergent subterranean roots. Nor was he keeping on his course out of mere obstinacy — because he had chosen it originally. In every moment of reflection he chose it freely and deliberately afresh — and nerved himself accordingly to the causeless effort which it demanded.

Immediately inside the door he was confronted by Janet, who had heard his step and come out into the hall to meet him. A week ago Dodge had taken a

furnished house in another part of town about a mile away, and as there were trams, she came to see them pretty frequently.

"Hulloa, Janet!" he exclaimed: "I thought you couldn't come again till to-morrow." She kissed him and explained that she had found more time on her hands than she expected.

"How long have you been here?"

"Oh, all the evening!"

She spoke in an impatient, slightly annoyed tone, which made him wonder if he had overestimated the change in her character before she went away. He looked at her for a moment and had the impression that she was struggling with conflicting impulses.

"Well —" he began vaguely, hanging up his hat.

"I want to talk to you!" she broke in suddenly, and taking him by the hand, led him like a child into the dining-room.

"Sit down!" she said, and sat down herself opposite to him. She looked at him: "What are you going to do about Margaret?" John frowned heavily.

"I've just been having a long talk with her," went on Janet energetically.

"Did she suggest anything?" asked John wearily. Janet's energy somehow annoyed him. Apparently she supposed he had never considered this question until she came to Loomfield.

"I think she ought to get away from here!" John's teeth came together with a snap, and he said nothing. She read his thought.

"No," she said, replying to his previous question: "She didn't suggest anything herself. She didn't tell me she wanted to get away." There was silence, and after a pause Janet went on: "Of course you can't move. You've only just come here . . ." John looked up. So she wasn't quite taking sides against him, then, after all?

"Well, what can we do? She doesn't seem to want to go anywhere alone!" he said.

"That's what worries me! She never used to be nervous. And now she seems to be getting timid and listless and not interested in anything — exactly like Dolly was, before she . . ." Janet stopped abruptly and blushed at her own tactlessness.

"You don't suppose I haven't noticed it!" said John. "But it can't be anything to do with Dolly's complaint. Those weak women who gradually fade away — or get mental — are always disappointed. You said so yourself." He paused and smiled grimly. "Perhaps Margaret is 'disappointed'. I am afraid she is. But not quite in that way, surely!"

"I did have an idea," said Janet tentatively. "Did Margaret say anything to you about the Garden Party?"

"No! What Garden Party?"

"I thought not. Her mother's giving a big Garden Party at Klosters — next week. She specially asked Margaret to come and help her. She said she had already asked her friend, Susan Holmes, down for the week-end. But Margaret hasn't said anything about it to you, because she thought it would worry you. She was going to write off to Lady Hudson and simply say she couldn't come." Janet paused. "She doesn't feel up to doing the journey alone, you see," she went on, "and she thinks

you wouldn't want to go with her. She seemed to think you aren't much interested — in anything but your own work!" There was another pause.

"I see," said John. "I couldn't go anyhow."

"I didn't suppose you could," went on Janet, skating quickly on over what she somehow felt to be thin ice: "I would go — only I daren't take the time either. But what I thought was this: Mr. Marston's coming to-morrow, isn't he, on his way to town?"

"Yes."

"How long was he going to stay?"

"Three days."

"To-day's Thursday! Can't you ask him to go up earlier — on Saturday — by way of Klosters, taking Margaret with him so far, so that she will be there for the week-end?" John reflected gloomily for a moment.

"It doesn't give us much chance to talk," he said.

"Can't you find time to-morrow night? It's such a chance for her. You know how she loves Klosters — and how fond she is of Miss Holmes — and this weather!"

"Why should you expect this weather to last over the week-end? Look here, Janet, if I had any real confidence that it would help her to shake it off, you know, I'd jump at it. But she has been to Klosters once already since it came on. And it doesn't seem to make any difference. She gets depressed if she's away from me — and depressed if she's with me, apparently!"

Janet decided to be firm. "I see your point about Mr. Marston," she said. "I shall be sorry not to see a little more of him myself, I must say. But she really would like to go for a few days this time. I could tell by the way she spoke. Shall we ask him?"

"All right," said John: "I'll ask him — as soon as he comes. He'll go of course." "Where is Margaret?" he added, getting up: "I haven't seen her to-day yet. She had breakfast in bed."

Janet touched his forehead with her fingers, as they went to the door.

"Poor boy!" she murmured.

"Oh don't say that!" he cried nervily: "It's probably all my fault . . . . Only I can't for the life of me tell where!"

CHAPTER XLVII

It was Margaret herself who suggested, soon after Gerald's arrival, that he and John should retire together to the study.

"You must have heaps of things to say to each other!" she insisted, and added with exaggerated solemnity — "things it would never do, for me to hear!" Gerald saw John flush up a little and throw her a quick look, in which he immediately divined the mixture of annoyance and pain. He felt uncomfortable, and was as a matter of fact not particularly anxious to be closeted immediately with his host.

"Oh, please give me a little respite!" he said. He looked at her appealingly. "I've come here for a rest-cure, you know!"

Margaret forced a smile in a way that plainly showed she thought he was merely trying to be polite. John was already at the door.

“Are you coming?” Gerald hesitated awkwardly, until Margaret’s old instinct for coming to the rescue reasserted itself suddenly, and she laughed and said to him jokingly:

“You’ll see quite enough of your humble servant to-morrow, Gerald!” They went upstairs and said nothing. John closed the door behind him and Gerald knew that he was wanting to ask his opinion about the New Scapegoat; but he himself wished somehow to put off that moment as long as possible. By the piece of paper lying on the desk at the open window he could see that John had been working at the poem again, and it occurred to him that they might be able to discuss its nature and meaning for some time without entering into the question of its merits or chances of publication. He picked up the piece of paper.

“May I see?”

“Oh, if you like! It’s an unfinished stanza — the one I was working on, when I had to leave off. I don’t get much time for that sort of thing, you know!”

“How much more have you done beyond what you sent me?”

“About half as much again.” Gerald looked at the unfinished stanza.

pastors
Taught their black flock that paradise is won
By hard work and obeying their white masters
done
fun
begun
And gave Me thanks at setting of the sun
Because a frightened presbyterian nigger
Is safer stuff to base a mortgage on:
He does more work: the dividends grow bigger:
And gradually the Gospel supersedes the trigger.

“This is quite Byronic!” said Gerald. “So you’re on to missionaries now!”

“Yes,” said John: and he added, with a short laugh: “Ialdabaoth as Empire-builder!” Gerald laid down the paper and cast about in his mind for the thing that was vaguely worrying him.

“I don’t really understand what you’re after, John,” he said. “What puzzles me is — I thought, with your upbringing, you had got over this irony business you know, irony about self-deception and all that — ages ago — especially in religion. Incidentally that’s what made me feel you were, in a way, ahead of me. And now here you are writing Byronic verse about ‘presbyterian niggers’. Mind you, it’s very amusing! I only say, I don’t quite understand it.”

“It doesn’t amuse me much!” said John. “I know perfectly well what you mean. I thought I had ‘got over’ it, too. Otherwise I shouldn’t have entered the Church. But — it goes so much deeper than I thought.”

“What does? Self-deception?”

“Old Testament morality. ‘The pleasure of controlling others’”

“And that’s what you mean by ‘Ialdabaoth’ in your poem.”

“Yes. I called it Ialdabaoth. You couldn’t very well actually use ‘Jehovah.’” He paused. “The wider I am spread, the deeper you must search,” he quoted.

Gerald was silent after this for some time.

“It’s curious,” he said at last slowly: “how we often seem to move — more or less *parallel* to one another.”

“How parallel?”

“I mean — how can I explain? — I seem to have been making just the same sort of mistake myself: thinking I’d *got over* something — you know, gone through it and come out the other side. And then finding I was all wrong.”

“What did you think you had got over?”

“The ‘lusts of the flesh’ I was going to say — but that’s obviously absurd. No one expects to get over them. No, I don’t mean that. It’s more a sort of selfishness — and yet I don’t mean that either. Even *I* wasn’t such a fool as to think I had eliminated egotism. No, what I really mean, I think, is a kind of sentimental attitude towards love and affection — the illusion that one can be said to ‘love’ an object or a soul from which one expects to derive happiness.”

“I remember,” said John, “your saying something about it the first time I came to see you.”

“Yes,” broke in Gerald. “I remember too. We were speaking about Romance. And that’s just the word I want. ‘Romance’. Well, I thought I had *blown the gaff* on Romance. Well — it seems I haven’t.” There was silence.

“Do you mean,” asked John at last, with hesitation, “that you have — formed an attachment?” Gerald laughed loudly.

“Formed an attachment! Apologies — what a lovely phrase it is! Nothing so sensible as that, I’m afraid. No, I mean the most awful things. — I oughtn’t to tell you, really! — ridiculous hobbledehoy longings — catching myself taking the plots of cinema films seriously and yearning after the heroine and so forth!”

“Are you so sure it’s ridiculous?” asked John solemnly. Gerald stared at him.

“Apparently you don’t understand —”

“It’s not so simple as that,” broke in John earnestly. “If there is one thing I am absolutely certain of, it’s this — that the longing of a man for a woman or of a woman for a man (I don’t mean mere physical greed) is *never* altogether ridiculous — or ignoble.”

“Yes, but you beg the whole question, my dear man! The point is, it *is* physical greed — only in a particularly dangerous disguise. What I call ‘yearning’ is simply lust with spats on.”

“Nonsense!” said John firmly and with such conviction that Gerald stared at him again, this time almost with a kind of admiration. John proceeded: “The idea that Romance is disguised lust and that it vanishes with physical satisfaction is absolute balderdash. You can’t separate emotions out into parts, like that. It’s like the idea that Romance ends with marriage — whereas in fact —” he paused for a moment, while he seemed to take a rapid bird’s eye view of his own brief married life, and then, with the same confidence, added, “it begins with it!” But then, anxious not to have said more than the truth he knew, he added: “Unless by ‘romance’ you mean uninterrupted happiness. I don’t myself. I mean adventure and discovery (getting at the *real person*) and — and fighting.”

"Look here!" said Gerald. "Let's chuck this — or I shall scream. I feel as though I were just struggling with all my might out of a dangerous disease, when someone I respected came along and said: "Hi, you're all wrong: what you take for disease is really health, and your 'health' is really disease! It takes the heart out of a man."

"But surely," said John, "that's the very thing you are trying to do yourself."

"What?"

"Take the heart out of a man."

Gerald started perceptibly and gave John a sharp look. Had he been talking to Humphrey? Apparently it was impossible to meet a Trinder nowadays without his at once starting to talk mysteriously about your heart.

"Let's get back to _your_ mistake for a bit," he said uneasily, "if you don't mind! How did _you_ find out that your friend, Ialdabaoth, works deeper than you suggested after all?"

"Do you remember," said John, "at that meeting I came to with Humphrey (it was the first time we met) — there was a man who got up and said a lot about Economics and over-production?"

"I remember vaguely — yes."

"Well — I've only recently begun to understand what he was driving at. Have you ever read any Hicks or Cameron?"

"I've never even heard of them!"

"Exactly!" said John significantly. "People like you are not _meant_ to have heard of them."

"Why not? What do you mean?" John paused. He suddenly felt restless and over-eager, and did not know where to begin.

"Look here! Did you do the industrial Revolution period and the anti-machine riots and all that at school?"

"Yes."

"Didn't it occur to you at once that the machine-breakers had a genuine grievance — that there was no reason why their pay should stop, because the work did?"

"I believe it did, but —"

"But the history-book pointed out that the men were foolish, not to see that machines would make more and more work in the long run and so forth!"

"That _was_ what I was going to say."

"Yes. But that is not a final answer. It means you have got to go on increasing your production indefinitely and never use any of the extra power for leisure — never rest on your oars."

"No. I saw that too."

"Exactly!" cried John triumphantly. "I believe every intelligent boy does. Did you ever say anything about it to anyone?"

"No. I was afraid to. Nobody else ever said anything about it, so I thought I must have overlooked some obvious point and that I should look a fool if I asked."

John's eyes gleamed. For a time he was too excited to say anything, and then:

"Do you realise at all," he said, "that _poverty_ in the twentieth century is simply an illusion? That there's not an _atom_ of _need_ for it? Do you know anybody

who does realise this?" Gerald said nothing. "Do you realise that practically every manufacturer of every article in every country in the world would reply, if you asked him: "I could turn out two, or three, or twenty times the quantity of goods I am turning out now — if I could sell them?"

"I know that we are supposed to be suffering from over-production," said Gerald.

"Yes — but have you ever thought that 'over-production' has two quite distinct meanings (1) producing more than is wanted and (2) producing more than you can sell — and that about one person in a million nowadays is capable of making a simple distinction like that?" Gerald did not answer. "At least they are capable of making it, but they don't seem able to keep hold of it! I think I told you in my letter," went on John, "about the textile workers here, who cannot get work in the factories — and therefore cannot get money (except from the Guardians and so forth) to buy anything. More and more of the factories are closing down every month — and the people are half-naked!" He paused, and lowering his voice, added: "And, do you know, I heard yesterday — for certain — that the docks at Newcastle are absolutely crammed with raw material — dumped there by the foreigner. And the manufacturers here can't touch it because they have no orders for the finished goods!" He spoke almost triumphantly. "Talk about 'over-production' if you like," he added after a pause, "but take a walk through my parish first."

"Yes," said Gerald. "I know it's terrible enough. But if there's no money . . . after all, we've still got the War to pay for."

"Bosh!" said John calmly. "You're repeating automatically what you've read and heard over and over again!" He pulled himself up and apologised. "I'm sorry — that was unnecessarily rude. We are coming to that. But do you seriously believe that we pay for the goods already consumed during the War by refraining from producing more goods now?"

"My head's not quick at these things," said Gerald cautiously. "You make it sound silly, as you put it — of course."

"Look here!" said John, "during the War I don't know how many millions of people were deflected from productive labour to the manufacture of munitions: three or four millions more were not merely withdrawn from productive labour; they devoted their energies entirely to destruction. All that time the poorer classes in my parish were better off than they are now — and most of them a lot better off. And my parish is not by any means a freak — as you know."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Increase the community's purchasing-power by reducing prices."

"Can you explain what you mean in a concrete example?"

"Well — for instance: Ascertain the ordinary market-price of shirts to-day. Issue a circular to shirt manufacturers authorising them to sell at, say, half that figure and guaranteeing them the difference on production of the receipt."

"Well, but where's the money coming from?"

"Ah," said John, with a tired look beginning to come into his face. "You're in for a long talk if we are going into that. You would create it, just as you do to-day every time a bank makes a loan. The bankers themselves admit that, when they are honest. The idea that money is 'savings' of which a certain definite amount is in

existence at any given time — and that that depends on abstinence in the past — that is all nonsense. At any rate it becomes more and more like nonsense, with every increase in our power of production, with every new piece of labour-saving machinery that is introduced into industry."

"You must have spent your whole time since I saw you last, studying political economy," said Gerald, "except when you were writing poetry and moving your furniture!"

"Yes, but do you see what I mean?" asked John eagerly.

"Not altogether. I thought it had been proved pretty well that inflation of the currency makes no difference in the long run — or rather does actual harm."

The tired look on John's face grew more pronounced.

"You've learnt the lesson all right!" he said bitterly.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean you've got the proper catchword ready on the tip of your tongue — just where you were meant to have it!"

"Meant by whom?"

"By — Ialdabaoth, if you like."

"I'm afraid that is unintelligible to me."

"Listen." John spoke quickly. It was clear that frequent repetition of what he had to say had already made it stale to him. "Inflation means an increase in the quantity of currency followed automatically by a rise in prices — and leaving actual purchasing-power therefore unaffected. Though it does not reduce real prices, it does temporarily stimulate production. In itself, therefore, it does no harm, and a little good. The hardship comes when it is followed by deflation, i.e. the calling in of the loans on which it was based. That is inflation. What I am speaking of is a fall in prices followed automatically by an increase in the quantity of currency. Nevertheless what I am speaking of is either never mentioned in polite circles or — when it is mentioned — is always stigmatized as 'inflation.'"

"But surely the prices of other goods will go up?"

"Certainly they would. And the total result is that you are no worse off with regard to other goods and much better off with regard to shirts — not only wearing more shirts, but employing more men to make them. And I never said, one would only do it with shirts, did I? I only gave them as an example."

"Do you mean it could be done with a lot of things?"

"With nearly everything. The world is teeming with unproduced goods. It's only the market that's the problem."

"But look here!" said Gerald, getting more interested as the implications of the scheme began to dawn on him, "aren't you going to have everybody getting twice as many shirts as he really needs? Is that economic?"

"It will be time enough to talk about that," said John, "when everybody has got half as many shirts as he wants. That part of it wouldn't worry you much, if you lived here!" And he added, reflectively: "But it does worry people who are not in constant contact with squalor. It is extraordinary how it worries them. As soon as they grasp the idea that it is perfectly possible for everyone to be comfortably off without even working long hours — perhaps in many cases without working at all — they forget the actual state of affairs altogether and either assert flatly that it

can't be true "because it's too good to be true" or else wander off into elaborate academic arguments about who would do the dirty work and how you would stop people getting more than they need." John suddenly laughed: "A woman died here of starvation three weeks ago (the magistrate called it that himself). I knew her a bit. The problem of how to prevent people like that from getting two motor-cars, when they only need one, worries me fearfully, I can tell you!"

"Still," said Gerald after a longish pause, "the substance of what you are saying is, that there is plenty for everybody!"

"Certainly."

"But look here!" said Gerald, "that's an obvious fallacy. You're talking as if there were plenty for everybody in England — whereas there isn't even enough food. We're an importing nation. I don't see how you are going to introduce your reform without establishing a kind of world-dictatorship in the first place."

"It is true that we are a food-importing nation. But I can't see what difference it makes. It would make a difference if we hadn't *enough* other goods to export, to balance our food imports. Then there might be some sense in going short of them ourselves. Or if the other nations hadn't enough for themselves. But in actual fact the problem is always the problem of *too much*. The one favour which every other nation in Europe and most of those outside it demand of us is to be *allowed* to unload their goods on us. Any arrangement that would facilitate that would be only too welcome."

"But how would your arrangement facilitate that?"

"By the general stimulation of trade in this country. It would make us richer — and therefore better customers, which is exactly what the world *really* wants of us."

"But surely" — objected Gerald, "I do know a little about selling — wouldn't it also mean that in all these goods which you speak of — I mean the goods selected for your special treatment — the industry here would be stimulated to such an extent that we should be underselling every competitor in foreign markets?"

John looked pleased. "Exactly!" he said.

"Well, what do you think the result of that would be?"

"Either a War — or the adoption by the said competitors of a similar scheme! They would *have* to finance their own consumption, because we had financed ours. But personally I am content to leave the foreign question alone to begin with. There would be sense in talking about it when we had settled the home question — the question of distributing to those of our own people who need them the goods we *can* produce ourselves and *want* to produce ourselves. All these intricate ideas seem to me to be extraordinarily remote when you have thousands of unemployed textile workers going about half naked. Do you know that the miners in Wales and Durham actually have to *fight* each other for a little bit of the worst quality coal to keep themselves warm? They wait in a queue outside derelict shallow pits, and risk the roof falling in on them when their turn comes — if it ever does come!"

There was a pause, and then:

"God!" said Gerald softly, "it really is awful. We talk about the breakdown of civilisation — this *is* the breakdown of civilisation." They looked at each other in silence. "But if you are right," said Gerald at last, "in supposing that there is a remedy

— and a remedy that, as far as I can see, would do no one any hard — why isn't it tried?" John smiled a little.

"That," he said, "is where 'Ialdabaoth' comes in. And we get back to the answer to your question. How did I find out that he goes deeper than I thought." He paused. "But isn't all this boring you?" Gerald shook his head emphatically.

"Not if it's not boring you. You know I've been out of things for some time. I come back and find, to my amazement, that you have turned from a parson into an economist (not to say poet) and apparently grown about ten years older in the process. I naturally want to hear anything I can about it all. Tell me how you first got interested in the economic side of the question." John looked rather pleased.

"Well, I came down here, as you know, simply because I wanted to get into a poor parish. If the distress had been due to a famine or something like that, I should never have thought twice about the cause of it, but concentrated simply on the distress itself — or rather on the human beings in distress. But — it has an extraordinary effect on you, when you are brought up at every turn against the fact that most of the suffering is unnecessary. It — well, it 'takes the heart out of a man'. Your own efforts to deal with it, to console people and so forth, begin to look sort of sentimental — footling. The obvious thing to do is to stop the leak. Besides, when you keep on finding out over and over again that it is not scarcity that is at the root of the matter, but plenty — I can't exactly explain. It has a definite psychological effect — that goes extraordinarily deep — as if you felt a huge force being artificially damned up somewhere — and the force seems to be in yourself too. The feeling of an exhaustible source of energy — and plenty. It's like the Sun. It is the Sun. After all the Sun is the ultimate source, even of mechanical energy — as Hicks keeps on pointing out. And because it can't get out . . . it creates pressure!

Well, anyway I felt just what you feel: if there's a remedy why can't it be introduced. And I began to read people like Hicks and Cameron. And then I began to grasp the sort of reason why it isn't introduced. At least I say I 'began to' grasp it, but in a way I knew already. I was worried already, as you know, about the way people's minds are got at."

"How 'got at'?"

"Well, for instance, one reason why this remedy isn't introduced, is because it isn't even heard of. You yourself hadn't heard of it. And it isn't intended to be heard of! It's beastly — a kind of conspiracy of silence — there's any amount of evidence for it. But there are much subtler things than that. Look here." He took a newspaper cutting out of a drawer and handed it to Gerald. It was one of Smiler's cartoons, the subject being the Government's refusal to legislate in some matter concerning the restriction of alien immigration. The artist had drawn a large dinner-table with loaves and fishes lying on it, each of which was labelled 'job'. All the places at this table were occupied by fat guzzling Germans, French and Italians, while the obsequious waiters were hungry-looking John Bulls.

"You see the devilishness of it!" said John. "That's what I mean by 'got at'. People are got at in every conceivable way, but mainly by pictures. Because pictures don't require any effort to understand — and they are unanswerable! They are alive!" Gerald continued to look at the cartoon, but without displaying much conviction.

"Don't you see," explained John, "how that kind of picture affects millions of minds without their knowing it?"

"Look here," he went on, when Gerald still made no sign, "the real problem to-day is the problem of distributing goods. Pictures of this kind are intended to keep people's eyes glued to the fictitious problem of distributing employment. And it's been so well done that most people are now positively incapable of distinguishing the one idea from the other.

"But, hang it, they're practically opposite ideas!"

"Thank God you've seen that!" said John fervently. "Of course they are." He paused. "The crux of the whole matter is," he went on at last, "are we going to save or are we going to spend? The one hope for us all is to find some way of spending more. And everybody right and left (everybody who can get a hearing) keeps on exhorting us to save. Do you agree that it is devilish?"

"Wait a bit! What about the gentle art of salesmanship? There are hundreds of thousands at it, and more every month. I shall be one of them myself in a fortnight. Their whole job is to get people to spend more."

"Ah!" said John. "That's competitive. Nobody'll try and stop you, as long as you confine yourself to telling people on what to spend. It's when you want to give them more to spend that the fun begins. On the contrary, salesmanship is another excellent red herring. Keep their noses glued tight to the game of trying who can shout loudest — and they won't notice there's nothing left to shout for!"

"The game of 'who can shout loudest'," said Gerald thoughtfully, "is hardly a good enough definition of salesmanship. It's worse than that. Crede mihi experto! If I were to tell you all the things we learn to do at that game — well — you'd know where to go for the devil — when you wanted him!"

"And you are going on with it?" Gerald shrugged his shoulders.

"You needn't always do everything you learn to do," he mumbled.

"It's always competition," said John after another pause. "People seem to have got the idea of competition into their very blood — so that it's impossible for them to think outside it. Here, it's obvious to every intelligent preparatory schoolboy that every single industrialised country in the world is rapidly becoming saturated with the means of production. It's obvious that the only problem for us all is how to sit down and use the wealth we've got. And not a single responsible man in the length and breadth of Europe has any suggestion but some new way of underselling the other fellow, or outwitting him somehow, so as to capture some part of the already inadequate market he has got."

"And the kind of mentality it induces!" exclaimed Gerald. "The people at my place, for instance, are quite good fellows. They can talk really intelligently about cricket-scores and where to go for a summer holiday and so forth. But now that their papers are encouraging them to take competitive selling seriously — as a kind of spiritual activity — so that they not only do it, but talk about it — my God! Their thinking apparatus is infinitely inferior to any preparatory schoolboy's I ever remember having to deal with!"

"I can't understand what on earth made you go in for it!" said John slowly, "in fact I hardly believed Humphrey, when he told me." Gerald did not immediately reply.

“But surely,” he said at last, “you are turning it into a kind of nightmare. There must be responsible people, right outside all these influences, who would have taken up your idea, if it is right. And yet I’ve heard nothing of it. What is the academic view, for instance, of Hicks and Cameron. I mean what do University people say about them?”

“Nothing,” said John — “or as little as possible — and that in the form of polite banter.”

“Hm.”

“Yes. You think I’ve got a bee in my bonnet. I told you you would never believe how deep it went. The Universities are as much under control as anyone else.”

“Do you mean to say that an Oxbridge don in his lectures says what he is *told* to!”

“Of course not. It’s not so simple as that. The thing is that, unless he is by nature the kind of man who will say the kind of thing that is wanted, he *never becomes a don*. He doesn’t get appointed.”

“Look here,” said Gerald, “steady! What proofs have you got for all this? I once had the same sort of idea . . . you remember I was asked to write an article for the new Encyclopedia — and it was suddenly turned down? Well, I thought there was some dark work behind it — but then — I suddenly realised how flattering it is to your self-esteem, when you have lost, to accuse the other man of foul play! So I never thought any more about it. You want very strong proofs.”

“But you *can’t* get proofs! Even if you knew all the facts, there would always be a perfectly honest explanation. It’s in the *minds* of the people that the control goes on. Control, control, control! And not a spark of freedom anywhere! Can’t you *see*, man, people are *afraid* of freedom! You can’t prove it — you can only see it!” He paused a moment and went on: “You can never prove it — at any point in the scale. How can I explain what I mean? Look here: take an everyday example — a mother and her daughter — or a father and his son — or a mistress and her servant, if you like. The one will do every conceivable thing for the other — subscribe large sums of money, sacrifice himself, work himself to the bone, never let the son out of his sight — everything except the only thing that really matters, which is to stand aside and set the son *free*. To let him stand on his own independent legs with an income of his own, and to confine your moral influence to the influence of affection, or friendly help and advice, *when it is asked for*. I’ve never experienced all that myself, because my father happened to be exactly the opposite by nature. But since I joined the Church, I seem to have come up against nothing else. Understand that — *see* with your eyes the relation between those two souls and you can see what goes on all the way up the scale, till you get to the man who appointed the don who gave the lecture to the author who wrote the book which influenced the novelist who wrote the novel that was read by the parson who preached the sermon to Mrs. Goldbooth!”

“And who is ‘Mrs. Goldbooth’? Presumably an inmate of the house that Jack built!” John laughed.

“No! only one of my parishioners at Onslow. A kind old soul; but she has become a sort of type for me of Ialdabaoth. Secret control! That’s what I’m up against. And the medium *par excellence* of secret control is — money. Money

enables one soul to control another without saying that it does so — without admitting even to itself that it does so. Once establish a money-relation between two people and you have opened the door to the devil.

Marston — people have a sort of instinctive perception of this — and it makes them afraid! The one thing they cannot bear to admit is that a man's moral nature is his own affair. That he is free to determine his own destiny. That he needn't — that he can't be 'good' unless he wants to. That nobody can ever say 'You ought' but only 'I ought'. And this fear comes out in all sorts of little ways. Have you ever noticed that nearly everyone is afraid nowadays to talk about finance? People push it away. They suddenly lose interest in the subject. Or if they do speak, they say it's 'too complicated' or it must be 'handed over to experts' or something. But if you look in their eyes — or read between the lines — you can see that they are afraid. Do you know . . . I can feel this fear . . . even in Margaret!" He stopped. For some time Gerald said nothing. At last he commented:

"But Margaret's father is a sort of financier, isn't he? She ought to have got used to it by now!" John stared at him for ten seconds without speaking.

"I know!" he said at last. "But nobody ever talks about it at Klosters. Margaret still hasn't the least idea what her father does all day in the City — when he is up there!" He smiled, and added quickly: "I don't mean that he is likely to be doing anything every nefarious —"

"Sweeny Hudson, the demon director of Lombard Street!" murmured Gerald.

"— the point is, her not knowing. And nobody at Klosters knowing. Do you know, I've sometimes watched Sir Otto moving about among a crowd of guests — a lot of stupid dilettante artists, generally — and I couldn't help feeling he takes a positive pleasure in keeping the two parts of his life absolutely separate! It must be a pleasure to him to feel all the time how all those people talk and nothing comes of it, and people like himself don't talk — and everything comes of it. Not that he gives any sign of it. No one could be more courteous."

"I must look out for all this," said Gerald in a voice which plainly betrayed that he did not take it very seriously.

"Yes," said John, catching him up quite eagerly. "Do! And promise to tell me your whole impression, will you?" Gerald nodded, with a smile. He looked at his watch.

"Oughtn't we to be going downstairs?" he said.

"In a minute!" said John. "I want your opinion of my poem first!" Gerald found he no longer had any uneasiness.

"Of course," he said. "You understand, it's difficult to say at this stage. Everything depends on how you finish it! I will tell you this much, that what I have seen appears to me to be an astonishing achievement — absolutely astonishing — in the circumstances. You have scarcely written anything before?" John shook his head. "But I feel bound to add that I don' t see it leading anywhere. For one thing, the old bottle you have chosen to put the new wine into — the Spenserian stanza — seems to me to be against it. I hope very much myself that you will finish it — but I can't honestly say I think its chances of publication are high." John's mouth set into a hard firm line, as he steeled himself to meet this latest disappointment. And Gerald,

perceiving that he had dealt a blow, endeavoured to pass through the poem to the heart behind it.

"I wonder what made you want to put it in that form."

"I should have thought that would be fairly obvious!" replied John. "I've explained this feeling I have of a secret control of people's souls — mainly by pictures. For the very reason that they are taken hold of *unconsciously* in this way — or half-consciously — I believe they are not nearly so far gone — in themselves — often, as one would judge by what comes out of them — by appearances."

"But civilisation itself," interpolated Gerald, "if you are right, is *further* gone than it appears. For how can a man cure a disease he is not even conscious of?"

"Exactly. And the thing is to make people conscious. Everywhere one turns, pictures are being put into the world — into men's imaginations — of the wrong sort — in such a way as to make them unfree. The only way out is to put other pictures into the world of a *different* kind. Pictures that will make them free. You know I always felt a sort of connection between Spenser's poetry and pictures."

"By Jove, Trinder!" said Gerald, "I do admire your gumption." and he added, "Can you describe to me at all the way the poem finishes?" John had temporarily lost the depression occasioned by Gerald's unfavourable estimate of his poem's chances.

"Very roughly!" he said. "The Goat calls up a series of pictures in something the same way as the first, in each of which, of course, he proudly reveals his own hidden part in the proceedings. That's the chief point of the whole thing — his revealing himself. And then finally, he outlines the great plan he had for nationalising and internationalising and centralising everything and running it all from a secret Headquarters in a sort of Lombard Street. There is not much action otherwise — until the end, when the crowd comes back again, and finds him out. This time the crowd is led by — by a glorious figure in white . . . riding on a sunbeam . . . the sunlight will be everywhere, saturating the whole scene . . . You will be able to see the light *through* this figure — like the sun shining through the leaves on a summer's day. I shan't describe his face. He will direct the crowd . . . and they will all drive the Goat away for ever into the wilderness . . . bleating piteously. His bleating will sound something like the three words, "*Thou shalt not*" . . . . I don't know if that will be the end, or if they will go back to the cathedral and celebrate a kind of new Mass — with a new ritual. I haven't quite imagined that. I don't suppose I shall be able to." He paused, and grew depressed again. "I doubt if I shall ever manage to finish it, Gerald," he said, "especially now that you have taken away its chances of publication. I shan't feel I can give the time for one thing."

"It's rather a strong way of putting it," objected Gerald, "to say I have 'taken away its chances.' I very much hope you will finish it," he added with genuine enthusiasm. "Publication isn't everything, after all."

"Why don't *you* write something — about it?" said John curiously, noticing the enthusiasm.

"About what?"

"About — about the Sun — oh, you know, *getting out*!"

"I certainly don't know!" said Gerald. "I wish I did! No. I might conceivably manage something about its 'creating pressure' as you put it just now. And that would be just about as far as I should get. Besides — what's the good of writing,

when about fifty new books are printed every week? Who'll read you? The people who want to, because they agree with you already. Nobody else'll ever touch you. You know my formula, 'Those that read don't need: those that need don't read!' All the same —" and he immediately became more serious — "I very much hope you'll finish the poem and I'm sure it won't be waste of time." John said nothing, but looked at him curiously again, to see if he meant it.

"I believe you could do it," he said, (and his tone was almost envious) "if you would only let yourself!"

"Let myself!" Gerald laughed. "Right! I hereby give myself carte blanche to write anything I feel like."

"Yes. But that's just it! You've got to feel like! I meant: let yourself be inspired."

"Do you imagine I'm likely to stop myself? As a matter of fact it's the one thing I really care about, the one tiny hope I've really got left in the world!" John hesitated and spoke rather awkwardly:

"What I mean is — I can't express it — it may be Ialdabaoth all over again, for all you know. It's not simply a question of letting other people be free. That's nothing to people like you! Some people have to learn to let themselves be free!"

"You mean," said Gerald very slowly, "we not only can't say 'you ought', but not even 'I ought' — only 'I will'?"

"Then you do understand what I mean?" John thought it was just like him, suddenly to show, in this uneasy sort of way, how well he had really understood all the time. But Gerald had had enough.

"I don't know!" he said, and jumped up. "Perhaps I shall be inspired, anyway — by the mystic atmosphere of Klosters! Come on! I'm going down to Margaret."

CHAPTER XLVIII

The evening of that painful conversation, when John had gone out of the house and returned in the small hours without offering to explain where he had been, had seemed to mark a definite change in Margaret's attitude towards him. Hitherto, alongside of the more or less impartial sense that he had wronged her, she had felt a strong current of pity, both for his harrassed mind and for the inevitable reaction of her own depressed mood on his spirits. Now she sometimes felt, in addition to all this, a faint but quite definite resentment and even hostility. It is one thing to feel yourself involved with another soul in the terror and pity of a tragic experience. It is quite another to feel yourself a lump of weakness and depression obstructing the path of an active spirit. And it was so that Margaret sometimes conceived herself to be regarded. There were times when she felt she was being simply dragged along in an unimportant, not to say, undignified manner. In theory, indeed, she was consulted before he took any important step, but actually she felt — as for instance when he proposed this move up north — that it had already been decided without reference to her, and that she could only oppose it at the expense of appearing cantankerous.

Moreover now that they were here, her position turned out to be so very different from what it had been at Onslow. John, it is true, kept on hinting that it was

her own listlessness and inability to 'pull herself together' that left her hands idle so much of the time. She knew he thought her unwilling to make the effort, to display the initial forbearance, which is always required in order to break into a new circle. But she also knew that the position really was different. It was a different kind of circle altogether, and one in which her co-operation was fundamentally — not wanted. These people always made her feel: 'You are too much unlike us'.

John himself was so deeply absorbed that he rarely gave any sign now that he even suffered from their estrangement. Gradually therefore it turned out that all she could do, in order to make her existence felt at all, was to justify the very imputation she resented so much — to sit idly by and occasionally put a spoke in his wheel, in the shape of some remark intended to remind him of her abiding dissatisfaction. Thus, she felt impelled to keep on revealing to him in apparently accidental ways that she regarded their present home as purely temporary, and she would generally choose some moment in which he appeared to be toiling especially hard to lay foundations for the future.

There were all sorts of ways of doing this — as, by suddenly relapsing into silence, coldly letting a subject drop, becoming totally unresponsive, and so on. Unused to introspection and constitutionally disinclined for it, it could only be very rarely that she herself caught a full glimpse of what she was doing, and when that happened, it shocked and depressed her so deeply that she hardly knew what to do. Each glimpse therefore, made her more distrustful of herself and her own words and less inclined to speak at all. Hence, the growing listlessness, of which John had complained to Janet.

Much of the time while John and Gerald were talking upstairs this evening, she sat over a novel, not so much reading it as vaguely rebuking herself for the little sting she had administered to John as he went out — and at the same time half preparing another one. But when the door opened, it was to admit, not John but Janet.

Janet learned that John was upstairs with Gerald, and, even though she had known Gerald to be in the house, was faintly surprised not to feel more excited by the news. This surprise was at the back of the curious, kind, ironical little smile with which she received it. Margaret, however, taking the smile to be a comment on their having rushed off so quickly to be alone together, was not quite sure whether it implied respect or indulgence. Indeed she could never be quite sure what Janet thought and felt, being as much attracted by her simple affection and goodness as she was sometimes repelled by an unexpected candour of expression, or by the sympathy which the latter would reveal for books or persons, that she herself regarded as morbid or sentimental.

They spoke now of the book on Margaret's lap, which was a French novel.

"Do you like them?" asked Janet, as if 'they' could all be quite conveniently discussed together.

"French books?"

"French novels."

"I like the clearness and the neatness of them," replied Margaret, and Janet noticed, as she spoke, the clearness of her own voice.

"Yes," she replied; "I suppose they are good that way. I never like the flavour of them myself — at least I didn't. Perhaps I should like it better now."

"Oh, of course it doesn't do to take the morals seriously," said Margaret.

"I know," said Janet keenly, "I'm only just beginning to understand that way of reading a book. You can take a book and use it — fit it into your own ideas — without bothering about what the author thinks is right or wrong. When I read a book, I'm always trying to ferret out what the author really thinks is the right thing between men and women. And if I don't agree with him, I don't like the book."

"Well," said Margaret, "that's certainly one way of reading!" Janet asked her if she had much time for reading.

"Plenty of time now," she replied.

"But you have a great deal of Parish work, haven't you?"

"No, very little."

"I see," said Janet, in a low voice, feeling the tension in the last remark, and thinking carefully what to say next.

"I should have thought," she suggested at last, "that you would have had a tremendous lot put on you. They must find your tact and good nature so extraordinarily useful." She meant this quite truthfully, yet she also said it because she thought it would be a good thing to say at the moment.

"Tact is rather old-fashioned in this part of the world," replied Margaret. "If you venture to be polite and expect other people to be polite, too, you are an early Victorian." She laughed.

"I don't see that old fashionedness matters much."

"Well, it matters in this way," replied Margaret, after thinking for a moment, "that once it's decided that you are early Victorian, you are settled for good. No one dreams, even in his wildest moments, of listening to anything you say." She laughed, again, to cover the feeling behind her words, while there arose in both their minds the unspoken thought of John and of his attitude towards tact.

"Are you going to Klosters?" Janet asked.

"Yes. I'm going to-morrow. John has asked Gerald Marston to go with me — on his way to town. Mother will put him up for the night." Janet's face lit up with pleasure at the success of her little plan; and Margaret, seeing the expression, was somehow annoyed by it. She looked at her sister-in-law with wide open eyes which had a touch of defiance in them: "I'm going, to please John," she affirmed, "it really doesn't make much difference to me whether I'm here or there. You don't get away from — things." Janet's face fell a little and she was occupied for a moment in preventing herself from reminding Margaret that, last time they had spoken, she had given John's wishes as a reason for not going. Margaret, however, suddenly felt how unresponsive she had been. She took Janet's hand and said in quite a different voice, although still in such a way as not to admit that her last words had been untrue: "It was very nice of you to think about it."

Janet was not surprised by her alteration. Several times, when they had been together lately, things had happened in this order — Margaret would show herself persistently cold and unresponsive throughout the visit, and then at the last moment would unaccountably reveal that she did not want Janet to go — and was grateful. Janet wondered what she could say. "I only want —" she began, with a

serious, troubled look, but her remark was cut short by the opening of the door and the entry of the maid to announce another visitor.

"Mr. Trumpett, Ma'am — to see Mr. Trinder."

Margaret made a quick, rather ugly grimace. "Show him into the dining-room, Nelly!" she began in a low voice, "and go and tell —" But she was suddenly cut short by a hearty bass voice just outside the door:

"Is that Mrs. Trinder? Am I intruding?" The owner of the voice, a short thickset man, in a tweed suit and clerical collar entered the room without waiting for an answer. The maid retired, and Margaret began introducing him to Janet.

"Well, Mrs. Trinder!" he said, after they had shaken hands: "Where's your energetic husband tonight — being energetic again?" Margaret did not immediately answer, and Mr. Trumpett turned to Janet with a smile: "Isn't he a wonderful man?" he said, and Janet's heart went out to him for his praise of John, though the pleasure was somewhat marred by a suspicion of Margaret's exasperation.

"I only hope he isn't wasting his great powers," said the latter.

"Well, he certainly won't get a newspaper reputation here," said the visitor complacently. "Nobody will hear of him. Never mind, Mrs. Trinder, you must console yourself with the knowledge that nobody ever does hear of the people who count nowadays." Janet had already begun to alter her opinion of Mr. Trumpett and to sympathise a little with Margaret's now evident exasperation. He had in a rich measure that peculiar Twentieth Century brand of conceit, which is always hinting with an indulgent smile: "I know <u>much</u> more about you than you do yourself, poor dear!" and he took no trouble whatever to avoid implying that Margaret was incapable of valuing anything higher than a trumpery notoriety.

"What do you say?" he added, turning to Janet. "Do you think your brother is throwing himself away on us?"

"I don't know enough about it," replied Janet, and she turned to Margaret. "He was getting on very well at Onslow, wasn't he, Margaret?" she asked. Margaret nodded.

"I suppose," said Janet, "there is more of a <u>career</u> open in that sort of place!"

"Oh, there's a career in the suburbs all right!" agreed Mr. Trumpett breezily, "as long as you know how to say what's wanted in a pretty enough way — tell the good ladies that cats and puppy-dogs have immortal souls — cats and puppy-dogs but <u>not</u> mice and bugs — eh?" and he looked knowingly at Margaret. Janet hastened to save Margaret from the necessity of replying.

"Of course, John would never say anything he didn't feel," she said.

"Exactly!" said Mr. Trumpett. "That's why he came down here. We say what we think here —" he grinned — "that's why we're not loved!" And once again he assured Janet: "We're not loved, you know, Miss Trinder — not loved at all!" Janet, who was sitting between the visitor and her sister-in-law, was amazed now to hear the latter, whom she had hitherto regarded as a kind of model of good breeding, actually whisper with her lips: "I don't wonder!" She stole an agonized glance at Mr. Trumpett to see if he had heard. Apparently not; and at the same moment there were steps and voices in the hall, and the door opened to admit Gerald and John.

John's first sensation, as he opened the door, was one of relief that there were enough visitors there to protect him from Margaret. It would be practically

impossible for her in the circumstances to aim an uncomfortable remark at him. But when he had introduced the visitor to Gerald and they had all gone into another room to take some cold supper, his apprehension of some sort of unpleasantness returned, and all through the meal he made an effort to keep up a brisk conversation on general topics, and to prevent the subjects, in which he personally was most interested, from rising to the surface.

In this he obtained considerable assistance from Janet. She had half expected — until he actually came into the room — that Gerald would have been reduced by now to the status of an ordinary mortal in her eyes. His appearance immediately put an end to this notion. A kind of holiness hung all about him. In spite of the fact that she had never known him until an age at which she could no longer be called young, in spite of this, as he came through the door, it was as if the spirit of her own youth had taken form and glided into her presence. Without feeling at all shy or awkward, she experienced an extraordinary pleasure and excitement in his company. And this made her talk well and vivaciously. It was exhilarating to be in the presence of a person who had lain in her bosom so long that he had become without knowing it, a part of her; but it was positively intoxicating to be able at the same time to speak to this person in an easy ordinary manner about nothing in particular. It was — it was like walking on a tight-rope.

Gerald, on his side, was vividly reminded as he looked round at the party, of the first occasion on which he had taken a meal with the Trinder family. Different as they clearly were in every important respect, Mr. Trumpett, by virtue of a certain directness in his manner, took the place of Humphrey quite effectively, and thus rendered the occasion something like a repetition of the previous one. As soon as he had this idea, however, Gerald began to perceive the differences more distinctly. Margaret, for instance, was much less talkative than she had been then. That struck him, but what struck him very much more was the change in Janet. Not only had her self-possession increased enormously, but there were palpable physical changes. A kind of subdued glow on her face made her look handsome — most of her movements were smooth and graceful instead of jerky — and they had not been talking ten minutes before he suddenly realised that her speech no longer betrayed a trace of stammering. All the rest of the evening Gerald was more conscious of her presence than of anyone else in the party.

During the latter part of supper, however, he began to ponder a little on his extraordinary conversation with John upstairs and, after the meal was over, he remarked to the latter, during a temporary lull in the conversation:

"Thinking over what we said just now, John, I still can't see anything to prevent your remedy being introduced in the ordinary way — or at any rate an attempt at it."

"What ordinary way?"

"Well, why shouldn't someone bring in a Bill in Parliament? Isn't anything being done about it <u>now</u>, during the Election?" There was silence in the room for a moment, and then Mr. Trumpett remarked with satisfaction:

"Ah! <u>You've</u> said something!" and at the same moment Gerald saw John exchange a quick glance with Janet.

"The politicians," said John, "are under the City" (and he jammed his thumb down on the surface of a little table so hard that the pressure bent it backwards) — "like that!"

Margaret rose.

"I think I'll go up and pack," she said. Everybody except Janet rose, and waited in silence until she had gone out of the room, and then Mr. Trumpett remarked to Gerald:

"Mrs. Trinder is a wise woman. She's bored by economics and isn't afraid to admit it." He turned to John: "It would be a good thing for us, if we were the same, Trinder!" He chuckled and went on for a long time smiling to himself down his pipe. But Gerald, catching a miserable look on John's face, suddenly realised why the latter had been so talkative all through supper. Once again Janet and her brother looked at one another, as if not certain which of them ought to speak, and then John began:

"You probably thought a good deal of what I said to you just now — upstairs — was moonshine of my own. I did say, if you remember, that there was any amount of evidence. Well now, for example, you've heard of Streeter?"

"The Industrialist man! Yes, but I haven't heard anything about him lately."

"The Industrialist Chancellor of the Exchequer he would have been, if the party gets in. Everybody took it for granted. Until about two years ago, when he suddenly ceased to be regarded as one of the party leaders altogether, and now at this Election he's not even standing for a seat. Well, since Janet's been here, we've discovered quite by accident that he was simply kicked out, because he got interested in Consumer Credit! There's no question of hearsay or rumour, you see. It's first-hand evidence. Janet, you explain!"

"Yes," said Janet. "I know from a Mr. Metcalfe, who used to be one of Mr. Dodge's secretaries. I worked with him, or rather under him, for more than a year. He told me himself that some big person in the City — he didn't say who it was — practically sent orders to Mr. Dodge that they wouldn't have Streeter. He says he took the message himself — so he ought to know!"

"The crack of the whip!" ejaculated Mr. Trumpett complacently.

"Mr. Metcalfe's putting up for Parliament himself this time," went on Janet.

"They're a cheerful lot," she added, "all of them!" She got up. "I'm going upstairs to see if Margaret wants any help." And, without looking again at Gerald, she left the room.

"M—", said the latter cautiously. He felt incapable of forming any opinion on all this new material. The chief thing he was conscious of at the moment was, that he didn't think much of Mr. Trumpett.

"We consider," said that individual, "that political action is out of Court altogether."

"Who will be Chancellor of the Exchequer?" asked Gerald, "if the Industrialists get in?"

"They will get in," said Mr. Trumpett. "The banks will see to that."

"Why?" asked Gerald, turning on him quickly. "Why will the banks see to it?"

"We know they like a change of Government — it makes people go on believing in democracy. Same reason they allowed Votes for Women to get through.

One tool's as good as another. And the more often you change the less chance there is of anybody tumbling to it."

Gerald turned to John:

"Who will be Chancellor of the Exchequer, John?"

"Emmot," said John.

"Inventor of the great 'Poor Persons' Savings Bank' scheme!" chimed in Mr. Trumpett, "and author of 'Economic Fads and Fancies.'"

"It's simply awful!" said John. "You feel you simply must do something — and yet what on earth are you to do?"

"If you don't know what on earth you are to do," said Mr. Trumpett, "it's much better to do nothing. You only play into their hands by fussing about with propaganda. They've got all the money and all the power, so they can always make your propaganda look silly."

"Yes, but if we are not going to do anything," said John, "what's the use of talking at all."

"I don't look at it that way," said Mr. Trumpett. "The thing's interesting for its own sake. Economics is a science — just like any other science."

"Oh Lord!" said John, and was quite glad to hear a ring at the bell. He went out to the front door to answer it. On the step stood a handsome correctly dressed young man, who immediately enquired if he had been rightly informed that Miss Trinder was in the house.

"Yes, come in!" said John, "I'm her brother." They shook hands.

"How do you do!" said the visitor with an extraordinarily pleasant smile. "My name's Metcalfe. I do hope you'll forgive me for calling at this astonishing hour, but I happen to have some news that I believe will interest you as much as it will your sister."

"I'll call her down," said John. He called out: "Janet, can you come down a minute?" and after a moment's hesitation, added, "Will you come, too, Margaret?"

"Come in, will you?" he said to Metcalfe, and showed him the way into the drawing-room.

A few minutes later Janet came in. "Margaret feels rather too tired to come down again," she explained to John, and immediately, to her astonishment, caught sight of Metcalfe, who advanced towards her, smiling and holding out his hand.

"It's all right!" he said reassuringly, "I only came to tell you — both — that Streeter is putting up for Parliament after all and will probably get in."

"Streeter!" exclaimed John and Mr. Trumpett together. "What party?" said Mr. Trumpett.

"How on earth did he get a Constituency?" asked John. "It's polling-day in less than a week!" Metcalfe answered them both. "His own party of course — he's standing for Ferrocester, North West Division."

"Ferrocester!" exclaimed John, "that's the same town as your own, isn't it?" And then he saw that Janet was looking at Metcalfe with amazement written once more all over her broad expressive face. Metcalfe laughed again, this time with the faintest suspicion of uneasiness.

"Yes," he explained. "It was my constituency! As far as the deeply disappointed population of Ferrocester is concerned, I'm giving it up on account of

‘important work abroad’ — Dodge’s work, which of course he won’t be able to carry on now he’s coming back to politics. Meanwhile I’m pushing Streeter instead.” And he added slowly: “You see, if Streeter gets in, he will be Chancellor of the Exchequer, and at the first possible moment he will either table himself, or strongly support, a Bill for the introduction of some form of Consumer credit — a very mild form, I may say, to begin with.”

“Who told you all this?” asked John, almost rudely incredulous.

“Streeter, of course!” said Metcalfe with a charming smile.

“Yes, but the party organisation!” objected Mr. Trumpett impatiently. Metcalfe looked at him. “How could he possibly do it without Dodge’s approval?” he asked patiently, and added rather consciously, “I’ve just been with Dodge for three hours myself.”

“By jove!” said Mr. Trumpett, “I suppose he’s taking it up as a party stunt. And a jolly good one, too! Do you remember, Trinder, I always said, if anybody did that, he would?” John nodded, and Metcalfe looked at Mr. Trumpett again, this time with marked coolness.

“By the way,” he said authoritatively to all three of them, “don’t advertise this too much. The whole point is to get him in. That’ll be easy enough; the seat’s an Industrialist plum, and the City people won’t have time now to kick up rough in any effective way. As soon as the session opens, the Bill will be brought in quickly and Dodge will try and shove it through so that it will actually begin to work before the Paper Companies have time to misrepresent it.”

“It would take a lot of misrepresenting,” said John thoughtfully, “to smash it once it had got going.”

“That’s the whole idea, you see!” said Metcalfe “a surprise attack that will be all over before they know what’s happened”; and in the silence that ensued he looked at his watch and then at Janet.

“I’m staying in the hotel just by Dodge’s place, Miss Trinder,” he said, “can we go along together?” and to John, who was obviously deeply impressed and puzzled, “I can explain it more fully another time. It’s so beastly late now, isn’t it?”

Janet ran upstairs to get her hat and say goodbye to Margaret.

CHAPTER XLIX

“Shall we walk?” suggested Metcalfe, as they came out into the road.

“Yes. I’d like to!” said Janet: “What a lovely night!” And she took a full deep breath of the soft air. They both looked up for a moment at the sky, a great awning of black velvet, spangled with the pale summer stars. Then they moved off, and had walked on for a hundred yards in silence before Janet remarked:

“Well, you have dropped a thunderbolt on us!”

“I didn’t want to say anything about it before that fellow,” confided Metcalfe, “but the worst effort of all was talking over Dodge. Streeter and I were at him for two hours before we could make him look more than six months ahead. He’s pledged himself to the hilt to deal with Unemployment, and talked all over the country about starting the moment he gets in to power. And he’s really got not the ghost of an idea what he can do — beyond making a few more roads.”

"I know!" said Janet.

"Well, we tried to frighten him about this; but he only said the other parties were in exactly the same boat, so it didn't matter! He's made up his mind now, though. He admitted the only real hope of staying in, once we get in, is to do something _better_ than the other parties. And he says he's willing to take risks."

"It was very clever of you!" said Janet. "But what of your own prospects?" she added. And, after a moment's silence, Metcalfe, ignoring her question, replied unexpectedly to her first remark:

"The step meets with your approval?"

"It certainly does," said Janet, "if it's not going to spoil things too much for _you_."

"Good!" said her companion, once more replying pointedly to the first part of her remark only. And he added: "Because as a matter of fact you are responsible for it!"

"_I_!" exclaimed Janet in amazement, "_I_ responsible for it." Metcalfe smiled, enjoying the advantage which her bewilderment gave him.

"Yes!" he said, "you remember the conversation we had last time I was here!"

"Which conversation?"

"Just before I went back to Ferrocester. Oh, but you _must_ remember it!" Now his voice sounded a little impatient.

"I'm sorry!" said Janet firmly, "but it's slipped my memory altogether."

"You made various suggestions about me!"

"Suggestions about _you_!" Janet was more amazed than ever.

"Oh yes!" said Metcalfe, "it's all very well to pretend you've forgotten!"

"But I'm not pretending — _honestly_, Mr. Metcalfe!"

"You were good enough to suggest," said her escort drily, "that I was an empty-headed social butterfly — and a careerist."

"Mr. Metcalfe!" gasped Janet.

"You said I knew all the time the things you have only just been finding out during the last year — with the help of your brother — that politics are really run from the City, and so forth, and that I had deliberately refused to let it worry me!"

"I think I do remember something of that conversation now!" admitted Janet humbly; "but I'm sure I didn't say anything as horrid as that."

Metcalfe laughed in a half amused, half exasperated manner:

"No, you didn't _say_ anything! You never do say anything of that kind. It's the things you don't say that show what you're thinking, Miss Trinder!" She did not reply.

"You made me very angry," he added genially.

"Oh," said Janet, and not quite seeing what else she could say, she added brightly; "You seem to have got over it!"

After another fifty yards:

"Do you think," she enquired breathlessly, "we could walk a little slower?" Metcalfe was racing along at such an enormous speed that she had practically to run to keep up with him.

"I'm sorry!" he said, and immediately reduced his pace by half. She glanced up at him now and saw that he had taken off his hat and was swinging the arm that

held it to and fro in an extraordinary, still sort of way. It suddenly occurred to her that he was extremely nervous. And when he opened his mouth next, the nervousness made him say what he had to say with a wonderfully condescending air, as if he were gently explaining something to a not very intelligent child:

"You see," he announced in this manner, without turning his head towards her, "I want to marry you!"

For a fraction of a second Janet's muscles seemed to stiffen like those of an animal listening intently, listening with its whole body, when it had just heard a strange noise. Then she recovered herself; but by that time a huge invisible barrier seemed to have been let down between them, cutting off all their former easy and amiable relation. The rest of the walk was spent by her in trying to break down this barrier and to think and speak to him as unhurriedly as she had been doing before it appeared. At last she answered him in a low voice:

"I think perhaps you're rather excited to-night!"

"Look here, Janet!" he answered, preventing himself with an effort from almost shouting the words, "don't make me angry again. I mean, that's a preposterous answer. People don't say things like this without thinking. You don't suppose I came over to-night, simply to tell you that political news? I meant to have this walk back, and to ask you."

"Still," objected Janet, after another pause, "don't you think you'll feel differently in the morning?"

"Confound it!" he exclaimed almost impatiently, "you are the most obstinate person I ever met, if you will excuse my saying it. It's a perfectly ordinary straight question: "will you marry me? Will you please answer it?" All this time decision was gradually hardening itself in Janet's anxious, feverishly active mind. She turned to her companion now and said with much more confidence:

"You think I'm not taking you seriously. Yes, I am. I'm not put off by your putting it in that funny, cross way either! But I honestly feel quite sure I'm not the sort of person you really want to marry."

"Why?"

"It's awfully hard to put it into words . . . All sorts of little things . . . How can I explain, Mr. Metcalfe? I've seen you — sometimes — going out in the evening — all beautifully dressed . . . You want one of the vivacious pretty ones, to keep you happy."

"I really don't see what my clothes have got to do with it!" he said a little stiffly, "I can't get myself up like a navvy in this profession! Look here . . ." he had lost the stiffness and begun instead to perspire with nervousness . . . "I like meeting people — and an occasional dance — but that doesn't mean I'm a feather-headed ass —"

"I never thought that!" said Janet quickly.

"Thank you! Vivacity and that sort of thing is very nice — it's perfectly all right to spend an evening with. But I want character in my wife. And I always meant to have it. Look here . . ." he got out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead . . . "you see . . . we've been thrown together a good deal . . . given me a chance . . . well, you see . . . I've seen how — as a matter of fact, how good you are!" He relapsed with

enormous relief into silence; and when Janet spoke again, her voice seemed to come from a long way off:

"You are paying me a very great compliment," she said quietly, "I don't simply mean by what you said last — but — what you ask me." She paused, and then added: "Incidentally, it's the first time in my life that particular compliment has been paid to me." She looked at him. "There," she said, "I tell you that!" And she went on: "But I still say no — because, really, Mr. Metcalfe, I'm quite sure we shouldn't do. You want someone much younger than me, for one thing." She spoke the last sentence vigorously and was surprised to see that it embarrassed him. He mumbled, with a kind of annoyance, something about 'its being impossible to discuss that kind of thing' and walked on in silence.

"It isn't only that!" she explained then: "I'm old in all sorts of ways. I sometimes think my soul was old the day I was born. You're different. That doesn't mean you're stupid. Anyone can see you're much cleverer than me. Incidentally, that's another reason!" She touched his hand for a moment. "I'm sorry," she said. "I know it wouldn't do! And — thank you!"

They had just reached the door of Dodge's furnished house, and there was a finality in her voice this time which there was no mistaking. Metcalfe reacted to it in a strange way. He snatched his hand away from her touch:

"Oh, very well!" he said sullenly, without quite looking her in the eyes, "Good night!" and he strode angrily away to his hotel.

He was, in fact, curiously angry, both with her and with himself. He really had felt that he was paying her a decided compliment, and was correspondingly annoyed by the assurance with which she had received and examined it. Thus, the genuine distress which her refusal had caused him (a refusal which an inward voice somehow told him was final) was smothered up and made easier to bear by the little billow of wrath which carried him away from her. But it was genuine nevertheless. Something was hurting him badly and would, he knew, hurt him still more in the next few months. He had laid himself at this woman's feet in the most abject way — had admitted her immense moral superiority — and for this had got no return whatever! He supposed he should ask her again. He wondered how old she really was. So he was the first?

As to the sacrifice he had made, apart from the flatness of dropping out of the limelight of a local campaign, it did not trouble him much. He knew that, if anything came of it, neither Dodge nor Streeter would forget him.

Janet on her side felt a sharp stab of pain at the quick way in which he withdrew his hand from her touch. And when, now that the excitement was over, she began to realise all that a proposal of marriage means, and what an overwhelming compliment it quite inevitably is, to be sought out in this way by another soul for a life-relation, then she could not forbear crying a little. Of late the melancholy loneliness and longing, which evening so often brought with it, had been inclined to change into their opposites more easily than ever — almost as soon, indeed, as they made themselves felt. To-night, however, her agitation over Metcalfe's proposal, together with the freshening of Gerald's image in her fancy kept them longer in their proper forms in her heart. They refused to be transmuted; and she was astonished to realise how much she had forgotten of her sufferings before

this curious transmutation had ever taken place. She felt bitterly sorry for all the thousands who must at that very moment be being torn by the pangs of lost love or bereavement and, thinking again of Metcalfe, she pitied him, wondered if she had done right, and felt lonelier than ever.

Later, however, as she lay in bed, the thought of a certain complacent element which she had long observed in her truculent suitor began to inoculate her against any very intense suffering on his behalf. She seemed to behold him nicely calculating the relative advantages of 'vivacity' on one side and 'character' on the other — and congratulating himself on having arranged things so that he could enjoy both in their proper places. She smiled to herself a little at this and wondered if the thought of her was really worrying him much. Perhaps it was. After all he had often been extraordinarily kind!

Exhausted by the manifold experiences of the day, she was at last able to let the whole chain of thought slip quietly out of her mind into the dusk of an idea-less melancholy, yielding herself at the same moment to the warm glow of longing and affection which seemed to rise up from the region of her heart and envelope her in happiness. The image of Gerald hovered lightly again over her fancy, as usual at night, identifying itself for a time with the longing in her soul, but then passing over into a confused sense of the real presence of all those other souls to whom she was closely tied by affection. She had a dim sense that her brothers, her dead father and mother and one or of her two closest friends stood with Gerald round the bed on which she lay and smiled and wove with rhythmic movements of their arms the magic carpet on which she was being gently spirited away from time.

CHAPTER L

The next morning — a dismally wet and windy one — Gerald and Margaret found themselves at about midday sitting opposite to one another in a third-class carriage. The train puffed loudly out of the hollow, glass-roofed station of Loomfield, and, after two or three remarks, both of them settled down in silence to their books and reflections. They both felt tired. Gerald's eyes, however, soon rose a little above the printed page and took on that fixed, steady look which showed that he was thinking or remembering. He was, in fact, living through once again the long conversation he had had with John on the previous day, and realising, in the process, how much of it had passed over his head at the time. All sorts of meanings now began to come out between John's words and expressions, like those magic pictures which children buy to put in water. In particular the 'secret control' of men's minds by means of images, from an interesting idea of John's, was turned into an omnipresent nightmare reality; it was as if he were waking up from a dream in the middle of the night and looking round him with a shiver. Sitting in the unwarmed railway carriage in his thin summer clothes, he did in fact shiver a little and gazed out with something like dismay upon the ugly network of squalid villas and grimy factories through which they were passing. A man came along the corridor, ringing a bell to announce luncheon, and almost at the same instant a cacophonous variety of aggressive voices began to hoot from all directions, some mournful, some triumphant, some merely

hoarse; all vulgar, insistent scolding, and proclaiming as though with a kind of sneer the standardized midday break in the factory day.

Out of an arch in a high, dun-coloured brick wall there issued, as the train ran by, a group of chattering white-faced girls. And at once, drawn out of himself by a sort of iron sympathy that was unrelieved by the faintest touch of humour or resignation, Gerald's consciousness dipped into the consciousness of these girls for a moment and returned aghast at what it had found. A horrible vision took possession of him, in which millions of shadowy figures poured with the regularity of clockwork, into and out of an enormous building, where they must spend each day in systematically dulling the faculties that made them human. Then, when the evening came, they marshalled themselves in obedient columns and poured into another enormous building, to exhaust on standardized dreams such remnants of these human faculties as they still possessed. Gerald had in mind the cinemas, the newspapers, and above all the endless monotonous novelette-production of Northern Syndicated Periodicals and its fellow concerns, in which he himself had recently lent a hand. Into this special, skilfully conceived dream-factory the faceless millions who were marching through Gerald's brain now disappeared and when they emerged again, ready for sleep and more work, it was with those sparks of energy which we call desire, love, imagination, those dying embers of humanity which some unforeseen accident might still have fanned into the flames from which they first issued, finally and irrevocably quenched. For the first time in his life Gerald was having a taste of just those imaginative adventures that had made John's mind what it was. John himself seemed at that moment to be particularly near to him.

He looked across at Margaret, still apparently absorbed in her book, and felt for a moment irked and impatient. It seemed extraordinarily unfair that he should be saddled with the care of a nervous patient, even if only for a day, just after the shattering experiences he himself had come through. He was ravenous just now for companionship — and had been looking forward more than he could say to two or three days with John and Margaret — but it was to have been the John and Margaret he remembered; not this taut unhappy woman. She had said something about his staying a few days at Klosters, but he decided now that he would get straight on to town the next morning and have a few friendly days with Humphrey before his new job began.

In the meantime he supposed he ought to do something about cheering her up. He suggested that they should go along to the second lunch. She agreed; and they lurched, one after another, along the swaying corridor to the restaurant-car. During the meal, though neither of them spoke much, Gerald could not help feeling that it was not only his own spirits that were rising. They watched the black industrial area gradually giving way to the empty and shining green of the countryside and at last the train ran through a cutting in the limestone edge and came out among the smooth-shaven knolls, the old stone walls and stone-built villages of the Cotswolds.

By the time they descended at the junction, the sky had half cleared. They walked up and down the deserted platform together, watching enchanted islands of white cloud hurrying past overhead, leaving the blue spaces of sky between them as empty as the glistening lines that ran past the platform both ways to the sharp

horizon. The wind was dropping. Gradually they perceived that the clouds were all piling up into one half of the sky, stepping down to the eastern horizon in a series of bright ridges, set curiously in perspective. The western celestial hemisphere, into the centre of which the local single line disappeared up a gradient, was now a clear unbroken shell of blue. Meanwhile they had both been fascinated by the evolutions of the piling clouds.

"Like the transformation-scene in a pantomime," remarked Margaret pensively, and he perceived at once the justness of her image, for the under edge of each shining ridge was a straight unbroken line running parallel with the horizon, while the top was curved and puffed into all manner of fantastic vegetable shapes, the whole exactly suggesting the elaborate, laminated scenery of a pantomime stage.

"They stand out," said Gerald dreamily, "like a photograph seen through a stereoscope. The whole picture is in three dimensions, and yet you feel as if each layer were perfectly flat in itself." His own remark, to which she agreed, took him by surprise; for he suddenly realised that it was something like eight months since he had spoken to anyone in this way, since he had been in a milieu where it was taken for granted that transient phases of colour and form are worth discussing. Gerald wondered for a brief instant whether he could be said to have any real existence at all, so much did his whole personality — not merely the temporary mood, but his very soul — seem to depend on the person he was with at the moment, and on what he conceived that person to think of him.

It was a long wait; the local connection was timed to meet the down train, and they had been deposited at the junction by an up one. By the time, therefore, the little train enlarged itself out of the shining shell of blue, the day had changed its whole character. It was now a warm summer afternoon with a light breeze stirring in the hedges. And the journey seemed to have changed its character with the weather. The train jogged slowly along, pulling up with a good many reluctant groans in every little station. People were getting in and out all the time; and yet all the occupants of the carriage at any given moment appeared to know one another quite well. So well, indeed, that they did not necessarily bother to exchange any greeting at first at all; and only ten minutes after he had got in, a newcomer would address somebody else in the carriage by his christian name. At one station a stout, copper-skinned man, with a curiously fierce face something like a chimpanzee's got in and sat down in a corner opposite a woman who was nursing a little girl. He said nothing to anyone. 'Evidently a stranger!' thought Gerald to himself. But five minutes later the chimpanzee man, who had been looking steadily out of window, turned to his neighbour; an old farm labourer.

"There's a tidy bit of straw left on that stack!" he said.

"There is that, Bob!" replied the labourer. And the chimpanzee man added:

"I reckon old John Folly could do with some!"

"Ah!" said the labourer, and everybody in the carriage except the woman and the little girl shook their heads and laughed. After this the chimpanzee man relapsed into silence and continued to glare so continuously and so fiercely at the little girl opposite that Gerald expected every minute that she would start crying. As the train slowed up for the next stop, however, the woman began gathering her things together with the anxiety which country women often display in trains, and all at

once the chimpanzee man jumped up, smiled, fetched her bundle down from the rack, and helped both herself and the little girl out of the carriage with an almost officious excess of kindness, which, taken in combination with the glare, was somehow extraordinarily comic. Gerald, who had been watching and listening to everything under the discreet cover of attending to his book, now raised his eyes cautiously for a moment and, meeting Margaret's, realised at once that she had been watching too. Immediately they looked away from one another, to avoid smiling. The next station was the one for Klosters, and Margaret was already beginning to look out for her familiar landmarks. There was Betsy's cottage under the hill, and above it on the left the little wood where you picnicked; between the two you got, if you looked sharply enough, a momentary glimpse of Klosters itself. The brakes began to grind on the wheels. She wondered whether Sukie Holmes had arrived yet, and whether anyone else would be there. Then she glanced over at Gerald and began speculating, with considerable interest, whether he would understand the atmosphere of Klosters. There were so few people who did understand. Sukie indeed was one of them, as far as she went, and Margaret would share with her subtle little delights and appreciations to which John, fond as he was of the place, had never shown any sign of responding. She had an idea somehow that Gerald would notice a great deal more, and she began secretly looking forward to the renewed life which her familiar beauties would draw from the freshness of his appreciation.

The car, with the back open, was waiting for them outside the station.

"It's an extraordinary thing," said Margaret reflectively, after they had driven about half a mile along the road, "how the air here, or I suppose I ought to say the light, seems to be a sort of golden colour. I always feel it especially when I come back again after an interval."

Gerald said nothing for a moment, and then he remarked, with condescension:

"Fancy your noticing that!"

"Well!" exclaimed Margaret, actually laughing aloud this time, "that's pretty cool! After all, it's my home!"

"All the more reason for not noticing anything!" gabbled Gerald quickly — and added: "What an idiotic thing to say — just for the sake of saying something! Please ignore my burble!" Margaret half turned her head to look at him. He had taken off his hat to allow the wind to blow through his unromantic shock of hair. Interested for a moment, in the dishevelled appearance which it gave him, she allowed her eyes to rest on him longer than they would otherwise have done, so that he became aware of it and turned his head towards her. Their eyes met for an instant and both of them smiled involuntarily before she looked away. It was an odd smile, a smile with a sort of secret understanding behind it, as if they were two children let out from school for an unexpected sky-larking half-holiday, and had just realised the fact.

"John must love this place!" said Gerald after a time. "The golden light we were speaking of . . . just the thing he gets so curiously excited about!" He noticed a cold, dogmatic intonation in the voice with which she replied.

“Oh no! The kind of ‘golden light’ he talks about is something quite different — apparently! This is quite a simple affair — something to do with the limestone. I’ve noticed it in the Jura, too.” It was evident she did not wish the subject pursued.

When they reached the gates of Klosters, the chauffeur stopped of his own accord.

“Are you walking up, Madam?” he asked. Margaret looked enquiringly at Gerald.

“Would you like to? I usually do — but there’s no need!”

“Rather!” They got out of the car, and walked along side by side. Margaret removed her hat and allowed the breeze to play on her forehead as lightly and freely as the numberless different layers of association were beginning to play on her memory. She hummed part of a tune.

“We shall see the house round this bend!” she said, breaking off in the middle of it. They stopped as they came round the corner, and stood under the trees looking at the house and the garden in front of it. Margaret glanced at Gerald half expectantly. But he said nothing. At last, however, after a long silence, he began trying to express himself in a complicated way:

“Do you ever have the feeling that you have been . . . *dragged out of your course* . . . I mean, as though you had been led into doing — and feeling — a lot of things that don’t really belong to you at all? I can’t explain. It’s an extraordinary feeling.” He spoke hesitatingly. Margaret did not reply. She was disappointed that he should speak of himself rather than of the place. Now, however, he pointed to the house.

“I really feel as if I had — I don’t know — *forgotten* all this,” he began, and then he stopped and blushed, as he looked at her, fearing lest he were trying to be more confidential than anything in the occasion called for — besides being perfectly unintelligible. But Margaret, perceiving with gratification that he was after all deeply moved, at once became interested. She realised that he was trying to express more than she could follow, and encouraged him to go on.

“Forgotten it?” she enquired.

“Yes.” He took her up quickly and gratefully. “I had forgotten how calm, how — how *secure* — an English house can look. I don’t know, I seem to have been overwhelmed with a lot of elaborate, tortured ideas; and they’re all so *stupid* really. Don’t you think Psychology is a stupid subject? It doesn’t exist, really. Poetry is the only thing that exists. I knew that once, too. I can’t think how I ever came to forget it . . . It’s — it’s so *obvious*!”

“Yes,” she said slowly, “I think I have some idea of what you mean. Klosters does have that sort of effect on people. That’s part of its charm.”

“By Jove!” exclaimed Gerald. “What a place to be brought up in — as a child!”

And they walked the rest of the way up to the house in silence.

The moment the front door opened, there was a long agonised crescendo howl, a scurry and scrabble of feet, a kind of earthquake, and Nestor, rushing at Margaret, enveloped her in the customary delirium of joy. After he had failed, not only to knock her down, but also in his various attempts to lick her face, he began industriously pretending to be a loony, splaying out his front paws, flopping down on them, and shaking his head about from side to side in a ridiculously affected

manner. Then, when Margaret laughed at him, he pretended that he thought she was a rat, snarling, growling, panting and worrying round her shoes and the hem of her skirt with a display of colossal zeal.

"So you've a real English sheep-dog!" said Gerald. "But of course, you would have. I shall begin to expect this sort of thing now." And they went out on to the verandah, where he was introduced to Lady Hudson, and then to Susan Holmes, who had arrived that morning. Susan and Gerald smiled at one another, as they shook hands, and it was an extraordinary thing, but this smile, too, appeared to Gerald to express a sort of secret understanding, though they had never met before. The moment their eyes met, he not only remembered Margaret's telling him that Miss Holmes was a factory-inspector, but began to feel rather like a very small and imperfect factory himself. But — and this was the peculiar thing — it was a pleasant feeling. He felt as if they already understood all one another's foibles — and perhaps fortes too — and liked one another the better for it. For the first hour of their being in the same place, Miss Holmes's eye seemed to say something for him, every time it caught his — something mildly reproving and yet amusing at the same time. 'Young man,' it said on the occasion of one of these accidental glances, 'you probably know rather too much,' and then it seemed to add in a kindly manner: 'Still — you'll probably do!' 'Yes' — it enquired next time it caught him — 'and what are you doing, gadding about with Margaret Trinder! Ha! just you be careful!'

Before supper the three of them wandered round the garden together, and for some reason it pleased Gerald particularly to see that Sukie and Margaret had taken one another's arms. The wind had dropped by now completely, and the soft stone of the walls and terraces and the house behind them seemed to have become a part of the green and golden light in the Western sky. Only the dark masses of Aubretia, having absorbed some of the rich glow of the afternoon, were giving it back again to the evening. As they came round the corner of a low wall, Gerald suddenly started back before what seemed like a solid column of water spurted over it on to the ground in front of him. The two women laughed, and at the same moment he realised that it was only a peacock, which had flopped noiselessly off the wall and was now walking away in a dignified manner to the right. They stopped all three and looked at it, wondering if it would honour them by spreading its tail. But it refused.

"Oh, look!" cried Margaret suddenly. And walking along the terrace in an even slower and more dignified manner than the peacock Gerald perceived a large short-haired grey cat. When it came up to them, it stopped, looked up with its great round moon of a face and proceeded to open and shut its mouth twice without making any sound. Sukie laughed.

"Somebody really ought to teach that cat to mew!" she said; and Margaret stole a glance at Gerald. He was approaching the crucial test — how would he pass it? He began to stammer a little.

"B-b-ut you can't have a cat like that!"

"What do you mean?" said Sukie. "Why not?"

"He matches the house!" Margaret laughed and her eyes shone a little.

"Wait a minute!" said Gerald. He stooped to the cat and put his hands beneath its chest, then, lifting it up from the ground, he allowed its body to slide forward

through his fingers, so that its front paws reached the ground, just after the hind ones had slipped out of them.

"I thought so!" he said, and he turned to the ladies. "He pours out!" he exclaimed triumphantly, "I felt sure he would somehow, after that peacock."

"Yes," said Margaret, "he's too good-natured. He'll let anyone do anything they like with him! I'm always afraid it'll get him into trouble some day."

"Trouble!" exclaimed Gerald. He looked round him. "It's hard to imagine him getting into any trouble in a place like this!"

He waited for them to explain, but neither of them said anything, and Gerald had a strong feeling that they were not desirous of continuing the subject. Later on, when he was alone with Susan Holmes, he learnt from her that there was an Experimental Station for Poison Gas less than three miles away, which used up two animals a day and was not too scrupulous about the way in which it came by them.

He began stroking the cat, which purred and rubbed its head affably against his knuckles.

"What breed is it?" he asked. "Is it half-Persian?"

"No," replied Margaret. "It's rather an unusual kind. Not many people have heard of it — a British Blue." Gerald continued to stroke the beautifully sleek fur and to watch the tail waving gently to and fro.

"Margaret," said Sukie suddenly, "the man appreciates Merlin. He must be quite intelligent."

It seemed to Gerald that he had never had a higher compliment paid him. He laughed, but then grew suddenly serious:

"Merlin!" he said, "pardon me, but did I understand you to say 'Merlin?' But of course! He couldn't possibly have any other name!" Margaret laughed at him. He really was being extraordinarily silly. But she had realised now that, like Nestor at the front door, he was silly because he was happy. She tucked the cat under her arm, and they all went indoors.

"Well," said Lady Hudson, as they sat down to dinner, "what time did you leave Loomfield?"

"I suppose it must have been twelve-o-clock this morning, Lady Hudson," replied Gerald, "but it really seems to me more like the middle of last week — or last year for that matter!" And the moment he had spoken, he had a curious feeling that Susan Holmes would have liked to wag an admonishing finger at him.

CHAPTER LI

Gerald did not rush away from Klosters, as he had intended. He felt so immediately and entirely at peace in the place that, once his hostess had made it clear to him that he was welcome, day followed day almost without his noticing it. Lady Hudson herself thought little enough of any extra burden which the hospitality might cast on her, when she placed it beside the benefit of a congenial companion for Margaret — someone calculated to help reawaken her old interests and enthusiasms. For she was growing more anxious about her stepdaughter every week.

Gerald was sorry when Susan Holmes departed for town one Monday morning. It was not only that he liked her, but he had reached by that time the

precarious level of happiness at which a man dreads any change — above all, any personal change. He had enjoyed wandering about with the two women and watching their friendship; he had enjoyed the common appreciation of the other's personality which he seemed to share with each of them separately; and now this was over and would probably never happen again. He doubted whether Margaret and he could keep up, alone, the same mood of happy irresponsible companionship. They would have too little in common — or was it too much?

It was hard to say. They were peculiarly placed in that both of them, during those few days were in the placid, yet half-bewildered state of mind of a person awakening from a bad dream. It was as if one were lying still on one's back, snug and warm in bed, surrendering to a pleasantly incoherent reverie, and wishing neither to fall asleep again, nor to get up. The chief desire of a person in this condition is the desire not to disturb the status quo. And this was in fact what they felt. But neither of them realised how closely akin the other's experience was to his own.

Margaret, when she recollected some of the things which she had said to John in the course of the last two or three months, could hardly believe it was true. The annoyance which had prompted them and the increasing sense of estrangement which had prompted the annoyance seemed now so utterly causeless. And on two or three occasions the thing which brought this home to her most tellingly was, oddly enough, a remark of Gerald's. He would say something, express some opinion or feeling, in which she readily concurred. And no sooner had she done so than she realised that, if John had made that same remark (as he very well might have done), it would have made her feel estranged from him and, perhaps, angry. For instance, the day after Susan left, going on some errand for Lady Hudson they passed several cottages, which had been bought by town people and done up in an 'old world' style for residential or week-end purposes. There were in fact nearly as many people of this kind in the village as there were farm-labourers. More of the land went out of cultivation every year, farmers were tumbling over each other in their efforts to sell it as building-plots, and the farm-houses themselves were occupied almost without exception by middle-class rentiers, who took an aesthetic rather than a practical interest in the business of farming. The farmer himself generally lived in a cottage on his own estate. Of the smaller cottages, those which had not been thus bought up by urban intruders were in many cases falling unobtrusively to pieces for the want of twenty pounds to spend on them. Gerald said it gave him an oppressive feeling to think of the village people being crowded out of their cottages into the towns, because they could not get a living out of the land, while the cottages themselves were occupied by refined ladies, who bought with money that came from Argentina tramways or Chicago tinned meat concerns the Liberty curtains with which they adorned the latticed windows.

Margaret agreed readily — and then suddenly realised with a pang that, if John had said this, she would almost certainly have been annoyed; she would have accused him in her heart of worrying unnecessarily and spoiling their peace. She really could not think how she had fallen into that habit of getting annoyed with John whenever he took anything seriously to heart; and she began to wonder how he had put up with it as patiently as he had.

The next evening they went together to a little variety-concert in the village hall. It had been got up by one particular clique, resident rather than native, which happened to be cursed with a decidedly vulgar taste; so that most of the jokes in the comic items turned on veiled suggestions of fornication — marital and otherwise — and this in spite of the fact that it was primarily a children's entertainment. It was surprising, too, that all the children roared with laughter and clapped their hands at the right moments. Once again Gerald remarked gloomily as they came away, how depressing it was to think that, for all these children, their first introduction to the great mystery was — this! Margaret agreed with him. And then, as before, she misdoubted what her attitude might have been, if John had ventured to make the same remark to her.

Both of them walked back to Klosters after the concert in silence, and Margaret, when she got up to her room, sat down and wrote John a little note before she went to bed.

> Dearest John,
>
> This is just to tell you how lovely the weather is here and how much better she is feeling. She really will be quite different when she comes back next week. I know it. No more, because if I wrote anything longer than a note, it would not be shorter than a book. I do hope you will have a successful class on Thursday.
>
> Gerald Marston will stay on over the Garden Party. He seems to like it here.
>
> Your
>
> Margaret.

She woke up next morning, feeling happier than she had done for a very long time. It promised perfect weather, too, and at breakfast it was she herself who suggested that they should all go for an excursion to see the Church in a neighbouring village.

"But it's polling-day!" objected Lady Hudson.

"Good heavens!" said Gerald. "So it is! I had completely forgotten."

"I had forgotten, too!" said Margaret, "but I don't see that it need make any difference. We can look in and vote on our way." But Lady Hudson excused herself nevertheless and, as Sir Otto was still away abroad, Gerald and Margaret set out alone on foot at about half-past-ten.

They walked on in silence. Margaret, who knew the walk well, began to quietly drink in the familiar impressions, dwelling on each one lovingly as it came to her. There was a faint haze between the earth and the sky, which seemed to catch the sunlight and embody it, so that the ghost of solid gold was everywhere, and every colour which met the gaze was a burnished colour. Above all, the ripening corn seemed as if it had absorbed more of this ghostly gold than it could carry, and was now giving back the surplus to the trunks and heavy leaves of the trees. Margaret, feeling her spirit expand and deepen into the golden light and spread out with it over the earth, grew calmer and calmer, happier and happier, with every moment of the day.

It was nearly two o'clock when they reached their village and after some luncheon, wandered along to the church, to experience together the cool dignity of the little Norman porch which they had come to see. In the tympanum of the arch over the door there was an almost obliterated relief, crude as a child's drawing, which was supposed, Margaret said, to represent St. Michael transfixing the dragon with his sword.

After they had spent some time in the empty building, they came out into the sun and found out a shady corner of the churchyard where they lay for a long time looking up at the tower. Margaret began idly examining a wild flower and, in doing so, gradually realised that the whole of the rich loam above the graves was alive with those secret little plants, that have tiny close leaves of a darker green than usual, and flowers tinier still. The wealth of detailed form crowded into the small space gave a sort of fairy atmosphere to the churchyard, which increased her sense of well-being. Soon she leaned back and began watching from under her broad hat-brim a group of swallows darting to and fro about the tower of the little church. The contrast between their swift swooping curves and the immovable pillar of masonry in the midst seemed to ring out some joyous secret that lurked in the latter's form. So far from emphasising the weight of the stone, they seemed to give it lightness, an upward spring, such as the serpents of Mercury's Caduceus impart to the winged rod around which they twist.

She turned and pointed this out to Gerald, who was lying back with his eyes half closed, blinking sleepily at the leaves between him and the sky. He struggled into a sitting posture and laughed when she said it was a shame to disturb him. Then he looked long and earnestly at the tower, till he could see what she meant.

"It's like a queen," he said at last, "with her attendant maidens busy about her robes."

But Margaret had seen by this time — that there was another reason for the apparent lightness — the almost floating appearance — of the tower, which had given her such a strange impulse of joy. Now that the afternoon was drawing on, the solid golden light did not, it seemed, stop short at the surface of the rain-eaten old limestone, but entered right into it, leavening it, working within it, obliterating its corners and making it seem no more than a denser part of the quivering blue-gold behind it.

"Is it an accident," she said absently, "that the word 'light' has the two meanings?" And she tried once more to explain something of what she had seen. This time Gerald did not attempt to add anything of his own; but he made it plain by the two or three questions which he put that he was eager to hear everything on this subject that she had to say.

At last they rose and walked slowly across the fields to another village about a mile and a half away, from which one could easily get back to Klosters by bus. Here they had tea under a huge acacia tree in an old inn-garden, whose lawn sloped down to one of the few Cotswold rivers — a little winding stream it was, that hardly deserved the name, but swift-rippling and wonderfully clear. Every hour that passed, the day, and these two human beings with it, seemed to get quieter and quieter; and yet, the quieter they grew, the more, in a mysterious way, did they seem to become awake. Margaret could remember many evenings of the same sort, both

in England and elsewhere, loaded with beauty and peace; yet the distant background of these memories enriched rather than dulled the present moment. Gerald, on the contrary, could remember few, so that he at length began to feel, along with the extraordinary tranquillity, a kind of agitation, an agitation that was partly suppressed excitement, and partly a pathetic horror of mutability.

By now the haze had quite cleared from the air, which hung still and bright and cooler than it had been all day. Somewhere in the near distance children were shouting and laughing at their games. There was no other sound in the garden. And then suddenly the urgent blare of a steam-organ, playing rapidly through the chorus of a popular tune, broke up the stillness — but not the spell; which was so extraordinarily strong, that Margaret had hardly begun to think about the noise, in a sense had hardly noticed it, when Gerald at last suggested that they might go and see what was toward. They went. On the village green they found a fair, with swings, cocoanut-shies, and roundabouts, all set out in readiness for the evening. The proprietor had just started his engines going, and a few clients, mostly children, were already revolving on the prancing wooden horses. They walked about the green and between the tents and waggons and crowded stalls, and noticed the gaily-painted ornamental woodwork on the caravans, which, in spite of its Brummagem origin, blossomed occasionally into carven fruit-clusters and extravagant gargoyle faces. To Margaret the bright gim-crackery conveyed its own delicate poetry, and when they came back to the roundabout, which by now was three parts filled with riders, she stood and took her fill contentedly of the brilliant red and yellow stripes on its canvas awning and the saucy little green pennon on top.

Suddenly Gerald caught her arm in quite a tight grip and pointed at the turning platform:

“What is it?”

“Look!” he cried, “oh, look! Wait till he comes round again — look! there! Oh, you missed him! Between the little boy with a red cap and the girl in blue!” (Gerald was almost crying with anxiety) “Look! there! — the man that takes the money!”

This time Margaret did see what he was pointing at. Near the outer edge of the circular platform stood a young man in a tilted bowler hat. He was leaning back against some support, his legs easily crossed, a cigarette in his mouth, and an expression on his face of absolutely sublime nonchalance. Margaret laughed. The inclined sublimity sped past again.

“What is he leaning on?” she asked.

“But that’s the whole point!” gasped out Gerald, “he’s not leaning on anything! He’s leaning on centrifugal force!” Again she looked. It was quite true; the supercilious youth was actually leaning back at an angle of something like sixty degrees on nothing whatever. She turned suddenly to Gerald. They smiled.

Gerald Marston remembered that smile for years afterwards, indeed for his whole life. There was one other smile, and one only, which had given him the same sense of carrying across, like the lightning flash, vast, gathering worlds of unspoken intimacy. And the other time it had been a stranger’s. After going for many months without hearing good music, he had found himself one evening in a crowded London concert hall. The orchestra had just finished playing a Beethoven Symphony and Gerald, in the agony of delight and reverence which followed its conclusion, had

failed to consult his programme concerning the next item. Consequently he was taken by surprise when a lusty bass suddenly started into one of Handel's most jovial jumping arias. The breaking in on him of this fresh world of delight, together with the something funny which he always found in Handel's arias, had caused his lips to break involuntarily into a peculiar mixed smile. And looking up with that smile still on them, he had accidentally met the eye of a strange gentleman, whose lips had immediately broken into the very same enigmatic smile as his own, after which momentary signal the two had looked away from one another — for ever.

"Come on!" he cried excitedly, as the roundabout came gradually to a standstill, and the children began dragging themselves reluctantly from their seats. They climbed up on to two horses and after a time, to the accompaniment of hideous distorted whoops from the steam whistle, the thing began to revolve. There is a sort of summer-evening happiness, which comes without rime or reason and goes as unaccountedly. It had descended on Gerald at that moment during tea, when he heard the children's voices in the distance, and now it was surging up in him again, an uncontrollable ocean. He looked about him. The light was clear, clear, clear; and his brain was clear, clear, clear. He would have liked to shout at the top of his voice, and yet he also took an especial pleasure in compressing these paroxysms of joy secretly and silently within himself. He seemed to be conscious of every single minute sensation, and of precisely how much he was enjoying it. He enjoyed the touch of the breeze on his eyeballs, he enjoyed the cool, smooth, fat feel of the twisted brass pole in his hand, he enjoyed the rhythmic rise and fall of his wooden steed beneath him, he enjoyed the leaning toward the centre, and the giggling girls in front of him with their summer frocks and pretty legs. He was proudly conscious of how right and proper it was that his own horse should be *outside* Margaret's, so that he was, so to say, *protecting* her, as she rose and fell serenely beside him in her simple white dress. And when, as he whirled past, he happened to notice a slight movement among the mirrors on the front face of the gaudy central pillar, and looking sharply again next time round was just in time to see a little tin figure of a Hindoo gentleman, whose jointless arm actually beat *Bim Bom* on his tympanum in time to the music every ten or twelve bars — when he noticed this and, as they again rushed past, pointed it out speechlessly to Margaret, at that moment Gerald would very willingly have chanted his *Nunc Dimittis* and perished.

"Oh, we *must* stay a little longer!" he cried, as they jumped down off the steep wooden step. "Can we? Would you like to? It'll be simply marvellous after dark!" She found a telephone in the village, and later they went to the inn and sitting in a stuffy little parlour, consumed bread and butter, two pints of beer, and ham like nothing on earth, under the benign gaze of King Edward VII, who hung on the wall with a pathetically jaunty grey top hat stuck to the side of his Humpty Dumpty head and a sporty case of field-glasses slung across his enormous corporation. Afterwards they wandered over to a large marquee, which the showmen had been erecting in a corner of the green. It was a real circus; and they soon discovered that it was the central feature of the fair; for little buses of all sizes and shapes were already beginning to arrive from the market-town and the neighbouring villages, and to deposit their chattering loads of humanity at the tent-entrance. They stood for some time watching the good-natured crowd jostle one another past the pay-counters.

“I’ve never been to one!” said Gerald at last in a sort of pleading tone, as if Margaret were his governess. And before long they too had passed the pay-desk and plunged into that curious still atmosphere, neither indoors nor out-of-doors, which is peculiar to the insides of tents, into a hollow yellow light, and into an odour which, at first impinging like a single solid element, gradually revealed itself to be penetrable, and compounded of human perspiration, animal flesh, sawdust, and Crabtree’s Corking Caramels.

Margaret’s eye roved eagerly round the tent, and she began vividly to recollect numerous circuses to which her father had taken her, when she was a child — sometimes alone, sometimes along with enormous chocolate-eating parties of Aunts and Uncles and Cousins. This was a small one, but it had the proper professional look, and she found herself feeling quite impatient for it to begin. There were of course the usual preliminaries to be got through, thigh-slapping acrobats, an appallingly obedient set of performing dogs, and a clown with a voice like a nutmeg-grater. Then came the tight-rope walker, stepping delicately with his long light pole across the whole diameter of the ring. She watched him, thrilling all through to his balance, as he inclined sinuously first to one side and then to the other, describing wide arcs with the end of the pole, but always regaining at last the proud vertical, and finally standing there as upright and steady as the church-tower itself, to take the applause of the audience. She saw Gerald turning to her, as the funambulo climbed down his ladder, and was rather afraid lest he should, by making some flippant comment, break the spell. But he only said in a much quieter and more serious voice than before:

“Wasn’t that simply lovely?” And then she was delighted to see that he had shared it.

After this the horses began to come on, and the clown with a voice like a nutmeg-grater, who had been up to now the dominating figure, gave way to the ringmaster, a fine, handsome man, who stood in the midst, cracked his whip, and shouted words of command and exhortation, and occasionally of praise, to the members of his troupe. A circus-girl, in a white bodice, white tights, and a short, frizzed white ballet-skirt galloped in on a magnificent chestnut horse which tore round the ring, eating up the ground in front of him and swallowing it down with his hoofs. Gradually she rose up on the creature’s back until she stood full length and scattered paper roses to the front row of her audience. A black paper hoop was let down in front of her: crash! She was through it, and careering round the ring as smiling and serene as ever. At last she departed at full gallop through the entrance, kissing her hand gaily to the roar of applause which arose behind her. Margaret and Gerald looked at one another for a moment, and this time said nothing.

A riderless horse cantered in. There was a shout of laughter from the ring, which gradually spread to the audience and rippled through the whole tent. Margaret looked again. The horse was not riderless. Clinging desperately on to its flank was a thing that looked at first like a bundle of filthy rags, but gradually resolved itself into a broken-down, red-nosed, hiccuping human being who shouted miserably for help — a typical product of two thousand years of Christendom, the kind of object that may be seen in the Tower Bridge Road at ten o’clock on any

Saturday night or waiting outside the casual ward of a country market-town at six in the evening.

“Oh damn!” murmured Gerald disgustedly.

Margaret looked at him in surprise, and then, suddenly remembering that he had never been to a circus before, she looked away again and smiled.

“What on earth’s happening?” said Gerald miserably. “Can’t they get him off again?” By this time, however, the luckless man had dragged himself up somehow on to the horse’s back and now, amid louder roars of laughter than ever, still clinging on like grim death to the terrified creature’s mane, was apparently trying to kick off his great hobnailed boots. Was he mad? The horse appeared to think so; at any rate it had increased its half-contemptuous canter to a gallop and was tearing round and round the ring like fire. At last the involuntary rider succeeded in what he had been trying to do and even, to Gerald’s amazement, began to struggle out of his coat. Underneath this was another coat and waistcoat, and another waistcoat still beneath that. The man seemed to be sitting a little more confidently on the horse’s back. Shirts began to be peeled off, grey shirts, striped shirts, red shirts, one after another, until at last he had nothing over his chest but a single white garment. He knelt on his horse on both knees, then on one knee, and, yes, actually began to remove innumerable pairs of trousers until, flinging the last pair recklessly to the winds, he rose and stood firm as a rock in his slim white tights and white cotton vest, swaying to the rippling rhythm of the galloping beast and only sloping easily to the centre to keep himself from being flung off at a tangent, as it tore on faster than ever three times round the ring and out at the entrance. The turn was over. Margaret looked at Gerald and receiving no answering look, began to examine his profile rather curiously. She thought she saw his lips moving, but could not make out what sounds they were forming. He still continued to stare vacantly at the ring, whispering to himself, very softly and caressingly as if he loved even the feel of the words on his lips: Oh, you beauty! you beauty! Oh you beauty!

When they came out of the tent, the velvety blackness of the summer night was slashed everywhere with yellow gas-flares, striving furiously into the dark. Laughing groups swung past them arm in arm, blowing squeaky toys or flinging confetti, some of which was aimed at Gerald and Margaret. Gerald’s exaltation had brought a strange warmth to the region of his heart, which made him see a friend’s face in every face. He would have liked to take Margaret’s arm, and even to kiss her, but he was afraid of spoiling everything. “I am always afraid!” he thought to himself vaguely.

She walked on beside him very tired and desirous of sleep, and when they were sitting side by side in the jolting bus that took them home to Klosters, had some difficulty in keeping her head from slipping down on to his shoulder. Soon, however, her attention was taken up by the couple on the seat opposite to them, a middle-aged man and a demure little girl, of about three years old. She was one of those rare little girls, who cannot say or look anything wrong or make any gesture amiss. She had a miniature suitcase on her knee, a cheap papier maché affair which had evidently been newly purchased at the fair, and was now absorbing her whole attention. After opening and closing it carefully several times, and examining the fastenings, she folded up some dolls’ clothes, which she had with her and put them

one by one carefully away into the case, looking up at her companion with a solemn air of enquiry after each object was laid to rest. When she had put away all the dolls' clothes and carefully smoothed them down with both hands, she began to look about her for something else to put in and, in doing so, accidentally caught Margaret's eye. Margaret tried to think of something else to give her to put in the case, but found she had nothing suitable. She smiled at the little girl, who looked back at her for a long time with great solemnity and for some while after that made no further movement. But then she began once more to look stealthily about her and at last, finding nothing else, took out her own tiny handkerchief, which was still folded from the laundry, unfolded it, folded it up again, laid it in the case, smoothed it carefully down with her fingers and then again looked enquiringly up at her father, who smiled awkwardly down at her, and from him back to Margaret, who also smiled. She looked at Gerald, to see if he had noticed anything of it, but as he did not turn his head, she supposed he was abstracted, and continued to watch the little girl with the same fascination as before. As a matter of fact he had carefully refrained from turning his head, because he knew his eyes were wet and that they would glisten in the dim light inside the bus in a ridiculous way.

"Did you see the little girl?" she asked him, as soon as the bus had deposited them at the gate of Klosters and they were on their way up the drive.

"Did I see her!"

"The suitcase!" said Margaret, and not for years had Gerald been happier and at the same time more helplessly and hopelessly conscious if mutability than he was at that moment, in order to conceal his emotion, he pretended an exaggerated contempt.

"I expect you would have preferred it to be a basket or a 'porringer' — something nice and arty!" he said savagely. She laughed deliciously:

"But I <u>hate</u> arty people!" she protested. He hardly knew what to do. If he had had a tail, he would have wagged it so hard that it would have come off.

"Don't tell me," he exclaimed in loud and aggressive tones, "that it is possible to live in a place like Klosters and <u>not</u> get arty!" She only laughed again. How different her whole state of mind was from that in which she had left Loomfield! The thought prompted her, when they said good night to one another, to press his hand a little harder than usual and thank him warmly for all his kindness. <u>His</u> kindness! He was amazed.

The next morning he found a hastily scribbled note from John waiting for him on the breakfast-table.

> "Streeter is in," wrote John. "We don't know the exact figures yet but there is no longer any doubt of the result. And it seems certain, too, that the party will get a majority. I can't tell you how excited I am. Gerald, I don't believe anyone has the remotest idea what it might mean if the bulk of the population were really to be relieved of economic pressure. Think of it! Leisure to know the Spirit — <u>for all</u>! Freedom to choose good or evil, and, above all, to find out which is which <u>by their own experience</u> — instead of just taking it all on

hearsay! Real freedom to love! No-one can foresee the enormous changes that may have begun from to-day.

No more now. I am writing Margaret by the same post. Don't forget what we said when you were here.

Yours ever,

John Trinder.

Gerald read this letter through three times and, at intervals during that day, found himself anxiously wondering whatever, in plain English, John Trinder might mean by 'freedom to love.'

END OF PART III