THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE

An Autohagiography

Subsequently re-Antichristened

THE CONFESSIONS OF ALEISTER CROWLEY

Volume One

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DEDICATION OF VOLUME ONE

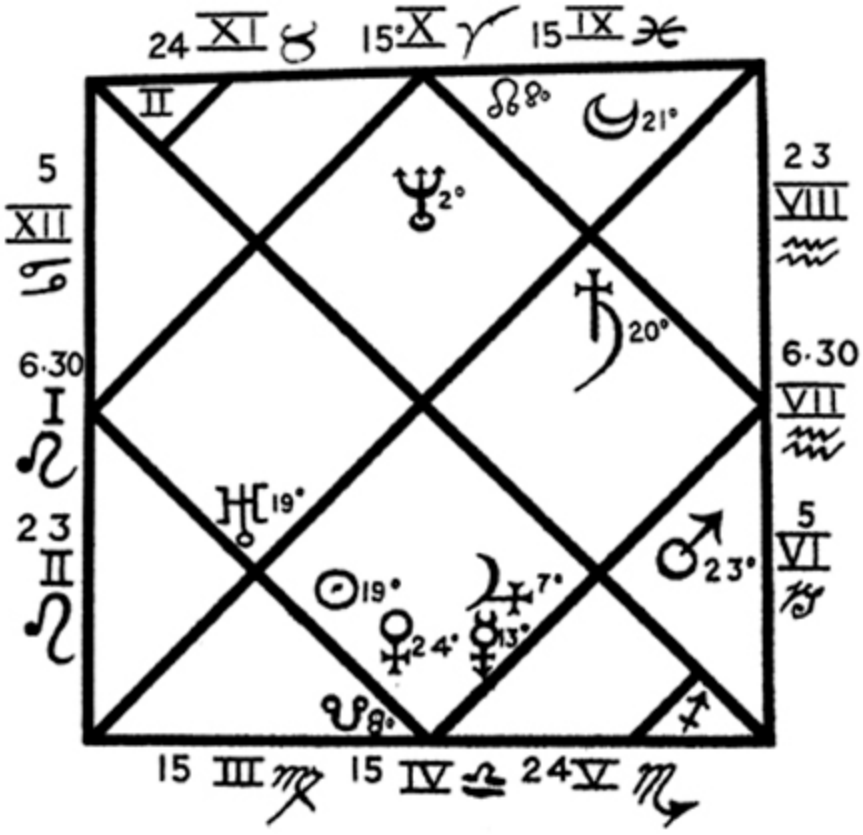
To Three Friends

J. W. N. SULLIVAN
who suggested this booklet

AUGUSTUS JOHN
who gave practical assistance

P. R. STEPHENSEN
who saw the point

The Figure Genethliacal
of
Edward Alexander Crowley.



PRELUDE

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

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

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

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

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

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

In writing the life of the average man, there is this fundamental difficulty, that the performance is futile and meaningless, even from the standpoint of the matter-of-fact philosopher; there is, that is to say, no artistic unity. In

the case of Aleister Crowley no such Boyg appeared on the hillside; for he himself regards his career as a definitely dramatic composition. It comes to a climax on April 8th, 9th and 10th, 1904 E.V. The slightest incident in the History of the whole universe appears to him as a preparation for that Event; and his subsequent life is merely the aftermath of that crisis.

On the other hand, however, there is the circumstance that his time has been spent in three very distinct manners: the Secret Way of the Initiate, the Path of Poetry and Philosophy, and the Open Sea of Romance and Adventure. It is indeed not unusual to find the first two, or the last two, elements in the molecule of a man: Byron exemplifies this, and Poe that. But it is rare indeed for so strenuous and out-of-doors a life to be associated with such profound devotion to the arts of the quietist; and in this particular instance all three careers are so full that posterity might well be excused for surmising that not one but several individuals were combined in a legend, or even for taking the next step and saying: This Aleister Crowley was not a man, or even a number of men; he is obviously a Solar Myth. Nor could he himself deny such an impeachment too brutally; for already, before he has attained the prime of life, his name is associated with fables not less fantastic than those which have thrown doubt upon the historicity of the Buddha. It should be the True Will of this book to make plain the truth about the man. Yet here again there is a lion in the way. The truth must be falsehood unless it be the whole truth; and the whole truth is partly inaccessible, partly unintelligible, partly incredible and partly unpublishable—that is, in any country where truth in itself is recognized as a dangerous explosive.

A further difficulty is introduced by the nature of the mind, and especially of the memory, of the man himself. We shall come to incidents which show that he is doubtful about clearly remembered circumstances, whether they belong to “eal life” or to dreams, and even that he has utterly forgotten things which no normal man could forget. He has, moreover, so completely overcome the illusion of time (in the sense used by the philosophers, from Lao-Tze and Plotinus to Kant and Whitehead) that he often finds it impossible to disentangle events as a sequence. He has so thoroughly referred phenomena to a single standard that they have lost their individual significance, just as when one has understood the word “cat,” the letters c a t have lost their own value and become mere arbitrary elements of an idea. Further: on reviewing one’s life in perspective the astronomical sequence ceases to be significant. Events rearrange themselves in an order outside time and space, just as in a picture there is no way of distinguishing at what point on the canvas the artist began to paint. Alas! it is impossible to make this a satisfactory book; hurrah! that furnishes the necessary stimulus; it becomes worth while to do it, and by Styx! it shall be done.

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

From the start my position was precarious. I was practically penniless, I had been betrayed in the most shameless and senseless way by practically everyone with whom I was in business relations, I had no means of access to any of the normal conveniences which are considered essential to people engaged in such tasks. On the top of this there sprang up a sudden whirlwind of wanton treachery and brainless persecution, so imbecile yet so violent as to throw even quite sensible people off their base. I ignored this and carried on, but almost immediately both I and one of my principal assistants were stricken down with lingering illness. I carried on. My assistant died1. I carried on. His death was the signal for a fresh outburst of venomous falsehoods. I carried on. The agitation resulted in my being exiled from Italy; through no accusation of any kind was, or could be, alleged against me. That meant that I was torn away from even the most elementary conveniences for writing this book. I carried on. At the moment of writing this paragraph everything in connection with the book is entirely in the air. I am carrying on.

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

In the later years of my life, as I have attained to some understanding of the unity behind the diverse phenomena of experience, and as the natural restriction of elasticity which comes with age has gained ground, it has be-

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

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

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

STANZA I

Edward Crowley,[1] the wealthy scion of a race of Quakers, was the father of a son born at 30 Clarendon Square, Leamington, Warwichshire,[2] on the 12th day of October,[3] 1875 E.V. between 11 and 12 at night. Leo was just rising at the time, as nearly as can be ascertained.[4] The branch of the family of Crowley to which this man belonged has been settled in England since Tudor times: in the days of Bad Queen Bess there was a Bishop Crowley, who wrote epigrams in the style of Marital. One of them—the only one I know—runs thus:

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

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

The Crowleys, are, however, of Celtic origin; the name O'Crowley is common in south-west Ireland, and the Breton family of de Quérouaille—which gave England a Duchess of Portsmouth—or de Kerval is of the same stock. Legend will have it that the then head of the family came to England with the Earl of Richmond and helped to make him King on Bosworth Field.

Edward Crowley was educated as an engineer, but never practised his profession[5]. He was devoted to religion and became a follower of John Nelson Darby, the founder of the "Plymouth Brethren". The fact reveals a stern logician; for the sect is characterized by refusal to compromise; it insists on the literal interpretation of the Bible as the exact words of the Holy Ghost.[6]

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

Her firstborn son, the aforesaid, was remarkable from the moment of his arrival. He bore on his body the three most important distinguishing marks of a Buddha. He was tongue-tied, and on the second day of his incarnation a

surgeon cut the fraenum linguae. He had also the characteristic membrane, which necessitated an operation for phimosis some three lustres6 later. Lastly, he had upon the centre of his heart four hairs curling from left to right in the exact form of a Swastika[7].

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

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

This baptism, by the way, though it never worried him, provided a peril to the soul of another. When his wife's conduct compelled him to insist upon her divorcing him—a formality as meaningless as their marriage—and she became insane shortly afterward, an eminent masochist named Colonel Gormley, R.A.M.C. (dead previously, then and since) lay in wait for her at the Asylum Gates to marry her. The trouble was that he included among his intellectual lacunae a devotion to the Romish superstition. He feared damnation if he married a divorced dipsomaniac with non-parva-partial dementia. The poor mollusc asked Crowley for details of his baptism. He wrote back that he had been baptised “in the name of the Holy Trinity”.

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

Crowley tried to help the wretched worm; but, alas, he remembered too well the formula: “I baptise thee Edward Alexander in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.” So the gallant colonel had to fork out for

a Dispensation from Rome. Crowley himself squandered a lot of cash in one way or another. But he never fell so far as to waste a farthing on the Three-Card trick, or the Three-God trick.

He has also the clearest visualization of some of the people who surrounded him in the first six years of his life, which were spent in Leamington and the neighborhood, which he has never revisited. In particular, there was an orange-coloured old lady named Miss Carey who used to bring him oranges. His first memory of speech is his remark. “Ca'ey, onange”;[8] this, however, is remembered because he was told of it later. But he is in full conscious memory of the dining-room of the house, its furniture and pictures, with their arrangement. He also remembers various country walks, one especially through green fields, in which a perambulator figures. The main street of Leamington, and the Leam with its weir—he has loved weirs ever since—Guy's Cliffe at Warwick, and the Castle with its terrace and the white peacocks: all these are as clear as if he had seen them last week. He recalls no other room in the house except his own bedroom, and that only because he “came to himself” one night to find a fire lighted, a steam kettle going, a strange woman present, an atmosphere of anxiety and a feeling of fever; for he had an attack of bronchitis.

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

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

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

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

One day he said something to his mother which elicited from her the curious anatomical assertion: “Ladies have no legs.” Shortly afterwards, when the Misses Cowper were at dinner with the family, he disappeared from his chair. There must have been some slight commotion on deck, leading to the

question of his whereabouts. But at that moment a still small voice came from beneath the table: “Mamma! Mamma! Sister Susan and Sister Emma are not ladies!”

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

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

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

The Universe was created by God 4004 B.C. The Bible, authorized version, was literally true, having been dictated by the Holy Ghost himself to scribes incapable of even clerical errors. King James' translators enjoyed an equal immunity. It was considered unusual— and therefore in doubtful taste—to appeal to the original texts. All other versions were regarded as inferior; the Revised Version in particular savoured of heresy. John Nelson Darby, the founder of the Plymouth Brethren, being a very famous biblical scholar, had been invited to sit on the committee and had refused on the ground that some of the other scholars were atheists.

The second coming of the Lord Jesus was confidently expected to occur at any moment.[9] So imminent was it that preparations for a distant future—such as signing a lease or insuring one's life—might he held to imply lack of confidence of the promise, “Behold I come quickly.”

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

One fine summer morning, at Redhill, the boy—now eight or nine—got tired of playing by himself in the garden. He came back to the house. It was strangely still and he got frightened. By some odd chance everybody was either out or upstairs. But he jumped to the conclusion that “the Lord had come,” and that he had been “left behind. It was an understood thing that there was no hope for people in this position.” Apart from the Second Advent, it was always possible to be saved up the very moment of death; but once the saints had been called up, the Day of Grace was finally over. Various alarums and excursions would take place as per the Apocalypse, and then would come the millennium, when Satan would be chained for a thousand years and Christ reign for that period over the Jews regathered in Jerusalem. The position of these Jews is not quite clear. They were not saved in the same sense as Christians had been, yet they were not damned. The millennium seems to have been thought of as a fulfilment of god's promise to Abraham; but apparently it had nothing to do with “eternal life”. However, even this modified beatitude as not open to Gentiles who had rejected Christ.

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

The lot of the saved, even on earth, was painted in the brightest colours. It was held that “all things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to His purpose”. Earthly life was regarded as an ordeal; this was a wicked world and the best thing that could happen to anyone was “to go to be with Christ, which is far better”. On the other hand, the unsaved went to the Lake of Fire and Brimstone which burneth for ever and ever. Edward Crowley used to give away tracts to strangers, besides distributing them by thousands through the post; he was also constantly preaching to vast crowds, all over the country. It was, indeed, the only logical occupation for a humane man who believed that even the noblest and best of mankind were doomed to eternal punishment. One card—a great favourite, as being peculiarly deadly —was headed “Poor Anne's Last Words”; the gist of her remarks appears to have been “Lost, lost, lost!” She had been a servant in the house of Edward Crowley the elder, and her dying delirium had made a deep impression upon the son of the house.

By the way, Edward Crowley possessed the power, as per Higgins, the professor in Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion, of telling instantly from a man's speech what part of the country he lived in. It was his hobby to make walking tours through every part of England, evangelizing in every town and village as he passed. He would engage likely strangers in conversation, diagnose and prescribe for their spiritual diseases, inscribe them in his Address

books, and correspond and send religious literature for years. At that time religion was the popular fad in England and few resented his ministrations. His widow continued the sending of tracts, etc. For years after his death.

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

1 — “the youngest” (1834-87).
2 — It has been remarked a strange coincidence that one small county should have given England her two greatest poets—for one must not forget Shakespeare (1550-1616).
3 — Presumably this is Nature's compensation for the Horror which blasted Mankind on that date in 1492.
4 — See the Horoscope.
5 — His son elicited this fact by questioning; curious, considering the dates.
6 — On the strength of a text in the book itself: the logic is thus of a peculiar order.
7 — There is a notable tuft of hair upon the forehead, similar to the mound of flesh there situated in the Buddhist legends. And numerous minor marks.
8 — He has never been able to pronounce “R” properly—like a Chinese.
9 — Much was made of the two appearances of “Jesus” after the Ascension. In the first, to Stephen, he was standing, in the second, to Paul, seated, at the right hand of God. Ergo, on the first occasion he was still ready to return at once; on the second, he had made up his mind to let things take their course to the bitter end, as per the Apocalypse. No one saw anything funny, or blasphemous, or even futile, in this doctrine!

STANZA II

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

Crowley remembers, as if he had seen it yesterday, the dining-room and the ceremony of family prayers after breakfast. He remembers the order in which the family and the servants sat. A chapter of the Bible was read, each person present taking a verse in turn. At four years old he could read perfectly well. The strange thing about this is not so much his precocity as the fact that he was much less interested in the biblical narratives than in the long Hebrew names. One of his father's favourite sermons was based on the fifth chapter of Genesis; long as the patriarchs lived, they all died in the end. From this he would argue that his hearers would die too; they had therefore better lose no time in making sure of heaven. But the interest of Alick was in the sound of the names themselves — Enoch, Arphaxad, Mahaleel. He often wonders whether this curious trait was symptomatic of his subsequent attainments in poetry, or whether it indicates the attraction which the Hebrew Qabbala was to have for him later on.

With regard to the question of Salvation, by the way, the theory of the exclusive Plymouth Brethren was peculiar, and somewhat trying to a logical mind. They held predestination as rigidly as Calvin, yet this nowise interfered with complete freewill. The crux was faith in Christ, apparently more or less intellectual, but, since “the devils also believe and tremble”, it had to be supplemented by a voluntary acceptance of Christ as one's personal saviour. This being so, the question arose whether Roman Catholics, Anglicans or even Nonconformists could possibly be saved. The general feeling seems to have been that it was impossible for anyone who was once actually saved to be lost, whatever he did.[1] But it was, of course, beyond human power to determine whether any given individual had or had not found salvation. This, however, was clear: that any teaching or acceptance of false doctrine must be met by excommunication. The leaders of the Brethren were necessarily profound Theologians. There being no authority of any kind, any brother soever might enunciate any doctrine soever at any time, and this anarchy had already resulted, before the opening of our story, in the division of the Brethren into two great sects: the Open and the Exclusive.

Philip Gosse, the father of Edmund Gosse, was a leader among the Open Brethren, who differed from the Exclusive Brethren, at first, only by tolerating, at the Lord's table, the presence of “Professed Christians” not definitely affiliated to themselves. Edmund Gosse has described his father's attitude in Father and Son. Much of what he wrote taxes the credulity of the reader. Such narrowness and bigotry as that of Philip Gosse seemed beyond belief. Yet Edward Crowley regarded Philip Gosse as likely to be damned for latitudinariansm! No one who loved the Lord Jesus in his heart could be so careless of his Saviour's honour as to “break bread”[2] with a man who might be holding unscriptural opinions.

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

Another early reminiscence. On February 29th, 1808, Alick was taken to see the dead body of his sister, Grace Mary Elizabeth,[3] who had only lived five hours. The incident made a curious impression on him. He did not see why he should be disturbed so uselessly. He couldn't do any good; the child was dead; it was none of his business. This attitude continued through his life. He has never attended any funeral[4] But that of his father, which he did not mind doing, as he felt himself to be the real centre of interest. But when others have died, though in two cases at least his heart was torn as if by a wild beast, and his life actually blighted for months and years by the catastrophe, he has always turned away from the necrological facts and the customary orgies. It may be that he has a deep-seated innate conviction that the connection of a person with his body is purely symbolic. But there is also the feeling that the fact of death destroys all possible interest; the disaster is irreparable, it should be forgotten as soon as possible. He would not even join the search party after the Kang Chen Janga accident. What object was there in digging frozen corpses from under an avalanche? Dead bodies themselves do not repel him; he is as interested in dissecting rooms as in anything else. When he met the dead body of Consul Litton, he turned back, knowing the man was dead. But when the corpse was brought to Tengyueh, he assisted unflinchingly at the inquiry, because in this instance there was an object in ascertaining the cause of death.

One other group of incidents of early childhood. The family went to the west of England for the summer. Alick remembers Monmouth, or rather Monmouth Castle. It is curious that, in the act of remembering this for the purpose of this book, he was obsessed by the idea that there could not be such a place as Monmouth; the name seemed fantastic. It was confused in his mind with “Monster” and “Mammoth”, and it was some hours before he could convince himself of its reality. He remembers staying in a farm some distance from the road and has a very vague impression of becoming acquainted with such animals as ducks and pigs. Much more clearly arises the vision of himself on a pony with people walking each side. He remembers falling off, starting to yell and being carried up to the house by the frightened governess (or whoever it was) in charge of him. This event had a tragic result. He ought to have been put back on the pony and made to conquer his fears. As it was, he has never been able to feel at home on horseback, though he has ridden thousands of miles, many of them over really dangerous country.

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

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

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

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

It is very important to mention that the mind of the child was almost abnormally normal. He showed no tendency to see visions, as even commonplace children often do. The Bible was his only book at this period; but neither the narrative nor the poetry made any deep impression on him. He was fascinated by the mysteriously prophetic passages, especially those in Revelation. The Christianity in his home was entirely pleasant to him, and yet his sympathies were with the opponents of heaven. He suspects obscurely that this was partly an instinctive love of terrors. The Elders and the harps seemed tame. He preferred the Dragon, the False Prophet, the Beast and the Scarlet Woman, as being more exciting. He revelled in the descriptions of torment. One may suspect, moreover, a strain of congenital masochism. He liked to imagine himself in agony; in particular, he liked to identify himself with the Beast whose number is the number of a man, six hundred and three score six. One can only conjecture that it was the mystery of the number which determined this childish choice.

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

The congenital masochism of which we have spoken demands further investigation. All his life he has been almost unduly sensitive to pain, physical, mental and moral. There is no perversion in him which makes it enjoyable, yet the phantasy of desiring to be hurt has persisted in his waking imagination, though it never manifests itself in his dreams. It is probable that these peculiarities are connected with certain curious anatomical facts. While his

masculinity is above the normal, both physiologically and as witnessed by his powerful growth of beard, he has certain well-marked feminine characteristics. Not only are his limbs as slight and graceful as a girl's but his breasts are developed to quite abnormal degree. There is thus a sort of hermaphroditism in his physical structure; and this is naturally expressed in his mind. But whereas, in most similar cases, the feminine qualities appear at the expense of manhood, in him they are added to a perfectly normal masculine type. The principal effect has been to enable him to understand the psychology of women, to look at any theory with comprehensive and impartial eyes, and to endow him with maternal instincts on spiritual planes. He has thus been able to beat the women he has met at their own game and emerge from the battle of sex triumphant and scatheless. He has been able to philosophize about nature from the standpoint of a complete human being; certain phenomena will always be unintelligible to men as such, others, to women as such. He, by being both at once, has been able to formulate a view of existence which combines the positive and the negative, the active and the passive, in a single identical equation. Finally, intensely as the savage male passion to create has inflamed him, it has been modified by the gentleness and conservatism of womanhood. Again and again, in the course of this history, we shall find his actions determined by this dual structure. Similar types have no doubt existed previously, but none such has been studied. Only in the light of Weininger and Freud[5] is it possible to select and interpret the phenomena. The present investigation should be of extraordinary ethical value, for it must be a rare circumstance that a subject with such abnormal qualities so clearly marked should have trained himself to intimate self-analysis and kept an almost daily record of his life and work extending over nearly a quarter of a century.[6]

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

2 — i.e. sit at the communion-table.

3 — *What* a name!

4 — With one notable exception, at which he officiated.

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

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

STANZA III

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

Alick remembers a lady calling at the house for a subscription in aid of Our Soldiers in Egypt. Edward Crowley browbeat and bullied her into tears with a Philippic on “bibles and brandy”. He was, however, bitterly opposed to the Blue Ribbon Army. He said that abstainers were likely to rely on good works to get to heaven and thus fail to realize their need of Jesus. He preached one Sunday in the town hall, saying, “I would rather preach to a thousand drunkards than a thousand T-totallers.” They retorted by accusing him of being connected with “Crowley's Ales”. He replied that he had been an abstainer for nineteen years, during which he had shares in a brewery. He had now ceased to abstain for some time, but all his money was invested in a waterworks.[1]

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

They had to cross a barrage of arrows and peas and ultimately got so scared that they found a roundabout way.

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

There has always been something suggesting the oriental — Chinese or ancient Egyptian — in Alick's personal appearance. As his mother at school had been called “the little Chinese girl”, so his daughter, Lola Zaza, has the Mongolian physiognomy even more pronounced. His thought follows this indication. He has never been able to sympathize with any European religion or philosophy; and of Jewish or Mohammedan thought he has assimilated only the mysticism of the Qabbalists and the Sufis. Even Hindu psychology, thoroughly as he studied it, never satisfied him wholly. As will be seen, Buddhism itself failed to win his devotion. But he found himself instantly at home with the Yi King and the writings of Lao-Tze. Strangely enough, Egyptian symbolism and magical practice made an equal appeal; incompatible as these two systems appear on the surface, the one being atheistic, anarchistic and quietistic, the other theistic, hierarchical and active. Even at this period the East called to him. There is one very significant episode. In some history of the Indian Mutiny was the portrait of Nana Sahib, a proud, fierce, cruel, sensual profile. It was his ideal of beauty. He hated to believe that Nana Sahib had been caught and killed. He wanted to find Nana Sahib, to become his ally, share in torturing prisoners, and yet to suffer at his hands. When Gregor Grant was pretending to be Hyder Ali, and himself Tipu Sahib, he once asked his cousin, “Be cruel to me.”

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

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

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

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

The boy's intellect was amazingly precocious. It must have been very shortly after the move to Redhill that a tailor named Hemming came from London to make new clothes for his father. Being a “brother”, he was a guest in the house. He offered to teach Alick chess and succeeded only too well, for he lost every game after the first. The boy recalls the method perfectly. It was to catch a developed bishop by attacking it with pawns. (He actually invented the Tarrasch Trap in the Ruy Lopez before he ever read a book on chess.) This wrung from his bewildered teacher the exclamation, “Very judicious with his pawns is your son, Mrs. Crowley!”

As a matter of fact, there must have been more than this in it. Alick had assuredly a special aptitude for the game; for he never met his master till one fatal day in 1895, when W. V. Naish, the President of the C.U.Ch.C.,

took the “fresher” who had beaten him to Peterhouse, the abode of Mr. H. E. Atkins, since seven times amateur champion of England and still a formidable figure in the Masters' Tournament.

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

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

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

A letter dating from his early school life at Cambridge:
Dear Papa & Mama,

For my holiday work prize I have got a splendid knife, 2 blades, a saw, a screwdriver, a thing to pull out thorns, another to get stones out of horse's shoes, another I don't know what for, a leather piercer, a gimlet & a corkscrew and name plate. It is nicol plated in some parts, but the handle is ivory. The asphalt[2] gave way near the middle. We were nearly blown hup bu the hoiler[3] a little while ago, no jokes. We had a ½ holiday given us on Friday. Please send me a little money for fireworks. Send up my bankbook by the 1st please. I am awfully well, thank you! I have joined a sort of band of chaps, who are with God's blessing, going to try & help others & speak to them about their souls. I will write soon again. Write quick please.

Good bye
Yr loving son
Alec

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

But to this day he has never read the book! For certain lines of study he had a profound, instinctive and ineradicable aversion. Natural History, in any form, is one of these. It is hard to suggest a reason. Did he dislike to analyse beauty? Did he feel that certain subjects were unimportant, led to nothing that he wanted to explore? However this may be, he used to make up his mind with absolute finality as to whether he would or would not take some particular course. If he would, be panted after it like the hart after the water-brooks; if no, nothing would persuade him to waste an hour on it.

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

I

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

II

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

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

The former has left numerous traces, chiefly of a visual character; the Grand Hotel in Paris, Lucerne and the Lion, William Tell, the Bears at Berne, the Rigi, the Staubbach, Trummelbach and Giessbach, Basle and the Rhine, the Dance of Death. Two points only concern us: he objected violently to being taken out in the cold morning to see the sunrise from a platform on the Rigi-Kulm and to illumination of a waterfall by coloured lights. He felt acutely that nature should be allowed to go her own way and he his! There was

plenty of beauty in the world; why make oneself uncomfortable in order to see an extra? Also, you can't improve a waterfall by stage-craft!

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

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

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

A frequent guest at The Grange was an old gentleman named Sherrall, whose vice was Castor Oil. Edward Crowley was in the habit of holding “Tea Meetings”; a score or so of people would be invited to what is vulgarly known as a blow-out, and when the physical animal was satisfied, there would be a debauch of spiritual edification. On the mahogany table in the dining-room, extended to its fullest length, would stand two silver urns of tea. Into one of these young Alick emptied Mr. Sherrall's Caster Oil. So far, so good. The point is this, that the people served from that urn were too polite or over-awed either to call the attention of their hostess or to abstain from the accursed beverage. The only precaution necessary was to prevent that lady herself from seeing one of the doctored cups.

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

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

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

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

Practically all boys are born with the aristocratic spirit.[4] In most cases they are broken down, partly by bullying, partly by experience. In the case of Alick, he was the only son of a father who was naturally a leader of men. In him, therefore, this spirit grew unchecked. He knew no superior but his father; and though that father ostentatiously avoided assuming authority over the other Brethren, it was, of course, none the less there. The boy seems to have despised from the first the absence of hierarchy among the Brethren, though at the same time they formed the most exclusive body on earth, being the only people that were going to heaven. There is thus an extreme psychological contradiction inherent in the situation. It is improbable that Alick was aware at the time of the real feelings which must have been implanted in him by this environment; but the main result was undoubtedly to stimulate his pride and ambition in a most unwholesome (?) degree. His social and financial position, the obvious envy of his associates, his undoubted personal prowess, physical and intellectual, all combined to make it

impossible for him to be satisfied to take any place in the world but the top. The Plymouth Brethren refused to take any part in politics. Among them, the peer and the peasant met theoretically as equals, so that the social system of England was simply ignored. The boy could not aspire to become prime minister or even king; he was already apart from and beyond all that. It will be seen that as soon as he arrived at an age where ambitions are compelled to assume concrete form, his position became extremely difficult. The earth was not big enough to hold him.

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

On March 5th, 1887, Edward Crowley died. The course of the disease had been practically painless. Only one point is of interest to our present purpose. On the night of March 5th, the boy — away at school — dreamed that his father was dead. There was no reason for this in the ordinary way, as the reports had been highly optimistic. The boy remembers that the quality of the dream was entirely different from anything that he had known. The news of the death did not arrive in Cambridge till the following morning. The interest of this fact depends on a subsequent parallel. During the years that followed, the boy — and the man — dreamed repeatedly that his mother was dead; but on the day of her death he — then 3,000 miles away — had the same dream, save that it differed from the others by possessing this peculiar indescribable but unmistakable quality that he remembered in connection with the death of his father.

From the moment of the funeral the boy's life entered on an entirely new phase. The change was radical. Within three weeks of his return to school he got into trouble for the first time. He does not remember for what offence,[5] but only that his punishment was diminished on account of his bereavement. This was the first symptom of a complete reversal of his attitude to life in every respect. It seems obvious that his father's death must have been cau-

sally connected with it. But even so, the events remain inexplicable. The conditions of his school life, for instance, can hardly have altered, yet his reaction to them makes it almost incredible that it was the same boy.

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

1 — At Amsterdam. It was a failure at first, the natives objecting to a liquid which lacked taste, smell and colour.
2 — i.e. Of the “playground”.
3 — Query? “Oiler”, of course, but what was that doing?
4 — It is purely a question of virility: compare the noble races, Arabs, Pathans, Ghurkas, Japanese, etc. with the “moral” races. Of course, absence of caste determines loss of virility and vice versa.
5 — On revision, he thinks it was “talking on the march”, a whispered word to the other half of his scale of the “crocodile”.

STANZA IV

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

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

Tom Bond Bishop was a prominent figure in religious and philanthropic circles in London. He held a more or less important position in the Custom House, but had no ambitions connected with the Civil Service. He devoted the whole of this spare time and energy to the propagation of the extraordinarily narrow, ignorant and bigoted Evangelicalism in which he believed. He had founded the Children's Scripture Union and the Children's Special Service Mission. The former dictates to children what passages of the Bible they shall read daily: the latter drags them from their play at the seaside and hands them over to the ravings of pious undergraduates or hired gospel-geysers. Within his limits, he was a man of acute intelligence and great executive and organizing ability. A Manning plus bigoted sincerity; a Cotton Mather minus imagination; one might even say a Paul deprived of logical ability, and this defect supplied by invulnerable cocksureness. He was inaccessible to doubt; he knew that he was *right* on every point.

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

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

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

“Of unrivalled cunning, his address was plausible; he concealed his genius under a mask of matchless mediocrity and his intellectual force under the cloak of piety. In religion he was an Evangelical, that type of Nonconformist who remains in the Church in the hope of capturing its organization and its revenues.

“An associate of such creatures of an inscrutable Providence as Coote and Torrey, he surpassed the one in sanctimoniousness, the other in bigotry, though he always thought blackmail too risky and slander a tactical error.[1]

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

I do not know whether my Uncle Tom could have found any arguments against this theory, but in practice he had a horror of what he called sin which was exaggerated almost to the point of insanity. His talents, I may almost say his genius,[2] gave him tremendous influence. In his own house he was a ruthless, petty tyrant; and it was into this den of bitter slavery that I was suddenly hurled from my position of fresh air, freedom and heirship.

He lived in London, in what was then called Thistle Grove. The name has since been changed to Drayton Gardens, despite a petition enthusiastically supported by Bishop; the objection was that a public house in the neighbourhood was called the Drayton Arms. This is typical of my uncle's attitude to life. His sense of Humour. When I called him “Uncle”, he would snigger,

“Oh my prophetic soul, my uncle!” But the time came when I knew most of Hamlet by heart, and when he next shot off his “joke”, I continued the quotation, replying sternly, “Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast!” — I am, in a way, glad to think that at the end of his long and obscene life I was reconciled with him. The very last letter he ever received from me admitted (if a little grudgingly) that his mind was so distorted that he had really no idea how vile a thing he was. I think this must have stirred his sense of shame. At least, I never received any answer.

I suppose that the household at Thistle Grove was as representative of one part of England as could possibly have been imagined. It was nondescript. It was neither upper nor lower middle-class. It had not sufficient individuality even to belong to a category. My grandmother was a particularly charming old lady. She was inexpressibly dignified in her black silks and her lace cap. She had been imported from the country by the exigencies of her son's position in the Civil Service. She was extremely lovable; I never remember hearing a cross word fall from her. She was addicted to the infamous vice of Bezique. It was, of course, impossible to have “The Devil's Picture Books” in a house frequented by the leading lights of Evangelicalism. But my Aunt Ada had painted a pack of cards in which the suits were roses, violets, etc. It was the same game; but the camouflage satisfied my uncle's conscience. No Pharisee ever scoured the outside of the cup and platter more assiduously than he.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I was genuinely fond of my Aunt Ada. She was womanly in the old-fashioned sense of the word; a purely passive type. Naturally talented though she was, she was both ignorant and bigoted. In her situation, she could not have been anything else. But her opinions did not interfere with her charity. A woman of infinite kindness. Her health was naturally delicate; an attack of rheumatic fever had damaged her heart and she died before her time. The meanness and selfishness of my Uncle Tom were principally responsible. He would not engage a secretary; he forced her to slave for the Scripture Union and it killed her.

One anecdote throws a curious light upon my character in these early days and also reveals her as possessed of a certain sense of humour. Some years before, on the platform at Redhill with my father, I had seen on the bookstall *Across Patagonia* by Lady Florence Dixie. The long name fascinated me; I begged him to buy it for me and he did. The name stuck and I decided to be King of Patagonia. Psycho-analysts will learn with pleasure that the name of my capital was Margaragstagregorstoryaka. “Margar” was derived from Margaret, queen of Henry VI, who was my favourite character in histo-

ry. This is highly significant, as indicating the type of woman that I have always admired. I want her to be wicked, independent, courageous, ambitious, and so on. I cannot place the “ragstag”, but it is probably euphonic. “Gregor” is, of course, my cousin; “story” is what was then my favourite form of amusement. I cannot place the “yaka”, but that again is probably euphonic.

I cannot imagine why, at this very early age, I cultivated a profound aversion to, and contempt for, Queen Victoria. Merely, perhaps, the clean and decent instinct of a child! I announced my intention of leading the forces of Patagonia against her. One day my Aunt Ada took me to tea at Gunters'; and an important-looking official document was handed to me. It was Queen Victoria's reply. She was going to blow my capital to pieces and treat me personally in a very unpleasant manner. This document was sealed with a label marked with an anchor to suggest naval frightfulness, taken for this purpose from the end of a reel of cotton. But I took the document quite seriously and was horribly frightened.

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

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

The situation resulted in a very amusing way. Having got to the point of saying. “Evil, be thou my good,” I racked my brains to discover some really abominable crimes to do. In a moment of desperate daring I sneaked one Sunday morning into the church frequented by my Uncle Tom on Streatham Common, prepared, so to speak, to wallow in it. It was one of the most bit-

ter disappointments of my life! I could not detect anything which satisfied my ideas of damnation.

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

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

Aubrey Tanqueray is typical. He must not forfeit the esteem of his “little Parish”, and avoids mortification by shifting from one parish to another. When Paula asks him. “Do you trouble yourself about what servants think? he answers, “Of course.” If one had to worry about one's actions in respect of other people's ideas, one might as well be buried alive in an ant-heap or married to an ambitious violinist. Whether that man is the Prime Minister, modifying his opinions to catch votes, or a bourgeois in terror lest some harmless act should be misunderstood and outrage some petty convention, that man is an inferior man and I do not want to have anything to do with him any more than I want to eat canned salmon. Of course the world forces us all to compromise with our environment to some extent, and we only waste our strength if we fight pitched battles for points which are not worth a skirmish. It is only a faddist who refuses to conform with conventions of dress and the like. But our sincerity should be Roman about things that really matter to us. And I am still in doubt, as I write these words, as to how far it is right to employ strategy and diplomacy in order to gain one's point. The great men of the world have stood up and taken their medicine. Bradlaugh and Burton did not lose in the end by being downright. I never approved the super-subtlety of Huxley's campaign against Gladstone; and as for Swinburne, he died outright when he became respectable. Adaptation to one's

environment makes for a sort of survival; but after all, the supreme victory is only won by those who prove themselves of so much hardier stuff than the rest that no power on earth is able to destroy them. The people who have really made history are the martyrs.

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

This characteristic is evidently inherited from my father. His integrity was absolute. He lived entirely by his theological convictions. Christ might return at any moment. “Even as the lightning lighteneth out of the East and lighteneth even unto the West, so is the coming of the Son of Man.” He would have to give an account of “every idle word”. It was a horrifying thought to him that he might be caught by the Second Advent at a moment when he was not actively and intensely engaged on the work which God had sent him into the world to do. This sense of the importance of the lightest act, of the value of every moment, has been a tragically intense factor in my life. I have always grudged the time necessary for eating, sleeping and dressing. I have invented costumes with the sole object of minimizing the waste of time[3] and the distraction of attention involved. I never wear underclothing. The “Magnetism” of men and women has for its physical basis sweat: in health this is sparse and very fragrant. Any defect should be instantly remedied: there is no surer danger sign than foul or unduly profuse perspiration.

This quality determined much of my life at school. I instinctively understood that I did not want academic knowledge as such; but since I was under duress, the best plan for avoiding interruption was to acquit myself well in class and in examination. I had no ambitions; but I invariably set myself to acquire the necessary knowledge with the minimum of exertion. My natural abilities, especially my memory, made this easy. I soon discovered that to distinguish myself in school was in the nature of a conjurer's trick. It is hard to analyse my method or to be sure of the analysis; but I think the essence

of the plan was to make certain of the minimum required and to add a superstructure of one or two abstruse points which I would manage to bring to the notice of the master or the examiner so as to give him the idea that I had prepared myself with unusual thoroughness.

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

1 — I quote from an obituary of him published during his life.
2 — He devised a most ingenious method of teaching history by charts, each nation being represented by a river of greater or less breadth as it rose or fell, annexations by tributaries, etc., etc.
3 — In Mexico City in 1900 Eckenstein counselled me to turn back the heels of my stockings to facilitate putting them on. I objected to the waste of time involved. This developed into a long argument on the point: he won, but I couldn't believe it and am yet unconverted.

STANZA V

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

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

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

Talking of theory, I came to the conclusion, which at that time was a damnable heresy and a dangerous delusion, that all the elements were modifications of one substance. My main argument was that the atomic weights of cobalt and nickel were practically identical and the characteristic colours of their salts suggested to me that they were geometrical isomers like dextrose and lævulose. This is all obvious enough today, but I still think that it was not bad for a boy in his 'teens in the early 'nineties, whose only source of information was “Little Roscoe”.

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

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

A Boyhood in Hell

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

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

He had started a school for the Sons of Brethren at 51 Bateman Street, Cambridge. May God bite into the bones of men the pain of that hell on earth (I have prayed often) that by them it may be sowed with salt, accursed for ever! May the maiden that passes it be barren and the pregnant woman that beholdeth it abort! May the birds of the air refuse to fly over it! May it stand as a curse, as a fear, as an hate, among men! May the wicked dwell therein! May the light of the Sun be withheld therefrom and the light of the Moon not lighten it! May it become the home of the shells of the dead and may the demons of the pit inhabit it! May it be accursed, accursed — accursed for ever and ever!

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

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

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

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

3. We were told that “the Lord had a special care of the school and brought to light that which was done in darkness,” etc., etc. *ad nauseam*. “The instrument was on this occasion so-and-so, who had nobly come forward,” etc., etc. In other words, hypocrisy and sneaking were the only virtues.

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

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

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

Physically, I broke down. The strain and the misery affected my kidneys; and I had to leave school altogether for two years. I should add in fairness that there were other accusations against me, though, as you shall hear, almost equally silly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

cane, 15 minutes more prayer, 15 more strokes — and more prayer to top it!

5. On Sunday the day was devoted to “religion”. Morning prayers and sermon (about 45 Min.). Morning “meeting” (1 1/2 to 2 hours). Open-air preaching on Parker's Piece[1] (say 1 hour). Bible reading and learning by heart. Reading of the few books “sanctioned for Sunday” (say 2 hours). Prayer meeting (called voluntary, but to stay away meant that some sneak in the school would accuse you of something next day) (say 1 hour). Evening prayer and sermon (say 30 minutes). Preaching of the gospel in the meeting room (1 1/2 hours). Ditto on Parker's Piece[1] (say 1 hour). Prayer before retiring (say 1/2 hour).

6. The “Badgers': meeting”. Every Monday night the school was ranged round the back of the big schoolroom, and the scourgings of Barnswell (Cambridge's slum) let in, fed, preached to and dismissed.

Result, epidemics of ringworm, measles and mumps.

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

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

It is impossible to suppose that the character of the school had completely changed between my father's death and my return from the funeral. Yet before that I was completely happy and in sympathy with my surroundings. Not three weeks later, Ishmael was my middle name. I cannot account for it at all satisfactorily. I had been perfectly genuine in my ambition to lead a life of holiness; the idea of intimate communion with “Jesus” was constantly present to my mind. I do not remember any steps in the volte-face. I asked one of the masters one day how it was that Jesus was three days and three nights in the grave, although crucified on Friday and risen again on Sunday morning. He could not explain and said that it had never been explained. So I formulated the ambition to become a shining light in Christianity by doing this thing that had never yet been done. This idea, by the way, is very characteristic. I am totally unable to take any interest in doing anything which has been done before. But tell me of an alleged impossibility; and health, wealth, life itself are nothing. I am out to do it. The apparent discrepancy in the gospel narrative aroused no doubt in my mind as to the

literal truth of either of the texts. Indeed, my falling away from grace was not occasioned by any intellectual qualms; I accepted the theology of the Plymouth Brethren. In fact, I could hardly conceive of the existence of people who might doubt it. I simply went over to Satan's side; and to this hour I cannot tell why.

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

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

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

not content to believe in a personal devil and serve him, in the ordinary sense of the word. I wanted to get hold of him personally and become his Chief of Staff.

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

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

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

STANZA VI

I must mention the intervention of my Uncle Jonathan in the matter of the Badger's meeting, and that of my Uncle Tom in the final eruption.

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

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

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

My uncle and aunt visited me at Cambridge. I told them about the Badger's meeting, not in a spirit of complaint, but rather as Sir Richard Burton might have described his adventures among savages. Uncle Jonathan did not see the matter in that light at all. He made inquiries which confirmed my story; and told Champney point blank that this sort of thing had got to stop. Champney attempted to bluster, but on being threatened with the sanitary authorities, knuckled under. The matter, however, did not stop there. My uncle saw clearly that I was being brutally ill-treated; and he made an application to the courts which resulted in my being called to see Mr. Justice Stirl-

ing in Chambers. I have always been intensely loyal even to my enemies, and (for all I knew) the Judge might send my mother and her brother to prison. So I lied like a little man and pretended that I was perfectly happy at the school. I do not think that he was entirely fooled by my protestations; and although I was not made a Ward in Chancery, a promise was exacted that I should go to a Public School and university as soon as I had passed the “Cambridge Local”.

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

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

proved. I was allowed to work a very limited number of hours, but I progressed rapidly, having the undivided attention of my tutors.

These persons, however, were not too satisfactory; they were all my Uncle Tom's nominees; that is, they were of the sawny, anaemic, priggish type, who at the best could boast of minor Cambridge[1] colleges. Of course, I considered it my duty to outwit them in every possible way and hunt up some kind of sin.

This uncle, by the way, some years later, contributed what he esteemed a brilliantly witty article to the Boy's Magazine, the organ of an Evangelical attempt to destroy the manhood of our public schools. It was called *The Two Wicked Kings*. These were described as tyrants who ruined the lives of boys and enslaved them. Their names were Smo-King and Drin-King. Uncle Tom called my attention to his masterpiece and I said, with shocked surprise, “But, my dear Uncle, you have forgotten to mention a third, the most dangerous and deadly of all!” He couldn't think who that was. I told him. Now, I ask you, is it not deplorable that so important and accurate an addition to his thesis should not have been accepted with pious glee?

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

As my father had been accustomed to drink wine, I could not see how drinking could be a sin. There was, therefore, no object in doing it. I never touched wine until I got to Trinity and I have never felt the smallest temptation to excess. My father had, however, not been a smoker, saying that if God had intended men to smoke He would have supplied a chimney at the top of the head.[2] I had no hesitation, therefore in making a great point of smoking. I had no thought of connecting the service of the “third King” with the reproduction of the species, and therefore no reason to suppose that my father had ever so far forgotten himself. I spent my whole time trying to enroll myself under the royal banner; but this could only be done by cooperation and it was sometime before I found the means.

To return to my tutors. Relations were invariably strained. On one occasion the Rev. Fothergill had taken me for the summer to a fishing centre near Lairg called Forsinard. We went fishing one day to a loch over the moors and in the course of some argument I threw his rod far into the water. He attacked me with fury, but I got a good hold and threw him after it. I then went off in the boat, but he caught me as I was pushing off, overturned

the boat on top of me and tried to drown me. That night the gods still further favoured me. For a village girl named Belle McKay found herself with nothing better to do than to roam with me amid the heather. We returned together quite openly and Fothergill threw up the sponge. He took me back to London the next morning. Breaking the journey at Carlisle, I repeated my victory with a buxom chambermaid.

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

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

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

It will be seen that I had developed enormously in these years. Unfortunately, my misery was so great during this long battle with my tyrants that while the incidents themselves stand out luminously in focus, I find it very hard to remember the order in which they occurred. There are, moreover,

curious contradictions in myself against which I seem always to be stumbling. For example, as late as 1894, I think it must be, I find myself writing hymns of quite acceptable piety. One was published in *The Christian*; it began:

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

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

It is very strange that I should have had no inkling of my tendency to Mysticism and Magick by means of any definite experience. It is true that, from the beginning, I held the transcendental view of the universe, but there was nothing to back it up in the way of experience. Most children have a touch of poetry and believe in what I hate to call psychic phenomena, at least to the extent of fancying they see fairies or being scared of "bugges by night". But I, although consciously engaged in the battle with "principalities and powers", never had the slightest hallucination of sense or any tendency to imagine things ghostly. I might have had an ambition to see the devil and talk things over with him, but I should have expected such communication to be either perfectly material or perfectly intellectual. I had no idea of *nuances*. When I eventually learnt how to use my astral eyes and ears, there was no confusion; the other world had certain correspondences with our own, but it was perfectly distinct. I seem to have made a very determined effort to prevent the obliteration of my spiritual consciousness of the world beyond the veil by the ink of terrestrial experience. Then again, there are sudden outbreaks of a fully formed personality, in which I spoke with the assurance and authority of a man of fifty on subjects on which I had really no opinion at all in the ordinary sense of the word.

There is one amazing incident; at the age of fourteen as near as I can remember. I must premise that I have always been exceptionally tender-

hearted, except to tyrants, for whom I think no tortures bad enough. In particular, I am uniformly kind to animals; no question of cruelty or sadism arises in the incident which I am about to narrate.

I had been told “A cat has nine lives.” I deduced that it must be practically impossible to kill a cat. As usual, I became full of ambition to perform the feat. (Observe that I took my information unquestioningly *au pied de la lettre*.) Perhaps through some analogy with the story of Hercules and the hydra, I got it into my head that the nine lives of the cat must be taken more or less simultaneously. I therefore caught a cat, and having administered a large dose of arsenic I chloroformed it, hanged it above the gas jet, stabbed it, cut its throat, smashed its skull and, when it had been pretty thoroughly burnt, drowned it and threw it out of the window that the fall might remove the ninth life. In fact, the operation was successful; I had killed the cat. I remember that all the time I was genuinely sorry for the animal; I simply forced myself to carry out the experiment in the interest of pure science.

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

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

However, that comes later.

1 — Oxford was *anathema maranatha* to my Uncle Tom. Keble! Manning!! Newman!!! Procurers to the lords of hell far subtler and more fearful than Darwin, Huxley and Tyndall.
2 — One might surely argue that His most generous device was the adaptation of tobacco to the nerves of taste and smell.

STANZA VII

“The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley.” Even so cunning a combination of rat and ape as my Uncle Tom made occasional mistakes, and one of these was very fortunate for me. He engaged a tutor names Archibald Douglas, an Oxford man who had purged that offence by having travelled for the Bible Society across Persia. If my uncle had ever heard of George Borrow, he might have saved himself much trouble; and I might have been driven insane. It was in the spring of '91. I had recovered from a bad attack of whooping-cough. The idea was that we should bicycle down to Torquay, but on reaching Gildford I was too ill to ride further and we went down by train. Though Douglas called himself a Christian, he proved to be both a man and a gentleman. I presume that poverty had compelled the camouflage. From the moment that we were alone together he produced a complete revolution in my outlook upon life, by showing me for the first time a sane, clean jolly world worth living in. Smoking and drinking were natural. He warned me of the dangers of excess from the athletic standpoint. He introduced me to racing, billiards, betting, cards and women. He told me how these things might be enjoyed without damaging oneself or wronging others. He put me up to all the tricks. He showed me the meaning of honour. I immediately accepted his standpoint and began to behave like a normal, healthy human being. The nightmare world of Christianity vanished at the dawn. I fell in with a girl of the theatre in the first ten days at Torquay, and at that touch of human love the detestable mysteries of sex were transformed into joy and beauty. The obsession of sin fell from my shoulders into the sea of oblivion. I had been almost overwhelmed by the appalling responsibility of ensuring my own damnation and helping others to escape from Jesus. I found that the world was, after all, full of delightful damned souls; of people who accepted Nature as She is, accepted their own place in Nature and enjoyed it, fought mean and despicable things fairly and firmly whenever they met them. It was a period of boundless happiness for me. I had always yearned for the beauty of nature; my only friends, except animals and occasional strangers, from whom I was carefully protected, had been the skies, the streams, the mountains and the seas. For the first time in my life I was brought into contact with my fellow men and women. For the first time honest friendship, wholesome love, frank, gay and courageous, became possible and actual. I had loved nature as a refuge from mankind. I now perceived the beauty of the world in conjunction with the beauty of my species. For the first time the sea sparkled, the breezes whispered other songs than those in praise of solitude, the flowers lent their fragrance and their folly to light, laughing girlhood; the moon, instead of Artemis, was Aphrodite.

“I said, ‘she is warmer than Dian

. . . . . .

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

. . . . . .

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

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

An irreligious man may have moral checks; a Plymouth Brother has none. He is always ready to excuse the vilest crimes by quoting the appropriate text and invoking the name of Christ to cover every meanness which may delight his vain and vicious nature.

For the Plymouth Brethren were in themselves an exceptionally detestable crew. The aristocrats who began the movement were, of course, just aristocrats, and their curious system left them so. But they ran a form of "Early Christian" Spiritual Socialism by having no appointed priest or minister, and they were foolish enough to favour their followers financially.

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

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

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

The Meeting at Oban consisted of a Mr. Cameron and his wife and the bedridden mother of one of the two, I forget which. Now as it is written “Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them”, it was all very well: but two forms a quorum. Jesus will not come for less. This has never been disputed by any doctor of the Brethren. Wigram is clear on the point; if Darby had ever been clear on any point, it would have been on that. Kelly never denied it; even Stuart was sound in this matter, and Stoney himself (though reluctantly) gave his adhesion. To hold a Meeting you must have two persons present . . .

Well, I need hardly say that Mr. and Mrs. Cameron took opposite sides of the controversy. When the glad wires flashed the message that Mr. Raven in the Meeting at Ealing had deliberately said with slow and weighty emphasis, “He that hath the Son hath eternal life”, Mrs. Cameron almost wept for joy. When (the message continued) Major McArthy had risen to his feet and retorted, “He that hath the Son of God hath everlasting life”, Mr. Cameron executed a Highland through funeral fling.[1]

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

In short, the Meeting at Oban had split. Mr. Cameron had withdrawn from the Lord's supper! ! ! It was therefore absolutely necessary for both of them to assure themselves that the bedridden mother was of their way of thinking, or neither could hold the morning meeting; though I suppose either could preach the gospel — *morosa voluptas*!

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

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

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

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

"Emily Jane was a nursery maid."

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

Here, by the way, is a curious point. These bigots are so inconsistent that I have never been able to follow the working of their minds. There is a great deal of doctrine in *The Ancient Mariner* which outrages every tenet of the Plymouth Brethren, but my mother does not appear to have taken offence at that. My only suggestion is that she detested snakes for Freudian reasons; she had probably met them in dreams and had therefore good reason (from her point of view) for identifying them with the devil in his most objectionable form. My mother was naturally a rather sensual type of woman and there is not doubt that sexual repression had driven her as nearly as possible to the borders of insanity.

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

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

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

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

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

I immediately went out and appealed to the tobacconist on the bridge above Streatham station to say, if asked, that he remembered my having been in his shop on the Thursday night previous, which was that of the cab drive. He was a good sportsman and naturally anxious to oblige. I went back to my uncle and proposed a deal. I would tell him where I had been, but he must not punish me, for I had been led astray by bad companions. He was only too glad; and I owned up, tremulous and tearful, that I had been in the tobacconist's. He would have doubted a merely innocent alibi. The girl was, of course, discredited, and nothing more was heard of the matter. And I had had her on my mother's very bed!

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

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

It is difficult to explain by what means I came to the conclusion that poetry was of paramount importance. There was a sort of family tradition which honoured the poet; but it was as irrational as the rest of their beliefs. I can only imagine it as derived from their having been told at school that the English poets were the glory of humanity, for they certainly knew no poetry beyond “Casabianca” and “We are Seven.” I discovered Shakespeare for myself. It happened that in the farmhouse at Forsinard were three old folio vo-

lumes. My mother had an edition of Shakespeare; but I had never read it, because it was permitted. At the farmhouse, however, there was nothing else to read. I became fascinated and spent night after night poring over the pages. (I have always been singularly thorough in anything I take up. My father had a favourite sermon on the word “but”; and I went through the whole Bible, page by page, enclosing this word, wherever it occurred, with an oblong of ink.)

Apart from the few regular pieces for recitation, there was *Paradise Lost*. This bored me for the most part as much as it does now, but allowed me to gloat over the figures of Satan and Sin. After all, Milton was a great poet; and the subconscious artistic self of him was therefore bitterly antagonistic to Christianity. Not only is Satan the hero, but the triumphant hero. God's threats have not “come off”. It is the forces of evil, so called, that manifest in strength and beauty of form. The glories of the saints are tinsel. It is impossible to draw goodness with character. On the Christian theory, goodness is, in fact, nothing but absence of character, for it implies complete submission to God. Satan's original fault is not pride; that is secondary. It springs from the consciousness of separateness. Now of course this is, mystically speaking, sinful, because the Mystic holds that all manifestation is imperfection. Christian theology has not had sufficient logic to see, like its elder sister, Hindu theology, that any attributes soever must distinguish their possessor from some other possible being. But their instinct has been to go as far in that direction as possible and consequently the divine characters in Milton are comparatively colourless. Such was the transmutation in the nature of God effected by building a super-structure of Greek philosophy upon the foundation of the savage phantasm of Jehovah. My own attitude in the matter is to be seen in my aesthetic tendencies. I could never tolerate smooth, insipid beauty. The ugliness of decrepitude revolted me; but that of strength absorbed my whole soul. I despised the tame scenery of the Swiss lakes; the ruggedness of barren pinnacles of rock and the gloomy isolation of such lakes as Llyn Idwal appealed to my imagination. Wastwater disappointed me. It did not come up to the level of its poetic reputation. It was only when I got among the crags themselves that I was happy. I demanded to be at grips with death in one way or another. The bourgeois ambition to get through life without unpleasantness seemed to me the lowest vileness and entirely in keeping with the moral attitude of the heavenly people in *Paradise Lost*.

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

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

STANZA VIII

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

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

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

A PEEP BEHIND THE SCENES

In the hospital bed she lay
Rotting away!
Cursing by night and cursing by day,
Rotting away!
The lupus is over her face and head,
Filthy and foul and horrid and dread,
And her shrieks they would almost wake the dead;
Rotting away!
In her horrible grave she lay,
Rotting away!
In the place of her face is a gory hole,
And the worms are gnawing the tissues foul,
And the devil is gloating over her soul,
Rotting away!

Note that the title of this poem is ironical. It is taken from a goody-goody book, popular at that time, which describes the life of traveling barnstormers and how the only hope for them was to be converted. But the irony goes somewhat deeper. It was a genuine criticism of the shallow philosophy of optimism which went with the polite Christianity of the time. I was analysing life in the spirit of Schopenhauer. I couldn't see any sense in pretending that life was not full of horrors. Death and trousers are facts in nature; and merely to avoid reference to them or to invent euphemisms for them does not alter their character. I was reduced to gloating on murder and putrefaction, simply because these things gave the most forcible denial to the assumptions current at home. Paganism is wholesome because it faces the facts of life; but I was not allowed to take a normal view of nature. In my situation, I could not dismiss the falsities of Christianity with a smile; I was compelled to fight fire with fire and to oppose their poisoned poultices with poisoned daggers.

Such was the influence of home life. But it was partially interfered with by the more decent current of school life. I have mentioned my school in Streatham. It was there that occurred the last important incident of this period. Being the star chemist of the school, I determined to distinguish myself on the 5th of November, 1891. I procured a ten-pound jar from the grocer's, put two pounds of gunpowder at the bottom and filled it up with various layers of different coloured “fires”. These were all — except for the small ingredients of varied metallic salts — of the same composition: sugar and chlorate of potash. In order to make sure of success, I turned the whole household on to mixing these ingredients, with the result that they were mingled so intimately as to produce what was to all intents and purposes chlorate power! I pressed this down very powerfully, buried the jar in the playground, stuck a rocket into the top and lighted it at the critical moment. The rocket had been fixed too firmly to rise and the protecting wad of paper burnt through before I could step back. I neither saw nor heard anything. I felt as if a brush of some warm tarry and gritty substance had been passed across my face; and found myself standing on the brink of a hole in the ground of no mean size. I wondered how on earth it could have happened that my experiment had failed. I remember apologising for the failure and saying that I must go up to the house to wash my face. I discovered that I was being supported on the journey by my private tutor and my mother. Then I found myself in the headmaster's sanctum, receiving first aid. I remember nothing more for some time except the annoyance of being awakened to have my dressings changed. I slept for ninety-six hours with these semi-conscious intervals. My tutor had the sense to wire to Guy's Hospital for Dr. Golding Bird, whose intervention probably saved me from erysipelas and the loss of my sight. In the course of convalescence, over four thousand pieces of gravel and the like were removed from my face; and it was on Christmas Day

that I was first allowed to use my eyes for a few minutes. The explosion had been devastating. The windows were smashed for a long way round; and the bottles in the chemist's shop on the railway bridge — a quarter of a mile and more away — rattled, though the passage of trains had no such effect. Strangely enough, I was the only person injured. Throughout I enjoyed the episode; I was the hero, I had made my mark!

The following year I was ready to go to a public school. My Uncle Jonathan wanted me to go to Winchester, as per the family tradition, but my health demanded a more bracing climate and it was decided that I should go to Malvern. The school at that time was rising to the height of its glory in athletics. We possessed a brilliant bat in Percy Latham; H. R. and W. L. Foster were sure to distinguish themselves in one way or another, and the youngsters of that famous game-playing family were coming on, ready to take their places when the time came. There was also C. J. Burnup as a promising colt.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Of the second poem I retain:

> Poor lady! whom a wicked jury's hate
> In face of facts as iron as the grave
> To which they would have doomed thee – bitter fate!
> Thee guiltless to the cruel hangman gave.
>
> Shame on the judge who sees but half the facts!
> Shame on the nurse who private letters opes!
> But never shalt thou be forgot by us,
> The pity of thy life's so blasted hopes.

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

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

I made no intimate friendships. I did my work sufficiently well to avoid serious punishment, but without ambition. I took no interest in the Shakespeare prize, for which everybody had to enter, and had not read a line of the two plays prescribed, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard II*. But for some reason or other I got scared three days before the examination, got excused from games and worked so hard that I came out sixth in the school. I was able to quote several long passages accurately from memory. With me, it was always a question of the interest which I took in things. I had the makings of a sound classical scholar, but I could not bring myself to memorize Greek and Latin poetry. Stranger still, I could not master the rules of prosody. My most hostile critics admit that my technique and my sense of rhythm are unsurpassed; but the rules of scansion meant nothing to me, because no one explained their connection with the way a poem should be read.

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

By this time I had acquired a considerable facility in making the best of my advantages. I had in some ways much more experience of life than most boys of my age. My holidays, what with fishing, mountain-climbing and running after girls, were full of adventures of one kind and another, in which I was always being thrown on my own resources. By the time I reached Tonbridge I had developed a kind of natural aristocracy. People were already beginning to be afraid of me and there was no question any longer of bullying. My health must have been very much better. Albuminauria breeds me-

lancholy and destroys physical courage. I had also, no doubt, been subject to constant irritation do to my phimosis and the operation had relived me. I was, therefore, more or less ready to fight anybody that annoyed me. And people took good care not to do so.

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

The glimpse of normal human life afforded by Archibald Douglas had rendered me completely sane as far as my conscious life was concerned. The problem of life was not how to Satanise, as Huysmans would have called it; it was simply to escape from the oppressors and to enjoy the world without any interference of spiritual life of any sort. My happiest moments were when I was alone on the mountains; but there is no evidence that this pleasure in any way derived from Mysticism. The beauty of form and colour, the physical exhilaration of exercise, and the mental stimulation of finding one's way in difficult country, formed the sole elements of my rapture. So far as I indulged in daydreams, they were exclusively of a normal sexual type. There was no need to create phantasms of a perverse or unrealizable satisfaction. It is important to emphasize this point, because I have always appeared to my contemporaries as a very extraordinary individual obsessed by fantastic passions. But such were not in any way natural to me. The moment the pressure was relieved every touch of the abnormal was shed off instantly. The impulse to write poetry disappeared almost completely at such periods. I had not even any of the ordinary ambitions of young men. I was content to enjoy sport without wishing to attain eminence in it. It came natural to me to find ways up mountains which looked to me interesting and difficult. But it never occurred to me to match myself against other people. It was from purely aesthetic considerations that I climbed the gullies of Tryfan and Twll-Du. This last climb landed me, as luck would have it, in a controversy which was destined to determine my career in a very remarkable manner.

1 — One may trace the influence of R. Haggard. One epic began:

> “In fair Milosis city
> The king he gave decree
> That every maid reputed pretty
> And even esteemed or wise or witty
> To his palace brought should be.

And all obeyed save one proud Sheikh
Who his only gen Zuleikh.”

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

STANZA VIV

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

I think it was the following summer that I was staying at a farm in Langdale and heard from the natives of the celebrated twenty-four hours' walk. The idea is to climb the four highest fells, Scafell Pikes, Helvellyn, Skiddaw and Saddleback, in a day. I conceived a minor ridge walk and set out one morning at dawn from Langdale, climbed the Langdale Pikes, and followed the crest of the fells to Scafell Pikes. Then I crossed to Scafell by the Broad Stand; and, seeing the Deep Ghyll pinnacle, climbed that on my way to the summit of Scafell. It was a terrifically hot day over Lingmell and down into the valley to climb the screes of Great Gable. My attention was attracted by the Great Napes Needle and I climbed that. Thence I took the easiest way — the Needle ridge, or a gully, I forget which — to the summit of the mountain. I had become almost insane from heat, thirst and exhaustion; I could no longer walk, but crawled on hands and knees down to Sty Head Tarn, whose waters revived me to some extent. I struggled on homewards and reached the top of Rossett Ghyll Pass shortly after nightfall. There was a bright moon, but I had a terrible time picking my way down the path. I must have been a little light-headed from exhaustion and there was a Dantesque quality in the long climb among the blinding white patches of light and the jetty shadows. At the bottom of the pass I met a small rescue party who had just started out to look for me, and reached home about eleven o'clock. It was, in its way, a remarkable performance of a boy.

Another incident is less heroic but more amusing. My tutor had invited his sister to stay a few days at the farm at Langdale. One day I took her up the Langdale Pikes and found quite decent bit of scrambling. Having not rope, I could only help her from below. She became scared and broke into a passionate monologue punctuated by screams. It consisted of variations on a triple theme. “I'm going to fall — Our Father which art in heaven — don't look at my legs.” Ah me! — “I learnt about women from 'er.” It was a startling complete revelation of the psychology of the well-brought-up young la-

dy. Craven fear, prurient shame and narcotic piety: of such is the kingdom of Tennyson!

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

I had every reason, later on, to agree with Robinson. I was only once on a rope with Jones. It was on Great Gable; the rocks were plastered with ice and a bitter wind was blowing. In such conditions one cannot rely on one's fingers. Our party proposed to descend the Oblique Chimney on the Ennerdale face. Robinson led the way down. The second man was a Pole named Lewkowitch, who was generally known as “Oils, fats and waxes”, because of his expert knowledge of them and the personal illustration of their properties which he afforded. He had no experience of climbing and weighed about sixteen stone. It was up to me, as third man on the rope, to let him slowly down. I had, of course, to descend little by little, the rope being too short to allow me to lower him from the top. I soon found myself in the most difficult part of the chimney, very ill placed to manipulate a dangling ox. I looked up to Jones, the last man, to hold my rope so that I could give full attention to Lewkowitch, and saw to my horror that he was maintaining his equilibrium by a sort of savage war dance! He was hampered by a photographic apparatus which was strapped to his back. Robinson had urged him to lower it separately. As nor Einstein nor the Blessed Virgin Mary was there to suspend the law of gravitation, I have no idea how we got to the bottom undamaged; but when we did I promptly took off the rope and walked home, utterly disgusted with the vanity which had endangered the party. Of course, there could only be one end to that sort of thing, and Jones ended by killing himself and three guides on the Zinal side of the Dent Blanche a few years later.

The imbecility of the accident is shown by the fact that the fifth member of the party, who was quite a beginner, found himself — after the smash — alone on the precipice. The guides had begged Jones not to attempt the

pitch from which he fell, but he had persisted. The fifth man had hitched the rope over a rock and it had broken between him and the third guide. But this man, instead of going down to the valley, actually climbed the mountain, spent a night on the ridge and went down the next day to Zermatt.

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

Jones obtained the reputation of being the most brilliant rock climber of his time by persistent self-advertisement. He was never a first-rate climber, because he was never a safe climber. If a handhold was out of his reach he would jump at it, and he had met with several serious accidents before the final smash. But his reputation is founded principally on climbs which he did not make at all, in the proper sense of the word. He used to go out with a couple of photographers and have himself lowered up and down a climb repeatedly until he had learnt its peculiarities, and then make the “first ascent” before a crowd of admirers. Now the essential difficulty of negotiating a pitch of any length is that one has to waste any amount of time and strength while one is finding out where the holds are. There is no credit at all in repeating a climb.

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

This conduct seemed to me absolutely unsportsmenlike. To prostitute the mountains to personal vanity is in fact something rather worse. And I had a taste of the malice of people's envy in my first week. A personal issue arose from the very start. Robinson happened to ask me if I had climbed in Wales. I told him yes, and mentioned one particular place, the Devil's Kitchen or Twll Dy, which I had climbed by taking off my boots. I had no idea that the place was famous, but it was. It was reputed unclimbable. Almighty Jones himself had failed. I found myself, to my astonishment, the storm centre. Jones, behind my back, accused me flatly of lying. Quite unconsciously, however, I put myself in the right. I have always failed to see that it is necessary to make a fuss about one's climbs. There is a good reason for describing a first climb. To do so is to guide others to enjoyment. One may also for the same reason describe interesting variations of a climb, or its accomplishment by a solitary man. Now as it happened, Jones had been blowing his trumpet about the first ascent of Kern Knotts Chimney; the top pitch, however, he had failed to do unaided. He had been hoisted on the shoulders of the second man. I went to have a look at it and found that by wedging a

stone into a convenient crack, and thus starting a foot higher up, I could get to the top, and did so. I recorded this in the Climbers' Book; and the following day a man named H. V. Reade, possibly in a sceptical mood, followed in my footsteps. He found my wedged stone, contemptuously threw it away, climbed the pitch without it, and recorded the feat. That was a double blow to Mr. Jones. It was no longer a convincing argument that if he couldn't do a thing it couldn't be done.

But this was not all. Scafell is separated from Scafell Pikes by a pass called Mickledoor; and on the Scafell side it is precipitous. The ridge of the pass is well-marked; by going down a little, on one side one can climb the cliffs by the Broad Stand or Mickeldoor Chimney, on the other side by the North Climb; and so on. But it had been the ambition of every climber to start from the exact top of the ridge. This was called the Direct Climb of Mickledoor; and nobody had done it. That seemed to be a shame, so I did it. This time the fat was in the fire. My good faith was openly challenged in the smoking-room. I shrugged my shoulders, but offered to repeat the climb the following day before witnesses — which I accordingly did. I suppose I am a very innocent ass, but I could not understand why anyone calling himself human should start a series of malicious intrigues on such a cause of quarrel. I must admit that my methods were sometimes calculated to annoy; but I had no patience with the idiotic vanity of mediocrities. I took the Climbers' Record to be a serious complication and never wrote in it without the fullest sense of responsibility. So when I found a solemn Te Deum being chanted on account of the fifth ascent of the Pillar Rock by a “lady”, I took my dog to the top and recorded, “First ascent by a *St. Bernard* bitch.” When Jones, after the usual practice, had climbed Kern Knotts Crack, and three public school masters, who ought to have known better, said they had seen him do it, and it was a marvellous exhibition of skill and so on, I completed their remarks by a colophon: (Advt.) So much fuss was made about Kern Knotts Crack that Eckenstein took a young girl named Miss. Nicholls and asked her to lead up it, which she did.

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

death of Norman Neruda, who died of heart failure when he happened to be in a rock chimney in the Dolomites.

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

One very significant incident is stamped upon my memory. I was spending an evening with the professor and in the course of some discussion I said, “The Bible says so.” These words dripped with the utmost irony from my lips. I meant to imply the bitterest contempt. I was not understood. He took me seriously and broke out into a passionate denunciation of the book. His manner was so ferocious that I was positively startled; and the interesting thing about the incident is this. I had been so long so alert lest I should be accused of disbelief, that it almost took my breath away to hear a man in authority speak so openly.[1] I have explained how I had vainly sought supreme wickedness in the Church of England. I had even gone to so-called “high” churches and on one occasion dared to enter the portals of the papists. But I had found nothing wicked even there. They all seemed to me to be tarred with the same brush; they were cold, heartless, dull, stupid, vapid and fatuous. The emotionalism of some and the sacramentalism of others seemed to me perfectly insincere. The fact is that (as my brother-in-law, Gerald Kelly, once told me, with astounding insight) I was the most religious man that he had ever met. It is the inmost truth. The instinct was masked for a long time, firstly by the abominations of the Plymouth Brethren and the Evangelicals; secondly, by the normal world. It only broke out at a subsequent period in any recognizable form. But when it did so, it became the axis of my being. As a matter of fact, even in these early days, my real need was spiritual satisfaction; and I was a Satanist or a worldling (as the case may be) in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.

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

ELVIRA

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

. . . . . .

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

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

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

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

At Eastbourne, I had still no interest in games. I was still prevented from anything like intimate association with my fellow creatures. I was still ignorant of the existence of English literature and I became a first-rate French scholar without reading any French literature. In my play time I was either hunting flappers on the front, playing chess or climbing Beachy Head. My chess was almost entirely book-learning and I was very mush surprised to find myself the best player in the town. For although the local champion in-

sisted on giving me pawn and more, I beat him so easily every time I met him that the odds might have been reversed without making much difference to the result. I edited a Chess Column in the Eastbourne Gazette and made myself a host of enemies by criticizing the team. I wanted to arose enthusiasm, to insist on study and practice and to make Eastbourne the strongest town in England. The result fell short of breaking up the club, but not very far.

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

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

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

STANZA X

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

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

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

The unique character of the climbing led to an amusing incident. The greatest rock climber in England, A. F. Mummery, published a short account of his work on the cliffs at Dover, where he lived. He stated that at more

than twenty to thirty feet above sea-level no climbing was possible, and that practically all his climbs were traverses; that is horizontal and not vertical. I wrote to him saying that my experience was precisely the opposite. All my climbing had been done at greater altitudes, and that (with hardly an exception) my climbs were vertical. He wrote back rather superciliously to the effect that there were certainly grassy gullies which corresponded to my description, but they were not what he called climbing. I replied, thanking him and begging him to accept a few photographs of the grassy gullies under description. These showed the most formidable-looking pinnacles in the British Islands, and vertical cracks as precipitous as anything in Cumberland. He wrote back immediately a warm letter of congratulation. It was evident that we had been using the word “chalk” to cover two widely different species of material.

I published some of my records in the local newspapers with the idea of inspiring the natives with praiseworthy enthusiasm. Once again I had misjudged humanity. All I got was a leading article beginning with the words, “Insensate folly takes various forms.” Another shock was to come. Cousin Gregor suddenly declared that he was engaged to be married and that he didn't think he had the right to climb any more on Beachy Head. My boyhood's idol was shattered at a blow. I received my first lesson in what the religions of the world have discovered long since, that no man who allows a woman to take any place in his life is capable of doing good work. (Similarly, men may be as foolish over dogs as old maids over cats.) A man who is strong enough to use women as slaves and playthings is all right. Even so, there is always a danger, though it is difficult to avoid it. In fact, I don't think it should be avoided. I think a man should train himself to master what are commonly called vices, from maidens to morphia. It is undeniable that there are very few such men. Again and again I have had the most promising pupils give up the great work of their lives for the sake of some wretched woman who could have been duplicated in a Ten Cent Store. It doesn't matter what the work is; if it is worth while doing, it demands one's whole attention, and a woman is only tolerable in one's life if she is trained to help the man in his work without the slightest reference to any other interests soever. The necessary self-abnegation and concentration on his part must be matched by similar qualities on hers. I say matched — I might say better, surpassed — for such devotion must be blind. A man can become his work, so that he satisfies himself by satisfying it; but a woman is fundamentally incapable of understanding the nature of work in itself. She must consent to co-operate with him in the dark. Her self-surrender is, therefore, really self-surrender, whereas with him it is rather self-realisation. It is true that if a woman persists long enough in the habit, she will ultimately find herself therein. For woman is a creature of habit, that is, of solidified impulses. She has no individuality. Attached to a strong man who is no longer himself by

this work, she may become a more or less reliable mood. Otherwise her moods change with her phantasms. But the most dominant mood of woman will always be motherhood. Nature itself, therefore, insures that a man who relies on a woman to help him is bucking the tiger. At any moment, without warning, her interest in him may be swept off its feet and become secondary. Worse — she will expect her man to abandon the whole interest of his life in order to look after her new toy. A bitch does not lose all her interest in her master just because she has puppies.

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

I must record a very strange phenomenon in connection with my adventures on Beachy Head. One summer day I went up with my mother and took her down to the grassy slopes (the Grass Traverse) which used to extend eastward from Etheldreda's Pinnacle. I say “used to extend”, for since that time there has been an extensive landslide. It was rather a scramble for an old lady to reach them from the top of the cliff, but it could be done by descending a narrow gully called Etheldreda's Walk. I put her in a comfortable position where she could make a water-colour sketch, and went off to do some climbing on the Devil's Chimney, which is some distance west of the pinnacle. The general contour of the cliff is here convex, so that I was entirely out of her sight, besides being a quarter of a mile away. Such breeze as there was was blowing from the south-west, that is, from me to her. I was trying to make a new climb on the west of the Devil's Chimney and had got some distance down, when I distinctly heard her crying for help. At this time I had no acquaintance with psychic phenomena, yet I recognized the call as of this type; that is, I had a direct intuition that it was so. It was not merely that it seemed improbable that it could be normal audition. I did not know at the time for certain that this was impossible, though it was afterwards proved to be so by experiment. I had no reason for supposing the danger to be urgent: but I rushed madly to the top of the cliff, along it and down to the Grass Traverse. I reached her in time to save her life, though there were not many seconds to spare. She had shifted her position to get a

better view and had wandered off the traverse on to steep, dusty, crumbling slopes. She had begun to slip, got frightened and done the worst thing possible; that is, had sat down. She had been slipping by inches and was on the brink of a cliff when I reached her. She had actually cried for help at the time when I heard her, as nearly as I could judge; but, as explained above, it was physically impossible for me to have done so. I regard this incident as very extraordinary indeed. I have never taken much stock in the regular stories of people appearing at a distance at the moment of death and so on; nor does the fact of something so similar having actually happened to me make me inclined to believe such stories. I cannot offer any explanation, apart from the conventional magical theory that a supreme explosion of Will is sometimes able to set forces in motion which cannot be invoked in ordinary circumstances.

To return to my subject. Despite the regrettable incident of impulsive humanitarianism above recorded, my associations with Beachy Head possess a charm which I have never known in any other district of England. My climbs there fulfilled all my ideals of romance, and in addition I had the particularly delightful feeling of complete originality. In other districts I could be no more than *primus inter pares*. On Beachy Head I was the only one — I had invented an entirely new branch of the sport.

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

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

For instance, one of the most original characters that I have ever met was the Rev. T. C. V. Bastow, of Little Peatling Rectory, Lutterworth. It was the proud boast of this gentleman, who used to spend his vacations at Wastdale Head, that he possessed a rudimentary tail; and though I was never favoured personally with a view of this distinction, he was credited

with readiness to demonstrate the Darwinian Theory to any earnest young anatomist who might be in the offing. He wandered about the crags with a three-pronged claw attached to twenty or thirty feet of rope, his theory being to throw it up the rocks till it caught somewhere, and then swarm up the rope. He gave himself the air of being a rock climber of the first rank and I never thought of doubting it.

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

Some years later I made a blunder of the same kind which resulted in a frightful tragedy. I was in Arolla in 1897[1] with Morris Travers and his younger brother. In Coolidge's Guide there is a record of the ascent of the Petite Dent de Veisivi by the gap facing Arolla. The local guides, however, unanimously denied that this route had ever been done. The rocks below the gap, they said, were overhanging and were impossible. We decided to test these statements, ascended the mountain by the ordinary way and came down by the route in question. The rocks do overhang, but the holds are so good that the climb is quite easy. We discussed the climb with a son of the celebrated Dr. John Hopkinson, Edward, who was there with a large family. We said, quite truthfully, that there was no difficulty or danger for a responsible party; but he and three of his children attempted to repeat our climb and all were killed. A peculiarly English incident adds a touch of grotesque grimness to the story. The widow begged Travers, who was a member of the rescue party (I had left the valley), to allow her to take a last look at her husband. She had been brought up to fancy pictures of people lying in state — “calm and grand in Death”, and that sort of thing . As a matter of fact, all the remains had been brought down in one sack; no one could tell what was whose.

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

There remains one remarkable incident of my climbing in Cumberland. I had been trying some new routes on the Pillar Rock one day, when I was caught by a terrific thunderstorm. Luckily for me, as it turned out, I was

soaked to the skin in ten minutes. Any further serious climbing being impossible, I started back to Wastdale. In doing this one crosses the ridge of Pillar Mountain, along which runs a wire sheep fence. I crossed this; and, the storm increasing in violence, my attention was attracted by the little flames of lightning that played upon the iron uprights. I forgot about my axe. The next thing I knew was that I had been knocked down. I can hardly say that I felt any definite electrical shock; but I knew what must have happened. I was seized by a curious mixture of exhilaration and terror; and dashed down the face of the mountain at its steepest point, leaping from rock to rock like a goat. I easily beat the record from the summit to the hotel! Despite the intense concentration[2] necessary to jump down the dangerous crags, my conscious attention was absorbed by the magnificent spectacle of the cliffs of Scafell, framed in lurid purple storm clouds and literally ablaze with lightning; continuous and vivid to a degree that I have never since seen except on one occasion near Madrid, when the entire sky was a kaleidoscopic network of flame for nearly two hours.

1 — See ***Collected Works***, Vol. I, p. 127. “Elegy,” the date seems a misprint.
2 — But see ***The Book of Lies***, cap. 32, “The Mountaineer”.

STANZA XI

In 1894 I had my first serious taste of the Alps. I went with my tutor to the Suldenthal in the Austrian Tyrol. I had discovered the Badminton Volume of Mountaineering. I looked on it very much as I had been taught to look on the Bible. It says much for my innocence previously described, that despite the data already in my possession, I failed entirely to realize that the one book was as full of grotesque blunders and inaccuracies as the other. I arrived in Sulden with a deep reverence for the Alpine guide, and hastened to engage Joseph Pingerra, who was supposed to be the best in the valley. I was very shocked to find that is was customary in the Tyrol to go two on a rope instead of three, though in point of fact this was the only thing they knew about climbing. But I was amazed beyond measure to find that I was a much better rock climber than my guide. He did not know what rock climbing was, judged by Cumberland standards! I had no experience of snow and ice; so here, of course, I was the reverent disciple. Imagine my astonishment, then, when after two or three days Pingerra slipped and fell on a perfectly easy snow slope. He was entirely unable to do anything to save himself and I had to pull him up on the rope. I retained my faith in Badminton by saying to myself that the guides in the outlying groups must be very poor examples. I engaged two other guides and started for the Köenigspitze, spending the night in a hut. In the morning the guides were drunk and unwilling to start, making absurd excuses about the weather. I had not sufficient self-confidence to tackle the Köenigspitze by myself; but I dismissed them, made a solitary ascent of the Eisseespitze, and thought the matter over. I was utterly disgusted and decided to learn ice and snowcraft by myself, as I had with rocks.

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

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

My arrival changed the situation. Once assured that I was flesh and blood, the guide plucked up a little courage, which the American further stimulated by a promise of additional dollars. As I had come up alone, the

three of us could evidently go down together. I agreed to accept the responsible position of last man and we roped-up accordingly. But we were no sooner started than the guide again lost whatever nerve he ever possessed. His employer had never been on a mountain before, but he had common sense and pluck; he behaved admirably in every respect; we half nursed and half chivvied that guide down that ridge. It was, of course, out of the question to follow the ridge, as I had just done, so that two or three thousand feet of the descent were accomplished by glissading down snow slopes. If I had been alone I could have got down by that route in under three hours. As it was, we took nine and a half. But the next day the guide had no lack of nerve; he wanted me to pay him for his services! Nothing doing.

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

In 1895 I felt myself fit to tackle the higher peaks of the Alps and went to the Little Scheideck. My first exploit was a solitary ascent of the Eiger. I started late and on the final ridge caught up with a “strong” party of English with guides, the principal Herr being a charming clergyman from Japan, the Rev. Walter Weston. The guides were more or less drunk and frightened. They were trying to make some excuse for turning back; but shame stimulated their courage when I came up and we proceeded to the summit. We all went down together; the guides professed themselves delighted with the sure-footed agility of my performance and said that I was “wie ein Führer.” A year before the compliment would have persuaded me that I had died and gone to heaven, but time had changed all that. I still clung pathetically to Badminton; I had merely reached the stage of praying pathetically to meet the good guides described in the book. I was still obsessed by the idea that it was suicidal to cross snow-covered glaciers without a rope. So I took a porter: he was quite willing to obey my orders implicitly, since I was regarded as a *Wunderkind*. We went up the Jungfrau by the Schneehorn-Silberhorn route, I leading up and descending last. But it was the same old story. The man couldn't stand on a snow slope. I was constantly having to misuse valuable time in saving his worthless life.

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

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

In '95 I was not yet aware of what was going on. I discovered independently the facts of the case. I found that I could go pretty well anywhere without the least danger or difficulty, whereas all the people I met were constantly on the brink of disaster. I began to think that solitary climbing was the safest form of the game. The one problem was the snow-covered glacier. I began to study that question by itself. I soon noticed that when I looked down on such a glacier from a ridge, I could see the covered crevasses quite plainly. They appeared as lines of shade. Descending to the glacier, I found that I was still able to detect the slight differences in illumination. So much for the theory. But the question still remained, “I see it, but can I cross it safely?” My experience with chalk helped to give me confidence. I was accustomed to estimate the breaking-strain of rotten material. Now, given a night's hard frost, it stands to reason that a bridge which has not fallen through by its own weight during the previous day would support my extra weight in the early morning. I began to test my theory, being, of course, careful to arrange my routes, so as to avoid having to cross snow-covered glaciers after sunrise. I noticed, however, that a great deal of care was necessary to avoid accidents; and this made for slowness. There were also

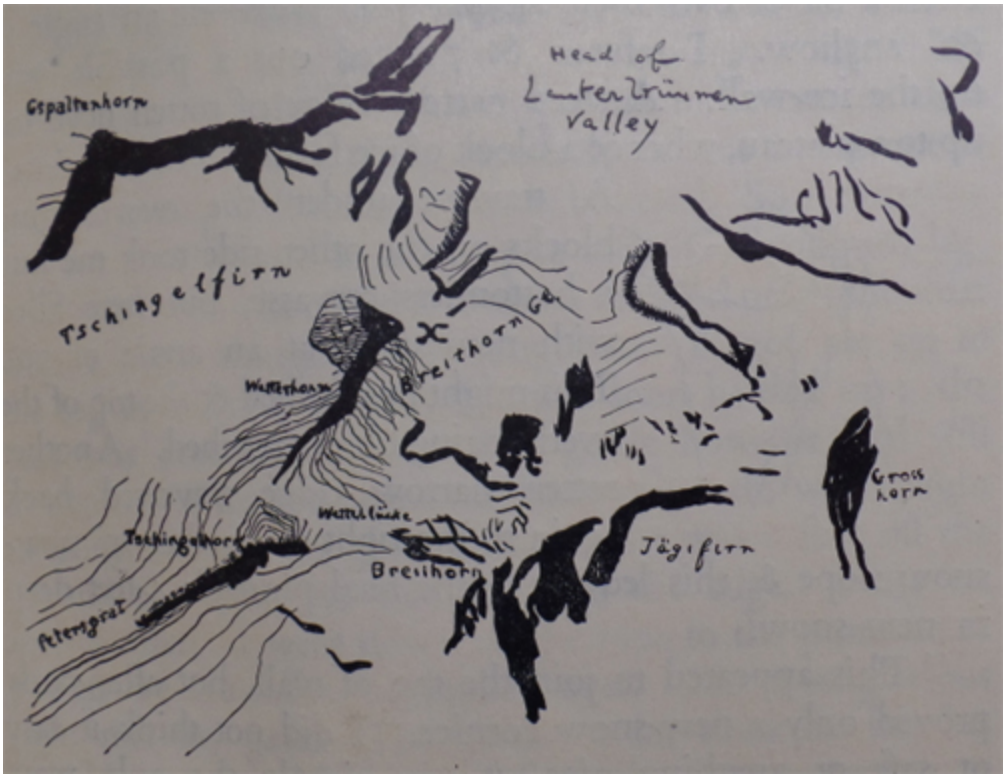
many other occasions on which a second man would be a safeguard, and some when he might be of active assistance.

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

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

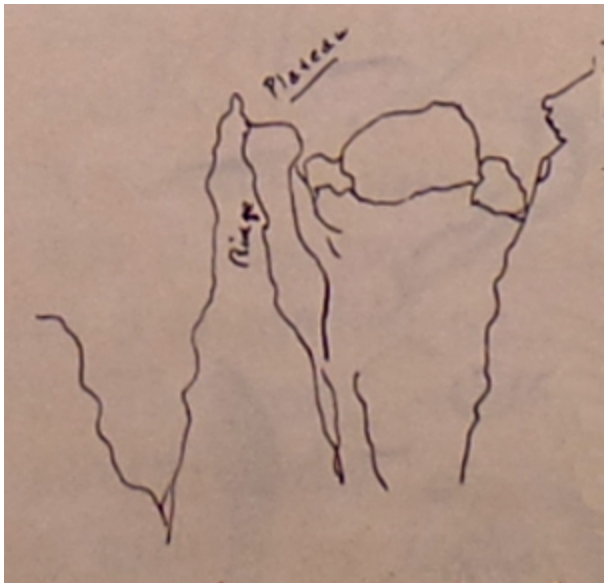
In the absence of so miraculous a combination, the best thing to be hoped for was one other man who would possess all the qualities which one lacked oneself; and it was my supreme good fortune in 1898 to find what I sought in Oscar Eckenstein.

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

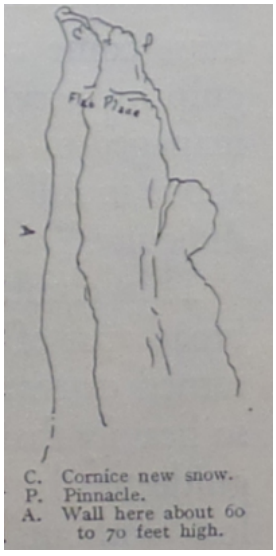


Here is an account (written at the time) of one of our small climbs:

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



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



“This appeared to join the top of the wall, but afterwards proved only a new-snow cornice. I did not think it easy or sage or anything nice—it was simply the only way. I told Christian so, & started up. Impassioned cries of ‘Come back.’ ‘*When* you fall (not *if*) don't say I didn't tell you!’ All in old High German. Finally ‘Ich gehe nicht.’ I told

him to stay there & we'd pull him straight up afterwards. Still the impassioned cries. But I went on. He took the rope off. I got Armstrong to the plateau & put him on the end. Freezing in the blizzard. Bridge very good, Traverse very bad. New-snow cliff atrocious. Rotten little ridge ghastly. Next slope wusser & wusser. Fixed myself on a flat place. Freezing in blizzard. Inchis this in solid ice.

Pulled Armstrong up to where I was. Went on to Pinnacle. Discovered 4-foot cornice. Broke it away. Result, I cut a step in the undercut wall & a handhold above. But it was not to be crossed thus with safety, especially as here I was out of all shelter from the blizzard. So Armstrong had to come up to me. Collaring my leg, he raised it to about the level of his shoulder with a most almighty everlasting boost & got me on to the top of the cliff at last. He was soon hauled up: the pass was practically won. The guide however had still to come. With the rash confidence of youth, we thought to bring him up straight. But once he was a foot off the ground the rope was two feet into the edge. Nary an inch further. I went down the rope to the pinnacle to put an axe as a roller. I looked over. The most glorious sight met my gaze. The guide—6 in. thick in ice, his face blue with cold, hanging from the rope expecting to be pulled up. I shouted that he must help himself—he said he couldn't. I might have known it! I said he must come up our way, & he, swallowing in one great gulp his previous principles, agreed. And this he actually managed to do. Meanwhile Armstrong, sitting on the ice above in full blizzard, froze into it, & he was released with difficulty.”

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

This was not a question of using a compass. I was born with a sense of direction which, though it does not tell me in so many words where the North is, tells me when I am facing in the same direction as the door of the house, hut or tent from which I have started in the morning. I can therefore keep straight in any conditions of light or weather. I have also what I may call a subliminal, self-registering, trigonometrical pedometer, which enables me to make the correct compensation whenever I am forced out of my way. It also enables me to find a place, provided that I know its distance and direction from my starting point. This peculiar facility has constantly been of the utmost use to me in the course of my explorations. It works not only in open country but in cities, provided that they are unfamiliar. In London or Paris, for example, my rational mind is liable to interfere with the process, with the result that I can lose my way in the most ridiculous manner in the course of a quarter of a mile of quite familiar streets

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

But the one really disastrous feature was the attitude which I was compelled to assume about money. I was taught to expect every possible luxury. Nothing was too good for me; and I had no idea of what anything cost. It was all paid for behind my back. I was never taught that effort on my part might be required to obtain anything that I wanted; but one the other hand I

was kept criminally short of pocket money lest I should spend it in some disgraceful way, such as buying books or tobacco, or spending it on even worse abominations such as theatres and women. (I was encouraged to keep a dog!) I had therefore no sense of responsibility in the matter of money. It never occurred to me that it was possible to make it, and I was thus trained to be dependent to the point of mendicancy. The effect was, of course, disastrous. When I got to Cambridge I still had everything paid for me and in addition I found myself with unlimited credit which I could keep secret. When I came into my fortune a year later, I was utterly unprepared to use it with the most ordinary prudence, and all the inherent vices of my training had a perfectly free field for their development. Before, if I wanted to give a dinner party every day of the week, I could do it, but if I wanted a little cash my only alternative to the card table was the pawnshop, till I came of age. After that, it was simply a question of writing a cheque, which gave me no idea of the nature of the transaction involved. I doubt whether any one in history was ever furnished with such a completely rotten preparation for the management of practical affairs.

My residence at Eastbourne broke up very suddenly. During the whole of my adolescence I had taken the romantic point of view of love; and I found that the universal practice was for elder people to interfere in the affairs of their juniors. Two people could not decide to marry without rousing a hurricane. There was never any exception. Engagements were always being made and broken on unintelligible religious grounds. The family of the Lamberts was no exception to this. The eldest daughter was an acid old maid in the late twenties; the youngest was a hysterical monster of suppression. The middle girl was beautiful, voluptuous and normal. She was not sufficiently intelligent to revolt openly against her family; but her human instincts told her that something was wrong and that she had better get out of it. She was in love with a quite suitable young man and engaged to him on probation. The question was whether he would or wouldn't join the Plymouth Brethren. Naturally, the more he saw of them the less he liked them and he ultimately made up his mind to stand by the church of his fathers. On announcing this desolating decision he was overwhelmed with abuse and thrown out of the house. His fiancée was forbidden to communicate with him in any way, and to all intents and purposes imprisoned. I offered to arrange for correspondence with a view to an early elopement. But I couldn't stand the continuous abuse and ill-treatment which was the portion of the unfortunate girl. The family literally foamed at the mouth on every opportunity. Meals were a poisoned whirlwind. She was constantly reduced to tears and perhaps the happiest time she had was when she was actually being beaten. I ought to have conducted my intrigues with greater patience, no doubt, but it got on my nerves too much. One morning at breakfast I said about a millionth part of what I thought and the family started screaming. It was as if they had been

attacked by collective mania. Everything was thrown at me; they went for me with claws and fists. They were too blind with rage to know what they were doing. I simply knocked their heads together and walked out of the house. When I thought the atmosphere had had time to dissipate I returned with the intention of carrying out a rescue for the distressed damsel. They were too much scared to oppose me and I begged her to come away at once and go to her ex-fiancé's family. But she could not summon up courage to do it. The opportunity went by; and later in the afternoon my Uncle Tom, summoned by telegram, came to fetch me away from the accursed spot.

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

STANZA XII

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

I remember being amazed in later years when my patriotism was doubted. I wasn't going to have “Eintritt Verboten” put up over the Great Gate with a Prussian sentry to enforce it. I am perfectly aware that I am irrational. The traditions of England are intertwined inextricably with a million abuses and deformities which I am only too eager to destroy. But all Englishmen keep their brains in watertight compartments. It would be a comic degradation of make Trinity the headquarters of the Rationalist Press Association. But at the time I had not seen the logical incompatibility of my various positions. Shakespeare's patriotism in John of Gaunt's dying speech and Henry V appeals directly to my poetic sense.

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

> “Two skinny Frenchmen, one Portugee,
> One jolly Englishmen lick 'em all three.”

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

The atmosphere of Cambridge formed an admirable background for my state of mind. I saw myself as a romantic character in history. The Church of England, as represented by my Uncle Tom, had seemed a narrow tyranny, as detestable as that of the Plymouth Brethren; less logical and more hypocritical. My Uncle Jonathan was a sound churchman; but he kept his religion to himself and went his own triumphant way in the world, keeping ecclesiastical discipline at arm's length as far as he himself was concerned. He was *prima facie* one of the saved, whenever he troubled to think about it, no doubt; but in practice the Church of England was simply a machine for keeping the lower classes in their proper place. At Trinity it was the same thing. Christianity was the official religion with which it was convenient to comply, just as it is convenient to go to a good tailor. It was, in short, a political paganism.

I don't suppose that I appreciated this fact at the time, in that way. My attitude was determined by the unquestionable beauty of ecclesiastical architecture and the comparative dignity of the Ritual. But when I discovered that Chapel was compulsory I immediately struck back. The Junior Dean halled me for not attending Chapel, which I was certainly not going to do, because it involved early rising. I excused myself on the ground that I had been brought up among the Plymouth Brethren. The Dean asked me to come and see him occasionally and discuss the matter, and I had the astonishing impudence to write to him that “The seed planted by my father, watered by my mother's tears, would prove too hardy a growth to be uprooted even by his eloquence and learning”. It sounds like the most despicable hypocrisy, but it was pretty good cheek, and I had made up my mind that I would not be interfered with. I regarded any attempt to control my actions as an impertinent intrusion and I was not going to waste time in taking any but the easiest way out.

I entered for the Moral Science Tripos with the idea that it would help me to learn something about the nature of things. I don't know why it should have interested me. It must have been my subconscious will speaking. In any case, I was profoundly disgusted to find that Political Economy was one of the subjects. I attended the first lecture; the professor told us that the subject was a very difficult one because there were no reliable data. It is easy to imagine the effect of such a statement on a boy who had been trained in the exactitude of mathematics and chemistry. I closed my notebook and never attended another lecture. My tutor naturally called me to account, but by great good fortune he was a man of extraordinary ability — Dr. A. W. Verrall. He accepted my plea that my business in life was to study English Literature. He was, indeed, most sympathetic. He knew only too well that the University curriculum afforded no opportunities. He knew, too, that my school knowledge was amply sufficient to take me through the University

examinations without my doing any work for them. In fact, during my three years I only did one day's work for the university, and that consisted in employing a boy to read through a translation of a Greek play while I followed it in the text. I got either a first or second class in every subject.

One of the dons at Pembroke, a clergyman named Heriz Smith, ran a sort of secret cult which was disrespectfully called by outsiders the Belly-banders. There were said to be 7 degrees of initiation, in the highest of which the candidate was flagellated. I took the first degree out of curiosity. It made so little impression on me that I have altogether forgotten what took place. I remember that I was alone in the man's room with him. He blindfolded me. I waited for something to happen; it did not. I was, of course, utterly unable to divine what purpose might lie behind the scheme. It was, of course, looked upon as cant by the man's own colleagues, who probably presumed certain undesirable features.

I am rather sorry now that I did not continue. There may have been nothing in it beyond sensuous mysticism, but for all I know Heriz Smith may have developed a method of psycho-analysis of quite possibly great value. I am inclined to think that the most scientific and reliable way of exploring people's unconscious minds would be to watch their reaction to a well-thought-out series of unfamiliar circumstances. One could compare their respective qualities, such as will-power, patience, dignity, courage, imperturbability, and so on. Such data should be of great use in answering the question, “Werewithal shall a young man mend his ways?”

I was very put out by finding, as a first year man, that Hall was at half-past eight. I objected to my evenings being cut into by dining so late and soon acquired the habit of having all meals sent in from the kitchen. I was thus almost totally dissociated from the corporate life of the college. The only institution which interested me was the Debating Society, the Magpie and Stump. But I could not take even this seriously. It seemed to me absurd for these young asses to emit their callow opinions on important subjects. I was only interested in “rag” debates. I remember on one occasion that the suggestion had been made by a committee inspired by one of the tutors, the eminent mathematician, W. W. Rouse Ball, to establish a junior common-room. My contribution to the discussion was to say that “this proposal seems to me to be all Ball's.” (An even happier moment was in a debate on a proposal to institute a Passion Play in England, when Lord Kilmarnock said that it would certainly be a popular attraction to hear Arthur Roberts say “I thirst.”)

My three years were determined by the influence of a fourth year man named Adamson, whom I think I met at the Chess Club. He started to talk

to me about English literature. For the first time I heard the name Shelley. Wie gesagt, so gethan. Nothing else seemed to me worth while but a thorough reading of the great minds of the past. I bought all the classical authors. Whenever I found a reference of one to another I hastened to order his works. I spent the whole of my time in reading. It was very rare that I got to bed before daylight. But I had a horror of being thought a “smug”; and what I was doing was a secret from my nearest friends. Whenever they were about I was playing chess and cards. In the daytime I went canoeing or cycling. I had no occupations which brought me into close touch with any great body of undergraduates. I even gave up the habit of going round to see people, though I was always at home to anyone who chose to call. I was not interested in the average man; I cultivated the freak. It was not that I liked abnormal people, it was simply the scientific attitude that it is from the abnormal that we learn.

Most people of this disposition are readily carried away into anti-social channels. But with me this was not the case. I dropped my subscription to the Boat Club because I was getting nothing out of it; but I was always wildly enthusiastic about the success of the boat. I have always had a passionate yearning for mankind, wholesale and retail, but I cannot endure to have them anywhere around. It is a very peculiar psychology; yet it is frequently found among poets. We are lonely and suffer intensely on that account. We are prepared to love any and every specimen of humanity in himself, for himself, and by himself; but even a dinner party gets on our nerves.

It is perhaps part of the psychology of sensitiveness. We cannot bear having our corners knocked off, and at the same time we are so well aware of the intense suffering of isolation that we long to lose ourselves in a crowd at a football match. I can be perfectly happy as an unknown individual in a revel, from a political meeting to a masked ball; but inevitably one's unique qualities draw attention to one; the cruel consciousness of self is reawakened, one becomes utterly miserable and flees to the ends of the earth to be rid of one's admirers. A certain coarseness is inseparable from popularity and one is therefore constantly driven away from the very thing one needs most. It is a quasi-electrical phenomenon. One can only find satisfaction in intimate union with one's opposite.

This fact explains very largely the peculiar nature of the love affair of great men. They cannot tolerate their like. Their superiority is recognized as the cause of their pain, and they assuage their pain by cultivating people to whom that superiority means nothing. They deliberately seek the most degraded and disgusting specimens of women that exist. Otherwise, they brutalize themselves by addiction to drink and drugs. The motive is always the same; to lose consciousness of their Promethean pangs.

I must here point out that the social system of England makes it impossible for a young man of spirit and intelligence to satisfy his nature with regard to sex in any reasonable way. The young girl of position similar to his own is being fattened for the market. Even when his own situation makes it possible for him to obtain her he has to pay an appalling price; and it becomes more difficult than ever for him to enjoy female companionship. Monogyny is nonsense for any one with a grain of imagination. The more sides he has to his nature, the more women he needs to satisfy it. The same is, of course, true, *mutatis mutandis*, of women. A woman risks her social existence by a single experiment. A young man is compelled by the monogamic system to develop his character by means of corrupt society vampires or women of the lower classes, and though he may learn a great deal from these sources, it cannot but be unfortunate that he has no opportunity to learn from women of his own birth, breeding, education and rank in society.

Now, monogamy has very little to do with mongyny; and should have less. Monogamy is only a mistake because it leaves the excess women unsatisfied and unprovided for. But apart from this, it provides for posterity, and it is generally recognized that this is the crux of all practical arguments on the subject. But the defect of monogamy, as generally understood, is that it is connected with the sexual appetite. The Practical Wisdom of the Astrologers has made this clear. The Fifth House (love, children) has nothing to do with the Seventh (marriage, lawsuits, public enemies). Marriage would lead to very little trouble if men would get rid of the idea that it is anything more than a financial and social partnership. People should marry for convenience and agree to go their separate ways without jealousy. It should be a point of honour for the woman to avoid complicating the situation with children by other men, unless her husband be willing, which he would be if he really loved her. It is monstrous for a man to pretend to be devoted to securing his wife's happiness and yet to wish to deprive her of a woman's supreme joy: that of bearing a child to the man whom she desires sexually, and is therefore indicated by nature as the proper father, though he may be utterly unsuitable as a husband. In most cases this would be so, for it must obviously be rare that a man with a genius for paternity should also possess a talent for domesticity. We have heard a great deal in recent years of the freedom of women. They have gained what they thought they wanted and it has availed them nothing. They must adopt the slogan, “There shall be no property in human flesh.” They must train men to master their sexual selfishness, while of course allowing them the same freedom as they themselves will enjoy. The true offences against marriage arise when sexual freedom results in causing injury to the health or estate of the partner. But the sentimental wrong of so-called infidelity is a symptom of the childishness of the race.

Among artists, the system here advocated has always been more or less in full swing. Such societies exist in circumstances highly inimical to a satisfactory life. Financial considerations alone make this obvious; yet it is notorious that such people are almost uniformly happy. There is no revolt against the facts of life, because there is no constraint. The individual is respected as such and is allowed to act as he or she likes without penalty or even reproach. Only when selfish or commercial considerations arise do we find catastrophe.

It is commonly supposed that women themselves are the chief obstacle to such an arrangement. But this is only because they have been drilled in to thinking that the happiness and well-being of the children depend upon their supporting the existing system. When you tackle a woman on the subject she pretends to be very shocked; and hysterically denies the most obvious facts. But she wilts under cross-examination and agrees with the above conclusions in a very short time. For women have no morality in the sense of the world which is ordinarily understood in Anglo-Saxondom. Women never let ideals interfere with their practical good sense. They are also influenced by selfishness; it is natural to them to put the interests of their children before their own. Men, on the other hand, are hard to convince. When forced to analyse the situation, they arrive not at a reason but at a prejudice, and this is purely the brainless bestial lust for exclusive possession.

Anthropology proves these theorems thoroughly. The first step in civilization is to restrain women from infidelity. The institutions of the pardah, sati and the marriage laws all show that men think that women must be kept under lock and key, whereas women have always realized that it is impossible and undesirable to prevent men from taking their happiness where they find it. The emancipation of women, therefore, depends entirely upon leaving them free to act as men do. Their good sense will prevent them from inflicting the real wrongs; and besides, their complete independence and happiness will encourage them in nobility and generosity.

We already see, in America, the results of the Emancipation of Women from the economic fetter. There is an immense class of bachelor girls (and of married women whose husbands are strictly business machines) who pick up men with the same nonchalance as the young “blood” picked up women in my time at Cambridge.

I found myself, from the very beginning of my university career, urged by circumstances of every sort to indulge my passion in every way but the right one. My ill-health had prevented me from taking part in the ordinary amusements of the public school boy. My skill in avoiding corporal punishment and my lack of opportunity for inflicting it had saved me from develop-

ing the Sadistic or Masochistic sides to my character. But at Cambridge I discovered that I was of an intensely passionate nature, physiologically speaking. My poetic instincts, further, transformed the most sordid liaisons into romance, so that the impossibility of contracting a suitable and serious relation did not worry me. I found, moreover, that any sort of satisfaction acted as a powerful spiritual stimulus. Every adventure was the direct cause of my writing poetry. In the periods of suppression my brain had been completely clogged; I was as incapable of thought of any kind as if I had had the toothache.

I have a genuine grudge against the system on this account. Whole months of my life, which might have been profitably spent in all sorts of work, were taken up by the morbid broodings of the unsatisfied appetite. Repression is as mentally unwholesome as constipation, and I am furious, to this hour, that some of the best years of my life, which should have been spent in acquiring knowledge, were sterilized by the suffocating stupor of preoccupation with sex. It was not that my mind was working on the subject; it was simply unable to work. It was a blind, horrible ache for relief. The necessities of men in this respect vary enormously. I was, no doubt, an exceptional case. But I certainly found even forty-eight hours of abstinence sufficient to dull the fine edge of my mind. Woe unto them by whom offences come! The stupidity of having had to waste uncounted priceless hours in chasing what ought to have been brought to the back door every evening with the milk!

Cambridge is, of course, an ideal place for a boy in my situation. Prostitution is to all intents and purposes non-existent, but nearly all the younger women of the district are eager to co-operate in the proper spirit — that of romance and passion.

There is thus little trace of public school *faute de mieux* pæderasty: it survives only in very small “æsthetic” coteries, composed mostly of congenital perverts, and in theological circles, where fear of scandal and of disease inhibit natural gratification. Oxford, of course, is different, chiefly, I believe, owing to the great Balliol tradition of statesmanship. The idea seems to be that intrigues with women are more dangerous than useful to a rising politician: while on the other side of the fence the state of the Law supplies one with a pull on one's intimates on the Bench or in the Privy Council which is only the stronger because it is not, and never can be, used.

STANZA XIII

Till the Great Gate of Trinity opened me the way to freedom I had always been obsessed more or less either by physical weakness or the incubus of adolescence. I had never known what it was to be able to work freely and gladly. Now, however, I was able to give myself with absolute concentration to literature and I read everything important in the language with the utmost thoroughness. For example, I read the whole of the writings of people like Carlyle, Swift, Coleridge, Fielding, Gibbon, and so on. In this way I obtained a much more comprehensive idea of these men than if I had, as people usually do, picked out the masterpieces.

I was very anxious that my style should not be influenced by my contemporaries, and also not to waste myself on anybody who had not stood the test of time. I made it a rule to read no one who had not been dead for fifty years, unless brought under my notice in some special way. For example, I could not avoid Swinburne, as one of my friends was crazy about him and I could not doubt, after the first acquaintance, that that he was a classic. Similarly, I allowed myself to read Sir Richard Burton, because *The Arabian Nights* was an established masterpiece and his was the best translation. I also read a good deal of French literature and all the best Greek and Latin authors. But my peculiar temperament made me balk at one or two fences. I had certain innate ideas about literature; I say innate because I cannot imagine on what grounds I formed them. Thus I could not tolerate the idea of a novel exceeding a certain length, with the result that I have never read a page of Samuel Richardson. It is easier to understand the objection which I had to what I thought gossip. I have never read Boswell and have never been able to bring myself to face the average memoir. With regard to history[1] again, I demanded that the subject should be important. I did not see why I should bother my head about the Crimean War. I studied philosophy and kindred subjects with the greatest enthusiasm; but resented the form in which it was set forth by such people as Plato. It seemed to me that the argument of any of Plato's dialogues might have been presented much more clearly and cogently in about a tenth of the space. I made a very thorough study of logic as being my critical apparatus.

It is hard to say what motive impelled me to work so desperately hard as I did. Much of the work was anything but pleasant; and at the time, no less than now, it appeared quite useless. But I had a strong sense of duty about it. I think the idea was mostly to make sure that I knew everything that there was to be known, and incidentally to avoid the possibility of plagiarism. There was a certain tinge of vanity in the matter as well. I thought it shameful to leave anything unread. I was influenced by Ruskin's imbecile

remark that any book worth reading was worth buying, and in consequence acquired books literally by the ton.

My plan of going from each author to those whom he quoted had a great advantage. It established a rational consecution in my research; and as soon as I reached a certain point the curves became re-entrant, so that my knowledge acquired a comprehensiveness which could never have been so satisfactorily attained by any arbitrary curriculum. I began to understand the real relation of one subject to another. I think I must have unconsciously asked myself which subject treated of reality in the most intimate and ultimate sense. I was, of course, far from the conception that all truth is equally important, or that no truth can by itself cover the whole ground of existence. My tendency was to discard certain types of research as immaterial. I gradually got the idea that the thing I was looking for was abstruse; and one of the results of this was to induce me to read the literature of alchemy. It is perhaps natural for a young man to confuse obscurity with profundity.

With regard to the choice of a profession, I decided on the Diplomatic Service. It seemed to me to afford the greatest opportunities for worldly enjoyment, while at the same time demanding the highest qualities of mind. The subtlety of intrigue has always fascinated me. It is very curious that this should have been the case, in view of my master passion for truth and my relentless determination to tell it without regard for consequences. The obstacle to my success in the preliminary canter was that I had no aptitude whatever for learning languages. I could master the grammar of a language in a few hours; but I was impatient of acquiring the vocabulary. Genders and inflections irritated my sense of simplicity. It is also difficult for me to acquire a language by ear, partly because my hearing is not particularly acute, and partly because I resent any conversation whatever which does not deal with matters of prime importance. The early stages of learning a language are, therefore, agonising.

I had been advised with regard to the fourth language required for the examination not to take Italian, because so many people spoke it so perfectly, or Spanish, because it was considered the easiest way into the service, but Russian, on account of its extreme difficulty, and because the knowledge of it made one eligible for appointment to the most interesting and brilliant Court in Europe. This led to my going to St. Petersburg, a journey which worked wonders in enlarging my outlook on the world.

The passion for travel was already very strong in me. Home was my idea of Hell; and London itself had a sordid aspect which never appealed to me. The idea of wickedness in London is connected with that of shame, and besides this there are certainly excellent reasons for a poet to feel unhappy

there. To begin with, I can't stand the climate. I have known rare days in May and June when youth pays a fleeting visit to town, when the sunlight excites and the breeze braces one. It is this idea of the Young Dionysus with which I am in love. I always feel myself as about eighteen or twenty; I always look at the world through those eyes. It is my constant sorrow that things do not always accommodate themselves to that point of view; and it is my eternal mission to redeem the Universe to that state of intoxicated innocence and spiritual sensuality.

"I bring ye wine from above.
From the vats of the storied sun.
For every one of ye love,
And life for every one."

The air of London is damp and depressing. It suggests the consciousness of sin. Whether one has a suite in the Savoy or in an attic in Hoxton, the same spiritual atmosphere weighs upon the soul.

T

o a poet, moreover, the artistic side of London is the abomination of desolation. The plays are commercialized either for sentimentality or pornography. There is something uncomfortable in going to see a play by Shakespeare or Ibsen. Actors and spectators alike seem to be engaged in a dreary ritual. Grand opera is even worse. Covent Garden patronizes Wagner; he is an excuse for the display of diamonds. I shall never forget my first experience of Continental opera: Lohengrin at Stockholm. The atmosphere was absolutely natural; people had gone there because they really liked the music. I was transported into my own ideal world of love and melody. The caresses of my companion were the overflowing of ecstatic passion. Sin had been abolished, I was back in Eden.

In London one cannot even go to the National Gallery or the British Museum with a pure heart as one goes to the Louvre or the Prado. One cannot get away from the sense that one is performing an act of piety.

Concerts are even more dreadful than the Opera. The surroundings are invariably bleak; one feels that the artist is doing it on purpose. Singing and playing demand background. Singing is the natural expression of human emotion, the joy of youth and life as connected with the landscapes of Corot and Gauguin, or with the interiors of Teniers. Elaborate instrumental music asks for appropriate architecture, not necessarily that of the cathedral. Music should have its own temples. London concert halls are blasphemous and obscene.

Before the cinema — the panorama. The camera obscura and the magic lantern were the popular scientific wonders of the period. Some nameless *pompier* had sluiced I do not know how many acres of canvas with a representation of Niagara. They built a pavilion to house it. One was supposed to be standing on Goat Island — in fact, one was rather the goat — and one walked round a vast gallery and inspected each segment of the waterfall in turn. In due course everyone had see it and the question was what to do with the building. They turned it into a *palais de glace* with real ice. I, always keen on skating, bought a ticket for the season. The convention was for the ordinary skater to swing round and round the outside, while the experts performed their evolutions in the centre. At that time I was bent on learning the outside forward loop, which involves raising the unemployed leg very high until you discover the knack. Absorbed in this labour I failed to observe the Duke of Orleans, a glaring girl on either arm. He swerved, swanking, out of the ruck and collided with me. We both sat down very hard, but I on the point of his skate to the detriment of my much prized perineum. Being then a perfect young fool, as I am now a perfect old one, I supposed it incumbent on my race and caste to pretend not to be hurt, so I forced myself to go on skating despite agony so great that I could hardly bite back the tears, until I thought I had done enough for honour and felt free to slip away. I was engaged that night to a committee meeting of the Climbing Club at the rooms of H. V. Reade in Jermyn Street. I managed somehow to sit through the meeting, the matter being made worse by my insane bashfulness which prevented me asking my host to let me use his bedroom. We proceeded to a restaurant to dinner, but there I broke down and excused myself.

The rest of the evening's entertainment remains a mystery. I have a vague memory of being stretched on the seat of a railway carriage and I learned later that I had reached home, some six miles from London, soaked to the skin. I suppose I must have wandered about in the rain for an indefinite period, in pain too great to know what I was doing except to try to be brave. The blow had set up cystitis which kept me in bed for the next three weeks. The inflammation gradually disappeared after spreading to the prostate gland and the urethra. Nor was that the end of the trouble. The urethritis caused a discharge which proved very refractory to treatment and ultimately determined a triple stricture for which I am being treated at the moment of dictating this paragraph more than a quarter of a century after the accident. The moral is, of course, to avoid the Bourbons, though, as the duke is reported to be dying at the present moment, it is quite possible that his physician is shaking his head wisely and saying, “Ah, Your Highness, this is what comes from getting mixed up with people like Aleister Crowley! . . .”

The very streets testify against the city. On the one hand we have pale stunted hurrying pygmies jostling each other in the bitter search for bread;

an ant heap is a miracle of beauty and dignity in comparison. On the other, when it comes to excitement or amusement, we see perspiring brutes belching the fumes of beer; course, ugly parodies of apes. Nature affords no parallel to their degradation. There is no open air life, physical or mental, and there is the ever-abiding sense of sin and shame to obsess these slaves. Nowhere, except in English cities, do these conditions exist. Slum life there is elsewhere, and misery enough; pitiful struggle, monstrous greed and triumphant brutality. But only in England are the people poisoned through and through; elsewhere there is a sense of independence even in the most servile. The Russian mujik is in his way an aristocrat.

And the cause of all these phenomena is one and the same. It is the Anglo-Saxon conception of Christianity which pollutes the race. Only the well fed Pagan, whether he be a bishop or a bookmaker, is exempt, because he either does not take religion seriously or takes it individually without reference to his neighbour. The most bigoted members of the Greek and Roman communions of the Continent, though they may feel their religion passionately and make it the mainspring of their lives, are not bound together by that insect-like collective consciousness which stamps the Anglo-Saxon. The English Pagan is in nine cases out of ten a Norman or a Celt. He has the aristocratic consciousness, whatever he may tell you about his religious opinions. Now it is all very well to be one of the master class and smile contemptuously while bowing the knee in the temple of Rimmon, but a poet cannot be content with the situation. Hence the most intensely aristocratic types, like Shelley and Byron, instead of acquiescing in the social system which made them superiors, felt with acute agony the degradation of the slaves among whom they moved, and became revolutionaries and exiles because they could not endure to live in such a degraded community.

Certain classes in England possess manliness and self-respect. As a rule they are connected with sport and agriculture, or are skilled workmen. The essence of aristocracy is to take a pride in being what you are, whatever that may be. There is no room for this in industrialism and the result is that one can watch a London thoroughfare for hours without even seeing an individual whose nonentity is not repulsive. Everyone who possesses natural advantages has got out of the ruck and takes very good care to avoid further contamination. Such people lead lives of artificial seclusion. It is part of their Freudian protection to become unconscious of the mob. But it is the business of the poet to see, hear and know everything. He dare not let himself forget. England is the most fertile mother of poets, but she kills the weak and drives the strong to happier land. James Thomson, John Davidson, Richard Middleton, Ernst Dowson and I don't know how many more even in our own generation found England unendurable for this one reason. The English poet must either make a successful exile or die of a broken heart.

At Cambridge I was surrounded by a more or less happy, healthy, prosperous set of parasites. The paganism of the university had to a great extent redeemed them from the sense of sin. But during vacation I either hid myself in the mountains among the sturdy peasants or went abroad. North-Western Europe appealed to me. There was a certain element of romance in the long nights, the cold clear air, the ice. I loved to wander solitary in Holland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. There was a mystery in the streets and a spontaneous gaiety in the places of amusement, which satisfied my soul. Life seemed both more remote and more intense. As a stranger, I never came into contact with the *malaise*, the soul-searching, the psychological dissatisfaction which Ibsen and Strindberg describe. But though my view was thus entirely superficial, it was none the less in a certain sense profound and accurate. One can get a very good idea of a country by traveling through it in the train. The outward and visible signs do, after all, reveal, especially to the poet, its inward and spiritual graces. The people who lead one astray are the analysts who fail to come out the other side. Mr. Jorrocks and Mr. Pickwick give a better idea of England than Charles Reade or Sir Walter Besant. Dumas père tells us more about France than Zola. A great deal of the interior workings of a national mind ought to be taken for granted. One can distinguish profitably between two pretty girls at the end of an opera glass. It is absolutely misleading to disembowel them, and the average so-called psychological writer tries to do. There are all sorts of obscure processes always at work in nature and they are more or less the same for all of us. To insist upon them is one of the worst kinds of false thinking. Zola's peasants in *La Tere* are untrue, except as among themselves. The ultimate issue is that these people breed cattle, grow corn and wine, and fight like demons for their country. Henri Barbusse's Le Feu was a disgrace to literature. Mass psychology is the only important thing about the masses. The great artists, such as Emily Brontë — or was it her brother? — make no such blunder. They deal with individuals; but they never lose sight of the fact that the individual is only such to a limited extent. He is only one figure in a picture; and when he stands out unnecessarily, there is something wrong with the picture. Captain Marryat's stories contain masterpieces of individual portraiture, but he never loses sight of the background. I am convinced that the English people were very much happier under the old semi-feudal system. “Hard cases make bad law.” We have abolished all kinds of injustice on our attention being called to them; but the result has been that we have created an artificial doctrinaire society in which nobody is really happy or prosperous. All classes are complaining. We are in the condition of a man whose nerves all talk at once instead of doing their work quietly. The most appalling of political mistakes is to develop consciousness in sections of the social organism which are not its brains. The crash has come in Russia; and we shall not have long to wait.

But in those days of adolescence I had no inducement to do any political thinking. The atmosphere was one of prosperity and stability. It was taken for granted that England was the greatest country in the world and that nothing could go wrong. One hear about Ireland as a perennial nuisance; and Mr. Gladstone was regarded as a traitor, neither more nor less. One of my tutors had been a Caius don named d'Arcy, whose father was the rector of Nymphsfield in Glouchestershire. I had spent some time there — to make my first appearance in the hunting field. “Chapel-folk” were looked upon as criminals of no class. I remember the old rector clucking over a riddle. “Why is Gladstone's hair like a tuft of grass?” “Because it grows on the top of an old sod.” That was the quality of political thought which was considered on the same level of certainty as two and two make four. I recall two lines of a poem that I wrote to Lord Rosebery:

“And now, my lord, in medias res,
Get rid of all your red Rad fleas.”

I had been invited to meet Gladstone in north Wales, refused to go and wrote him a poem.

LINES ON BEING INVITED TO MEET THE PREMIER IN WALES, SEPTEMBER 1892.

I will not shake thy hand old man,
I will not shake thy hand;
You bear a traitor's brand, old man,
You bear a liar's brand.
Thy talents are profound and wide,
Apparent power to win;
It is not every one has lied
A nation into sin.

And look not thou so black, my friend,
Nor seam that hoary brow;
Thy deeds are seamier, my friend,
Thy record blacker now.
Your age and sex forbid, old man,
I need not tell you how,
Or else I'd knock you down,[2] old man,
Like that extremist cow.

You've gained your every seat, my friend,
By perjuring your soul;
You've climbed to Downing Street, my friend,

A very greasy poll.
You bear a traitor's brand, old man,
You bear a liar's brand;
I will *not* shake thy hand, old man,
I will *not* shake thy hand.

And I didn't.

My life at Cambridge did nothing to make me think more deeply. With regard to foreign politics, the position was parallel. It was pure Kipling; but (in another water-tight compartment) I was passionately enamored of the views of Shelley, though I did not correlate them with any practical programme.

There was yet another compartment. Scott, Burns and my cousin Gregor had made me a romantic Jacobite. I regarded the Houses of Hanover and Coburg as German usurpers; and I wished to place “Mary III and IV” on the throne. I was a bigoted legitimist. I actually joined a conspiracy on behalf of Don Carlos, obtained a commission to work a machine gun, took pains to make myself a first-class rifle shot and studied drill, tactics and strategy. However, when the time came for the invasion of Spain, Don Carlos got cold feet. The conspiracy was disclosed; and Lord Ashburnham's yacht, which was running the arms, fell into the hands of the Spanish navy.

This part of my mind did succeed in getting disturbed by the other parts. My reactionary conservatism came into conflict with my anti-Catholicism. A reconciliation was effected by means of what they called the Celtic Church. Here was a romantic and mystical idea which suited my political and religious notions down to the ground. It lived and moved in an atmosphere of fairies, seal-women and magical operations. Sacramentalism was kept in the foreground and sin was regarded without abhorrence. Chivalry and mystery were its pillars. It was free from priestcraft and tyranny, for the simple reason that it did not really exist!

My innate transcendentalism leapt out towards it. The *Morte d'Arthur, Lohengrin* and *Parsifal* were my world. I not only wanted to go out on the quest of the Holy Grail, I intended to do it. I got the idea of chastity as a positive virtue. It was delightful to be pure. Previously, chastity had been my chief abomination; the sign-manual of cowardice, heartlessness and slavery. In the Celtic Church there was no fear of God, but a communion with Him as nobly familiar as the relations of Roland and Charlemagne. I still too everything very literally. Browning's quotation:

“Childe Roland to the dark tower came"

was as real to me as the Battle of Waterloo. In a sense, perhaps, even more so. I think it was only due to my subconscious common sense that I did not go and see Browning and ask him where to find the dark tower!

1 — There is no such thing as history. The facts, even were they available, are too numerous to grasp. A selection must be made; and this can only be one-sided, because the selector is enclosed in the same network of time and space as his subject.
2 — Mr. Gladstone was attacked by a cow in Hawarden Park in 1891.

STANZA XIV

I obtained the honour of knighthood[1] from one of Don Carlos' lieutenants. It is part of the legitimist theory that the sovereign had abrogated to himself the monopoly of conferring spurs, while on the other hand a woman could not confer knighthood. All Victorian creations are invalid.

The effect of adopting the official Anglo-German theory is even more patent to-day than in the nineties. Then it was city knights; the next step was the matinée idol; now the pawnbroker, the movie star and the low comedian have made the title a badge of nastiness. There is only one honour connected with true knighthood, that of being a man of honour, of having taken the vows — to uphold the right, to serve mankind, to protect the distressed, and generally to exercise the manly virtues. When renegade Jews and clowns walk in to dinner before gentlemen, the latter may prefer to go without.

I took my admission to the Order with absolute seriousness, keeping vigil over my arms in a wood. The theory of the Celtic Church was that Romanism was a late heresy, or at least schism. The finest cathedral in the world was too small for the Church, as Brand found. The mountains and forests were consecrated sports. The nearest thing to a material house would be a hermitage such as one was likely to encounter while traveling on the Quest.

But all these ideals, seriously as I entertained them, were in the nature of reverie. In practical life I was still passionately engaged in cleansing myself from the mire of Christianity by deliberate acts of sin and worldliness. I was so happy to be free from the past tyranny that I found continual joy in affirming my emancipation.

There were thus several divers strands in the loom of my soul which had not yet been woven into a harmonious pattern. I dealt with life empirically, taking things as they came, without basing them on any fundamental principle.

Two main events were destined to put me on the road towards myself. The first took place in Stockholm about midnight of December 31st, 1896. I was awakened to the knowledge that I possessed a magical means of becoming conscious of and satisfying a part of my nature which had up to that moment concealed itself from me. It was an experience of horror and pain, combined with a certain ghostly terror, yet at the same time it was the key to the purest and holiest spiritual ecstasy that exists. At the time, I was not aware of the supreme importance of the matter. It seemed to me little more

than a development of certain magical processes with which I was already familiar. It was an isolated experience, not repeated until exactly twelve months later, to the minute. But this second occasion quickened my spirit, always with the result of “loosening the girders of the soul”, so that my animal nature stood rebuked and kept silence in the presence of the immanent divinity of the Holy Ghost; omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, yet blossoming in my soul as if the entire forces of the universe from all eternity were concentrated and made manifest in a single rose.

The second event took place in October 1897. The occasion was an attack of illness. It was nothing very serious and I had long been accustomed to expect to die before I came of age. But for some reason or other I found myself forced to meditate upon the fact of mortality. It was impressed upon me that I hadn't a moment to lose. There was no fear of death or of a possible “hereafter”; but I was appalled by the idea of the futility of all human endeavour. Suppose, I said to myself, that I make a great success in diplomacy and become Ambassador to Paris. There was no good in that — I could not so much as remember the name of the ambassador a hundred years ago. Again, I wanted to be a great poet. Well, here I was in one of the two places in England that made a specialty of poets, yet only an insignificant fraction of the three thousand men in Residence knew anything about so great a man as Æschylus. I was not sufficiently enlightened to understand that the fame of the man had little or nothing to do with his real success, that the proof of his prowess lay in the invisible influence with he had had upon generations of men. My imagination went a step further. Suppose I did more than Cæsar or Napoleon in one line, or than Homer and Shakespeare in the other — my work would be automatically cancelled when the globe became uninhabitable for man.

I did not go into a definite trance in this meditation; but a spiritual consciousness was born in me corresponding to that which characterizes the Vision of the Universal Sorrow, as I learnt to call it later on. In Buddhist phraesology, I perceived the First Noble Truth — Sabbé Pi Dukkham — everything is sorrow. But this perception was confined to the planes familiar to the normal human consciousness. The fatuity of any work based upon physical continuity was evident. But I had at this time no reason for supposing that the same criticism applied to any transcendental universe. I formulated my will somewhat as follows: “I must find a material in which to work which is immune from the forces of change.” I suppose that I still accepted Christian metaphysics in some sense or another. I had been satisfied to escape from religion to the world. I now found that there was no satisfaction here. I was not content to be annihilated. Spiritual facts were the only things worth while. Brain and body were valueless except as the instruments of the soul.

The ordinary materialist usually fails to recognize that only spiritual affairs count for anything, even in the grossest concerns of life. The facts of a murder are nothing in themselves; they are only adduced in order to prove felonious intent. Material welfare is only important as assisting men towards a consciousness of satisfaction.

From the nature of things, therefore, life is a sacrament; in other words, all our acts are Magical Acts. Our spiritual consciousness acts through the will and its instruments upon material objects, in order to produce changes which will result in the establishment of the new conditions of consciousness which we wish. That is the definition of Magick. The obvious example of such an operation in its most symbolic and ceremonial form is the Mass. The will of the priest transmutes a wafer in such wise that it becomes charged with the divine substance in so active a form that its physical injection gives spiritual nourishment to the communicant. But all our actions fit this equation. A tailor with the toothache takes a portion of the wealth derived from the business to which he has consecrated himself, a symbol of his accumulated and stored energy, in order to have the tooth removed and so to recover the consciousness of physical well-being.

Put in this way, the Magical Theory of existence is self-evident. I did not apprehend it clearly at this time; but I unconsciously acted upon it as soon as I had discovered the worthlessness of the world. But I was so far from perceiving that every act is magical, whether one likes it or not, that I supposed the escape from matter to involve a definite invasion of the spiritual world. Indeed, I was so far from understanding that matter was in its nature secondary and symbolic, that my principal preoccupation was to obtain first-hand sensory evidence of spiritual beings. In other words, I wanted to evoke the denizens of the other planes to visible and audible appearance.

This resolution was the first manifestation of my true will. I had thrown myself with the utmost enthusiasm into various occupations from time to time, but they had never occupied my entire attention. I had never given myself wholly to chess, mountaineering or even to poetry. Now, for the first time, I felt myself prepared to expend my resources of every kind to attain my purpose.

To me the spiritual world consisted roughly of the Trinity and their angels on the one side; the Devil and his on the other. It is absolutely sophistical to pretend that Christianity is not Manichaean in essence. The Vedanta theory of Advaitism in the Upanishads makes evil — and indeed all manifested existence — Maya, pure illusion. But even at this, there is no satisfactory explanation of the appearance of the illusion. In Christianity evil is just as real as good; and so long as two opposites exist they must either be equal or there

must be a third component to balance them. Now this is in itself sophistical, for the third component only exists as a make-weight; and it is pure fiction to discriminate between two things whose only function is to counterbalance a third thing. In respect of the Universe of Discourse involved, a proposition cannot have two contradictories. If the opposite of good exists at all, as it must, if “good” is to have any meaning, it must be exactly equal in quantity and quality to that good. On the Christian hypothesis, the reality of evil makes the devil equal to God. This is the heresy of Manes, no doubt. But those who condemn Manes must, despite themselves, implicitly affirm his theorem.

I seem to have understood this instinctively; and since I must take sides with one party or the other it was not difficult to make up my mind. The forces of good were those which had constantly oppressed me. I saw them daily destroying the happiness of my fellow-men. Since, therefore, it was my business to explore the spiritual world, my first step must be to get into personal communication with the devil. I had heard a good deal about this operation in a vague way; but what I wanted was a Manual of technical instruction. I devoted myself to black magic; and the bookseller — Deighton Bell, God bless 'em! — immediately obliged with *The Book of Black Magic and of Pacts*, which, judging by the title, was exactly what I needed.

It was with intense disappointment and distrust that I read this compilation. The author was a pompous, ignorant and affected dipsomaniac from America, and he treated his subject with the vulgarity of Jerome K. Jerome, and the beery, leering frivolity of a red-nosed Music Hall Comedian making jokes about mothers-in-law and lodgers.

It was, however, clear, even from the garbled texts of the Grimoires which he quoted, that the diabolists had no conception of the Satan hymned by Milton and Huysmans. They were not protagonists in the spiritual warfare against Restriction, against the oppressors of the human soul, the blasphemers who denied the supremacy of the Will of Man. They merely aimed at achieving contemptible or malicious results, such as preventing a huntsman from killing game, finding buried treasure, bewitching the neighbours' cows, or “acquiring the affection of a judge”. For all their pretended devotion to Lucifer or Belial, they were sincere Christians in spirit, and inferior Christians at that, for their methods were puerile. The Prayer-book, with its petitions for rain and success in battle, was almost preferable. The one point of superiority was nevertheless cardinal; their method was in intention scientific. That is, they proposed a definite technic by which a man could compel the powers of Nature to do his bidding, no less than the engineer, the chemist and the electrician. There was none of the wheedling, bribery and servility which is of the essence of that kind of prayer which seeks material gratifica-

tions. Sir J. G. Frazer has pointed out this distinction in *The Golden Bough*. Magic he defines as Science which does not work. It would be fairer to state this proposition in slightly different terms: magic is science in *posse*.

The compiler of *The Book of Black Magic and of Pacts* is not only the most ponderously platitudinous and priggishly prosaic of pretentiously pompous pork-butchers of the language, but the most voluminously voluble. I cannot dig over the dreary deserts of his drivel in search of the passage which made me write to him. But it was an oracular obscurity which hinted that he knew of a Hidden Church withdrawn from the world in whose sanctuaries were preserved the true Mysteries of Initiation. This was one better than the Celtic Church; I immediately asked him for an introduction. He replied kindly and intelligibly, suggesting that I should read *The Cloud upon the Sanctuary* by Councillor von Eckartshausen. With this book I retired to Wastdale Head for the Easter vacation of 1898. This period proved to be the critical moment of my early life; in two most important respects it determined the direction of my efforts. The two were intimately linked in certain ways and in order to make clear my position I must retrace my steps for a little and bring myself up to date in the matter of climbing, as also of literature.

The summers of 1896 and 1897 were spent in the Alps. They were the logical development of my previous experience. I had made up my mind to look for a climbing companion of a permanent character. I had met Professor Norman Collie in Westmorland. His teaching and advice were invaluable. I arranged to spend part of the summer with Morris Travers, Collie's demonstrator at University college, London, and a very admirable “second man” he was. A man who writes treatises on “Gas Manipulation” and who knows how to rebuff the advances of his girl students is an ideal companion on a mountain. Unfortunately, he obtained an appointment in a far country and had to give up climbing in consequence. But we made our mark in the Alps, beginning with the first guideless traverse of the Mönch, the Vuibez Séracs, and the first traverse of the Aiguilles Rouges, climbing all the pinnacles.

Travers joined me for a short time in August. We began by making the first guideless traverse of the Mönch. We started for the Guggi hut within two or three hours of his arrival, he having come straight through from London without breaking the journey. We started the next morning very early and made great speed up the lower slopes in our enthusiasm. Travers became extremely mountain sick. It was obvious that the barometric pressure had nothing to do with it; he was simply upset from the fatigue of the journey, the change to coarse food and the sudden call upon his full physical strength when out of training. Numerous other similar observations prevented me from ever being so foolish as to attribute this sickness to the alti-

tude. I have produced all the symptoms on Beachy Head in men who had been perfectly comfortable on the high Alps; and I experienced no discomfort whatever above 23,000 feet.

Travers and I wandered about the Oberland for a week without going below the snow-line. His mountain sickness soon disappeared, but he became badly sunburnt. In those days we cherished the superstition that lanolin was a preventative; but the application seemed to feed the sores instead of healing them. A few days after leaving me he arrived at the Gornergrat, whither he had dispatched his baggage, in fluttering rags and with a face which was little better than one single suppurating sore. A lady sitting outside the hotel exclaimed indignantly that such disgusting objects should not be allowed to frequent public places. It was his mother!

Talking of sunburn, there was once — improbable as it may appear — a Dr. Bowles, of Folkestone, interested in the subject. He arranged with Morris Travers to carry out a research on the actinic value of the solar rays on glaciers. Travers and I and his brother went to live in a hut on a glacier somewhere above Bel Alp, where Travers was to carry out some experiments. One day there arrived Bowles and a number of voluntary victims, each member of the party having his face painted with grease paint of divers colours, the right half vermilion and the left sky-blue, or the left bright green and the right orange, and so on. I record, with regret, that I, who had refused to abdicate the dignity of humanity to this extent, was the only person in the party who was not badly burnt. The sun showed no respect to persons in the matter of their camouflage. My freedom was due to the fact that I had spent most of my life in the open air and gradually acquired immunity. It sometimes strikes me that the whole of science is a piece of impudence: that Nature can afford to ignore our impertinent interference. If our monkey mischief should ever reach the point of blowing up the earth by decomposing an atom, and even annihilate the sun himself, I cannot really suppose that the Universe would turn a hair. If we are ever to do anything, it can only be by the manipulation of those spiritual forces which lie behind the consciousness of which the Universe of matter is but a symbolic phantasm.

The second of these exploits — the Vuibez Séracs – constituted one of the most interesting ice climbs that I had ever done. They had not been climbed for a generation, when the glacier was in a very different condition, and were reputed impossible. Jean Maître, who was supposed to be the best guide in the valley, with other strong guides and some distinguished members of the Alpine Club, decided to attempt it. They returned with a wonderful story of desperate adventure. They had been stopped, they said, by the final obstacle, an overhanging ice wall guarded by a wide crevasse. This interested us. We set out the following morning, reaching the obstacle without

any difficulty, which gave us a poor idea of the capacity of the mighty men of valour. But we could not be surprised at their failure to negotiate the obstacle. We found ourselves standing on a knife-edge separated from the overhanging wall by a crevasse so broad that we could only just reach it with our axes. Travers held me on the rope while I leant across and cut a ledge in the wall which could be used for his hands. Having anchored him to his brother lower down, I lowered him cautiously so that he was able to lean across with his hands on the ledge, thus forming a bridge. I then climbed, in my crampons, on to his shoulders and stood there for forty minutes while I cut hand and foot holds in the overhanging ice. Trusting myself to these, Travers was hastily pulled back to the vertical by his brother. In this position he was able to support my weight on his uplifted axe-head sufficiently to allow me to use one hand. In this way I cut fresh hand holds in the overhanging wall and ultimately pulled myself over the edge. There was still some step-cutting to be done before I got to a sufficiently good place to pull up the others. I have never seen the performance of Travers equalled on any occasion. Hastings himself could hardly have been more strong, steady and enduring, to say nothing of the qualities required to allow a man to stand on his head and shoulders with sharp spikes!

We now found that so far from this obstacle being the last, it was the first! I take a good deal of credit to myself for finding the way to the top through the tangled pinnacles of ice. I began to be not a little alarmed; the *séracs* stretched line after line above us. There was no way of getting out of them and at any moment the sun might strike the glacier and overthrow their pride and our temerity. We climbed with desperate haste and managed to reach the snow-covered glacier above them just in time. As it happened, a party had gone out from the hotel after breakfast with the idea of watching us from the opposite slopes and they told us next evening that our tracks had been obliterated in a dozen places by falling ice.

1 — There is a great deal more to this story; but I may not tell it — yet.

STANZA XV

I must not omit to mention the first descent of the west face of the Trifthorn. It was early in the season of '96. Going up to Zermatt in the train I met an English climber whom I will call Arthur Ellis. He was anxious to do guideless work and we agreed to try a few mountains together. We made some minor expeditions and he proved highly competent. One day we climbed the Trifthorn by the ordinary route, with the idea of attempting the traverse. As I was to go down last, he was carrying the rucksack with our provisions. We made several attempts to find a way down the Zinal face; but always the slopes steepened until it became evident that they pitched over, and we had to retrace our steps. Ellis, however, was very annoyed at my caution and wanted to glissade, which was a proposal about as reasonable as jumping off the Eiffel Tower. Presently he made an excuse for taking off the rope and retired behind a rock while I sat down and lit my pipe. I was aroused by a hail. Ellis was three or four hundred feet down the slope! He urged me once more to glissade. He said he had invented a new method of exercising this art, which was to hold the axe by the shaft and use the pick as a brake. It was downright insanity; and took me absolutely by surprise, as previously he had been a sound and careful climber. I could do nothing to restrain him: I tried to humour him and suggested that he should “come up to where I was and start fair.” But he wasn't taking any and let himself go. A few seconds later he was performing cartwheels and then disappeared over the edge. The angle was such that I could not see where he had fallen. I hastily climbed a convenient rock pinnacle. Then I saw him. He was lying, spreadeagled, in the Bergschrund, with his blood staining the snow; which, by the way, ought not to have been there, and would not have been but for the continuous bad weather.

The task before me was hardly prepossessing. It was up to me to find my way alone down a face which had never previously been climbed. However, I discovered a route which took me to the glacier in about five hours. At one point I was obliged to lower myself down by the rope; and, as I could not unhitch it, I was thrown more than ever on my own resources after that. On several occasions I was obliged to make some very risky jumps, so that I might have been cut off if I had found a passage beyond my powers.

I must admit feeling considerable disgust at seeing Ellis making his way over the glacier as if nothing had happened. He had fallen some eight hundred feet, the last three hundred sheer drop. I was utterly exhausted and badly in need of food. It was all I could do to catch up to him. The only damage he had suffered was a trifling cut on one leg! Nightfall was at hand; and though the hut was not very far off in actual distance, we had a terrible

time getting there, having to wade through soft snow up to our waits. The hut was bewirtshaftet; but the guardian had not come up in consequence of the weather, so we had to force our way in and break into the provision room in order to get fuel and the like.

Our adventures were not yet over. My clothes were (naturally) dripping, I threw my coat on the table, above which hung my Alpine lamp. This type of lamp has a hole in the bottom through which a candle is thrust. It is held in place by a spring. I threw myself on the straw, being too tired to complete the operation of going to bed without a few moments' rest. I felt sleep overcoming me, knew it was my duty to put out the candle, but began to argue that even if it did drop out the fall would extinguish it, or if not, the wet coat would do so. It was a perfectly good argument; but the one chance in a million came off — it didn't go out till my coat was burnt to cinders.

Luckily, the next morning the guardian of the hut came up. I borrowed his coat and went down to Evolena, where my baggage had been sent. Ellis was not fit to be moved and I arranged to come up two days later and fetch him. At Evolena I got a change of clothes and sent up the guide's coat by a porter.

Now, in the hotel was a Girls' School, being conducted to admire the wonders and beauties of nature. The following day they came down in the afternoon from the glacier, very excited at having found the tracks of a chamois on the mule path. I knew, of course, that this was hallucination and thought no more of it. Just before dinner I was outside the hotel taking the air, when I saw in the distance a solitary figure slowly approaching. Its action was very peculiar, I thought.

> “The wild man wends his weary way
> To a strange and lonely pump.”

Yet it seemed somehow familiar. It drew nigh; yes, it was Arthur Ellis. I expressed surprise; but he said that he had felt so much better he thought he might as well come down, but it had been a long and terrible day. He had started at dawn. This was absurd, as it was only a couple of hours' easy walking from the hut. Ah yes, he said, but he had come down over the snout of the glacier and he had had to cut steps all the way — no more glissading for him! This story was again rather incredible. But his axe had been tremendously knocked about. The truth slowly dawned on my benighted brain: he had solemnly cut his way down the mule path — he was the chamois whose tracks the girls had seen!

Well, it was not time for me to join my friends at Arolla; but I wasn't going to climb any more with Ellis, so I made my excuses and departed.

The fag-end of the story is as peculiar as the rest. We arranged to dine together in London and when I got back I wrote to him. He replied at once, asking me to dine with him at his club. I duly turned up; but he was not there and I have never heard a word of him since!

Another very amusing incident occurred at Arolla. A little way above the old hotel is a large boulder, which had never been climbed from the hotel side. I spent some time before I found out how to do it. One had to traverse the face to the right, with a minimum of hand-hold and foot-hold, until one came to a place where the slope eased off. But this point was defended by a bulge in the rock which threw one out. It was just possible for a very slim man with a prehensile abdomen. But it was a matter of a quarter of an ounce one way or the other whether the friction grips were sufficient or not. It was one of the most difficult pieces of rock climbing I had ever tackled.

I decided to have some fun with it and taught a girl how to do it. I then offered a hundred francs to any guide who could get up. We got together a little party one afternoon and I proceeded to show off. Several other people tried, but without success. I began to mock them and said, “But this is absurd — you fellows can't climb at all — it's quite easy — why, I'd back a girl to do it — won't you have a try, Miss So-and-so?” My pupil played up beautifully and pretended to need a lot of persuasion. Ultimately, she offered to try if she were held on a rope from above. I said, “Nonsense, you can do it perfectly well by yourself!” The company protested that she would kill herself; and she pretended to be put on her mettle, refused all help and swarmed up in great style.

This made everybody very much ashamed. Even the guides were stung into trying it. But nobody else got up. So I started to coach them on the rope. Several succeeded with the moral support and without being hauled. A fair number, however, came off and looked rather ridiculous, dangling. People began the urge the chaplain to try his hand. He didn't like it at all; but he came to me and said he would go if I would be very careful to manage the rope so that he did not look ridiculous, because of the respect due to his cloth. I promised him that I would attend to the matter with the utmost conscientiousness. I admitted that I had purposely made fun of some of the others, but that in his case I would tie the rope properly; not under his arms but just above the hips.

Having thus arranged for the respect due to his cloth, I went to the top of the rock and sat sufficiently far back to be unable to see what was hap-

pening on the face. When he came off, as the rope was fastened so low, he turned upside down. I pretended to misunderstand and jerked him up and down for several minutes before finally hauling him up, purple in the face and covered with scratches. I had not failed in the respect due to his cloth. But quite a number of people were sufficiently lacking in taste to laugh at him.

One day I took my cousin Gregor, who by this time was married and had discovered that his life was not worth keeping. We made the second ascent of the N.-N.E. ridge of Mont Collon. It is a long and severe climb. The conditions were very bad and Gregor was quite unequal to this class of climbing, so that I had to pull him up most of the way. We were very late on the mountain in consequence. I had no idea of the best way down, but decided to try the short and precipitous route which leads to the level glacier above the Vuibez Séracs. The descent of a difficult mountain is always awkward when the second man is not up to the mark. He cannot go down last because of the danger; and in going down first he is pretty sure to take the wrong road, wherever he cannot be guided by voice. However, we got down the steep part, safely enough, just before dark.

We took off the rope to descend some slopes covered with loose rock. As I sat down to coil the rope I realized that I was completely exhausted, though mentally rather than physically. My brain played me a curious trick. Gregor had reached a patch of broken rocks at the bottom of the slope and I followed him slowly. Suddenly I saw a troll, one of those funny little dwarfs with pointed caps and formidable beards that one sees pictured in German fairy stories and on beer mugs (Heinzelmännchen appears to be the official name). This creature was hopping about the rocks in a very jovial way. He appeared quite real in every respect. For instance, he was not transparent. But it never occurred to me to believe in him. I put him down to cerebral fatigue. The apparition only lasted for a few minutes. He was gone before I rejoined my cousin.

It would, of course, have been madness to attempt to cross the glacier that night, the snow being very deep and soft, so we managed as best we could to keep warm. I did not sleep very much — it was my first night out. In the morning we ran across the frozen snow to the little pass which leads down to the valley. We had hardly crossed it when we met a rescue party sent up by the dear old hotel keeper, Anzevui, who had a curious personal affection for me as the bad boy of the valley who was always making things interesting. Our descent had been watched through glasses; and they had come to the conclusion that we must have met with an accident, because our route down the mountain was an original variation of the regular way

and supposed to be impossible. We had, in fact, met with one exceedingly bad pitch where I was glad of the hitched rope.

On another occasion I was benighted; it was with Morris Travers and his younger brother on the Aiguilles Rouges, owing to our extreme conscientiousness in climbing every pinnacle accurately and the breakdown of the younger Travers from fatigue. It was one more example of the disadvantage of a third man. A party of two would have finished the climb at least three hours earlier. A bitterly cold wind was blowing from the north-west, so that we could not pass the night on the ridge or on that side of it. We had to find shelter on the eastern face. It was too dark to get down the cliffs, even if young Travers had been equal to the effort, and they were very steep. There was not even a reasonable ledge.

However, we found a chimney where the boy could rest in moderate comfort and there was a sort of shelf which accommodated his brother. As for me, the best repose I could find was to wedge myself across the chimney with one foot, my back against a steep patch of now; the warmth of my body melted this and the water trickled down. As my knickerbockers had been torn to pieces on the rock, there was a certain degree of discomfort connected with my night's rest and the strain on my leg somehow damaged the knee joint, which used continually to give trouble for years afterwards. But I was so tired that I went to sleep with my pipe in my mouth. It is extraordinary that I did not fall — the pipe did.

STANZA XVI

Such were some of the adventures of 1896 and 1897. My experiences all contributed to build up an original theory of mountaineering. It was not till 1898 that I discovered the identity of my own ideas with those of the great climbers. But I discovered the extremely unpleasant fact that the English Alpine Club were bitterly opposed to mountaineering — its members were incompetent, insanely jealous of their vested interests and unthinkably unsportsmanlike. Professor Norman Collie had proposed me for the club and Sir Martin Conway had been kind enough to second me; but the record of climbs which I put in to qualify for admission was much too good. It was subversive of all authority. The average Alpine Clubman qualifies by paying guides to haul him up a few hackneyed peaks. He is not expected to do any new climbs whatever; and it is an outrage to the spirit of the club to do anything original. Mummery had been blackballed because he was the most famous climber in England; and, though occasionally climbing with guides before he found Collie and Hastings, had been in fact the leader of the party. The Club was, of course, afraid to give its real reasons for objecting to him. It circulated the lie that he was a bootmaker! Later on, it became a public scandal that he was not a member of the Club and he was weak enough to allow himself to be elected. In my case, Collie and Conway warned me that my election would be opposed and I withdrew my name. On this, the son of a church furnisher named Tattersall, who had insinuated himself into Trinity, circulated the rumour that I had been expelled from a London Club. He hated me because I, as president of the Cambridge University Chess club, did not see my way to allow him to become secretary. He was an excellent player, but unsuitable for conducting official correspondence with other clubs. I went to his rooms with a heavy malacca and demanded that he should retract his falsehood or fight. He refused to do either, so I thrashed him soundly then and there. He complained to my tutor, who halled me, made a few remarks on the desuetude of the duel, changed the conversation to Ibsen and asked me to dinner.

Mountaineering differs from other sports in one important respect. A man cannot obtain a reputation at cricket or football by hiring professionals to play for him. His achievements are checked by his averages. But hardly any one in England at that time knew anything about mountaineering. Various old fogies, who could not have climbed the simplest rocks in Cumberland, or led across an easy Alpine pass, had been personally conducted by peasants up a few mountains and written themselves up into fame. The appearance of the guideless climber was therefore a direct challenge. They tried every dirty trick to prevent the facts from leaking out. They refused to record the exploits of guideless men in the *Alpine Journal*. They discounte-

nanced even their own members, they tried to ignore English rock climbing altogether and would have nothing to do with the Continental Alpine Clubs.

The result of this policy was to hinder the development of the sport in England. The younger men were ostracized. It was parallel to the attempts of the Church to pretend that there was no such thing as Science. The result was not dissimilar. In 1901 all the world's records, except one, were held by myself and Eckenstein. The exception was that of the greatest height attained by man. This was claimed by Matthias Zurbriggen, who was not a guide in the ordinary sense of the word, but a convict who had learnt all his climbing from Eckenstein at the request of the ne'er-do-weel's family, who didn't know what to do with him and probably hoped that he would kill himself on the mountains.

The Alpine Club even tried to fake records. One party made a great fuss over and ascent of the Dent Blanche. It was proved later that they had not been on the mountain at all and that one at least of the party — Smith *quidam* — knew it. Again, when I arrived at the head of the Baltoro glacier, I questioned some of my coolies who had been with the Conway expedition of 1892 about the alleged ascent of *Pioneer Peak*. The men unanimously declared that the party had only gone to the foot of the icefall and had turned back from this point. Far be it from me to place any reliance on the statements of ignorant Baltis, though I never found them at fault on any other point! But it is certainly singular that they should have agreed to give an account of the expedition so different from that recorded by the party themselves. Zurbriggen, who was the guide in the case, was cross-examined by Legros, the son of the painter, and a friend of Eckenstein's. He told a very singular story about *Pioneer Peak*, but as he was under the influence of alcohol I suppose his statements are as unreliable as those of my coolies.

The coincidence of evidence from two doubtful sources does not necessarily strengthen either, does it?

So bitter has been the hatred of the Alpine Club for the people who have exposed its principal members as impostors that it has actually induced the bulk of the press to ignore expeditions of such first-rate importance as those of 1902 and 1905 to the Himalayas. Subsequent exploration has been hampered in consequence; and the manslaughter of seven porters on Everest in 1922 was directly due to ignorance of the lesson taught by the Kang Chen Janga disaster, as will be made clear in the proper place.

However, my principles have triumphed all along the line. There were no Swiss guides on Everest in 1922 and the record for altitude is held by amateurs travelling two on a rope.

Let me emphasize the fact that I am absolutely satisfied with this result. I am congenitally incapable of personal ambition and envy. My interest is in the sport itself. I care nothing for glory. In 1899, for example, I worked out a route up the Aiguille du Géant from the Montanvers. This mountain had never been climbed fairly. The ordinary way up is a matter of engineering by means of *pitons* and wire ropes. I did not keep my knowledge to myself in order to have the glory of making the First Ascent. I indicated the way up to other climbers and was absolutely overjoyed when two Austrian amateurs made the climb. In the same way, I am perfectly satisfied at having broken down the dishonest and imbecile traditions of Badminton and only regret that I was not in command of the 1922 Everest Expedition, because that expedition failed and cost heavily in human life. I am convinced that if I had been there the summit would have been reached and that no one would have been killed. In the expedition of K 2, neither man nor beast was injured, and in that to Kang Chen Janga, the catastrophe was the direct result of mutinous disobedience to my orders. I do not lay claim to personal credit for this record, save in so far as I was on the way to an apprehension of the proper principles of mountain craft when I met Eckenstein, to whose instructions I am profoundly indebted.

I have never been in danger on a mountain, except through the rashness of others. Here is a typical case. I was crossing the Brêche de la Meije with a porter. About half way down the rocky slopes (we had taken off the rope) I stopped for a few minutes for personal reasons, never imagining that the boy would get himself into trouble. When I got up he had disappeared. I shouted and he replied. I then saw that he had done an incredibly rash action. By going on, entirely out of the way, he had crossed a narrow gully which was being constantly swept by ice from a hanging glacier. I could not leave him alone on the mountain and I could not ask him to risk his life by returning. There was nothing for it by to repeat his indiscretion. The only way across the gully was a steep slab, polished by ice and constantly bombarded. I had to rush it, at the gravest risk of slipping on the one hand and being smashed on the other.

It is a remarkable fact that only very exceptional men retain their normal reasoning powers in presence of mountains. Both Eckenstein and I have had constant evidence of this. It is not merely the panic of the peasant, who loses his head and calls on the saints whenever he finds himself a few yards off the beaten track or is overtaken by bad weather. Scientifically trained minds frequently lose all sense of judgment and logic.

There is an account, hardly a century old, of a party of quite distinguished men who ascended Saddleback. They speak of precipitous cliffs and yawning gulfs, though as a matter of fact there is not a rock on the moun-

tain which a child of three years old could call scrambling. They were, in fact on ponies! Shelley's descriptions of Mont Blanc are comically exaggerated; his powers of observation must have been completely in abeyance.

The expression “absolutely perpendicular” ultimately became a byword. It was used so frequently by ostensibly reliable men to describe quite gentle slopes. We used to ask engineers and other people accustomed to practical trigonometry to estimate the angle of the Matterhorn from Zermatt and from the Schwartzsee. They would give us anything from 30 degrees to 50 degrees in the first case and from 45 degrees to 80 degrees in the second. The actually figures are 10 degrees and 15 degrees.

In 1902 Pfannl proposed to rush Chogo Ri from Askole. He thought he could get there and back in three days! In reality, it is fourteen days to the foot of the mountain, though unladen men might possibly do it in five. Mountain panic was without doubt partly accountable for the mental and moral breakdown in Guillarmod and Righi, which led them to mutiny on Kang Chen Janga. A high degree of spiritual development, a romantic temperament and a profound knowledge based on experience of mountain conditions are the best safeguards against the insane impulses and hysterical errors which overwhelm the average man.

During my three years at Cambridge my literary faculties made sudden strides. The transition was brief. It is marked by my *Tale of Archais*. But in *Aceldama*, my first published poem of any importance, I attained, at a bound, the summit of my Parnassus. In a sense, I have never written anything better. It is absolutely characteristic. Its technical excellence is remarkable and it is the pure expression of my Unconscious Self. I had no corresponding mental concepts at the time. It enounces a philosophy which subsequent developments have not appreciably modified. I remember my own attitude to it. It seemed to me a wilfully extravagant eccentricity. I had no idea that it was the pure water of the Dircean spring.

A certain amount of conscious aspiration is, however, evident in *Songs of the Spirit*. This book is a collection of lyrics which reveal an ill-defined longing for spiritual attainment. The background is vividly coloured by observation and experience. The atmosphere of the old streets of Amsterdam, of the Colleges of Cambridge and of the mountains, lakes, forests and rivers, among which I wandered solitary, is evident in every stanza. The influence of my reading is almost negligible. The “wish-phantasm” of the book is principally that of a wise and holy man living in a lonely tower, master of the secrets of Nature. I had little conscious aspiration to that ideal. In practice, I was living for pleasure.

Another book of the Transition Period was *Green Alps*. This was never published. I had paid Leonard Smithers to have it printed and he told me that the printers' works had been destroyed by fire, which may or may not have been the case. It is characteristic that I accepted the situation with a shrug of the shoulders. I had a complete set of proofs, but I had become rather ashamed of the book. I merely selected the poems which I thought really worth while for inclusion in subsequent volumes. The collection was marked by a tendency to earthly passion; and its title shows that I already regarded human love as an idea to be transcended. *Green Alps* are pleasant pastures, but I was bound for the peaks.

My essential spirituality is made manifest by yet another publication, which stands as a testimony of my praeterhuman innocence. The book is called *White Stains* and is commonly quoted by my admirers as evidence of my addiction to every kind of unmentionable vice. Asses! It is, indeed, technically, an obscene book and yet the fact that I wrote it proves the purity of my heart and the mind in the most extraordinary fashion.

The facts are as follows: In the course of my reading I had come across von Krafft-Ebbing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*. The professor tries to prove that sexual aberrations are the result of disease. I did not agree. I thought that I was able to understand the psychology involved; I thought that the acts were merely magical affirmations of perfectly intelligible points of view. I said to myself that I must confute the professor. I could only do this by employing the one form at my disposal: the artistic form. I therefore invented a poet who went wrong, who began with normal and innocent enthusiasms, and gradually developed various vices. He ends by being stricken with disease and madness, culminating in murder. In his poems he describes his downfall, always explaining the psychology of each act.

The conclusions of the book might therefore be approved in any Sunday School and its metaphysics is orthodox from the point of view of the Theologian. I wrote the book in absolute seriousness and in all innocence. It never occurred to me that a demonstration of the terrible results of misguided passion might be mistaken for pornography. Indeed, now that I do understand that vile minds think it a vile book, I recognize with grim satisfaction that *Psychopathia Sexualis* itself has attained its enormous popularity because people love to gloat over such things. Its scientific form has not protected it from abuse, any more than the artistic form of my own reply to it. But von Kraft-Ebbing has not been blackguarded as I have. The average man cannot believe that an artist may be as serious and highminded an observer of life as the professed man of Science.

I was to find very shortly that the most innocent personal relations could be taken by filthy minds as the basis for their malicious imagination. The story of how this came about dominates my third year at the University, as will appear. It seems as if my destiny were preparing me for my appointed work by clearing inessential factors out of the way. My one serious worldly ambition had been to become the champion of the world at Chess. I had snatched a game from Blackburne in simultaneous play some years before. I was being beaten in the Sicilian defence. The only chance was the sacrifice of a rook. I remember the grand old master coming round to my board and cocking his alcoholized eye cunningly at me. “Hullo,” said he, “Morphy come to town again”! I am not coxcomb enough to think that he could not have won the game, even after my brilliancy. I believe that his colossal generosity let me win to encourage a promising youngster.

I had frequently beaten Bird at Simpson's and when I got to Cambridge I made a savagely intense study of the game. In my second year I was President of the University and had beaten such first-rate amateurs as Gunston and cole. Outside the Master Class, Atkins was my only acknowledge superior. I made mincemeat of the man who was champion of Scotland a few years later, even after I had given up the game. I spent over two hours a day in study and more than that in practice. I was assured on all hands that another year would see me a master myself.

I had been to St. Petersburg to learn Russian for the Diplomatic Service in the long vacation of 1897, and on my way back broke the journey in Berlin to attend the Chess Congress. But I had hardly entered the room where the masters were playing when I was seized with what may justly be described as a Mystical Experience. I seemed to be looking on at the Tournament from outside myself. I saw the Masters — one, shabby, snuffy and blear-eyed; another, in badly fitting would-be respectable shoddy; a third, a mere parody of humanity, and so on for the rest. These were the people to whose ranks I was seeking admission. “There, but for the grace of God, goes Aleister Crowley,” I exclaimed to myself with disgust, and there and then I registered a vow never to play another serious game of chess. I perceived with praeternatural lucidity that I had not alighted on this planet with the object of playing chess.

Aleister Crowley, by the way! I have not yet explained how I came to have changed my name. For many years I had loathed being called Alick, partly because of the unpleasant sound and sight of the word, partly because it was the name by which my mother called me. Edward did not seem to suit me and the diminutives Ted or Ned were even less appropriate. Alexander was too long and Sandy suggested tow hair and freckles. I had read in some book or other that the most favourable name for becoming famous

was one consisting of a dactyl followed by a spondee, as at the end of a hexameter: like “Jeremy Taylor”. Aleister Crowley fulfilled these conditions and Aleister is the Gaelic form of Alexander. To adopt it would satisfy my romantic ideals. The atrocious spelling A-L-E-I-S-T-E-R was suggested as the correct form by Cousin Gregor, who ought to have known better. In any case, A-L-A-I-S-D-A-I-R makes a very bad dactyl. For these reasons I saddled myself with my present nom-de-guerre — I can't say that I feel sure that I facilitated the process of becoming famous. I should doubtless have done so, whatever name I had chosen.

STANZA XVII

I began my last year at Cambridge with my moral decks cleared for action. I didn't know where I was going, but I was on the way. I was thus quite ready for the perception of the First Noble Truth, but also for an entirely new current to influence my life. Towards the end of the October term I met a man named Herbert Charles Jerome Pollitt. He was an M.A., ten years older than myself, and had merely come up to Cambridge to dance for the F.D.C. (Footlights Dramatic Club). I saw him only once or twice that term, but corresponded with him from abroad during the Christmas vacation. The result was the establishment of the first intimate friendship of my life.

Pollitt was rather plain than otherwise. His face was made tragic by the terrible hunger of the eyes and the bitter sadness of the mouth. He possessed one physical beauty — his hair. This was very plentiful and he wore it rather long. It was what is called a shock. But its colour was pale gold, like spring sunshine, and its texture of the finest gossamer. The relation between us was that ideal intimacy which the Greeks considered the greatest glory of manhood and the most precious prize of life. It says much for the moral state of England that such ideas are connected in the minds of practically every one with physical passion.

My sexual life was very intense. My relations with women were entirely satisfactory. They gave me the maximum of bodily enjoyment and at the same time symbolized my theological notions of sin. Love was a challenge to Christianity. It was a degradation and a damnation. Swinburne had taught me the doctrine of justification by sin. Every woman that I met enabled me to affirm magically that I had defied the tyranny of the Plymouth Brethren and the Evangelicals. At the same time women were the source of romantic inspiration; and their caresses emancipated me from the thraldom of the body. When I left them I found myself walking upon air, with my soul free to wing its way through endless empyreans and to express its godhead in untrammelled thought of transcendent sublimity, expressed in language which combined the purest aspirations with the most majestic melodies. Poems like “the Philosopher's Progress” illustrate my unconscious, and poems like “De Profundis” my conscious reaction. But, morally and mentally, women were for me beneath contempt. They had no true moral ideals. They were bound up with their necessary preoccupation, with the function of reproduction. Their apparent aspirations were camouflage. Intellectually, of course, they did not exist. Even the few whose minds were not completely blank had them furnished with Wardour Street Chippendale. Their attainments were those of the ape and the parrot. These facts did not deter me. On the con-

trary, it was highly convenient that one's sexual relations should be with an animal with no consciousness beyond sex.

As to my men friends, I had never met anyone of sufficiently exalted ideals and refinement to awaken serious sympathy. Pollitt was a new species. My feeling for him was an intensely pure flame of admiration mingled with infinite pity for his spiritual disenchantment. It was infinite because it could not even imagine a goal and dwelt wholly amid eternal things.

To him I was a mind — no more. He never manifested the slightest interest in any of my occupations. He had no sympathy with any of my ambitions, not even my poetry, except in a very peculiar way, which I have never thoroughly understood. He showed an instinctive distrust of my religious aspirations, because he realized that sooner or later they would take me out of his reach. He had himself no hope or fear of anything beyond the material world. But he never tired of the originality of my point of view; of watching the way in which my brain dealt with every subject that came under discussion.

It was the purest and noblest relation which I had ever had with anybody. I had not imagined the possibility of so divine a development. It was, in a sense, passionate, because it partook of the white heat of creative energy and because its intensity absorbed all other emotions. But for this very reason it was impossible to conceive of it as liable to contamination by any grosser qualities. Indeed, the Universe of Sense was entirely subordinated to its sanctity. It was based upon impressions as an incandescent light upon its filament. But the world was transfigured and consumed by the ineffable intensity of the spiritual consciousness. It was so free from any impure ingredient that my friendship with Pollitt in no way interfered with the current of my life. I went on reading, writing, climbing, skating, cycling and intriguing, as if I had never met him.

Yet his influence initiated me in certain important respects. He was a close friend of Beardsley's and introduced me to the French and English Renaissance. In his heart was a hunger for beauty which I can only call hideous and cruel, because it was so hopeless. He totally lacked illumination in the mystical sense of the word. His outlook on life was desperate, very much like that of Des Esseintes. He suffered like Tintagiles. He could not accept any of the usual palliatives and narcotics; he had no creative genius, no ideals; he could not deceive himself about life, art or religion. He merely yearned and moaned. In certain respects he annoyed me, because I was determined to make my dreams come true; and he represented eternal dissatisfaction. In his heart was “the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched.”

The school of Art and Literature to which he introduced me was thus one which I instinctively despised, even while I adored it. The intense refinement of its thought and the blazing brilliance of its technique helped me to key myself up to a pitch of artistry entirely beyond my original scope; but I never allowed myself to fall under its dominion. I was determined to triumph, to find my way out on the other side. Baudelaire and Swinburne, at their best, succeed in celebrating the victory of the human soul over its adversaries, just as truly as Milton and Shelly. I never had a moment's doubt that I belonged to this school. To me it is a question of virility. Even James Thomson, ending with “confirmation of the old despair”, somehow defeats that despair by the essential force of his genius. Keats, on the contrary, no matter how hard he endeavours to end on a note of optimism, always leaves an impression of failure.

I well know how strangely perverse this criticism must sound, but I feel its truth in the marrow of my bones. In my own writings the tempestuous energy of my soul invariably sweeps away the wreckage of my mind. No matter to what depth I plunge, I always end with my wings beating steadily upwards towards the sun. The actual writing which releases my Unconscious produces the effect. I inevitably end by transcending the problem of the poem, either lyrically or satirically. Turn to any page at random and the truth of this will become apparent.

In his time at Cambridge Pollitt had been very prominent as a female impersonator and dancer. He called himself Diane de Rougy — *aprés* Liane de Pougy. The grossness of people who do not understand art naturally misinterpreted this æsthetic gesture and connected it with a tendency to androgynity. I never saw the slightest symptoms of anything of the kind in him; though the subject sometimes came under discussion. But at that time it was considered criminal to admire *Lady Windermere's Fan*. I have always take the attitude of Bishop Blougram and pay no attention to

> “the infamy scrawled abroad
> About me on the church wall opposite.”

I have made a point of understanding the psychology of the subject: *Nihil humani a me alienum puto*.

But the conscience of the world is so guilty that it always assumes that people who investigate heresies must be heretics; just as if a doctor who studies leprosy must be a leper. Indeed, it is only recently that science has been allowed to study anything without reproach. Matter being evil, the less that we know about it the better — such was the Christian philosophy in the ages which it darkened. Morris Travers told me that his father, an eminent

physician, had been ostracized, and had lost much of his practice, for joining the Anthropological Society. Later still, Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter have been treated with the foulest injustice by ignorant and prejudiced people. My mother always believed that *Great Eastern*, the first steamship of any size to speak of, met with repeated disasters because God was jealous, as He had been of the tower of Babel. In 1917 my cousin, Lawrence Bishop, told me that he thought that “the Lord prepared a great iceberg” for the *Titanic* in annoyance at the claim of the shipbuilders that she was unsinkable. William Whiteley had several fires, which my mother took as the repartee of the Almighty to the merchant's assumption of the title “Universal Provider”, which could be properly attributed only to God.

It is the modern fashion to try to dismiss these barbarous absurdities as excrescences on Christianity, but they are of the essence of the religion. The whole theory of the atonement implies that man can set up his own will in opposition to God's, and thereby excites Him to anger which can only be pacified by the sacrifice of His Son. It is, after all, quite as reasonable to think of God as being irritated by a shipbuilding programme as by idolatry. The tendency has, in fact, been to forget about the Atonement altogether and to represent Jesus as a “Master” whose teachings are humanitarian and enlightened. Yet the only evidence of what he actually said is that of the gospels and these not only insist upon the incredible and immoral sides of Christianity, but contain actual Logia which exhibit Jesus in the character of a superstitious fanatic who taught the doctrine of eternal punishment and many others unacceptable to modern enlightenment. General Booth and Billy Sunday preach perfectly scriptural abominations. Again, much of the teaching of Jesus which is not savage superstition is diametrically opposed to the ideas of those modern moralists who reject his supernaturalism and salvationalism. The injunction “Take no thought for the morrow” is incompatible with “Preparedness”, insurance and any other practice involving foresight. The command to break off all family and social relationships is similarly unethical. The truth, of course, is that these instructions were given to a select body of men, not to the world at large. Renunciation of the world is the first step toward spiritual illumination, and in the East, from the beginning of recorded time to the present day, the Yogi, the Fakir, the Bhikkhu and the Monk take this course, expecting that the piety of their neighbours will supply them with a means of livelihood.

It is not only illogical to pick out of the gospels the texts which happen to suit one's own prejudices and then claim Christ as the supreme teacher, hut his claims to pre-eminence are barred by the fact that all passages which are not fiendish superstition find parallels in the writings of earlier Masters. The works of Lao-Tze, the Buddhist Canon, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Talmud and the philosophy of many of the early Greeks, to say nothing

of the Sacred Books of Egypt, contain the whole of the metaphysics, theology and ethics to which modern enlightenment can assent. It is monstrous and mischievous for liberal thinkers to call themselves Christians; their nominal adhesion delays the disruption of the infamous system which they condone. To declare oneself a follower of Jesus is not only to insult history and reason but to apologize for the murderers of Arius, Molinos and Cranmer, the persecutors of science, the upholders of slavery and the suppressors of all free thought and speech.

At this time I had not carried these arguments to their logical conclusion. *The Cloud upon the Sanctuary* told me of a secret community of saints in possession of every spiritual grace, of the keys to the treasurers of nature, and of moral emancipation such that there was no intolerance of unkindness. The members of this Church lived their secret life of sanctity in the world, radiating light and love upon all that came within their scope, yet they were free from spiritual pride. They enjoyed intimate communion with the immanent divine soul of Nature. Inheritors of innocence and illumination, they were not self-seekers; and their one passion was to bring mankind into the sphere of their own sublimity, dealing with each individual as his circumstances required. To them the members of the Trinity were nearer and more real than anything else in the universe. But they were pure ideas of incorruptible integrity. The incarnation was a Mystical or Magical operation which took place in every man. Each was himself the Son of God who had assumed a body of flesh and blood in order to perform the work of redemption. The in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost was a sanctification resulting from the completion of the Great Work when the Self had been crucified to itself and raised again in incorruptible immortality.

I did not yet see that this conception reposed on metaphysical bases as untenable as those of orthodoxy. There was no attempt to explain the origin of evil and similar difficulties. But these things were mysteries which would be revealed to the saint as he advanced in the way of grace. Anyhow, I was certainly not the person to cavil. The sublimity of the idea enthralled me; it satisfied my craving for romance and poetry. I determined with my whole heart to make myself worthy to attract the notice of this mysterious Brotherhood. I yearned passionately for illumination. I could imagine nothing more exquisite than to enter into communion with these Holy Men and to acquire the power of communicating with the angelic and divine intelligence of the universe. I longed for perfect purity of life, for mastery of the secret forces of Nature, and for a career of devoted labour on behalf of “the Creation which groaneth and travaileth”.

My poetry at this time is charged to the highest point with these aspirations. I may mention the dedication to Songs of the Spirit, “The Quest”, “The

Alchemist", "The Philosopher's Progress", "A Spring Snowstorm in Wastdale", "Succubus", "Nightfall", "The Storm", "Wheat and Wine", "Vespers", "Astrology" and "Daedalus". In "the Farewell of Paracelsus to Aprile", "The Initiation", "Isaiah" and "Power", I have expressed my ideas about the ordeals which might be expected on the Path. All these poems were published in 1898. In later volumes, Mysteries Lyrical and Dramatic, The Fatal Force, The Temple of the Holy Ghost and *Tannhäuser*, these ideas are carried further in the light of my practical experience of the Path.

It may seem strange that, despite the yearning after sanctification, which is the key-note of these works, I never lost sight of what seems on the surface the incompatible idea of justification by sin. *Jezebel* and the other poems in that volume prove this point. It is as if my unconscious were aware that every act is a sacrament and that the most repulsive rituals might be in some ways the most effective. The only adequate way of overcoming evil was to utilize it fully as a means of grace. Religion was for me a passionate reality of the most positive kind. Virtue is etymologically manhood. Virility, creative conception and enthusiastic execution were the means of attainment. There could be no merit in abstention from vice. Vice indeed is *vitium*, a flaw or defect.

This attitude is not antinomianism, as the word is usually understood. When St. Paul said, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient", he only went half way. One ought to leave no form of energy to rust. Every particle of one's personality is a necessary factor in the equation and every impulse must be turned to account in the Great Work. I perceived, moreover, that all conventional rules of conduct were valid only in relation to environment. To take a fundamental issue: self-preservation. On the theory of reincarnation or that of immortality, there should be no more objection to dying than there is to going to sleep. In any case, I realized that my physical life was utterly valueless; and I did not set it at a pin's fee.

I have never been afraid of carrying into effect my conclusions; and I knew, what is more, that to fail to do so would be merely to create a conflict in myself. I had a thorough instinctive understanding of the theory of psychoanalysis. The this fact I attribute my extraordinary success in all my spiritual undertakings, From the very beginning I made a point of carrying out the instructions of one of the old Grimoires "to buy a black egg without haggling". I always understood that spiritual and material wealth were incommensurable. If I wanted a book on Magic and it was offered me for ten times the proper price, I would buy it on the spot, even though I knew that I had only to go round the corner to find an honest tradesman.

I did this sort of thing on purpose to affirm magically that nothing mattered except the work of the moment. It was “Take not thought for the morrow” carried out in its most literal sense. I made a point of putting God on His honour, so to speak, to supply anything I might need by demonstrating to him that I would not keep back the least imaginable fraction of my resources. I acquired this custom later on, when I had definitely discovered the direction of my destiny; but the moral basis of my attitude was already present. The first important indication of its incidence is given by the outcome of my friendship with Pollitt.

He was in residence during the Easter term of 1898 and we saw each other almost every day. In the vacation he accompanied me to Wastdale Head and used to walk with me over the fells, thought I could never persuade him to do any rock climbing.

I was absorbed in *The Cloud upon the Sanctuary*, reading it again and again without being put off by the Pharisaical, priggish and pithecanthropoid notes of its translator, Madame de Steiger. I appealed with the whole force of my will to the Adepts of the Hidden Church to prepare me as postulant for their august company. As will be seen later, Acts of Will, performed by the proper person, never fall to the ground, impossible as it is (at present) to understand by what means the energy is transmitted.

Although Pollitt had done so much for my education by introducing me to the actual atmosphere of current aesthetic ideas, to the work of Whistler, Rops and Beardsley in art, and that of the so-called decadents in literature, as well as to many remote and exquisite masters of the past whom I had ignored or misunderstood, my admiration and gratitude did not prevent me from becoming conscious of the deep-seated aversion of our souls. He had made no mistake in divining that my spiritual aspirations were hostile to his acquiescence in despair of the Universe. So I felt in my subconscious self that I must choose between my devotion to him and to the Secret Assembly of the Saints. Though he was actual and adequate, I preferred to risk all on the hazard. Human Friendship, ideal as it was in this case, was under the curse of the Universal Sorrow. I determined deliberately to give it up, notwithstanding that it was unique and adorable in its way; that there was no reasonable hope of replacing it. This was my Act of Faith, unalloyed with the dross of Hope, and stamped with the imperial countenance of Love, to determine that I would not continue our relations.

The poignancy of this resolution was jagged and envenomed; for he was the only person with whom I had ever enjoyed truly spiritual intercourse and my heart was lonely, hungry and embittered as only a poet's heart can understand. This determination developed gradually during that last May term.

He fought most desperately against my increasing preoccupation with the aspiration in which he recognized the executioner of our friendship.

Shortly after I went down, we had a last interview. I had gone down to the Bear at Maidenhead, on the quiet, to write *Jezebel*. I only told one person — in strict confidence — where I was going; but Pollitt found out that person and forced him to tell my secret. He walked into the room shortly after dinner, to my surprise and rage — for when I am writing a poem I would show Azrael himself the door!

I told him frankly and firmly that I had given my life to religion and that he did not fit into the scheme. I see now how imbecile I was, how hideously wrong and weak it is to reject any part of one's personality. Yet these mistakes are not mistakes at the time: one has to pass through such periods; one must be ruthless in analysis and complete it, before one can proceed to synthesis. He understood that I was not to be turned from my purpose and we parted, never to meet again. I repented of my decision, my eyes having been enlightened, on a little later, but the reconciliation was not written! My letter miscarried; and in the autumn, when he passed me in Bond Street, I happened not to see him; he thought I meant to cut him and our destinies drew apart.

It has been my life-long regret, for a nobler and purer comradeship never existed on this earth, and his influence might have done much to temper my subsequent trials. Nevertheless, the fragrance of that friendship still lingers in the sanctuary of my soul. That Eucharist of the Spirit reminds me constantly that the one ingredient necessary to my aesthetic development was supplied by the Gods at the one period in my life when it could profitably be introduced into my equipment.

STANZA XVIII

During the May Term of 1898 I met another man who, in his own way, was interested in many of the same things as I was myself. His name was Gerald Festus Kelly. He is described in the telephone book as an artist; and the statement might have passed unchallenged indefinitely had not the Royal Academy recently elected him as an associate. He is hardly to be blamed for this disgrace. He struggled manfully. Even at the last moment, when he felt the thunderclouds about to break over his head, he made a last desperate coup to persuade the world that he was an artist by marrying a model. But the device deceived nobody. The evidence of his pictures was too glaring. The effort, moreover, completely exhausted his power of resistance; and he received the blow with Christian resignation. It saddens me more hat I can say to think of that young life which opened with such brilliant promise, gradually sinking into the slough of respectability. Of course it is not as if he had been able to paint; but to me the calamity is almost as distressing as if that possibility had ever existed. For he completely hypnotized me into thinking that he had something in him. I took his determination to become an artist as evidence of some trace of capacity and I still hope that his years of unremitting devotion to a hopeless ambition will earn him the right to reincarnate with some sort of soul.

We met in a somewhat romantic way. My *Aceldama* had just been issued and was being sold privately in the University at half-a-crown. (There were only eighty-eight copies, with ten on large paper and two on vellum.) One of the mottoes in *Aceldama* is a quotation from Swinburne's “The leper”. I had not acknowledged the authorship of *Aceldama*; it was by “A Gentleman of the University of Cambridge” in imitation of one of Shelley's earlier books.

Now, there was a bookseller in the town with whom I had few dealings, for he was the most nauseatingly hypocritical specimen of the pushing tradesman that I ever set eyes on. He was entirely irreligious and did a considerable business in the kind of book which is loathsomely described as “curious.” But he was out to get the clerical and academic custom and to this end adopted a dress and manner which would have been affected in the sweetest of young curates. Somehow or other, a copy of *Aceldama* got into his hands; he showed it to Kelly, who was so excited by the quotation from Swinburne that he found out who I was, and a meeting was arranged. His knowledge of both art and literature was encyclopaedic, and we became very intimate, projecting collaboration in an Arthurian play and a new magazine to take the place of *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*, which had died with Beardsley. Noting much came of this at the time, but the meeting had

in it the germs of important developments. The critical event of the year was my meeting with Oscar Eckenstein at Wastdale Head.

Eckenstein was a man twenty years older than myself. His business in life was mathematics and science, and his one pleasure mountaineering. He was probably the best all-round man in England, but his achievements were little known because of his almost fanatical objection to publicity. He hated self-advertising quacks like the principal members of the Alpine Club with an intensity which, legitimate as it was, was almost overdone. His detestation of every kind of humbug and false pretence was an overmastering passion. I have never met any man who upheld the highest moral ideals with such unflinching candour.

We did a few climbs together that Easter and made a sort of provisional agreement to undertake an expedition to the Himalayas when occasion offered. He had been a member of the Conway expedition of 1892, but had quitted the party at Askole, principally on account of his disgust with its mismanagement. The separation was engineered, moreover, from the other side. For what reason has never been clearly explained. It would evidently be improper to suggest that they had made up their minds to record at least a partial success and did not want an independent witness to their proceedings on the glacier.

One incident of that expedition is well worth mentioning. A survey was being made with instruments which lacked various essential parts, and on Eckenstein pointing out the uselessness of making observations of this kind, the reply was, “Yes, I know, but it's good enough for the Royal Geographical Society.” Anything of this sort roused Eckenstein to a pitch of indescribably violent rage. I could not have had a better teacher in matters of conscience. He taught me thoroughness and accuracy in every department of the game.

It illustrate one point. I had considered myself a very good glissader, and as compared with the other people whom I met on the mountain side, even such experts as Norman Collie, I had little to learn. But Eckenstein showed me that I was not even a beginner. He made me start down assorted slopes from all sorts of positions, and to pick myself up into any other desired position; to stop, to increase my pace or to jump, at the word of command. Why “starting from all sorts of positions?” The idea was that one might conceivably fall on to a snow slope or have to jump to it from a great height, and it was therefore necessary to know how to deal with such situations.[1]

The combination was ideal. Eckenstein had all the civilized qualities and I all the savage ones. He was a finished athlete; his right arm, in particular, was so strong that he had only to get a couple of fingers on to a sloping

ledge of an overhanging rock above his head and he could draw himself slowly up by that alone until his right shoulder was well above those fingers. There is a climb on the east face of the Y-shaped bolder (so called because of a forked crack on the west face) near Wastdale Head Hotel which he was the only man to do, though many quite first-rate climbers tried it. Great as his strength was, he considered it as nothing, quoting a Bavarian schoolmaster of his acquaintance, who could tear a silver florin in half with his fingers.

He was rather short and sturdily built. He did not know the meaning of the word “fatigue”. He could endure the utmost hardship without turning a hair. He was absolutely reliable, either as leader or second man, and this quality was based upon profound and accurate calculations. He knew his limitations to a hair's breadth. I never saw him attempt anything beyond his powers; and I never knew him in want of anything from lack of foresight.

He had a remarkable sense of direction, thought inferior to my own. But his was based upon rational considerations, that is to say, he could deduce where north was from calculations connected with geology, wind and the law of probabilities; whereas my own finer sense was purely psychical and depended upon the subconscious registration in my brain as to the angles through which my body had turned during the day.

One point, however, is not covered by this explanation, nor can I find anything satisfactory or even plausible. For instance, one day (not having seen moonrise that month or in the district) we attempted to climb the Yolcan di Colima; we had sent back our *mozos* with the camp to Zapotlan, intending to cross the mountain to the ranch of a gentleman to whom we had introductions. We had watched the volcano for a week and more, in the hope of discovering some periodicity in its eruptions, which we hailed to do. We accordingly took our chance and went across the slopes until the rocks began to burn our feet through our boots. We recognized that it was hopeless to proceed.

We decided to make for the farm and soon reached a belt of virgin jungle where the *chapparal* and fallen timber made it almost impenetrable. The trees were so thick that we could rarely see the sky. The only indication for progress was to keep on down hill. The slopes were amazingly complicated, so that at any moment we might have been facing east, south or west. The dust of the rotten timber almost choked and blinded us. We suffered tortures from thirst, our water supply being extremely limited. Night fell; it was impossible to see our hands in front of us. We accordingly lit a fire to keep off the jackals and other possibilities, which we heard howling round us. We naturally began to discuss the question of direction; and I said, “The moon will rise over there”, and laid down my axe as a pointer. Eckenstein indepen-

dently laid down his, after a rather prolonged mental calculation. When the moon rose we found that my axe was within five degrees and his within ten degrees of the correct direction. This was only one of many such tests; and I do not see in the least how I knew, especially as astronomy is one of the many subjects of which my knowledge is practically nil. In spite of innumerable nights spent under the stars, I can recognize few constellations except the Great Bear and Orion.

Besides my sense of direction on the large scale, I have a quite uncanny faculty for picking out a complicated route through rocks and ice falls. This is not simply a question of good judgment; for in any given route, seen from a distance, there may always be a passage, perhaps not twenty feet in height, which would render the whole plan abortive. This is especially the case with ice falls, where much of the route is necessarily hidden from view. Obviously, one cannot see what is on the other side of a *sérac* whose top one has theoretically reached. Yet I have never been wrong; I have never been forced to turn back from a climb once begun.

I have also an astonishing memory for the minutest details of any ground over which I have passed. Professor Norman Collie had this quality very highly developed, but he paid me the compliment of saying that I was much better than he was himself. This too, was in my very early days when he was teaching me many quite rudimentary points in the technique of rock-climbing. Again, we have a question of subconscious physical memory. I am often quite unable to describe even the major landmarks of a climb which I have just done, but I recognize every pebble as I come to it if asked to retrace my steps. Efforts on my part to bring up a mountain into clear consciousness frequently create such a muddle in my mind that I almost wonder at myself. I make such grotesque mistakes that I am not far from doubting whether I have been on the mountain at all: yet my limbs possess a consciousness of their own which is infallible. I am reminded of the Shetland ponies (see Wilkie Collin's *Two Destinies*) which can find their way through the most bewildering bogs and mist. This faculty is not only retrospective — I can find my way infallibly over unknown country in any weather. The only thing that stops me is the interference of my conscious mind.

I have several other savage faculties; in particular, I can smell snow and water, though for ordinary things my olfactory sense is far below the average. I cannot distinguish perfectly familiar perfumes in many cases; that is, I cannot connect them with their names.

Eckenstein and I were both exceedingly expert at describing what lay behind any mountain at which we might be looking. In his case, the knowledge was deduced scientifically; in mine, it was what one must call sheer

clairvoyance. The nearest I could get to understanding his methods was judging by the glow above the ridge of a mountain whether the other side was snow-covered, and estimating its steepness and the angle of its rocks by analogy with the corresponding faces of the mountains behind us, or similar formations elsewhere. I should hardly be necessary to point out the extraordinary practical value of these qualities in deciding one's route in unknown country.

In the actual technique of climbing, Eckenstein and I were still more complementary. It is impossible to imagine two methods more opposed. His climbing was invariably clean, orderly and intelligible; mine can hardly be described as human. I think my early untutored efforts, emphasized by my experience on chalk, did much to form my style. His movements were a series, mine were continuous; he used definite muscles, I used my whole body. Owing doubtless to my early ill-health, I never developed physical strength; but I was very light, and possessed elasticity and balance to an extraordinary degree.

I remember going out on Scafell with a man named Corry. He was the ideal athlete and had gone through a course of Sandow; but had little experience of climbing at that time. I took him up the North Climb of Mickledoor. There is one place where, while hunting for holds, one supports oneself by an arm stretched at full length into a crack. The arm is supported by the rock and the hand grasps a hold as satisfactory as a sword hilt. The inconceivable happened; Corry fell off and had to be replevined by the rope. I was amazed, but said nothing. We continued the climb and, reaching the top of the Broad Stand, took off the rope. By way of exercise, I suggested climbing a short, precipitous pitch above a sloping slab. There was no possible danger, it was within the powers of a child of six; but Corry came off again. I was standing on the slab and caught him by the collar as he passed on his way to destruction.

After that, we put on the rope again and returned by descending, I think, Mickledoor Chimney. On the way down to Wastdale, he was strangely silent and embarrassed, but finally he made up his mind to ask me about it.

“Do you mind if I feel your arm?” he said. “It must be a marvel.”

I complied and he nearly fainted with surprise. My muscles were in quantity and quality like those of an Early Victorian young lady. He showed my his own arm. There could not have been a finer piece of anatomy for manly strength. He could not understand how, with everything in his favour, he had been unable to maintain his grip on the best holds in Westmorland.

A curious parallel to this incident happened in 1902 on the expedition to Chogo Ri. We had an arrangement by which a pair of ski could be converted into a sledge for convenience in hauling baggage over snow-covered glaciers. When the doctor and I proposed to move from Camp 10 to Camp 11 we set up this sledge and packed seven loads on it. We found it quite easy to pull. This was clearly an economy of five porters and we started two men up the slope. To our astonishment they were unable to budge it. They called for assistance; until the whole seven were on the ropes. Even so, they had great difficulty in pulling the sledge and before they had gone a hundred yards managed to upset in into a crevasse They settled the matter by taking two loads (between 100 and 120 pounds) each and went off quite merrily. It is useless to have strength unless you know how to apply it.

Eckenstein recognized from the first the value of my natural instincts for mountaineering, and also that I was one of the silliest young asses alive. Apart from the few priceless lessons that I had had from Collie, I was still an amateur of the most callow type. I had no idea of system. I had achieved a good deal, it is true, but a mixture of genius and common sense; but I had no regular training and was totally ignorant of the serious business of camp life and other branches of exploration.

We arranged to spend the summer in a tent on the Schönböhl glacier under the Dent Blanche, primarily with the idea of fitting me for the Himalayan expedition, and secondarily with that of climbing the east face of the Dent Blanche by a new route which he had previously attempted with Zurbriggen. They had been stopped by a formation which is exceedingly curious and rare in the Alps — slopes of very soft snow set in an unclimbable angle. He thought that my capacity for swimming up places of this sort might enable us to bag the mountain.

I hope that Eckenstein has left adequate material for a biography and made arrangements for its publication. I had always meant to handle the matter myself. But the unhappy termination of his life in phthisis and marriage, when he had hoped to spend its autumn and winter in Kashmir meditating upon the mysteries which appealed to his sublime spirit, made all such plans nugatory.

I fell it one of my highest duties to record in these memoirs as much as possible relative to this man, who, with Allan Bennett, stands apart from and above all others with whom I have been really intimate. The greatness of his spirit was not inferior to that of such giants as Rodin; he has an artist no less than if he had actually produced any monument to his mind. Only his constant man-handling by spasmodic asthma prevented him from matching his genius by masterpieces. As it is, there is an immense amount in his life

mysterious and extraordinary beyond anything I have ever known. For instance, during a number of years he was the object of repeated murderous attacks which he could only explain on the hypothesis that he was being mistaken for somebody else.

I must record one adventure, striking not only in itself, but because it is of a type which seems almost as universal as the “flying dream”. It possesses the quality of the phantasmal. It strikes me as an adventure which in some form or other happens to a very large number of men; which occurs constantly in dreams and romances of the Stevensonian order. For instance, I cannot help believing that something of the kind has happened to me, though I cannot say when, or remember the incidents. I have written the essence of it in “The Cream Cricean”; and some phantasm of similar texture appears to me in sleep so frequently that I wonder whether its number is less than one weekly, on the average. Sometimes it perpetuates itself night after night, recognizable as itself despite immense variety of setting, and haunting my waking hours with something approaching conviction that it represents some actuality.

This story is briefly as follows. One night after being attacked in the streets of Soho, or the district between that section of Oxford street and the Euston Road, he determined, in case of a renewed assault, to walk home by a roundabout and unfamiliar route. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Caledonian Road he thought that he was being followed — it was not late at night and somewhat foggy. To make sure, he turned into a narrow passage on to which opened the gardens of a row of houses, in one, and only one, of which lights were visible. The garden door of this house was open and he dodged in to see whether the men he suspected were following. Two figures appearing at the end of the passage, he quietly closed the door behind him with the intention of entering the house, explaining his position and asking to be allowed to leave by the front door. The door was opened by a young and beautiful woman in fashionable evening dress. She appeared of good social position and, on his explaining himself, asked him to stay to supper. He accepted. No servants appeared, but on reaching the dining-room — which was charmingly furnished and decorated with extremely good pictures, Monet, Sisley and the like, with sketches or etchings by Whistler, all small but admirable examples of those masters — he found a cold supper for two people was laid out. Eckenstein remained for several hours, in fact until daylight, when he left with the understanding that he would return that evening. He made no note of the address, the street being familiar to him and his memory for numbers entirely reliable. I think that he was somehow prevented from returning the same evening; I am not quite sure on this point. But if so, he was there twenty-four hours later. He was surprised to find the house in darkness and astounded when no further inspection he saw

a notice “To Let”. He knocked and rang in vain. Assuming that he must have mistaken the number, unthinkable as the supposition was, he explored the adjacent houses, but found nothing. Annoyed and intrigued, he called on the agent the next morning and visited the house. He recognized it as that of his hostess. Even the lesser discolorations of the wallpaper where the book-case and pictures had been testified to the identity of the room. The agent assured him that the house had not been occupied for three months. Eckenstein pointed to various tokens of recent occupancy. The agent refused to admit the conclusion. They explored the back part of the premises and found the French windows through which Eckenstein had entered, and the garden gate, precisely as he had left them. On inquiry it appeared that the house was vacant owing to the proprietor (a bachelor of some sixty years old, who had lived there a long while with a man and wife to keep house for him) having been ordered to the south of France for the winter. He had led a very retired life, seeing no company; the house had been furnished in early Victorian style. Only the one room where Eckenstein had had supper was unfurnished. The agent explained this by saying that the old man had taken the effects of his study with him to France, for the sake of their familiarity.

The mystery intrigued Eckenstein immensely and he returned several times to the house. A month or so later he found the two servants had returned. The master was expected back in the spring. They denied all knowledge of any such lady as described; and there the mystery rests, save that some considerable time later Eckenstein received a letter, unsigned, in evidently disguised handwriting. It contained a few brief phrases to the effect that the writer was sorry, but it could not be helped; that there was no hope for the future, but that memory would never fade. He connected this mysterious communication with his hostess, simply because he could not imagine any other possibility.

I can offer no explanation whatever, but I believe every word of the story, and what is most strange is that I possess an impenetrable conviction that something almost exactly the same must have happened to me. I am reminded of the one fascinating episode which redeems the once- famous but excessively stupid and sentimental novel *Called Back* from utterly abject dullness. There is also an admirable scene in one of Stevenson's best stories, “John Nicholson”. A similar theme occurs in *Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyd*e, “The Sire de Malétroit's Door”, and “A lodging for the Night”. There are similar ideas in oriental and classical literature. The fascination of the central idea thus seems a positive obsession to certain minds.

Is it somehow symbolic of a widespread wish or fear? Is it, as in the case of the Œdipus-complex, the vestige of a racial memory — “In the beginning was the deed”? (This phrase magnificent concludes Freud's Totem and Ta-

boo.) Or can it be the actual memory of an event in some previous incarnation or in some other illusion than what we call real life?

In the course of writing this story down, the impression of personal reminiscence has become steadily stronger. I now recall clearly enough that I have actually experienced not one but many such adventures, that is, as far as the spiritual essence is concerned. I have repeatedly, sometimes by accident but more often on purpose, gone into the wrong room or the wrong house, with the deliberate intention of finding romance. More often than not, I have succeeded. As to the sequel, I have often enough failed to return; and here again sometimes the fore of circumstances has been responsible, sometimes disinclination; but, most frequently of all, through the operation of that imp of the perverse whom I blame elsewhere in this book for occasional defeats at chess. I have wished to go, I have made every preparation for going, I have perhaps reached the door, and then found myself powerless to enter. Stranger still, I have actually returned; and then, despite the strongest conscious efforts to "recapture the first fine careless rapture" of the previous visit, behaved in such a way as to make it impossible.

I have never been baffled by any such inexplicable incident as the abandonment of the room, though I have sometimes failed to find the expected girl.

Talking the whole matter over with my guide, philosopher and friend, Frater O.P.V., he finds the whole story extraordinarily gripping. He finds the situation nodal for the spirit of romance. An extraordinary number of vital threads or "nerves" of romance.

He attaches great significance to the failure of Eckenstein to keep the appointment. It seems to him as if the whole business were a sort of magical ordeal, that Eckenstein should have been awake to the miraculous character of the adventure and kept his appointment though hell itself yawned between him and the house. The main test is his realisation that the incident is high Magick, that if he fail to grasp its importance, to understand that unless he return that night the way will shut for ever. He suggests that by failing to appreciate the opportunity at its full value he had somehow missed the supreme chance of his life, as if the "wrong house" were the gateway to another world, an inn, so to speak, on the outskirts of the City of God. In recent years I have been constantly alert and on the look-out for something of the kind. Whenever my plans are disarranged by a number of apparently trivial and accidental circumstances, I look eagerly for the possibility that the situation to which they lead may prove the opening scene in some gigantic drama. Numerous episodes in these Memoirs illustrate this thesis. One might even say that the whole book is a demonstration of how the accumulation

and consequence of large numbers of apparently disconnected facts have culminated in bringing “the time and the place, and the loved one all together”.

Eckenstein's parents had escaped from Germany in '48, or thereabouts, as political exiles, or so I imagine; I do not remember any details. But he was educated at Bonn and knew Bloody Bill intimately. This luckless despot was at that time a young man of extraordinary promise, taking himself with the utmost seriousness as realizing the gigantic responsibilities of his inheritance. He was intensely eager to fit himself to do his best for Germany. He was open-minded and encouraged Eckenstein's endeavours to introduce eight-oared rowing into the university, and used his influence to obtain permission of officers to lay by their swords when playing tennis.

One incident amuses me greatly. Students were exempt from the general law and could not be punished for any act which was not mentioned by name in the statues. The brighter spirits would then accordingly search the statues for gaps. It was, for instance, strengthens verboten to tie night-watchmen to lightning conductors during thunderstorms. Eckenstein and his friends waited accordingly for the absence of thunderstorms and then proceeded to tie up the watchmen.

He was as thoroughly anglicized as possible. The chief mark of the old Adam was a tendency to professional dogmatism. When he felt he was right, he was almost offensively right; and on any point which seemed to him settled, the coefficient of his mental elasticity was zero. He could not imagine the interference of broad principles with the detailed results of research. The phrase “general principles” enraged him. He insisted on each case being analysed by itself as it arose. This is all right, but it is possible to overdo it. There are many circumstances which elude analysis, yet are perfectly clear if examined in the light of the fundamental structure of the human organism. For all that, he was exactly the man that I needed to correct my tendency to take things for granted, to be content with approximations, to jump at conclusions, and generally to think casually and loosely. Besides this, my experience of his moral and intellectual habits was of the greatest service to me, or rather to England, when it was up to me to outwit Hugo Münsterberg.

Eckenstein's moral code was higher and nobler than that of any other man I have met. On numerous points I cannot agree; for some of his ideas are based on the sin complex. I cannot imagine where he got it from, he with his rationalistic mind from which he excluded all the assumptions of established religion. But he certainly had the idea that virtue was incompatible with enjoyment. He refused to admit that writing poetry was work, though

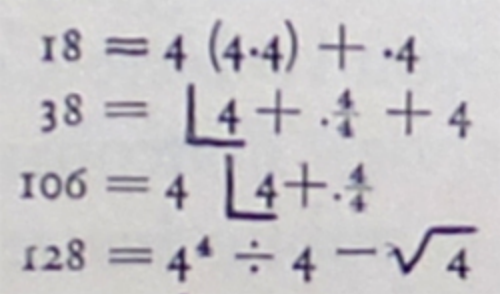
he admired and loved it intensely. I think his argument must have been that if a man enjoys what he is doing, he should not expect extra remuneration.

Eckenstein share the idiosyncrasies of certain very great men in history. He could not endure kittens. He did not mind grown-up cats. The feeling was quite irrational and conferred mysterious powers! for he could detect the presence of a kitten by means of some sense peculiar to himself. We used to tease him about it in the manner of the young, who never understand that anything may be serious to another person which is not so to them. One Easter the hotel was overcrowded; and five of us, including Eckenstein and myself, were sleeping in the barn. One of Eckenstein's greatest friends was Mrs. Bryant, whose beautiful death between Chamonix and Montanvers in 1922 was the crown of a noble life. She had brought her niece, Miss Nichols, who to intrepidity on rocks added playfulness in less austere surroundings. I formally accuse her of putting a kitten under Eckenstein's pillow in the barn while we were in the smoking-room after dinner. If it had been a cobra Eckenstein could not have been more upset!

He had also an idiosyncrasy about artificial scent. One day my wife and a friend came home from shopping. They had called at the chemist's who had sprayed them with “Shem-el-nessim.” We saw them coming and went to the door to receive them. Eckenstein made one rush — like a bull — for the window of the sitting-room, flung it open and spent the next quarter of an hour leaning out and gasping for breath.

Eckenstein was a great connoisseur of puzzles. It is extremely useful, by the way, to be able to occupy the mind in such ways when one has not the conveniences or inclination for one's regular work, and there is much time to kill in a hotel or a tent in bad weather. Personally, I have found chess solitaire and triple-dummy bridge or skat as good as anything.

Eckenstein was a recognized authority on what is known as Kirkwood's schoolgirl problem, but we used to work all sorts of things, from problems connected with Mersenne's numbers and Fermat's binary theorem to the purely frivolous attempt to represent any given number by the use of the number four, four times — neither more nor less, relating them by any of the accepted symbols of mathematical operations. Thus:



This has been done up to about 170, with the exception of the number 113, and thence to 300 or thereabouts with only a few gaps. I solved 113 with the assistance of Frater ψ and the use of a subfactorial, but Eckenstein would not admit the use of this symbol as fair.

He was also interested in puzzles involving material apparatus, one of which seems worth mention. He was in Mysore and a travelling conjurer sold him a whole bundle of more or less ingenious tricks. One of these consisted simply of two pieces of wood; one a board with a hole in it, the other shaped somewhat like a dumb-bell, the ends being much too big to go through the hole. Eckenstein said that he was almost ready to swear that he saw the man take them up separately and rapidly put them together, in which condition he had them and was never able to take them apart. He explored the surface minutely for signs of complexity of structure but without success. I never saw the toy, he having sent it to Mr. W. W. Rouse Ball, a great authority on such matters, but also baffled in this case.

We were naturally always interested in any problems concerned with the working out of a difficult route, and here his probity on one occasion made him the victim of an unscrupulous child of Shaitan. The villain appeared in the guise of an old and valued friend, saying “Is it possible to reach Q from P (mentioning two places in London) without passing a public house?” Eckenstein accordingly took his walks in that direction and after endless trouble discovered a roundabout way which fulfilled the condition. Communicating the joyful news, his friend replied, “Good for you! Here's something else. Can you get to the Horseshoe, Tottenham Court Road, from here without passing a public house?” I do not know how many pairs of alpine boots Eckenstein wore out on the problem, before asking his friend, “Can it be done?” A telegram assured him that it could. More boots went the way of all leather and then he gave up. “It's perfectly easy,” said the false friend, “*don't* pass them — go in!”

(The psychologist will observe that this atrocious piece of misplaced humour was made possible by the earlier problem having been genuine, difficult and interesting, thus guaranteeing the spoof.)

One of his favourite amusements was to calculate the possibility of some published description of a phenomenon. For instance, in the novel “She” here is a “rocking stone” about which there are sufficient data in the book to enable an expert to say whether it was possible in nature. He decided that it was, but only on the assumption that it was a cone balanced on its apex.

I suppose that every form of navigation possesses its peculiar dangers. I remember Eckenstein telling me of an adventure he once had with Legros. One might be tempted to think that very little harm could come to a barge in a dock on the Thames, bar being cut down by a torpedo ram. But the facts are otherwise. It was the first time that either of them had been in charge of this species of craft, which they had to manoeuvre in order to inspect a wharf which required some slight repair. The gallant little wave-waltzer displaced 120 tons and was called the *Betsy Anne*.

They boarded the barge without difficulty, but to get her going was another matter. The fellow-countrymen of Cook, drake and Nelson were not behindhand with wise advice couched in language of frankness and fancy. They learned that the way to make a barge go was to walk up and down the broad flat gunwale with a pole. She was certainly very hard to start; but it got easier as she gathered way. They entered into the spirit of the sport and began to run up and down with their poles, exciting each other to emulation with cheerful laughter. Pride filled their souls as they observed that their rapid mastery of the awkward craft was appreciated on shore, as the lusty cheering testified. It encouraged them to mightier efforts and before long they must have been making well over two miles an hour. Then Eckenstein's quick ear asked him whether the shouting on shore was so wholly the expression of unstinted admiration as he had supposed. He paid greater attention and thought he detected yells of coarse ridicule mingled with violent objurgation. He thought he heard a word at the conclusion of a string of extremely emphatic epithets which might easily have been mistaken for “Fool!” At this point Legros stopped poling, said shortly and unmistakably “Hell!” and pointed to the wharf, which, as previously stated, stood in need of some trifling repairs. It was now not more than fifty yards away and seemed to them to be charging them with the determination of an angry elephant. They realized the danger and shouted for advice. The answer was, in essence, “Dive!” It was, of course, hopeless to attempt to check or even to deflect the *Betsy Anne*. They dived, and a moment later heard the rending crash of the collision, and were nearly brained by baulks of falling timber. “Well,” said Eckenstein, as they drove home to change their muddy garments, “We've done a good morning's work, anyhow. That wharf is no longer in need of trifling repairs.” Both it and the Betsy Anne kept the neighbourhood in matchwood for the next two years. Oh! for a modern Cowper to immortalize the maritime John Gilpin!

When Eckenstein first called on Harriman he found him in a private office with drawing instruments, studying a map. Presently Harriman explained that he was planning a new railroad, his method being to find some spot as far as possible from human habitation. He would mark this as the terminal and connect it with the nearest big centre, so as to take in a few isolated settlements. The idea was to buy a belt of land through which the road might run. He would then induce people to go out to the end of the line and start something. In course of time intermediate settlements would follow, and the road would make its bit by selling its land for building and cultivation. He explained that this was, in essence, the method by which the country had been developed. I have always taken this into account in connection with the accusations against the railroad magnates. It seems to me that their imagination, intelligence, and pluck deserved ample reward.

Eckenstein had a number of stories about the railways whose calculations he made, some of which seem to me worthy of permanent record. The first may be called “The story of the Lost Truck.” This was an element of an ordinary freight train. For over six months it was sought for all over the United States, and was ultimately found on a siding thousands of miles away from its destination. I do not remember how the original mistake arose, but I have a vague idea there was some confusion between Washington, D.C. and Washington on the Pacific Coast. The consignment was important and valuable, and no effort was spared to find it. Eckenstein, knowing the details of the management of railways, found it almost incredible that it should have eluded search for six whole months.

Another very surprising incident is that of the famous accident at Graham. It was the duty of no less than five people to stop the train, yet not one of them did so. The signal for shutting off steam could not possibly be missed, but the train ran on full speed through a station where it was scheduled to stop, and met with disaster shortly afterwards. In my novel, *Moonchild*, I have used this incident with a slight adaptation. Eckenstein used to use this story as an argument against automatic coupling, and other purely mechanical devices for securing safety which are so angrily demanded by ignorant asses like Bernard Shaw (as he would say, with no lack of emphasis—but another noun). The decision of the railways has nothing to do with the inhuman greed and callousness of railway shareholders and directors. Eckenstein's attitude was that any conceivable automatism may go wrong, and therefore its existence may be actually mischievous as diminishing the sense of responsibility of the men in charge of the train. A similar argument applies to the Court of Criminal Appeal. Juries have been much more ready to hang men since they have had that phantom to relieve them of their sense of responsibility. I cannot help thinking, on the whole, with Eckenstein. The gen-

eral tendency to rely on mechanism to abolish the necessity for the use of the higher faculties in man is tending to brutalise him.

Eckenstein's favourite story is that of the most complicated collision that ever occurred in the history of railways. It was, I think, in Germany. It took place in an important junction at some distance from any station. A train ran from the branch on to the main line into the middle of another train which should not have been there. Two other trains then piled themselves up on the débris. The reason for the failure of the Block System is rather curious and elaborate. I distrust my memory too deeply to attempt to explain it, but the original cause of the accident sticks in my mind as illustrating how an event, trivial to the point of insignificance, may, by a concatenation of highly improbable incidents, culminate into the most colossal catastrophe.

The driver of the first train had failed to replace a worn washer in one of his gauges. The matter was not urgent, and involved no danger of any sort. He was replaced by another man at a station shortly after the accident, and the new driver had no reason to suspect any irregularity; because, by a chance that would not happen once in a hundred years, the washer stuck instead of moving. This rendered possible, through to the last degree unlikely, the misreading of his steam pressure. But the result was that he found himself at a standstill when he thought he had full power. Here again the accident was quite trifling in itself, but, as things were, it chanced that he found himself stuck at the exact point where the branch line cut in. Moreover, he had just passed the signal, so that the train behind him supposed the line to be clear. The times were such that the proximity of the trains took place within a period of two minutes.

The point of the whole story is that half a dozen or more extremely unlikely accidents, none of them dangerous in itself, or even taken all together, found a combination of places and times such that the totality of the circumstances resulted in the disaster. If the first train had stopped fifty yards before or after where it did, nothing would have gone wrong. If one of the trains had been half a minute earlier or later, nothing would have gone wrong. Everything occurs as if the most ingenious constructor of chess problems that ever lived, had been given absolute power over an immensely varied and complex set of energies, and been requested to produce the most improbable checkmate imaginable.

This story is of peculiar interest to me as furnishing a comparison of the events of my own life in relation to the *Book of the Law*. It supports my scepticism as no other facts within my knowledge ever begin to do. I ask myself whether, after all, it is not conceivable that the immense number of facts which point to intelligent control of very various energies, which claim

to be so, could not be in reality an accident in the true sense of the word like this collision. The degree of improbability is, at least, of the same order.

One last story. This, by the way, has been used by Conan Doyle as the basis of one of his stupid and dull yarns, “The Lost Special.” It was somewhere in the West of America. A train started from A to go to B, a distance of some fifty miles. There were no junctions on the line and few stations. The line was a comparatively new one, but it had been shortened considerable a few months before the incident by the building of an important bridge which enabled them to cut off a long detour. The train starter in threatening weather, which became a terrific blizzard. Telegraphic communication was temporarily interrupted. It was, therefore, some time before the alarm was given that the train had not arrived at B. There was nothing surprising in this. It had evidently been held up by the snow. But with the lapse of time the situation began to appear alarming, as the line traversed wild country and the train was not supplied with provisions. A snow-plough was sent out from B, but the drifts were so heavy that the line was not clear until the fourth day. When the rescue party arrived at A the rescuers supposed that the original animal had simply made its way back there. The authorities at A, however, denied all knowledge of the train. But, said the rescuers, we have come through from B and seen no signs of it. The situation was absurd. The only theory tenable was that the train had run off the line, and got hidden behind a bank of snow. There was, however, no place on the line where anything of the sort could have happened. When the train was ultimately found, the officials and the passengers had no suspicion of what was wrong. They supposed merely that the line in front of them and behind was blocked with snow drifts. The solution is almost inconceivably improbably. The train had run off the line, and by one chance in countless billions had found itself on the abandoned permanent way, and travelled a considerable distance along it before being brought up by the snow drifts.

1 — See ***The Diary of a Drug Fiend***, pp. 159-160.

STANZA XIX

We had one or two other people with us, in particular a man named Paley Gardner, who had been with Eckenstein at Wastdale at Ester. He was a man of giant strength, but could not be taught to climb the simplest rocks. He always tried to pull the mountain down to him instead of pulling himself up to it! He was one of the best fellows that ever walked and had led an extraordinary life of which he was too silent and too shy to speak. But he loosened up to some extent in camp; and two of his adventures are so remarkable that I feel they ought to be rescued from oblivion.

He was a rich man, but on one occasion found himself stranded in Sydney and too lazy to wire for money. At this juncture he met a man who offered to take him trading in the islands. They got a schooner, a crew and some stores; set off; sold their stuff; and started home. Then small pox broke out on board and every man died by Paley, who sailed the schooner, singlehanded, seven days back to Sydney.

On another occasion he found himself at Lima during the battle; if you can call it a battle when everyone thought it the best bet to shoot anyone he saw as a matter of general principle. Paley, being a man of peace, took up a position on a remote wall with the idea of shooting anyone that approached in case of his proving unfriendly. However, the first person that arrived was obviously an Englishman. They recognized each other and proceeded to concert measures for escape.

The newcomer, a doctor with long experience of South America, suggested that if they could only cross a broad belt of country inhabited by particularly malignant Indian tribes, and the Andes, they could reach the head waters of the Amazon and canoe down to Iquitos, where they would be in clover, as the Doctor was a close friend of Dom Somebody, a powerful Minister or other high official. They started off on this insane programme and carried it out (after innumerable adventures) with success. Arriving at Iquitos, ragged and penniless, but confident that the Minister's friendship would put them on a good wicket at once, they sought the local authorities — and learnt that their friend had been hanged a few days before, and that anyone who knew him might expect a similar solution to his troubles!

The two Englishmen were thrown into prison, but broke out and bolted down the river. The hue and cry was raised; but, just as their pursuers were closing in on them, the managed to steal a fishing smack, with which they put out into the open Atlantic. Luckily, a few days later, when they were on

the brink of starvation, they fell in with an English steamer bound for Liverpool. The Captain picked them up and took them home in triumph.

The weather made it impossible to do any serious climbing; but I learnt a great deal about the work of a camp at high altitudes, from the management of transport to cooking; in fact, my chief claim to fame is, perhaps, my "glacier curry". It was very amusing to see these strong men, inured to every danger and hardship, dash out of the tent after one mouthful and wallow in the snow, snapping at it like mad dogs. The admitted, however, that it was very good as curry and I should endeavour to introduce it into London restaurants if there were only a glacier. Perhaps, some day, after a heavy snowfall —

I had been led, in the course of my reading, to *The Kabbalah Unveiled*, by S. L. Mathers. I didn't understand a word of it, but it fascinated me all the more for that reason, and it was my constant study on the glacier. My health was not good during this summer and I had gone down to Zermatt for a rest. One night in the Beer-hall I started to lay down the law on alchemy, which I nowise understood. But it was a pretty safe subject on which to spread myself and I trust that I impressed the group of men with my vast learning. However, my destiny was in ambush. One of the party, named Julian L. Baker, was an analytical chemist. He took me aside when the group broke up and walked back to the hotel with me. He was himself a real practical alchemist — I don't know whether he had been fooled by my magpie display of erudition. He may simply have deduced that a boy, however vain and foolish, who had taken so much pains to read up the subject, might have a really honest interest after all; and he took me seriously. He had accomplished some remarkable work in alchemy. For one thing, he had prepared "fixed mercury"; that is to say, the pure metal in some form that was solid at ordinary temperatures.

As for me, I made no mistake. I felt that the moment of opportunity was come. I had sent out the S.O.S. call for a Master during that Easter at Wastdale Head; and here was a man who was either one himself or could put me in touch with one. It struck me as more than a coincidence that I should have been led to meet him partly through my ill-health and partly through my fatuous vanity. That night I resolved to renew my acquaintance with Baker in the morning and tackle him seriously about the intricate question which lay close about my heart.

The morrow dawned. At breakfast I inquired for Baker. He had left the hotel; no one knew where he had gone. I telegraphed all over the valley. He was located at the Gorner Grat. I sped up the mountain to find him. Again he had gone. I rushed back. In vain I hunted him through the hotels and at

the railway station. At last I got a report than an Englishmen corresponding to his description had started to walk down the valley to Brigue. I hurled myself headlong in pursuit. This time I was rewarded. I caught up with him some ten miles below Zermatt. I told him of my search for the Secret Sanctuary of the Saints and convinced him of my desperate earnestness. He hinted that he knew of an Assembly which might be that for which I was looking. He spoke of a Sacrament where the elements were four instead of two. This meant nothing to me; but I felt that I was on the right track. I got him to promise to meet me in London. He added, "I will introduce you to a man who is much more of a Magician than I am."

To sum the matter in brief, he kept his word. The Secret Assembly materialized as the "Hermetic Order of the G∴ D∴," and the Magician as one George Cecil Jones.

During the whole summer, the weather got steadily worse and my health took the same course. I found myself obliged to leave the camp and go to London to see doctors. I took rooms in an hotel in London, attended to the necessary medical treatment and spent my time writing poetry. The play *Jephthah* was my principal work at this period. It shows a certain advance in bigness of conception; and has this notable merit, that I began to realize the possibility of objective treatment of a theme. Previous to this, my lyrics had been more or less successful expressions of the ego; and I had made few attempts to draw characters who were not more than Freudian wish-phantasms — I mean by this that they were either projections of myself as I fancied myself or aspired to be; otherwise, images of women that I desired to love. When I say "to Love", I doubt whether the verb meant anything more than "to find myself through". But in *Jephthah*, weak as the play is, I was really taking an interest in other people. The characters are not wholly corrupted by self-portraiture, I stuck to the Hebrew legend accurately enough, merely introducing a certain amount of Qabbalistic knowledge.

The passionate dedication to Swinburne is significant of my literary hero-worship. With this play were published (in 1899) a number of lyrics entitled *Mysteries, Lyrical and Dramatic*. The shallow critic hastily assumed that the influence of Swinburne was paramount in my style, but on rereading the volume I do not think that the accusation is particularly justifiable. There are plenty of other authors who might more reasonably be served with an affiliation summons. Indeed, criticism in England amounts to this: that if a new writer manifests any sense of rhythm, he is classed as an imitator of Swinburne; if any capacity for thought, of Browning.

I remember one curious incident in connection with this volume. I had a set of paged proofs in my pocket one evening, when I went to call on W.B.

Yeats. I had never thought much of his work; it seemed to me to lack virility. I have given an extended criticism of it in *The Equinox* (Vol. I, No. II, Page 307). However, at that time I should have been glad to have a kindly word from an elder man. I showed him the proofs accordingly and he glanced through them. He forced himself to utter a few polite conventionalities, but I could see what the truth of the matter was.

I had by this time become fairly expert in clairvoyance, clairaudience and clairsentience. But it would have been a very dill person indeed who failed to recognize the black, billious rage that shook him to the soul. I instance this as a proof that Yeats was a genuine poet at heart, for a mere charlatan would have known that he had no cause to fear an authentic poet. What hurt him was the knowledge of his own incomparable inferiority.

I was little of him and George Moore. I have always been nauseated by pretentiousness; and the Celtic revival, so-called, had all the mincing, posturing qualities of the literary Plymouth Brother. They pretended to think it an unpardonable crime not to speak Irish, though they could not speak it themselves; and they worked in their mealy-mouthed way towards the galvanization of the political, ethnological and literary corpse of the Irish nation. Ireland has been badly treated, we all know; but her only salvation lay in forgetting her nonsense. What is the use of setting up a scarecrow provincialism, in re-establishing a barbarous and fantastic language which is as dead as Gothic and cannot boast sufficient literature to hold the attention of any but a few cloistered scholars — at the price of cutting Ireland off from the main stream of civilisation? We see already that the country has slunk into the slough of anarchy. When the Kilkenny cats have finished shooting each other from behind hedges, the depopulated island will necessarily fall into the hands of practical colonists, who will be content to dwell peaceably together and communicate with the world in a living language.

Like Byron, Shelly, Swinburne and Tennyson, I left the University without taking a degree. It has been better so; I have accepted no honour from her; she has had much from me.

I wanted the spirit of the University and I passed my examinations in order to be able to imbibe it without interference from the authorities, but I saw no sense in paying fifteen guineas for the privilege of wearing a long black gown more cumbersome than the short blue one, and paying thirteen and fourpence instead of six and eight pence if I were caught smoking in it. I had no intention of becoming a parson or a schoolmaster; to write B.A. after my name would have been a decided waste of ink.

I felt that my career was already marked out for me. Sir Richard Burton was my hero and Eckenstein his modern representative, as far as my external life was concerned. A Baccalaureate would not assist me noticeably in the Himalayas or the Sahara. As for my literary career, academic distinction would be a positive disgrace. And with regard to my spiritual life, which I already felt to be the deepest thing in me, the approbation of the Faculty was beneath troubling to despise. I have always objected to incurring positive disgrace. I see no sense in violating conventions, still less in breaking laws. To do so only gives one unnecessary trouble.

On the other hand, it is impossible to make positive progress by means of institutions which lead to one becoming a Lord Chancellor, an Archbishop, an Admiral, or some other flower of futility. I had got from Cambridge what I wanted: the intellectual and moral freedom, the spirit of initiative and self-reliance; but perhaps, above all, the indefinable tone of the University. The difference between Cambridge and Oxford is that the former makes you the equal of anybody alive; the latter leaves you in the invidious position of being his superior.

NOTE ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE

One of the most significant points in English character is thrown into relief by the contemplation of Oxford and Cambridge. I should be very puzzled to have to say that that point is, but the data are unmistakable. The superficial likeness between the Universities is very clear, yet their fundamental spiritual difference can only be described as “a great gulf fixed”. Contrast this with America, where even long experience does not enable one to distinguish at a glance between men from the four principal universities, or even to detect, in most cases, the influence of any university training soever, as we understand the idea. But to mistake an Oxford for a Cambridge man is impossible and the converse exceedingly rare.

I hope it is not altogether the blindness of filial affection that inclines me to suggest that the essential difference depends upon the greater freedom of the more famous university. Oxford makes a very definite effort to turn out a definite type of man and even his ingrained sense that he is not as other men operates finally as a limitation. At Cambridge the ambitions and aspirations of any given undergraduate are much less clearly cut and are of wider scope than those of his equivalent on the Isis. It seems to me no mere accident that Cambridge was able to tolerate Milton, Byron, Tennyson and myself without turning a hair, while Oxford inevitably excreted Shelly and Swinburne. *Per contra*, she suited Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde perfectly. Had they been at Cambridge, the nonsense would have been knocked out of them. They would have had to succeed or fail entirely on their own virtues;

whereas, as things were, the Oxford atmosphere and the Oxford manner shielded them from the rude blasts of all-round criticism.

These ideas receive some support from the consideration of the relations normally obtaining between undergraduates and dons. On the Granta we are no doubt *in statu puillari*; the Oxonian is *in statu quo pupillari*. He is taught, trained and, if necessary, trounced, to respect the principle of authority. It is really fair to say that no Cambridge man would ever dream of adducing authority in the course of an argument. He might indeed bring forward a great name on his side, but never without being ready to support it with the heavy artillery of patent proof. No fame is fixed with us as it is with them. The spirit of criticism never sleeps.

We see accordingly much stricter discipline with them than with us. We tend to trust the good sense and good will of the fluffiest fresher. Our dons never get nervous lest a rag should go too far, and we never betrayed their trust, at least not till quite recently. Since my time the tone of both universities has been lowered. Before 1900 a rag capable of scaring the women students would have been unthinkable.

Tyranny always trembles, and I remember only too well the wave of sympathy which swept through Cambridge at the news that the Oxford authorities, panic-stricken at some projected demonstration, had actually imported mounted police from London. Our own dons would have cut their throats rather than do anything so disgraceful; but if they had, we should have pounded those police into pulp.

This particular contrast is manifest to both universities. Whenever the subject comes up, anecdote answers anecdote to the point. The psychology extends to the individual. Our conception of the ideal proctor is very different to theirs. I my second year one proctor effected some capture by watching his victim from the darkness of a doorway. The story want round and within a week dishonour met its due. The dirty dog was ducked in the Cam. Nor were the avengers sent down. On the contrary, the proctor was obliged to burn his bands. Such conduct was practically unprecedented.

The typical tale is this. The grounds of Downing College are surrounded by a long low wall. One dark windy night a passing proctor saw his cap, caught by a gust, soar gracefully over the rampart. His bulldogs climbed the wall and retrieved it. But the cap was not their only prize. They dragged with them a most discomfited undergraduate, and a companion who was open to criticism from the point of view of the University regulations. But the proctor simply thanked the man for bringing back his cap and apologized for disturbing him. He refused to take advantage of an accident.

One very instructive incident concerns that brilliant Shakespeare scholar and lecturer Louis Umfraville Wilkinson. One summer night he came into college at Oxford a little lively with liquor. His with had made the evening memorable and he went on to his rooms without curbing his conversation, which happened to deal with the defects of the Dean in various directions. Fortune favoured him — I balance the books in perspective! — the Dean's window was open and the reprobate heard to his horror that one at least of his flock failed to estimate his eminence at the same exalted rate as he did himself. He actually brought a formal charge of blasphemy against Wilkinson, pressed it to the utmost and succeeded in getting him sent down.

Wilkinson shrugged his shoulders, came over to us and entered his name at John's. Now comes an infamy almost incredible. The Dean pursued his revenge. He wrote a long, bitter, violent letter to Wilkinson's tutor, giving an account of the affair at Oxford, and urging — in such language that it was more like a command than a threat — that Wilkinson be forthwith kicked out of Cambridge. The tutor sent for the offender and the following dialogue ensued:

“I believe you know Mr. So-and-So, Mr. Wilkinson.”

“I have that honour, sir.”

“Dean of Blank, Oxford, I understand.”

“That is so, sir.”

“I have a letter from him, which I propose to read to you.”

“Thank you, sir.”

The tutor read through the letter, made no comment, asked no questions. He tore it slowly in pieces and threw them into the fire.

“May I hope that you will be with us at breakfast tomorrow?”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Good morning, Mr. Wilkinson.”

“Good morning, sir.”

I confess that it seems to me that the method of Oxford in such matters errs in two different directions. On the one hand, the undergraduate is

treated as an irresponsible infant, to be dragooned into decency; and on the other, punished with a sternness which postulates that he is as accountable for his actions as a fully adult man, with comprehensive knowledge of the ways of the world. The result is to hinder his development, by withholding experience from him, and at the same time to punish his inexperience by making a mere mistake ruinous. The system tends to atrophy his ethical development by insisting on a narrow and inelastic code, while encouraging moral cowardice and unfitting him to face the facts which so presumptuously force themselves into notice as soon as the College conventions are done with.

Cambridge realizes that (within very wide limits) the more experience a man has, the better is he equipped to make his way in the world. We think it wiser to let men find out for themselves what dangers lie ahead, and pay the penalty for imprudence while recovery is comparatively easy. Better learn how to fall before the bones become brittle.

Another advantage of our idea of the relationship between long gowns and short is that, even if at the cost of some superficial respect, it is possible to establish more intimate communion in a spirit of comradeship between the old and the young. The intellectual gain is obvious; but perhaps even more valuable is the moral profit. To draw a hard and fast line between pupil and teacher limits both. Misunderstanding leads to mistrust, mistrust to enmity. It is better to realize the identity of interests.

I became aware of my feeling on this point quite suddenly. The impression is the more intense. One night there had been a regular rag. I forget what about, but we built a big bonfire in the middle of the market-place and otherwise spread ourselves. Things began with no definite pulse of passion discernible, but as the evening advanced, we found ourselves somehow or other at odds with the townees. I think we must have resented their attempt to participate in the general gaiety. Sporadic free fights sprang up here and there, but nothing really serious. On the whole we gave and took in good temper. Just before twelve o'clock I turned to go home. Just beyond the tobacconist's – Bacon, celebrated by Calverley in his overrated ode — swirled a swarm of townees shouting an swearing in a way that struck me as ugly. It was no affair of mine and I did not want to be late. But even as I changed my course to avoid the mob I saw that their game was to reinforce half a dozen roughs who were surrounding a doorway and hustling one of the proctors. My immediate impulse was to gloat upon the evil that had befallen my natural enemy, for until that moment my absurd shyness had prevented me from realizing my relations with the authorities. I had timidly accepted the conventional chaff, but now almost before that first thought was formulated my inmost instincts sprang into consciousness. I shouted to the few scat-

tered gownsmen that were still in the square and hurled myself headlong to the rescue of my detested tyrant. He was pretty well under the weather, warding off feebly the brutal blows that the cowardly cads rained on his face. His cap was gone and his gown was in shreds. His bulldogs had been handled still more roughly. I suppose the townees saw them as traitors to the cause, hirelings of the aristocracy. They had been knocked clean down and were being battered by the boots of the mob. We must have been about a dozen, not more, and we had to fight off forty. It was the first time that I had ever had to face the animal anger, unreasoned and uncontrolled, of a mass of men whose individual intelligences, such as they were, had been for the moment completely swamped by the savage instinct to stamp on anything that seemed to them sensitive.

Fate familiarised me with this psychology in another form. It breaks out every time any man speaks or acts so as to awaken the frantic fear which is inherent in all but the rarest individuals, that anything new is a monstrous menace. For the first time I observed the extraordinary fact that in such situations one's time-sense runs at two very different rates. The part of one's mind that is concerned with one's actions races riotously with their rhythm. Another part stands aloof, observing, analysing, imperturbable; a train of thought which might, in normal circumstances, occupy an hour reduced to a few minutes, and seeming slow at that.

The roughs were, to all intents and purposes, insane. The neither knew nor cared whether they ended by murder. And yet I have no idea why we mastered them easily enough. We had neither arms nor discipline. We were younger, certainly weaker, man for man, and we lacked the force which fury lends to its victims. I found myself puzzling it out and the only conclusion was that, whatever science may say, there is such a thing as moral superiority, a spiritual strength independent of material or calculable conditions.

The fight went on for twenty minutes or so and ended queerly enough. The mob thinned out, melted away at its outskirts, and the front rank men became aware of the fact simultaneously without any more reason than had marked their entire proceedings. They took to their heels and ran like rabbits.

I was half-past twelve before I got home. I took a tub and found I was black and blue. Of course my breach of the rule about midnight was duly reported. I was halled and explained why I had been late. The proctor whom we had conveyed to Christ's had not taken our names and I have no reason to think that he knew me. But my tutor asked no questions. He took my story for true; in fact, he treated me simply as another gentleman. That could not have happened at Oxford.

STANZA XX

Nothing gives such a mean idea of the intelligence of mankind than that it should ever have accepted for a moment the imbecile illusion of “free will”; for there can be very few men indeed, in any generation, who have at any time in their lives sufficient apparent liberty of action to induce them to dally with it. Of these few, I was one. When I left Cambridge, I had acquired no particular ties. I was already The Spirit of Solitude in embryo. Practically, too, my father having been the younger son of a younger son, I had not even a territorial bond. On the other hand, I had a large fortune entirely at my own disposal; there was no external constraint upon me to do one thing rather than another. And yet, of course, my career was absolutely determined. The events of my life up to that point, it they had been intelligently interpreted, would have afforded ample indications of the future. I was white-hot on three points; climbing, poetry and Magick.

On my return from Switzerland in 1898, I had nowhere in particular to go. There was no reason why I should settle down in any special place. I simply took a room in the Cecil, at that remote period a first-class hostelry, and busied myself with writing on the one hand and following up the Magical clues on the other. *Jephthah*, and most of the other poems which appear in that volume, were written about this period. It is a kind of backwater in my life. I seem to have been marking time. For this reason, no doubt, I was the more ready to be swept away by the first definite current. It was not long before it caught me.

I had a number of conversations with Julian Baker, who kept his promise to introduce me to “a man who was a much greater Magician than he was himself”. This was a Welshman, named George Cecil Jones. He possessed a fiery but unstable temper, was the son of a suicide, and bore a striking resemblance to many conventional representations of Jesus Christ. His spirit was both ardent and subtle. He was very widely read in Magick; and, being by profession an analytical chemist, was able to investigate the subject in a scientific spirit. As soon as I found that he really understood the matter I went down to Basingstoke, where he lived, and more or less sat in his pocket. It was not long before I found out exactly where my destiny lay. The majority of old Magical rituals are either purposely unintelligible or actually puerile nonsense.[1] Those which are straightforward and workable are, as a rule, better adapted to the ambitions of love-sick agricultural labourers than those of educated people with a serious purpose. But there is one startling exception to this rule. It is The Book of the Sacred Magick of Abramelin the Mage.

This book is written in an exalted style. It is perfectly coherent; it does not demand fantastic minutiae of ritual or even the calculations customary. There is nothing to insult the intelligence. On the contrary, the operation proposed is of sublime simplicity. The method is in entire accordance with this. There are, it is true, certain prescriptions to be observed, but these really amount to little more than injunctions to observe decency in the performance of so august an operation. One must have a house where proper precautions against disturbance can be taken; this being arranged, there is really nothing to do but to aspire with increasing fervour and concentration, for six months, towards the obtaining of the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel. Once He has appeared, it is then necessary, first, to call forth the Four Great Princes of the Evil of the World; next, their eight sub-princes; and, lastly, the three hundred and sixteen servitors of these. A number of talismans, previously prepared, are thus charged with the power of these spirits. By applying the proper talismans, you can get practically anything you want.

It cannot be denied that the majesty and philosophical irreproachability of the book are sensibly diminished by the addition of these things to the invocation of the Holy Guardian Angel. I should have preferred it without them. There is, however, a reason. Anyone who reaches a new world must conform with all the conditions of it. It is true, of course, that the hierarchy of evil appears somewhat repugnant to science. It is in fact very hard to explain that we mean by saying that we invoke Paimon; but, to go a little deeper, the same remark applies to Mr. Smith next door. We do not know who Mr. Smith is, or what is his place in nature, or how to account for him. We cannot even be sure that he exists. Yet, in practice, we call Smith by that name and he comes. Buy the proper means, we can induce him to do for us those things which are consonant with his nature and powers. The whole question is, therefore, one of practice; and by this standard we find that there is no particular reason for quarrelling with the conventional nomenclature.

At this time I had not worked out any such apology for the theories of transcendentalism. I took everything as it came and submitted it to the test of experience. As it happened, I had no reason at any time to doubt the reality of the Magical Universe. I began my practical work with astral visions and found to my surprise that after half a dozen experiments I was better than my teacher.

In these days I took my Magick very much *au pied de la lettre*. I knew, of course, that Magick had fallen into desuetude chiefly because people would follow the prescribed course of action and get no result.

An exquisitely amusing incident bearing on this point is as follows: Gerald Kelly, Ivor Back and one or two other ardent spirits, inspired by my success, decided to do Magick themselves. They hired and furnished a room at Cambridge for the purpose and proceeded to evoke various spirits. Nothing happened. At last one of the greatly daring extended his little finger outside the circle. He was not “slain or paralysed as if blasted by the lightning flash” and thence concluded that Magick was all rubbish. I offer this example to logic to the Museum of Human Imbecility, in the principal city of the Astral Plane.

I understood perfectly well that Back and Kelly, having no capacity for Magick, were bound to fail either to evoke a spirit or to get themselves blasted. If one does not understand anything about electricity, one cannot construct a dynamo; and having so failed, one cannot get oneself electrocuted.

But I suppose that their failure and my success was mostly a matter of personal genius, just as Burns with hardly any literary apparatus could write poetry, and Tennyson, with any amount, could not.

My success itself helped to blind me to the nature of the conditions of achievement. It never occurred to me that the problem of Magick contained metaphysical elements.

Consider my performance one evening at Eastbourne. Having waited for the lowest possible tide so as to be as remote as might be from the bandstand, I made a circle and built an altar of stones by the edge of the sea. I burned my incense, performed my evolutions and made heaven hideous with my enchantments. All this in order to invoke the Undines. I hoped, and more or less expected, to have one come out of the foam and attach herself to my person. I had as yet no notion that this programme might be accomplished far more easily.

There are thus two main types of mistake; one in spirit and one in technique. Most aspirants to Magick commit both. I soon learned that the physical conditions of a magical phenomenon were like those of any other; but even when this misunderstanding is removed, success depends upon one's ability to awaken the creative genius which is the inalienable heirloom of every son of man, but which few indeed are able to assimilate to their conscious existence, or even, in 99 cases out of 100, to detect.

The only Undine that appeared was a policeman, who approached near enough to observe a fantastically-garbed figure, dancing and howling in the moonlight “on the silvery, silvery, silvery sands”; howling, whistling, bellow-

ing and braying forth the barbarous names of evocation which have in the sacred rites a power ineffable, around a furiously flaming bonfire whose sparks were whirled by the wind all over the beach.

The basis of the delusion is that there is a real apodeictic correlation between the various elements of the operation, such as the formal manifestation of the spirit, his name and sigil, the form of the temple, weapons, gestures and incantations. These facts prevent one from suspecting the real subtlety involved in the hypothesis. This is so profound that it seems almost true to say that even the crudest Magick eludes consciousness altogether, so that when one is able to do it, one does it without conscious comprehension, very much as one makes a good stroke at cricket or billiards. One cannot give an intellectual explanation of the rough working involved, as one can explain the steps in the solution of a quadratic equation. In other words Magick in this sense is rather an art than a science.

Jones realized at once that I had a tremendous natural capacity for Magick, and my every action proved that I intended to devote myself to it "without keeping back the least imaginable thing". He suggested that I should join the Body of which he was an Adept; known, to a few of the more enlightened seekers, ass the Hermetic Order of the G∴ D∴. A short account of this Order is necessary. Most of the facts concerning it are given here and there in the *Equinox*; but the story is so lengthy and complex that it would require a volume to itself. Briefly, however, the facts are as follows:

Some time in the 'seventies or 'eighties, a cipher manuscript was found on a bookstall by a Dr. Woodman, a colleague in magical study of Dr. W. Wynn Westcott. It was beyond their powers to decipher it, though Mrs. Emery (Miss Florence Farr) told me that a child could have done so. They called in a man named Samuel Liddell Mathers, a scholar and Magician of considerable eminence. The manuscript yielded to his scrutiny. It contained, among minor matters, the rubric of certain rituals of initiation and the true attribution of the Tarot Trumps. This attribution had been sought vainly for centuries. It cleared up a host of Qabbalistic difficulties, in the same was as Einstein's admirers claim that his equations have done in mathematics and physics. The manuscript gave the name and address of an adept Sapiens Dominabitur Astris, a Fräulein Sprengel, living in Germany, with an invitation to write to her if further knowledge was required. Dr. Westcott wrote; and S.D.A. gave him and his two colleagues a charter authorizing them to establish an Order in England. This was done. Soon after, S.D.A. died. In reply to a letter addressed to her, came an intimation from one of her colleagues that they had never approved her policy in permitting open-temple work in England, but had refrained from active opposition from personal respect for her. The writer ended by saying that England must expect no more assis-

tance from Germany; enough knowledge had been granted to enable any English adept to form a Magical Link with the Secret Chiefs. Such competence would evidently establish a right to renewed relations.

Dr. Woodman had died and Mathers forced Dr. Westcott to retire from active leadership of the Order. Mathers, however, was not trusted. He, therefore, announced to the most advanced adepts that he had himself made the Magical Link with the Secret Chiefs; and, at an interview with three of them in the Bois de Boulogne, had been confirmed in the supreme and sole authority as the Visible Head of the Order. The Adepts entrusted with this information were required to sign a pledge of personal obedience to Mathers as a condition of advancement in the Order. Nevertheless, dissatisfaction continued. The advancement did not arrive. They suspected that Mathers had no more knowledge to give; and he retorted that, however that might be, he wasn't going to waste it on such hopeless duffers. Both positions have much to recommend them to discriminating sympathy.

These petty squabbles apart, a big thing had happened. Mathers had discovered the manuscript of Abramelin in the Library of the Arsenal in Paris and begun to translate it. He found himself harassed and opposed on all sides. In those days there was practically no public way of getting about Paris at all. Mathers lived at Auteuil, a long way from the Arsenal, and met with so many bicycle accidents that he was driven to go on foot. (There is always occult opposition to the publication of important documents. It took me over three years to get my *Goetia* through the press, and over two years in the case of *777*. This is one of the facts whose cumulative effect makes it impossible to doubt the existence of spiritual forces.) Other misfortunes of every kind overwhelmed Mathers. He was an expert Magician and had become accustomed to use *The Greater Key of Solomon* with excellent effect. He did not realize that Abramelin was an altogether bigger proposition. It was like a man, accustomed to handle gunpowder, suddenly supplied with dynamite without being aware of the difference. He worried through and got Abra-Melin published; but he perished in the process. He became the prey of the malignant forces of the book, lost his integrity and was cast out of the Order of which he had been the visible head.

This debacle had not yet taken place at the time of my first initiation, November 18th, 1898.

I took the Order with absolute seriousness. I was not even put off by the fact of its ceremonies taking place at Mark Mason's Hall. I remember asking Baker whether people often died during the ceremony. I had no idea that it was a flat formality and that the members were for the most part muddled middle-class mediocrities. I saw myself entering the Hidden Church of the

Holy Grail. This state of my soul served me well. My initiation was in fact a sacrament.

The rituals have been printed in the *Equinox*, Vol. I, Nos. 2 and 3. There is no question that those of Neophyte and Adept are the genuine rituals of initiation, for they contain the true formulæ. The proof is that they can be made to work by those who understand and know how to apply them. Shallow critics argue that because the average untrained man cannot evoke a spirit, the ritual which purports to enable him to do so must be at fault. He does not reflect that an electroscope would be useless in the hands of a savage. Indubitably, Magick is one of the subtlest and most difficult of the sciences and arts. There is more opportunity for errors of comprehension, judgment and practice than in any other branch of physics. It is above all needful for the student to be armed with scientific knowledge, sympathetic apprehension and common sense. My training in mathematics and chemistry supplied me with the first of these qualities; my poetic affinities and wide reading with the second; while, for the third, I suppose I have to thank my practical ancestors.

Being thus able to appreciate the inmost intention of my initiation, I was able to stand the shock of the events immediately subsequent. I was introduced to an abject assemblage of nonentities; the members of the Order were as vulgar and commonplace as any other set of average people. Jones and Baker themselves were the only members with any semblance of scientific education, until, a few months later, I met Allan Bennett, a mind pure, piercing and profound beyond any other in my experience. There was one literary light, W. B. Yeats, a lank dishevelled Demonologist who might have taken more pains with his personal appearance without incurring the reproach of dandyism; and one charming and intelligent woman, Mrs. Emery, for whom I always felt an affectionate respect tempered by a feeling of compassion that her abilities were so inferior to her aspirations. The rest of the Order possessed no individuality; they were utterly undistinguished either for energy or capacity. There is not one of them today who has made any mark in the world.

At my initiation, I could have believed that these adepts deliberately masked their majesty; but there was no mistaking the character of the “Knowledge-lecture” in which I had to be examined to entitle me to pass to the next grade. I had been most solemnly sworn to inviolable secrecy. The slightest breach of my oath meant that I should incur “a deadly and hostile current of will, set in motion by the Greatly Honoured Chiefs of the Second order, by the which I should fall slain or paralysed, as if blasted by the lightning flash”. And now I was entrusted with some of these devastating though priceless secrets. They consisted of the Hebrew Alphabet, the names

of the planets with their attribution to the days of the week, and the ten Sephiroth of the Qabbala. I had known it all for months; and, obviously, any school-boy in the lower fourth could memorize the whole lecture in twenty-four hours.

I see to-day that my intellectual snobbery was shallow and stupid. It is vitally necessary to drill the aspirant in the ground-work. He must be absolutely familiar with the terminology and theory of Magick from a strictly intellectual standpoint. I still think, however, that this course of study should precede initiation and that it should not be mixed up with it. Consider the analogy of poetry. One could, to a certain extent, teach a man to write poetry, by offering to his soul a set of spiritual and emotional experiences, but his technique must be based on the study of grammar and so on, which have no essential relation with art.

Talking over these matters with Jones and Baker, I found them quite in sympathy with my point of view; but they insisted, rightly enough, that I was not in a position to judge the circumstances. I must first reach the Second Order.

Accordingly, I took the grade of Zelator in December, of Theoricus in January and of Practicus in February. One could not proceed to Philosophus for three months, so I did not take that grade till May. The Philosophus cannot proceed to the Second Order in less than seven months; also he must be specially invited.

In the spring of 1899, at some ceremony or other, I was aware of the presence of a tremendous spiritual and magical force. It seemed to me to proceed from a man sitting in the east, a man I had not seen before, but whom I knew must be Very Honoured Frater Iehi Aour, called among men Allan Bennett. The fame of this man as a Magician was already immense. He was esteemed second only to Mathers himself; and was, perhaps, even more feared.

After the ceremony we went into the outer room to unrobe. I was secretly anxious to be introduced to this formidable Chief. To my amazement he came straight to me, looked into my eyes, and said in penetrating and, as it seemed, almost menacing tones: “Little Brother, you have been meddling with the Goetia!” (Goetia means “howling”; but it is the technical word employed to cover all the operations of that Magick which deals with gross, malignant or unenlightened forces.) I told him, rather timidly, that I had not been doing anything of the sort. “In that case,” he returned, “the Goetia has been meddling with you.” The conversation went no further. I returned

home in a somewhat chastened spirit; and, having found out where Iehi Aour lived, I determined to call on him the following day.

I should have explained that, on deciding to join the Order, I had taken a flat at 67 and 69 Chancery Lane.[2] I had already determined to perform the Operation of Abramelin, but Jones had advised me to go through my initiation first. However, I began to busy myself with the preparations. Abramelin warns us that our families will object strenuously to our undertaking the Operation. I resolved, therefore, to cut myself off absolutely from mine. So, as I had to live in London, I took the flat under the name of Count Vladimir Svareff. As Jones remarked later, a wiser man would have called himself Smith. But I was still obsessed with romanticism, while my summer in St. Petersburg had made me in love with Russia. There was another motive behind this — a legitimate one. I wanted to increase my knowledge of mankind. I knew how people treated a young man from Cambridge. I had thoroughly appreciated the servility of tradesmen, though I was too generous and too ignorant to realize the extent of their dishonesty and rapacity. Now I wanted to see how people would behave to a Russian nobleman. I must say here that I have repeatedly used this method of disguise — it has been amazingly useful in multiplying my points of view about humanity. Even the most broad-minded people are necessarily narrow in this one respect. They may know how all sorts of people treat them, but they cannot know, except at second hand, how those same people treat others.

To return to Allan Bennett. I found him staying with V. H. Frater Aequo Animo[3] in a tiny tenement in Southwark or Lambeth — I forget which. It was a mean, grim horror. Æ. A., whose name was Charles Rosher, was a widely travelled Jack-of-all-trades. He had invented a patent water-closet and been court painter to the Sultan of Morocco. He wrote some of the worst poetry I have ever read. He was a jolly-all-round sportsman with an excellent heart and the cheery courage which comes from knocking about the world, and being knocked about by it. If his talents had been less varied, he might have made a success of almost anything.

1 — Some are doubtless survivals of various forms of Nature Religion; but the majority are adaptations of Catholic or Jewish traditions to the ambitions, cupidities, envies, jealousies and animal instincts of the most ignorant and primitive type of peasant.
2 — My innocence after three years at Cambridge may be gauged by my conduct in the matter of choosing a residence. I understood it as a fixed principle of prudence, “When in a difficulty consult your lawyer.” Knowing nothing, whatever about renting apartments, I was in a difficulty. I therefore consulted my lawyer and took the first place he suggested. He, of course, never gave a thought to my convenience or the appropriateness of the district. He saw and took the chance of obliging a business acquaintance.
3 — I ultimately conjectured: Equi Animo: “with the soul of a horse”.

STANZA XXI

Allan Bennett was four years older than myself. His father, an engineer, had died when he was a boy; his mother had brought him up as a strict Catholic. He suffered acutely from spasmodic asthma. His cycle of life was to take opium for about a month, when the effect wore off, so that he had to inject morphine. After a month of this he had to switch to cocaine, which he took till he began to "see things" and was then reduced to chloroform. I have seen him in bed for a week, only recovering consciousness sufficiently to reach for the bottle and sponge. Asthma being a sthenic disease, he was then too weak to have it any more, so he would gradually convalesce until, after a few weeks of freedom, the spasms would begin once more and he would be forced to renew the cycle of drugs.

No doubt, this constant suffering affected his attitude to life. He revolted against being an animal; he regarded the pleasures of living (and above all, those of physical love) as diabolical illusions devised by the enemy of mankind in order to trick souls into accepting the curse of existence. I cannot forbear quoting one most remarkable incident. When he was about sixteen, the conversation in the laboratory where he was working turned upon childbirth. What he heard disgusted him. He became furiously angry and said that children were brought to earth by angels. The other students laughed at him and tried in vain to convince him. He maintained their theory to be a bestial blasphemy. The next day one of the boys turned up with an illustrated manual of obstetrics. He could no longer doubt the facts. But his reaction was this: "Did the Omnipotent God whom he had been taught to worship devise so revolting and degrading a method of perpetuating the species? Then this God must be a Devil, delighting in loathsomeness." To him the existence of God was disproved from that moment.

He had, however, already some experience of an unseen world. As a little boy, having overheard some gossip among superstitious servants, he had gone into the back garden and invoked the Devil by reciting the Lord's Prayer backwards. Something happened which frightened him.

Having now rejected Catholicism, he took up Magick and at once attained extraordinary success. He used to carry a "lustre" — a long glass prism with a neck and a pointed knob such as adorned old-fashioned chandeliers. He used this as a wand. One day, a party of theosophists were chatting sceptically about the power of the "blasting rod". Allan promptly produced his and blasted one of them. It took fourteen hours to restore the incredulous individual to the use of his mind and his muscles.

Allan Bennett was tall, but his sickness had already produced a stoop. His head, crowned with a shock of wild black hair, was intensely noble; the brows, both wide and lofty, overhung indomitable piercing eyes. The face would have been handsome had it not been for the haggardness and pallour due to his almost continuous suffering.

Despite his ill-health, he was a tremendous worker. His knowledge of science, especially electricity, was vast, accurate and profound. In addition, he had studied the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, not only as a scholar, but with the insight that comes from inborn sympathetic understanding.

I did not fully realize the colossal stature of that sacred spirit; but I was instantly aware that this man could teach me more in a month than anyone else in five years. He was living in great discomfort and penury. I offered him the hospitality of my flat. I have always felt that since the Occult sciences nourish so many charlatans, it should be one's prime point of honour not to make money in any way connected with them. The amateur status above all! Hospitality is, however, always allowable. But I was careful never to go beyond the strict letter of the word.

Iehi Aour came to stay with me and under his tuition I made rapid progress. He showed me where to get knowledge, how to criticize it and how to apply it. We also worked together at ceremonial Magick; evoking spirits, consecrating talismans, and so on.

I must relate one episode, as throwing light upon my Magical accomplishments and my ethical standards. Jones and I had come to the conclusion that Allan would die unless he went to live in a warmer climate. However, he was penniless and we would not finance him for the reasons given above. Instead, Jones and I evoked to visible appearance the Spirit Buer, of the *Goetia*, whose function is to heal the sick. We were partially successful; a helmeted head and the left leg being distinctly solid, though the rest of the figure was cloudy and vague. But the operation was in fact a success in the following manner. It is instructive to narrate this as showing the indirect and natural means by which the Will attains its object.

I am constrained to a seeming digression. Many authors insist on the importance of absolute chastity in the aspirant. For some months I had been disregarding this injunction with a seductive siren whose husband was a Colonel in India. Little by little I overcame my passion for her and we parted. She wrote to me frequently and tried to shake my resolution, but I stood firm. Shortly after the evocation of Buer, she wrote, begging me to call at her hotel. I cannot remember how it came into my mind to what I did, but I went to see her. She begged me to come back to her and offered to do any-

thing I wanted. I said to her, “You're making a mess of your life by your selfishness. I will give you a chance to do an absolutely unfettered act. Give me a hundred pounds, I won't tell you whom it's for, except that it's not for myself. I have private reasons for not using my own money in this matter. If you give me this, it must be without hoping or expecting anything in return.” She gave me the money — it paid Allan's passage to Ceylon and saved to humanity one of the most valuable lives of our generation.

So much for Buer. As for the lady, she came to see me some time later and I saw that I was myself acting selfishly in setting my spiritual welfare above her happiness. She had made a generous gesture; I could do no less. She agreed not to stand in the way of my performing the Operation of Abramelin, but begged me to give her a living memory of our love. I agreed and the sequel will be told in its place.

During this time, magical phenomena were of constant occurrence. I had two temples in my flat; one white, the walls being lined with six huge mirrors, each six feet by eight; the other black,[1] a mere cupboard, in which stood an altar supported by the figure of a Negro standing on his hands. The presiding genius of this place was a human skeleton, which I fed from time to time with blood, small birds and the like. The idea was to give it life, but I never got further than causing the bones to become covered with a viscous slime. In the *Equinox*, Vol. I, No. 1 is a story, “At the Fork of the Roads,” which is in every detail a true account of one episode of this period. Will Bute is W. B, Yeats,[2] Hypatia Gay is Alethea Gyles, the publisher is Leonard Smithers.

The Demons connected with Abra-Melin do not wait to be evoked; they come unsought. One night Jones and I went out to dinner. I noticed on leaving the white Temple that the latch of its Yale lock had not caught. Accordingly, I pulled the door to and tested it. As we went out, we noticed semi-solid shadows on the stairs; the whole atmosphere was vibrating with the forces which we had been using. (We were trying to condense them into sensible images.) When we came back, nothing had been disturbed in the flat; but the temple door was wide open, the furniture disarranged and some of the symbols flung about in the room. We restored order and then observed that semi-materialized beings were marching around the main room in almost unending procession.

When I finally left the flat for Scotland, it was found that the mirrors were too big to take out except by way of the black Temple. This had, or course, been completely dismantled before the workmen arrived. But the atmosphere remained and two of them were put out of action for several hours. It was almost a weekly experience, by the way, to hear of casual cal-

lers fainting or being seized with dizziness, cramp or apoplexy on the stair case. It was a long time before those rooms were re-let. People felt instinctively the presence of something uncanny. Similarly, later on, when I gave up my rooms in Victoria Street, a pushing charlatan thought to better himself by taking them. With this object he went to see them. A few seconds later he was leaping headlong down the five flights of stairs, screaming in terror. He had just sufficient genuine sensitiveness to feel the forces, without possessing the knowledge, courage and will required to turn them to account, or even to endure their impact.

1 — Iehi Aour never had anything to do with this; and I but little: the object of establishing it was probably to satisfy my instinct about equilibrium.
2 — The identification is conjectural, depending solely on the admissions of Miss Gyles.

STANZA XXII

Apart from my daily work, my chief preoccupation was to prepare for the Operation of the Sacred Magick.

The first essential is a house in a more or less secluded situation. There should be a door opening to the north from the room of which you make your Oratory. Outside this door, you construct a terrace covered with fine river sand. This ends in a “lodge” where the spirits may congregate. It would appear the simplest thing in the world for a man with £40,000, who is ready to spend every penny of it on the achievement of his purpose, to find a suitable house in a very few weeks. But a Magical house is as hard to find as a Magical book to publish. I scoured the country in vain. Not till the end of August 1899 did I find an estate which suited me. This was the Manor of Boleskine and Abertarff, on the South-East side of Loch Ness, half way between Inverfarigaig and Foyers. By paying twice as much as it was worth, I got it, gave up my flat and settled down at once to get everything in order for the great Operation, which one is told to begin at Easter.

The house is a long low building. I set apart the south-western half for my work. The largest room has a bow window and here I made my door and constructed the terrace and lodge. Inside the room I set up my Oratory proper. This was a wooden structure, lined in part with the big mirrors which I brought from London.

On first arriving at Boleskine, I innocently frightened some excellent people by my habit of taking long walks over the moors. One morning I found a large stone jar at my front door. It was not an infernal machine; it was illicit whisky — a mute, yet eloquent appeal, not to give away illicit stills that I might happen to stumble across in my rambles. I needed no bribe. I am a free trader in every sense of the word. I have no sympathy with any regulations which interfere with the natural activities of human beings. I believe that they aggravate whatever trouble they are intended to prevent; and they create the greatest plague of humanity, officialdom, and encourage underhand conduct on both sides, furtiveness and espionage. Any law which tends to destroy manly qualities is a bad law, however necessary it may seem on the surface. The tendency of most modern legislation is to bind Gulliver with packthread. I have never broken the law myself, because the things I happen to want are so utterly different from those desired by men in general, that no occasion has ever risen.

But I observe with regret that humanity is being compelled to turn its attention from its proper business by having to comply with innumerable petty formalities.

Salmon fishing on Loch Ness should be remembered by people who are praying for “those in peril on the deep”. It is a dull year when nobody is drowned. The lock is large enough to get up a regular sea; and the hills are so arranged that the wind can come down in all sorts of unsuspected ways. The most violent storms often arise without five minutes' warning. In addition, there is one section of the loch (north-east of Boleskine, on the same side) where the shore for some two miles is a rocky precipice just too high above the water to be climbable, even if one could get a footing.

It is useless fishing in settled fine weather; one wants it overcast, neither too hot nor too cold, neither windy nor quite calm — unsettled weather, in a word. One morning I got into a salmon which subsequently turned the scale at 44 pounds. He was terrifically game and really much too heavy for my tackle. Again and again he ran out the line and we only held him by rowing for all we were worth in his direction. It was nearly two hours before we got him into the boat.

The excitement over, I observed that a sleet was driving heavily and that the loch was white with foam. Also that we were off a lee-shore, and that shore about the middle of the precipice. We could do nothing but pull for life in the teeth of the gale, which increased in violence every moment. We were both already tired out. Despite every effort, we were forced, foot by foot, towards the rocks. By great luck, there is one gap in those infernal little cliffs. But the boat was not under control. However, we had to risk it and managed to get ashore without being smashed, to beach the boat and walk home. That was the worst of it.

But I was often caught on the wrong side of the loch. So near and yet so fat! There was the house a mile away and there was I with thirty miles to make to get there. I have never heard of the steamers being wrecked, but that is perhaps because they are wrecks already.

I took Lady Etheldreda to Scotland with me. I have had many dogs in my time; but she was *sui generis*. I had trained her to follow me on the mountains and she was not only an admirable rock climber but an uncannily prophetic tracker. For instance, I would leave her at the foot of a precipice beyond her powers and, after a climb, descend another precipice to another valley, often in mists so thick that I could not see ten years in any direction. But I would invariably find her at the foot of the rocks after making a detour of perhaps ten miles across unknown country.

These qualities had their defects. She became an amateur of sheep. It was straightforward sport. She never mangled a sheep, she killed it neatly with a single bite and went off to the next. She had no illusions about the ethics of her proceedings and she brought superlative cunning into service. She never touched a sheep within ten miles of Boleskine; she never visited the same district twice running; she was even at pains to prepare an alibi. Of course, she was always careful to remove every trace of blood. That was elementary. But she would sham sickness the morning after the kill and she would bring various objects into her kennel, as if to say, “Well, if you want to know who I have been passing the time, there you are!” She also realized that her extraordinary speed and endurance would help her to clear herself. On one occasion she killed not less than forty miles there and back from Boleskine. No one except her master, whom she trusted not to give her away, could suspect that she had covered so much ground — to say nothing of the shikar itself — in the course of the night. She was unsuspected for months — even weeks of watching failed to identify her and if she had not been such a magnificent animal she might have escaped altogether. But her size and beauty were unmistakable. The evidence began to be too strong to pooh-pooh and I had to send her back to London.

Boleskine is in the winter an excellent centre of *ski-laufing*. There is a little snow in the valley itself, but on the moors behind Strath Errick are tracts of elevated country, extending for many miles. The slopes are for the most part gentle and I have found the snow in first-rate condition as late as the end of March.

On off days at Wastdale Head, it was one of our amusements to throw the boomerang. Eckenstein had long been interested in it and constructed numerous new patterns, each with its own peculiar flight. As luck would have it, Walker of Trinity came to the dale. He had earned a fellowship by an essay on the Mathematics of the Boomerang. The theoretical man and the practical put their heads together; and we constructed some extraordinary weapons. One of them could be thrown half a mile, even by me, who cannot throw a cricket ball fifty yards. Another, instead of returning to the thrower, went straight from the hand and undulated up and down like a switchback, seven or eight times, before coming to the ground. A third shot out straight, skimming the ground for a hundred yards or so, stopped as suddenly as if it had hit a wall, rose, spinning in the air to the height of some fifty feet, whence it settled down in a slowly widening spiral. Obviously, these researches bore on the problem of flying. Eckenstein and I, in fact, proposed to work at it. The idea was that we should cut an alley through the woods on that part of my property which bordered Loch Ness. We were to construct a chute and start down in on a bicycle fitted with movable wings. There was to be a steam launch on the loch to pick up us at the end of the flight. We

were, in fact, proposing to do what has now, in 1922, proved so successful. But the scheme never went further than the construction of the boathouse for the launch. My wanderings are to blame.

The harmless necessary cat sheds those epithets in the Highlands. The most domesticated tabby becomes intoxicated by the air of freedom (so one hypothesis suggests) and begins to run wild. It takes to the woods and lives on rabbits and birds. Its conscience tells it that it is violating the game laws; man becomes its enemy. It accordingly flees at one's approach, though sometimes it becomes mad with fear and will attack a stranger, unprovoked, and fight to the death.

Much to my disgust, commercialism thrust its ugly head into my neighbourhood. The British Aluminium Company proposed to exploit the water power of the valley above Foyers. The Falls of Foyers are one of the few natural glories of the British Isles; why not use them to turn an honest penny?

> “I sate upon the mossy promontory
> Where the cascade cleft not his mother rock,
> But swept in whirlwind lightning foam and glory,
> Vast circling with unwearying luminous shock
> To lure and lock
> Marvellous eddies in its wild caress;
> And there the solemn echoes caught the stress,
> The strain of that impassive tide,
> Shook it and flung it high and wide,
> Till all the air took fire from that melodious roar;
> All the mute mountains heard,
> Bowed, laughed aloud, concurred,
> And passed the word along, the signal of wide war.
> All earth took up the sound,
> And, being in one tune securely bound,
> Even a star became the soul of silence most profound.
>
> “Thus there, the centre of that death that darkened,
> I sat and listened, if God's voice should break
> And pierce the hallow of my ear that hearkened,
> Lest God should speak and find me not awake —
> For his own sake.
> No voice, no song might pierce or penetrate
> That enviable universal state.
> The sun and moon beheld, stood still.
> Only the spirit's axis, will,
> Considered its own soul an sought a deadlier deep,

And in its monotone mood
Of supreme solitude
Was neither glad nor sad because it did not sleep;
But with calm eyes abode
Patient, its leisure the galactic load,
Abode alone, nor even rejoiced to know that it was God."

Money-grubbing does its best to blaspheme and destroy nature. It is useless to oppose the baseness of humanity; if one touches pitch one runs the risk of being defiled. I am perfectly content to know that the vileness of civilisation is rapidly destroying itself; that it stinks in my nostrils tells me that it is rotting and my consolation is in the words of Lord Dunsany. In the meantime, the water was to be wasted in producing wealth — the most dangerous of narcotic drugs. It creates a morbid craving — which it never satisfies after the first flush of intoxication.

Now the furnaces of the British Aluminium company cost a great deal to light. It was, therefore, impossible to extinguish them every Saturday evening. The people of the neighbourhood learnt this fact with unfeigned horror. Such wickedness was inconceivable! But besides that, it was sheer madness. Did not these people in Glasgow understand the God did not permit such things to happen with impunity? So on the first Saturday night the people betook themselves to points of vantage on the surrounding hills in order to see the Works destroyed by the Divine Wrath. No explanation has ever been offered why it did not come off!

The lady previously mentioned was now made happy as a result of the fortnight we had spent together in Paris. I therefore thought it my duty to take care of her until the following spring. The fulfilment of her hopes would end my responsibility before the beginning of my Operation.

I had asked Jones to come and stay with me during the six months, in view of the dangers and interference already experienced at the mere threat to perform it. It was obviously the part of prudence to have, if possible, an initiated on the spot. It is also very awkward for a man absorbed in intense magical effort to have to communicate with the external world about the business of every-day life. Jones did not see his way to come, so I asked Rosher, who consented. But before he had been there a month he found the strain intolerable. I came down to breakfast one morning; no Rosher. I asked the butler why he was absent. The man replied, in surprise at my ignorance, that Mr. Rosher had taken the early morning boat to Inverness. There was no word of explanation; I never saw him or heard of him for many years; and, when we met, though absolutely friendly and even intimate, we never referred to the matter.

One day I came back from shooting rabbits on the hill and found a Catholic priest in my study. He had come to tell me that my lodge keeper, a total abstainer for twenty years, had been raving drunk for three days and had tried to kill his wife and children.

I got an old Cambridge acquaintance to take Rosher's place; but he too began to show symptoms of panic fear. Meanwhile, other storms were brewing. The members of the London Temple, jealous of my rapid progress in the Order, had refused to initiate me to the Second Order in London, though the Chief himself had invited me. He, therefore, asked me to come to Paris, where he would himself confer the Grade. I went; and, on my return, ten days later, found that my protégée had also taken fright, fled to London and hidden herself.

Besides these comparatively explicable effects on human minds, there were numberless physical phenomena for which it is hard to account. While I was preparing the talismans, squares of vellum inscribed in Indian ink, a task which I undertook in the sunniest room in the house, I had to use artificial light even on the brightest days. It was a darkness which might almost be felt. The lodge and terrace, moreover, soon became peopled with shadowy shapes, sufficiently substantial, as a rule, to be almost opaque. I say shapes; and yet the truth is that they were no shapes properly speaking. The phenomenon is hard to describe. It was as if the faculty of vision suffered some interference; as if the objects of vision were not properly objects at all. It was as if they belonged to an order of matter which affected the sight without informing it.

By the exercise of dour determination, I succeeded in getting everything ready in good time to begin the work proper at Easter. It is unfortunate that in these days I had no idea of the value of a Magical Record from the historical standpoint. I find few dates, nor have I troubled to set down even such startling occurrences as are related above. I was dead set on attainment. Anything which appeared to me out of the direct road to the goal was merely a nuisance, a hindrance and a distraction. Apart from my memory, therefore, the chief sources of information about my life at this period are poems, rituals and records of visions.

I was very busily at work with the muse. My *Appeal to the American Republic* was begotten of a pleasant journey with two Americans from Geneva to Paris. The poem is still popular, though from time to time one has to change “The Lying *Russian* cloke his traitor head” to *Prussian*, and so on. *Carmen Saeculare* was actually the result of a more or less prophetic vision. Some of its forecasts have turned out wonderfully well, though the century

is yet young; others await fulfilment — but I do not propose to linger on merely to obtain so morbid a satisfaction!

"The Fatal Force," written in the spring of 1899, possesses one feature of remarkable interest. The idea of the play is that a high priestess, resenting the necessity of male co-operation in maternity, should marry her own son and, subsequently, the son of that union, so as to produce an individual who would be seven-eights herself; the advantage being that he would thus inherit as much of her power and wisdom as possible. I supposed this idea to be original; but I discovered later that Eliphas Lévi mentions this formula as having been used by the ancient Magicians of Persia with this very intention. That was one of the facts which led me to the discovery that in my last incarnation is was Eliphas Levi.

The Mother's Tragedy seems to have been influenced by Ibsen, with a touch of Bulwer Lytton.

In "The Temple of the Holy Ghost," however, the reader may trace the progress of my soul's development. A few of the poems in this book are comparatively normal. One can see the extent of my debt to various predecessors, especially Baudelaire. But while there is a certain delight in dalliance with demoniac Delilahs, there is a steady advance towards the utmost spiritual purity. In "The Athanor," the invocation of the Holy Guardian Angel reveals my true aspirations; while in "The Mountain Christ," "The Rosicrucian" and others, it is evident that my ambition was not to become superior to the rest of mankind except in order that I might redeem them.

I quote:
"The Oath of the Beginning.

"I, Perdurabo, Frater Ordinis Roase Rubeae et Aureae Crucis, a Lord of the Paths in the Portal of the Vault of the Adepts, a $5^{o}=6^{\square}$, of the Order of the Golden Dawn; and an humble servant of the Christ of God; do this day spiritually bind myself anew:

"By the Sword of Vengeance:
"By the Powers of the elements:
"By the Cross of Suffering:

"That I will devote myself to the Great Work: the obtaining of Communion with my own Higher and Divine Genius (called the Guardian Angel) by means of the prescribed course; and that I will use my Power so obtained unto the Redemption of the Universe.

“So help me the Lord of the Universe and mine own Higher Soul!”

This idea is further expanded in the obligation which I took in respect of the Operation. The influence of my initiation into the Second Order is manifest. While I remained in the Outer Order, I had not definitely realized the fact that I was bound up with the welfare of humanity and could only satisfy my aspiration by becoming a perfect instrument for the regeneration of the world. I quote once more:

“The obligation of the Operation.

“I, Perdurabo, in the Presence of the Lord of the Universe, and of all Powers Divine and Angelic, do spiritually bind myself, even as I am no physically bound unto the Cross of Suffering.

“(1) To unite my consciousness with the divine, as I may be permitted and aided by the gods Who live for ever, The Æons of Infinite years; that, being lost in the Limitless Light, it may find Itself: to the Regeneration of the Race, either of man or as the Will of God shall be. And I submit myself utterly to the Will Divine.

“(2) To follow out with courage, modesty, loving-kindness and perseverance the course prescribed by Abramelin the Mage; as far as in me lies, unto the attainment of this end.

“(3) To despise utterly the things and the opinions of this world lest they hinder me in doing this.

“(4) To use my powers only to the Spiritual well-being of all with whom I may be brought in contact.

“(5) To give no place to Evil: and to make eternal war against the Forces of Evil: until even they be redeemed unto the Light.

“(6) To harmonize my own spirit so that Equilibrium may lead me to the East; and that my Human consciousness shall allow no usurpation of its rule by the Automatic.

“(7) To conquer the temptations.

“(8) To banish the illusions.

“(9) To put my whole trust in the Only and Omnipotent Lord God: as it is written, “Blessed are they that put their trust in Him.”

"(10) To uplift the Cross of Sacrifice and Suffering; and to cause my Light so to shine before men that they may glorify my Father which is in Heaven.

"Furthermore, I most solemnly promise and swear: to acquire this Holy Science in the manner prescribed in the Book of Abramelin, without omitting the least imaginable thing of its contents; not to gloss or comment in any way on that which may be or may not be, not to use this Sacred Science to offend the Great God, not to work ill unto my neighbour: to communicate it to no living person, unless by long practice and conversation I shall know him thoroughly, well examining whether such an one really intendeth to work for the Good or for the Evil. I will punctually observe, in granting it, the same fashion which was used by Abramelin to Abraham. Otherwise, let him who receiveth it draw no fruit therefrom. I will keep myself as from a Scorpion from selling this Science. Let this Science remain in me and in my generation as long as it shall please the Most High.

"As all these points I generally and severally swear to observe under the awful penalty of the displeasure of God, and of Him to whose Knowledge and Conversation I do most ardently aspire.

"So help me the Lord of the Universe, and my own Higher Soul!"[1]

During this period I continued the practice of visions of and voyages upon divers Spiritual planes. It seems worth while to record a few of these. They afford a clear indication of my progress at this time.

In bed, I invoked the Fire angels and spirits on the tablet, with names, etc., and the 6th Key. I then (as Harpocrates) entered my crystal. An angel, meeting me, told me, among other things, that they (of the tablets) were *at war with the angels of the* 30 *Aethyrs, to prevent the squaring of the circle*. I went with him unto the abodes of Fire, but must have fallen asleep, or nearly so. Anyhow, I regained consciousness in a very singular state, half consciousness being there, and half here. I recovered and banished the Spirits, but was burning all over, and tossed restlessly about — very sleepy, but consumed of Fire! Only repeated careful assumption of Harpocrates' godform enabled me to regain my normal state. I had a long dream of a woman eloping, whom I helped, and after, of a man stealing my Rose Cross jewel from a dressing-table in an hotel. I caught him and found him a man weak beyond the natural (I could bend or flatten him at will),[2] and then the dream seemed to lose coherence. . . . I carried him about and found a hairbrush to beat him, etc. etc. Query: Was I totally obsessed?

Invoking the angels of Earth, I obtained wonderful effect. The angel, my guide, treated me with great contempt and was very rude and truthful. He showed me divers things. In the centre of the earth is formulated the Rose

and Cross. Now the Rose is the Absolute Self-Sacrifice, the merging of *all* in the 0 (Negative), the Universal Principle of generation through change (not merely the feminine), and the Universal light “Khabs”. The Cross is the Extension or Pekht principle. Now I should have learned more; but my attention wandered. This closes the four elemental visions: prosecuted, alas! with what weakness, fatuity and folly!

I . . . in the afternoon shut myself up and went on a journey. . . .

I went with a very personal guide:[3] and beheld (after some lesser things) our Master as he sat by the Well with the Woman of Samaria. Now the five husbands were five great religions which had defiled the purity of the Virgin of the World: and “he whom thou now hast” was materialism (or modern thought).

Other scenes also I saw in His Life: and behold I also was crucified! Now did I go backwards ion time even unto Berashith, the Beginning, and was permitted to see marvellous things.

First the Abyss of the Water: on which I, even I, brooded amid other dusky flames as Shin upon Maim, held by my Genius. And I beheld the victory of Râ upon Apophis and the First of the Golden Dawns! Yea: and monsters, faces half-formed, arose: but they subsisted not.

And the firmament was.

Again the Chaos and the Death!

Then *Ath* Hashamain ve *ath* h-aretz. There is a whirling, intertwining infinitude of nebulæ, many concentric systems, each system non-concentric to any other, yet *all* concentric to the whole. As I went backwards in time they grew faster and faster, and less and less material. (P.S. — this is a scientific hypothesis, directly contrary to that of Anna Kingsford.) And at last are whirling wheels of light; yet through them *waved* a thrill of an intenser invisible light in a direction perpendicular to the tangents. I asked to go yet farther back; and behold! I am floating on my back — cast down: in a wind of Light flashing down upon me from the immeasurable Above. (This Light is of a bluish silver tinge.) And I saw hat Face, lost above me in the height inscrutable; a face of absolute beauty. And I saw as it were a Lamb slain in the Glamour of Those Eyes. Thus was I made pure; for there, what impurity could live? I was told that not many had been so far back: none farther: those who *could* go farther would not, since that would have reabsorbed them into the Beginning, and that must not be to him who hath sworn to uplift the Standard of Sacrifice and Sorrow, which is strength. (I forgot the An-

gels in the Planetary Whirl. The regarded me with curiosity: and were totally unable to comprehend my explanation that I was a Man, returning in time to behold the Beginning of Things.)

Now was I able to stand in my Sephiroth: and the Crown of Twelve Stars was upon my head! I then went into the centre of the earth (I suppose) and stood upon the top of an high mountain. The many dragons and guardians I was able to overpower by *authority*. Now the mount was of glistening Whiteness, exceeding white as snow: yet dead and unluminous. And I beheld a vision, even like unto that of the Universal Mercury; and I learnt that I myself was Sulphur and unmecurial. Now having attained the Mecurialising of my Sulphur I was able (in my vision) to fecundate the mountain (of Salt). And it was instantly transmuted into gold. What came ye out into the wilderness for to see? No: into living, glowing, molten Light: the Light that redeemeth the material World! So I returned; having difficulty to find the earth (?). But I called on S.R.M.D. and V.N.R., who were glad to see me; and returned into the body: to waste the night in gibing at a foolish medico.

My actions continually testify that I naturally possessed what is after all the most essential asset for a Magician, in singular perfection. It came natural to me to despise and reject utterly, without a second's hesitation or regret, anything soever that stood in the way of my purpose. Equally, I could hold that purpose itself as nothing in comparison with the greater purpose of the Order to which I was pledged.

Early in 1900 I applied to the Second Order in London for the documents to which my initiation in Paris entitled me. They were refused in terms which made it clear that the London body was in open revolt against the Chief, though afraid to declare its intentions. I went to London and discussed the matter with Jones, Baker and Mrs. Emery. Jones saw clearly enough that if Mathers were not the head of the Order and the trusted representative of the Secret Chiefs, there was no Order at all. Baker's position was that Mathers was behaving badly; he was sick of the whole business. Mrs. Emery, the nominal representative of the Chief, was trying to find a diplomatic solution. Her attitude was most serious and earnest and she was greatly distressed by her dilemma. She had thought it best to resign quietly, but received a reply of the most staggering character. The letter is dated February 16th, 1900, and I quote the last two paragraphs in full.

“Now, with regard to the Second Order, it would be with the *very greatest regret* both from my personal regard for you, as well as from the Occult standpoint, that I should receive your Resignation as my Representative in the Second Order in London; but I cannot let you form a combination to make a schism therein with the idea of working secretly or avowedly under *Sapere Aude* under the mistaken impression that he received an Epitome of

the School of the Second Order work from G. H. Soror, *Sapiens Dominabitur Astros*. For this forces me to tell you plainly (and, understand me well, I can prove to the hilt every word which I here say and more, and were I confronted with S. A., I should say the same) though for the sake of the Order, and for the circumstance that it would mean so deadly a blow to S. A.'s reputation, I entreat you to keep this secret from the "Order," for the present, at least, though you are at perfect liberty to show him this if you think fit, *after mature consideration*.

"He has NEVER been at *any time* either in personal or written communication with the Secret Chiefs of the order, he having *either himself forged or procured to be forged* the professed correspondence between him and them, and my tongue having been tied all these years by a Previous Oath of Secrecy to him, demanded by him, from me, before showing me what he had either done or caused to be done or both. You must comprehend from what little I say here the *extreme gravity* of such a matter, and again I ask you, both for his sake, and that of the Order, not to force me to go further into the subject."

This letter struck at the very heart of the moral basis of her conduct. It put her in the position of having initiated people, for years, on false pretences. She could not drop out and say no more about it. The matter had to be thrashed out.

My own attitude was unhampered by any ethical considerations. I had seen a good deal of Mathers personally. He was unquestionably a Magician of extraordinary attainment. He was a scholar and a gentleman. He had that habit of authority which inspires confidence because it never doubts itself. A man who makes such claims as he did cannot be judged by conventional codes and canons. Ordinary morality is only for ordinary people. For example, assume a Prime Minister who has private information that somebody has discovered, and is cultivating, a new germ by means of which he intends to destroy the nation. To pass a "Short Act" would be to give the alarm and precipitate the disaster. It would be his duty to override the law and put his foot upon the mischief. Then again, the whole of Mathers' conduct might have been in the nature of a test. It might have been his way of asking the adepts whether they had the power of concentrating on the spiritual situation, of giving up for ever all their prejudices.

Anyhow, as far as I was concerned, Mathers was my only link with the Secret Chiefs to whom I was pledged. I wrote to him offering to place myself and my fortune unreservedly at his disposal; if that meant giving up the Abramelin Operation for the present, all right.

The result of this offer was recorded as follows:

D.D.C.F. accepts my services, therefore do I rejoice that my sacrifice is accepted. Therefore do I again postpone the Operation of Abra-Melin the Mage, having by God's Grace formulated even in this a new link with the Higher and gained a new weapon against the Great Princes of the Evil of the World. Amen.

I went to Paris, discussed the situation with Mathers and formulated the following proposal for dealing with the refractory “temple”.

I. The Second Order to be summoned at various times during two or three days. They to find, on being admitted one by one, a masked man in authority and a scribe. These questions, etc. pass, after pledge of secrecy concerning interview.

A. Are you convinced of the truth of the doctrines and knowledge received in the grade of $5^{\circ}=6^{\square}$? Yes or No?

If yes (1) Then their origin can spring from a pure source only?

If no (2) I degrade you to be a Lord of the Paths in the Portal in the Vault of the Adepts.

B. If he reply “yes”, the masked man continues: Are you satisfied with the logic of this statement? Do you solemnly promise to cease these unseemly disputes as to the headship of this Order! I for my part can assure you from my own knowledge that D.D.C.F. is really a $7^{\circ}=4^{\square}$.

If yes (3) Then you will sing this paper; it contains a solemn reaffirmation of your obligation as a $5^{\circ}=6^{\square}$ slightly expanded, and a pledge to support heartily the new regulations.

If no (4) I expel you from this Order.

II. The practice of masks is to be introduced. Each member will know only the member who introduced him. Severe tests of the candidate's moral excellence, courage, earnestness, humility, refusal to do wrong, to be inserted in the Portal or $5\circ = 6\square$ ritual.

III. Outer Order to be summoned. Similar regulations to be announced to them. New pledges required that they will not communicate the identity of anybody they happen to have known to any new member.

IV. Vault to be reconsecrated.

This was accepted, and I crossed to London to carry it out. I find an entry in my little book of Magical Rituals which reveals my state of mind.

April 12th, 1900.

I, Perdurabo, as the Temporary Envoy Plenipotentiary of Deo Duce Comite Ferro & thus the Third from the Secret Chiefs of the Order of the Rose of Ruby and the Cross of Gold, do deliberately invoke all laws, all powers Divine, demanding that I, even I, be chosen to do such a work as he has done, at all costs to myself. And I record this holy aspiration in the presence of the Divine Light, that it may stand as my witness.

In Sæcula Sæculorum. Amen!

A further complication had suddenly arisen. In Mathers' fatal letter to Mrs. Emery, he wrote that Sapiens Dominabitur Astris was not dead after all; but in Paris, working with him at that very moment. But when I arrived in Paris, Mathers had been rudely undeceived. The woman who claimed to be Sapiens had bolted, with such property of his as she could lay hands on. That such a man could have been so imposed upon seems incredible. But he told me that she certainly possessed knowledge which only Sapiens had, and also that she had told him every detail of a very private conversation which he had once had with Mme. Blavatsky at Denmark Hill. In the upshot, she proved to be one Mmme. Horos. In the following year she was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude for outrages on young girls. She had in some way used the rituals of the Order which she had stolen from Mathers to entice them to their doom.

My arrival in London as the envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Mathers put the cat among the chickens. My identity was very soon discovered and a typhoon began to rage in the teacup. The rebels resorted to all sorts of lawless and violent acts, and spread the most stupidly scandalous stories, not only about me, but about the few others who remained loyal to Mathers. They did not even scruple to slander a young girl of perfect purity, by imputing to her an improper intimacy with me. It was especially dastardly, as she was engaged to be married. To this day I cannot understand how people like W. B. Yeats should not have repressed such methods in the sternest way and insisted that the fight be fought with fir weapons. They had seized the furniture of the temple and the vault. I applied to a police magistrate for tit to be handed over. On the hearing of the summons we were amazed to find Mr. Gill, K.C., one of the most famous men at the bar, briefed to appear in a police court to squabble over a few pounds' worth of paraphernalia! The money was furnished by Miss. Horniman, daughter of the Mazawattee tea man, and later of Manchester Theatre fame. She had been expelled by Mathers some time previously.

I knew enough of campaigning to decline joining battle against such heavy artillery as Mr. Gill. Luckily, the value of the property had been sworn at a sum beyond the limit with which a police magistrate can deal. The summons was therefore withdrawn and Mr. Gill kept his eloquence and his

fee to himself. There was in reality nothing worth fighting for. The rebel camp broke up in anarchy. They issued various hysterical manifestos, distinguished by confusion of thought, inaccuracy of statement, personal malice, empty bombast and ignorance of English. One error is worth rescuing from oblivion. “Nothing in the above resolutions shall *ef*fect our connection with the Rosicrucian order.” The poor darlings meant *af*fect.

They went on squabbling amongst themselves for a few months and then had the sense to give up playing at Magick. Their only survivor is Arthur Edward Waite, who still pretends to carry on the business, though he has substituted a pompous, turgid rigmarole of bombastic platitudes for the Neophyte ritual, so that the last spark of interest is extinct for ever. Mathers, of course, carried on; but he had fallen. The Secret Chiefs cast him off; he fell into deplorable abjection; even his scholarship deserted him. He published nothing new and lived in sodden intoxication till death put an end to his long misery. He was a great man in his way. May he have expiated his errors and resumed his labours, with the advantage of experience!

Summer was now at hand and the wanderlust reasserted itself in me. There was no point in my going back to Boleskine till the following Easter. As it happened, Mathers — to whom I returned to report progress — had two guests, members of the Order. They had just comeback from Mexico. The fancy took me to go there. I wanted in particular to climb the great volcanoes. So, late in June 1900, I sailed for New York.

1 — Some of the above phrases are prescribed by Abramelin itself; others are adapted from my **5°=6□**, documents.
2 — This incident was once quoted by one of my critics as illustrative of the absurdity of Magick — as if Magick were responsible for the irrationality of dreams!
3 — This horrible phrase was not my own: I must not be judged by it.

END OF VOLUME I