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A Man Divided

by

Olaf Stapledon

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1 - A WEDDING FIASCO

1921

VICTOR HAD REFUSED his bride at the altar! That was the brute fact which agitated the little party in the vestry. No amount of explanation could mitigate it. As best man I had been in a good position to observe events; and even I, who had formerly been fairly intimate with Victor, was completely taken by surprise. True, I had long suspected that there was something queer about him; but up to the very moment of his quietly shattering remark, as he put the ring into his pocket, I had no idea that anything serious was amiss.

James Victor Cadogan-Smith, later to be known as plain Victor Smith, had seemed the ideal bridegroom. He was the son of a successful colonial administrator who had climbed by his own ability from a very lowly position, and had recently acquired a knighthood. The family had been humble "Smiths" until Victor's father had married the only child of a more aristocratic family, and had agreed to splice his wife's name to his own.

The new "Cadogan-Smith" assured his friends that he had done this mainly to please his father-in-law. But in later life he used to say, "In those days my snobbery was unconscious."

His son Victor was born in 1890. He was now a bridegroom of thirty- one, and certainly a catch for any girl. Looking at him in his wedding clothes, one could not help using the cliché "every inch a gentleman". His financial prospects were excellent. He was already reputed to be one of the most brilliant young business men of his city, and he was well established as a junior partner in a great shipping firm. Victor had come through the Great War, as we called it in those days, undamaged and with a Military Cross; and now, in the brief period of optimism that followed the war, it seemed that he had excellent prospects of working out for himself a triumphant business career in the phase of post-war recovery. To crown all, he had secured as his bride the charming daughter of the head of his firm.

The wedding celebrations had been planned in appropriate style. The only factor which was not in perfect harmony with the spirit of the occasion, I fear, was the best man. I had been greatly flattered by Victor's request that I should fill this office, but I could not help wondering why he had not asked one of his many more presentable friends. His subsequent behaviour toward me almost suggested that he regretted his choice. Certainly I did not fit at all into the picture of a smart wedding; and from the moment when I found that I should have to hire a conventional wedding garment my heart had failed me. Victor must have found me a very inefficient manager, for he had to re-arrange almost everything that I had undertaken. I knew, of course, that in one of his moods he had sometimes an almost obsessive passion for correctness, but I had been surprised and exasperated by his meticulous scrutiny of every detail of our clothing and of the time- table of the honeymoon tour.

At the church, Victor's erect and perfectly tailored figure had seemed the very pattern of orthodoxy; and Edith, I am sure, must have been admired by the whole congregation as the ideal bride, so "radiant" was she (yes, that is the fatally right word), and so expensively adorned.

I remember I was rather surprised when the bridegroom suddenly scratched his head, as though in perplexity, and began looking about him in a frank, inquisitive manner that seemed out of keeping with the occasion. And perhaps it was not quite seemly suddenly to turn his face full upon the lovely creature at his side; but everyone must have readily forgiven him, since his expression suggested great tenderness. I remember noticing that his eyelids, normally inclined to droop, so that his face wore the drowsy look of a lion in captivity, were now fully raised. His blue eyes gazed with a vitality--yes, and a warmth of feeling--which I had never before seen in them. "Such," I thought, "is the power of love." But the words had scarcely formed themselves in my mind, when Victor cut into the rector's solemn recitative in a voice that was unusually gentle but also unusually decisive. "Edith," he said, "we mustn't go on with this. I've-I've just waked up, and I see quite clearly that I am not the one for you, nor you for me."

For a moment, silence. The bride stared at the bridegroom like a startled hind, then let herself be hurried away on her father's arm. Victor, protesting his contrition, and offering to explain himself, followed the outraged bridal party into the vestry, with me upon his heels, and behind me his own distressed father.

When the door was shut, the bride's father turned on Victor with indignation, spluttering of breach of promise. Her mother attempted to console her. Edith herself was very properly in tears; but also, through streaming eyes, she stared at Victor with such an expression of fascinated terror that I looked to see what could have caused it. Certainly it seemed a new Victor that took charge of this very awkward situation. Except for the fact that he sometimes tugged at his collar and mopped the sweat from his face, he behaved with complete composure. He looked from one to the other of us all with a curious intensity and exhilaration, almost as though it was we that had changed, and he must size us up afresh. Presently in a tone of authority that silenced the rest of us he said, "Listen to me for a minute! I know I can't ever put things right after the mess I have made, but I'll do whatever I can. Anyhow, I must try to explain. Standing there in these damned silly clothes and listening to the rector, I--well, as I said, I just woke up from a sort of dream. I saw Edith and me as we really are, me a young snob without a mind, and Edith--well, she's good to look at, very" (he smiled ruefully at her), "and what's more, underneath all the conventional trappings of her mind there's something sensitive and honest; yes, and much too good for me, for that drowsy snob. In my dream-life I really did think I was in love with her, but I wasn't really, even then, and I'm certainly not now." He was watching Edith, and an expression of pain passed over his face as he said, "God! What a mess! Edith, I know I have hurt you horribly, but I have saved you from something far worse, from marrying that somnambulant snob."

No one had supposed Victor capable of talking like this. Or no one but myself. To me, though the whole incident had of course been very surprising, it had not seemed entirely out of keeping with certain events in the past; particularly so, when Victor turned from Edith to me with a special smile. It was a twisted smile, half quizzical but wholly amiable, which in the old days I had learnt to regard as revealing the true Victor, but had lately missed. The smile faded into a grave and steady gaze, while he said to the company, "Harry, here, perhaps knows what I mean, partly." This remark turned the attention of the three parents upon me, and I could feel them blaming me for Victor's shocking deed. Victor's father looked at his son, then back at me, and the look said as clearly as words could have done, "My boy, why did you get tangled up with this fellow? He's not one of us. And now, see where he has led you!" At this point Edith brought the scene to a close by imploring her parents to take her home.

2 - VICTOR'S EARLY LIFE

From 1890 to 1912

THAT SAME AFTERNOON, while I was in my bedroom at the hotel, packing my hired clothes, and wondering how Victor was dealing with the parents, he came in dressed in an old tweed coat and flannels. He flung himself into the easy chair and said, "Thank God, oh, thank God, that's over I How wise of me, quite unconsciously wise, to fetch you along to be best man. You were a sort of touchstone, or the alarm clock that woke me."

While I was pondering this, and mechanically packing, he changed the subject. "Harry, old man," he said, "don't go home yet, unless you must. The least I can do after getting you into this mess is to tell you more about myself. It's rather urgent, because I may go back into my sleep-life at any minute. If you can spare a few hours, let's walk somewhere."

This suggestion itself was surprising, Victor normally despised the humblest form of physical exercise. Tennis, rugger, swimming, he enjoyed; and in all of them he was competent, in some brilliant. Walking he regarded as a mug's game. It was a means of transport to be resorted to only when his sports car was off the road.

And now, though the car was available to take us quickly into open country, he asked me, rather sheepishly, if I should mind going by bus. Sensing my surprise, he added, "You see, the car means the other life, the sleep-walker's life, and so it--well, it gives me the creeps."

How I remember that bus journey of nearly thirty years ago! The bus was crowded, and we had to stand. The solid tyres chattered our teeth together like dice in a box. When the conductor came for our fares, Victor surprised me by muddling the transaction. The conductor, with unspoken contempt, handed back the superfluous coins. Victor looked at them, not with the shame of the business man who had fallen short of the sacred virtue of business efficiency, but with a laugh which seemed to express relief at his own carelessness. He then became entirely absorbed in watching our fellow passengers, with the same wide-eyed fascination as he had displayed in the vestry. He stared so hard and so unselfconsciously that people began to grow restive and resentful. He was particularly attentive to a comfortable body with an amiable face, who finally remarked with an attempt at severity, "Young man, control your eyes!" Suddenly realizing that he was not behaving correctly, Victor chuckled and said in a breezy voice, "Sorry I You mustn't mind me. I've been--well I've been asleep for several months, and it's so exciting to see people again; real people, and not just dreams." A florid man, who evidently considered himself a wag, remarked, "They've let you out too soon, lad. If I were you I'd take the next bus back." There was a general titter. Victor grinned; then winked, as he nudged me and said, "It's all right. My keeper's with me."

At the terminus we set out along a suburban street that presently became more like a country road. Then came a path through woods and fields. At last Victor began to tell me the strange facts about himself which threw light not only on his conduct at the church but also on my earlier relations with him. But while part of his mind was occupied with recounting his biography, another part seemed to be intensely concentrated in his senses. With alert eyes he looked about him at the scenery. Sometimes he would stop to examine a leaf or a beetle as though he had never seen such a thing before, or pause at a stile to run his fingers curiously, lovingly, along the grain of the wood, or dabble his hand in a stream with childish delight, or sniff the complicated fragrance of a handful of earth. Once, when a woodpecker called, he stood still to listen. "What's that bird?" he asked. "What a lot I miss in my sleep-life!"

All this was notable enough in itself, but far more so to anyone who knew Victor's customary indifference to all, such commonplace experiences. Normally his interest was almost wholly limited to motors, sport, business, feminine charm, and the stability of society. His only other subject was human character, which he judged with a quick eye for a man's less reputable motives, and no eye at all for his personality as a whole. This, at least, was the case with Victor in his normal mood; but if this had been the whole Victor, I should never have grown to admire him.

I shall report as much as I can reconstruct of our memorable conversation on that walk, but probably I shall fail to convey my vivid impression of Victor's quickened vitality and intelligence, or the sense of his anxiety to make full use of his brief spell of lucidity while it lasted. However, I shall not miss any important facts, for I subsequently persuaded him to help me to write fairly full notes about all that he told me.

"Well," he said, plunging at the root of the matter, "I am apparently some sort of divided personality, but a queer sort; and up to today I have never said a word about it to anyone. My first waking up, so far as I know, was at my prep school. It was only a half-waking, and it lasted only for a minute or I so, but it was something startlingly new to me. I had been, charged with circulating smutty drawings, and really I hadn't even seen the things. The Head lectured me on smut and on lying, and then whacked me. The whacking stung me into life, or stung me awake. After about the third stroke the pain suddenly became much more violent than it had been, and I began to yell, having been the proper little silent Englishman up to that point. I bolted for the door, but the Head caught me. For a moment we faced one another, he with a horrible look that I couldn't understand at the time, but it seemed all wrong. It reminded me of our dog when I found him guzzling a beefsteak in the larder, growling hideously while he went on gulping the stuff down. I was so startled by the Head's new face that I let out a throat-breaking scream, and tried to bash him on the nose. You see, faces had been just masks before that waking, and now here was one that turned into a window with a soul looking out of it, and a soul (I vaguely felt) in a very terrible state. I remember quite distinctly feeling all in a flash that God almighty had turned out to be just a filthy monster. I yelled out 'Beast! Why do you like hurting me?' Then I think I must have fainted, for I can't remember anything more. Needless to say, I was expelled."

Victor fell silent, contemplating the past with his twisted smile. When I asked him whether the waking came often after that incident, he remained silent. We were now leaning over the rail of a footbridge above a stream, and Victor was all the while intently watching several fishes that were dimly visible in the dark water.

"My mind," he suddenly said, "is like this stream. When I am my real self it's clear right to the bottom, with all sorts of live things moving about at different levels. When I am that I thick-headed snob, the water is muddy. Awake, I can look down into my mind and see every little minnow of a desire, every little sprat of a thought, busily nosing about, feeding and growing, or fading into old age, or being hunted down and swallowed up by stronger creatures. Yes, and when I am fully awake, I can not only see them but control them, tame them, order them, all to do as I will, make them dance to my tune; 'I' being always a something outside the

water, or floating on its surface. The image breaks down, but perhaps you see what I mean. In the dream-life I am the sport of those creatures (or at least of some of them) that come nosing up through the opaque water, pushing me hither and thither with the swirl of their lashing tails, and sometimes threatening to swallow me, my real self. In fact, they do sometimes completely swallow my real self. Over and over again I have simply been completely identified with one or other of those brutes. Do you see what I mean?"

"Partly," I said; and again I asked if the waking state happened often.

"Not often, but more frequently as time goes on. And it tends to last longer, and also to be more thorough." He sighed, and said, "Perhaps some day I shall be permanently awake. But I hardly dare hope for that. For the present, full waking comes seldom, and never lasts long, just long enough to get me into the most distressing scrapes, and then, let the wretched dreamer suffer for it. Once, when I was about seventeen, I woke when I was persecuting some miserable fag. I was taking a high moral line with him over some very small crime of his, and leading sadistically up to a thrashing. Suddenly I saw the kid as a live human person, and at the same time I caught a terrifying glimpse of myself as the cad I was. I saw as clear as daylight what was happening in my own mind. The affair with the Head of my prep. school had roused an ugly monster from some dark cranny at the bottom of the river, and this creature had been ranging about ever since, devouring a lot of harmless small-fry, and growing fat and strong, unseen under the muddy water. The sudden waking seemed to be due to the commotion caused by this brute even on the surface of my mind. The danger woke me, and in a flash I saw right down into the depths. I can remember the unendurable shame of waking to find myself behaving so disgustingly. I forget exactly what happened in consequence. But I can remember being so upset that I said, 'Gosh I How you must hate me, Johnson minor, and quite right too!' Then I actually wrote a note telling him if ever he saw me being a cad again he must remind me how, when I did it before, I woke up and was sorry. I signed the thing and gave it him. Naturally the kid was bewildered by my sudden change, and frightened, I think. But he took the note: Well, a few days later he had an excellent opportunity of using it, and he did use it. In my somnolent, doltish phase, I couldn't remember a thing about the earlier, awake phase. When he showed me the note I had written and signed, I was confident it was a forgery. Of course I was furious. And of course I regarded his behaviour as insufferable cheek. With great gusto I whacked him. Naturally this incident was soon known to the whole school. I used to be frightfully popular, being good at games and correct about school etiquette. But this affair broke my popularity completely. Everyone despised and distrusted me. And as popularity was my ruling passion (though I didn't know it), I went through agonies trying to restore my position. Sometimes I half succeeded. But always, just when everything seemed going well, I would wake up for a few minutes and do something outrageous, so that the fat was in the fire all over again."

Victor fell silent, gazing down into the stream, with folded arms on the rail of the bridge. Suddenly he stood upright, with a laugh that was also a sigh, stretching himself as though in relief after some kind of bondage. We moved along the path. "Tell me," I said, "when you say you saw the kid as a live human person, what do you really mean? Telepathy?"

"No, no I Perhaps telepathy may have something to do with it sometimes, but mainly it's just a heightening of imaginative insight. The other person's tone of voice and facial expression, the whole smell of him, so to speak, suddenly flash a meaning at me. Johnson minor suddenly became a vivid picture of a desperately perplexed and frightened little person. And also I saw myself with the same imaginative penetration. I saw myself as he saw me, and indeed very much more clearly than he could possibly have seen me."

"You see," he said, looking round at me with an open smile which was impossible to the normal Victor, "it's not only other people that come clear, and not only my own mind, but everything. To pursue the metaphor, not only the stream turns limpid, but the banks, the fields, the people in them, the sky, the whole universe become--yes, limpid. I see into everything, in a sense. Not, of course, spatially, like X- rays. Not mystically either, seeing God in them, or what not. Rather, instead of being just coloured shapes, they become bewilderingly pregnant symbols; pregnant with whatever was relevant to them in my past experience. That's it! The wretched Johnson minor's puckered brows and quivering lip suddenly flooded me with all my forgotten experience of such things, and with anew, shattering insight into their meaning in terms of the mental suffering of Johnson himself, there and then."

I think it was at this point that Victor bent down to watch a violent drama that had staged itself in a cobweb strung between the tall grasses beside our path. But he did not stop talking. "Sometimes," he said, "I seem able to trace the waking to some event outside myself. It's the impact of experience that shakes me into life--Johnson minor's struggle not to blub, or the conjunction of you and Edith and the marriage service. The sight of this spider preparing its dinner might do the trick, if ever my sleep-walking self could stoop to notice such things. God I what a spectacle it is, isn't it!" He jerked out an almost frightened laugh. "See how he's tying up the wretched fly like a struggling parcel! Over and over the string goes, and tighter and tighter. And the poor devil goes on buzzing, steadily as a machine. Ha! There's one of his wings roped now. And he's getting tired. It's like catching a lion in a net in the Sahara, or one of those gladiatorial duels with net and sword. Now the whole string bag is finished, and next comes the feasting."

Another question occurred to me. "When you slipped back into the dream-life after the Johnson minor incident, you had no idea (as you said) of what had happened in the wide-awake state. Then, is the waking state also vague about the events of the dreaming state. For instance, have you now forgotten what happened before you 'woke' in the church this morning?"

"No, no!" He laughed rather bitterly. "In the wide-awake life I remember the sleep-walker life with most distressing clarity, and often in far more detail than the somnambulist could notice when things were actually happening. I remember it all not only more clearly but in a new light, from a new angle. For instance, I remember damning you brutally yesterday because you had booked us several three-star hotels instead of the four-star ones I had demanded for the honeymoon tour. And I remember, too, what I did

not notice at the time, namely that your look of contrition had also a tinge of disgust and contempt about it. Now, of course, my outburst fills me with unutterable shame. At least it does, and it doesn't; because when I look harder at the memory it doesn't really seem mine at all, not something I did, but something that stupid snob did, who shares my body. Then again, I remember saying 'good-night' to Edith on the evening before the wedding. The greedy-respectful kiss, and the soapy remarks! Now, it makes me shudder, both for myself and for her. I wonder just how much damage that fool somnambulist has done to her. What I did to her, breaking off the match, was just the pain of a necessary operation. It had to be. (But, oh, I hope she gets through with it quickly.) What he did was to keep on for months poisoning her with his insincerity and false values. Yes! The memory of last night's 'goodnight' makes me go hot all over. Then, I (if I must say 'I' and not 'he') thought of myself as the romantic lover, worshipping the beloved as a being of superior calibre, almost divine; and ready to live for her all the rest of my life. But looking back, I see precisely what was happening in my mind, and it's not at all edifying. Of course there was plenty of good healthy physical lust for Edith's extremely seductive body; but it was presented to the somnambulist not as lust at all but as the physical consequence of my adoration of her pure spirit. Now, it makes me squirm. And what sort of a pure Spirit has she, poor girl? No doubt, deep down inside her there's a little smothered germ of honesty and generosity, the true and pure Edith. But it hardly ever manages to express itself, because of the loads of false conventions and false values overlying it. And while I was protesting my selfless devotion to her as a person, what I was actually thinking (though I didn't notice it) was that she was an excellent match for me, well trained in all the antics of our sort of people, perhaps rather 'better class' than myself, thoroughly presentable, something to show off with complacency. But far from worshipping her, I felt that I was definitely better stuff in away, and that she was really only raw material for me to work up into a first-class partner. Sometimes, for instance, she had shown a tendency to think for herself. That sort of thing mustn't be allowed. Her function was to be the adoring and helpful wife."

He paused, then concluded, "So you see my wide-awake self does very clearly remember the experiences of the other. If it didn't it wouldn't have any background at all. It would be merely an infant mind. The actual sum of its existence has been far shorter than the other's."

"Do you mean it's never active for more than a few minutes or hours?"

"Sometimes days, even weeks; and it's spells grow longer as I grow older. For the present, at any rate. But I can't help fearing that the general stiffening thatt sets in in middle age will reverse the process. Now let me get back to my story. My first really important spell of wide-awake living was brought on by you, in our third year at Oxford, when we first got to know each other."

"Now," I interrupted, "I understand why you were so inconsequent; first stand-offish, then friendly, then cold again."

"It began," he said, "after that bump supper, when some of us, all a bit tight, invaded your room. Instead of taking it lying down, you had the cheek to make a fuss, so we began chucking things out of the window into the quad. You actually put up a fight,

which was surprising and amusing, because we had always regarded you as a worm. You had come from some bloody little unheard-of grammar school, and you had an accent like the mud on a provincial street. We weren't going to stand cheek from that sort. No doubt you remember, when you were being I held down, I stared at you as offensively as I could, and said you reminded me of my hosier. It was then that I came awake. It was your pinched little face that did it. Instead of seeing you as just a type, and a despised type, I suddenly saw you, as I had seen Johnson minor. Somehow I saw you being torn between contempt for us all and irrational envy and self-abasement. And I saw how horribly hurt you were, not simply by our brutality but by your own involuntary treason to yourself."

Interrupting Victor, I said, "I can distinctly remember how your face suddenly changed. Your eyes opened wide with surprise, and your mouth too. Then you turned away with an odd, awkward little laugh. You picked up a book, and sat on the arm of the easy chair, apparently reading."

"Yes, but really I was just feeling mortally ashamed."

"Then suddenly you shut the book, gently, and laid it on the table, and said something about this being pretty caddish, really, and what about stopping it. Then there was an argument, but finally your gang took itself off; and you--it struck me as odd at the time-stayed behind to help me clear up the mess. Remember? First I tried to push you off with the others, and then when you began to go, meek as a lamb, I suddenly changed my mind. What a grind it was, wasn't it, fetching the damaged books and furniture from the quad up the staircase to the top floor."

"Yes, and when we had finished, you offered me cocoa! Cocoa! My God! To me, who considered myself one of the bloods! But I had the sense to accept, for I was thoroughly awake by then. And it was a damned good drink, too. And we sat there talking till the small hours, till you nearly fell asleep. Then I borrowed your Bateson's Heredity and took it off to my own room. By breakfast time I had just about finished it. That first talk we had was an eye-opener to me. Do you remember how we leapt about from heredity to socialism, religion, astronomy, like a couple of monkeys swinging from branch to branch. Monkeying with the universe! You had the advantage of far greater knowledge, and I had an absolutely fresh, innocent zest."

"And a diabolical quick-wittedness," I added, "an intelligence that frightened me."

3 - BEGINNINGS OF OUR FRIENDSHIP

From 1908 to 1912

AT THIS POINT I shall interrupt my account of my conversation with Victor on his abortive wedding day to tell, mainly in my own words, about my relations with him at Oxford.

During the rest of the term I saw a good deal of him. We made expeditions on Cumnor Hill. We punted on the Cher. We sat up late in my room or his, talking about everything under the sun, and far beyond it.

The set with whom Victor normally consorted, the bloods and their hangers-on, found his sudden interest in a colourless nobody from a secondary school quite inexplicable, and ridiculous. It was assumed that the big fair athlete had conceived a more than platonic friendship for the small dark bookworm. I myself was as puzzled as anyone by Victor's interest in me, and still more puzzled by his violent thirst for knowledge. It was all so inconsistent with everything that I had known of him before. On the very few occasions when our ways had, crossed he had overawed me with that "self- satisfied air of effortless superiority" which was supposed to be characteristic of our college. And though later I was to learn from the awakened Victor that this imposing demeanour of his was just a carefully cultivated affectation concealing a bewildered and morally timid self, in those early days it Impressed me; and at the same time exasperated me against myself for being cowed by an assurance which I vaguely felt to be meretricious. But on that memorable evening, when we first talked seriously together, Victor's manner suggested an unselfconscious modesty. In the subsequent weeks of our increasingly close friendship I was often put to shame by the intellectual humility that accompanied even his most penetrating remarks. I set out to be his mentor in his new-found interests, but to my chagrin I found that in many ways it was he that was the leader in our mental partnership. Far from being merely the superficially clever but unoriginal mind that I had supposed him to be, he soared far beyond me in sheer imaginative power; and this in spite of the fact that at the outset he was ludicrously ignorant of the spheres of knowledge that seemed to me most important. Previously I had written him off as one of those glib intelligences that could, indeed, easily amass enough of Greek and Latin literature to secure a First in Honour Mods, but had neither the curiosity nor the power of vision to explore the living, growing tissue of human culture. Not only so, but he had always seemed a thoroughly hidebound and insensitive personality. Though in his own set he had a reputation for shrewd character-judgment, it had always seemed to me that he had merely a certain slickness in docketing his acquaintances according to their obvious failings, often ticking them off with some Latin or Greek quotation. And generally the classification which he adopted implied that there was one correct type, and that all others were more or less ridiculous aberrations. Of course, the correct type was the ideal of complacent gentility which he and his set embodied, and to which the rest of us, in spite of our better judgment, vainly aspired. Never, so far as I know, had Victor shown any sign of realizing any human being as a living and unique person. Never did he greet any sincere expression of anyone's authentic personality otherwise than with derision or an uncomprehending and insolent stare.

Such was the James Victor Cadogan-Smith that I had known, from afar and had apparently so shockingly misjudged. For now, after the invasion of my room, and during the following few months, I came into contact with a mind that extended sensitive antennae toward every acquaintance, and seemed magically aware of the other's ever-changing moods. For my new friend was

earnestly, constantly, almost feverishly, absorbed in exploring every aspect of experience, and above all every aspect of human nature and human society.

His interest in myself, of course, was largely due to my comparatively wide knowledge of fields which he had formerly ignored. For, though officially I was reading history, I made time for a great deal of general reading, and my interest had led me into regions that were in those days little explored by Oxford undergraduates. Not only was I an ardent admirer of the early Wells; I was also reading Freud with more enthusiasm than judgment. The advancing study of heredity also fascinated me. In philosophy and social thought Bertrand Russell was opening many new windows for me. Karl Marx, too, I had discovered; and his strictly sociological attitude I counterbalanced with a half- guilty addiction to popular astronomy.

These fields were all apparently new to Victor. Under my guidance he entered them with a childlike zest, a power of assimilation which I envied, and a critical acumen which I could not always at the time appreciate. Again and again I dismissed as unimportant some suggestion of his which, years afterwards, turned out to be sound. The case of Freud was specially significant. Victor apparently felt none of the horror and fascination with which most new readers of the great pioneer greeted his theory of sex and of unconscious motivation. He was merely intrigued, and demurely amused at the general uproar. On the other hand he never plunged into unquestioning partizanship, as I myself had done. He seemed to leap at once to the more detached and balanced attitude which most of us were to arrive at twenty or twenty- five years later.

Even in theoretical matters, then, where I was supposed to be the leader, Victor often went ahead of me, but in the sphere of personal contacts his leadership was unmistakable. His "feminine intuition", as I called it, expressed itself sometimes in devastating but never vindictive comments on his own friends and mine, and in sudden probings into my own dark heart. His exposures were often painful, but somehow I could never seriously resent them. His uncanny awareness of my unacknowledged motives often stung me to indignant denial; but a minute later, or a day or a week, or in some cases not till middle age, I had to admit to myself that he was right. The entirely unself- righteous way in which he delivered these judgments was disarming. Once when he had been telling me of a tennis victory, and I had duly congratulated him, he looked silently at me, grinned broadly, punched me amiably in the chest, and said, "Damn it! You're grudging me my poor little triumph. You're wishing I had been beaten. Just as I wished you hadn't won that essay prize. Or rather, a sneaking spiteful bit of me did."

His power of imaginative insight and sympathy varied a good deal from day to day. Sometimes I found with relief that he had missed (or had not troubled to notice) some ungenerous impulse of mine. On the other hand there were occasions when, having scrutinized me steadily for a while, he would break in on some pronouncement of mine with, "No, no! You're not really feeling that way about it. You're merely feeling you ought to feel that way."

It was this heightened personal consciousness that brought me so greatly into Victor's debt. For under his influence I was

gradually forced to become aware of depth beyond depth of mental activity. Priding myself on my honesty and self-criticism, I discovered that I had all along been deceiving myself. As a good Freudian I accepted the theory of unconscious motivation, but only in the abstract, not in detailed application to myself. Now, without any special technique of analysis, Victor made me aware that, for instance, under my noble passion for truth lurked an impulse to impute dishonesty to others. Under my social consciousness and my revolutionary zeal lay a purely vindictive lust to see the "bloods" discomfited.

I became increasingly dependent on Victor's psychological insight, on his intuitive power of analysing and cleansing the psyche; a power far more effective than my own ill-digested psycho-analytical precepts. I shall have more to say on this matter, but for the moment I merely want to record that, if I was of any service to Victor in those early days, he was far more helpful to me. He became my father confessor, but without any assumption of spiritual superiority. The relationship was always a man-to-man relationship, and nearly always tinged with humour. Moreover, nine times out of ten it was by the example of his own self-analysis that he led me to discover my own hidden depths. And toward the primitive, submerged denizens of his own mind he felt no shame but merely an amused interest. He knew that their antics could never seriously disturb him, so long as he was in his awakened state; and so he could watch them with scientific detachment. Friendly toward the archaic fauna of his own mind, he was equally friendly toward the more contemptible creatures that he fished up into the light from my mind's turgid depths. And because he could regard them with such composure, I myself grew able to face them without either horror or inverted pride; and with some hope of disciplining them.

In one rather surprising respect Victor seemed to be my inferior. He had a reputation for dash and pluck, both with the gloves and on the rugger field; yet I found him childishly nervous at the prospect of physical pain, and shattered by its actual presence. The task of taking a splinter out of his hand was too much for him to face without the stimulus of a spectator's ridicule; while the distress caused by the splinter itself seemed to paralyse his mind. When I laughed over the contrast of his present cowardice and his reputed hardihood, he let slip a remark to which at the time I paid little attention, but on his wedding day it became luminous. "Everything I nowadays becomes so unendurably vivid." Not until long afterwards, in fact on his wedding day, when he made his lengthy confession to me, did I learn that Victor's awakened consciousness had two distinct phases, the one less, the other more developed. In both there was that intensification of the sensory life; but while in the commoner and less fully awakened phase hyperaesthesia was an uncontrollable and devastating thing, in the rarer and still more lucid state he had a strange power of regarding the electric storm of his sensations (and indeed his whole intensified passional life) with serene detachment, as though through the eyes of some all-seeing all-feeling but utterly imperturbable deity. But in our undergraduate days he never reached this height, and so he often laid himself open to my friendly ridicule of his fastidiousness and his I unmanly timidity. Friendly? On one occasion he retorted, smiling through his distress, "Vindictive blighter! Under your taunting, of course, there's your real kindliness, but under that again, you devil, you're licking your lips."

For the rest of the term, and most of the next one, our friendship developed, though spasmodically. And during that period Victor

himself, the awakened Victor, developed rapidly. Like a plant retarded by a cold spring, and then suddenly crowding forth all its leaves and flowers, his mind burgeoned with experience. His official studies suffered, but he ate his way through the libraries, seizing upon everything that promised light on his central problem, which was the problem of us all, the problem of man and the universe. The rest, no matter how reputable, he ignored, as a caterpillar ignores all but its own distinctive food. In this feverish pursuit of wisdom (as he told me long afterwards on his wedding day) he was goaded constantly by the knowledge that "death" might seize him any day, the death of his awakened self into "that somnambulent and loathsome snob".

He had one great advantage over the rest of us, namely that in the wakened state he seldom needed more than two or three hours of sleep, with an occasional indulgence to the extent of five. But it was necessary for him to lie in bed for six or seven hours or so every night to rest his body. All these unsleeping hours were therefore spent in reading, or in "getting his thoughts in order". While the rest of us were sunk in the archaic vegetative life, he would lie in bed methodically going through his memories and re-assessing them. Vast tracts of experience which the sleep-walker had allowed to slip into oblivion were now available to him. Memories that were formerly the vaguest and most illusive wraiths now presented themselves almost with the detail of the original event. All this wealth of personal experience had to be regarded afresh, from the point of view of the awakened Victor. Its inner essence, untasted by the sleep-walker, had to be pressed from it and assimilated.

All his nights, I said, were spent in this way; but no, for besides book-learning and self-knowledge he needed other kinds of experience, of which I must tell.

Freeing himself in a few weeks from all the inhibitions of his set, his social class, and the historical moment, he seemed in a manner to have rushed headlong by sheer imaginative power through much of the cultural evolution which was to occupy his fellows for some twenty years. Starting as a respectable Tory Christian who accepted without question the moral code that had been imposed on him by his Victorian parents, he now passed at a gallop through a kind of Liberal Nonconformity, and on through Marxian Communism and Atheism, and before he lapsed solidly back into the "sleep-walker" state he was already groping beyond these. Thus in the second and third weeks of our friendship he was affirming that, though the Christian doctrines were sheer myth, he recognized in the universe "a power making for righteousness". And though his eyes were opened to the hideous facts of social injustice, and he was already taking on "social work" in a boys' club, he still believed that the "great change" would come through the leadership of a morally awakened middle class. Similarly, though intellectually he recognized the wrong-headedness of nineteenth-century sexual prudery, he was still emotionally bound up with it. But already by the end of that term he was "breathing the cold exhilarating air of atheism", seeking how best to devote his life to work for "the coming proletarian revolution", and deliberately spurning the sexual conventions to which his class paid lip-service even while it violated them in actual conduct.

But later in his life, as I shall tell, he outgrew all these attitudes, which he came to regard as adolescent.

During his last term at Oxford, and the second term of our friendship, he must have pursued his sexual experiments very thoroughly, for he was seldom available in the evenings; and though he was reticent about his adventures, I know that he spent many nights out, stealing back into college in the early morning by a climber's route, up a drain- pipe and along a cornice.

At the time he told me nothing of his amatory life. I remember noting, in his manner, when he must have been still fresh to them, a new complacency, even defiance. "The bloods," he once said, "make a great song about their dashing amours, but nearly always they're mythical. Those who do it, hold their tongues; those who daren't, brag." On another occasion he said, "To talk against the taboos is merely to stand shivering on the springboard. It's the act that counts." A few weeks later I became aware that Victor's mood had changed. Exhilaration had given place to despond, and an irritability which he had not hitherto shown. And he seemed dissatisfied with many of the ideas that we had recently agreed upon. He was already beginning to poke fun at our confident atheism and to express doubts about the all- importance of economic determinism. This shocked me, for at that time I was coming increasingly under the influence of Marx, priding myself on my lonely vision; for few undergraduates had even heard of the prophet of Communism. I was shocked, too, by Victor's new sense that Freud's gospel, also, was somehow insufficient. As a good Marxist, I ought not to have minded this; but I had not yet reached the stage of pushing either of my new faiths to the exclusion of the other.

Victor's doubts about Freud were not merely intellectual. While he had often charged the great Viennese with a non sequitur in his arguments, and had laughingly forgiven him, now he was more radically critical. One evening (he was becoming more available in the evenings), when we were deep in one of our usual discussions, smoking our pipes in the armchairs before my fire, he made a long and disillusioned confession. At first I put his gloominess down to mere physical lassitude after his spell of concentrated debauchery. But it turned out to be far more than the expression of a passing mood. With my usual meticulous industry I jotted down all I could remember of Victor's confession as soon as he had left me. Using those notes some thirty-five years later, I must do my best to reconstruct his actual words.

We had been discussing the importance of instinct, if I remember rightly. Victor charged me with overestimating it. He rose from his chair and walked about the room, like a caged lion. "It's all very well," he said, "but if you had lived as I have lived in the last few weeks you'd probably feel as I do. You probably know that I have been- doing a bit of practical research in sex. Well, at first it was magnificently refreshing to be free of the taboos. And the sense of being animal-to-animal with a woman at last was somehow spiritually fulfilling; though also, in my first experiment, hellishly torturing, because we neither of us knew how to adapt to the other. We hadn't the technique. After a few nights got her rhythm, so to speak, and things went better. But presently I had to try another girl, and then Number One cut up rough about it. She had sworn she wouldn't mind, because there was no question of our being 'in love'; but I sensed that as a matter of fact she was falling for me pretty thoroughly, which was one reason why I tried Number Two. Number One was so terribly upset about it that I felt perfectly bloody, because--well, in spite of Freud

and all that, just couldn't help feeling that I had messed up something sacred. That in itself was a revelation. Freud seemed pretty foolish to me then. As for her--well she'll get over it, of course, but with a twist in her that need not have been there. O God! I feel foul about it even now. And what could I do to mend matters but clear out? Which seemed like running away. Well, the harm had been done, so I went on with my research, more cautiously." Here Victor interrupted himself to turn on me with an unusual sharpness, even contempt. "For God's sake,'" he said "don't sit there oozing self-righteousness at me, and fairly stinking of hypocrisy!" I had said nothing, and I was not consciously feeling self-righteous; and if I was a hypocrite, I had deceived myself. But I had been feeling a curiously violent distaste for Victor's sexual adventures. And though I had carefully maintained a façade of sympathetic interest, Victor's antennae had reached behind it. "You accept Freud in theory," he said, "but when I set about testing the theory in action you go emotionally Victorian." I could only protest that, whatever tricks my old emotional habits might play me, I was fully emancipated. Victor continued his story.

"My Number Two," he said, "was much older. She helped I me a lot. She had style, and she taught me style, too. Each of us was a musical instrument for the other to play on in the sex duet. It was exquisite for a time, and I'll never forget her. But presently we began to know one another better mentally. And like so many artists she had practically nothing in her mind but her art, namely, love-making. At first I didn't care. She did that so superlatively well, with touch and voice and looks, that for a whole week I was in a sort of ecstasy. What a thing touch can be, ranging from zephyrs to high-tension flashes! And tone of voice! Like fingers rippling over all the keys of one's emotions! And looks! The faint, faint changes of lips and eyelids! But I'm wandering. What I wanted to say was--well, I was beginning to slip back toward the somnambulist again. One night I actually fell asleep with her. Before that I had stayed wide awake when she slept, with my mind careering over the universe. Falling asleep warned me. Then I began to realize that I was not properly awake even by day. The cutting edge of my mind was not what it had been. And images of her kept interrupting my thought. Her voice sang in my ears all day. Remembering the feel of her body next mine made me gasp-like getting into a very hot bath. I longed for night. I realized I had got properly caught in my own experiment, but I didn't care. This was life, I said. But after a few days I began to be frightened. Somehow our duet was no longer the exquisite thing it had been, and yet I couldn't keep away from her. I felt I wanted something more of her, and it was more than she had in her to give. I told myself that though she was a superb executant she was not a creative artist. But one night, instead of falling asleep beside her, as I had recently done, I stayed fully awake, puzzling desperately over the whole business. She was asleep. I listened to her breathing. Presently I had a sort of revelation. Not a mystical revelation, but a sudden flash of insight into the implications of my own experience. You know those old puzzle pictures. There's a forest of trees and undergrowth and rocks, and you're told to 'find the Red Indian'. You turn it about, this way and that; there's nothing but what you saw before. Then suddenly there he is, larger than life and clear as your own hand. Well, in the same way I suddenly saw a new pattern in my recent experience, the essential pattern. Suddenly I realized that I was most desperately lonely. I realized with horrible clearness that, in spite of all the delight we had had together, we were poles apart."

"No, a bad metaphor that; because 'poles' are poles of some I one thing, and we simply didn't make one thing together, really. Of

course we made our little perfect duet of love-making, but we weren't one underneath that. The thing didn't express any deeper oneness. In a sort of vision I felt what that oneness should be. I imagined myself lying in bed with the right person. The feel of the whole thing would be different, and the love-making would be not only perfect in technique but perfect in meaning.' It would be a bodily union expressing unity of--well, spirit, or personality. I mean--each mind contributing to the other on every level, and reaching to a sort of stereoscopic vision, seeing the world from two points of view but seeing it singly, and seeing it solid. And the wider apart the two points of view, the better; provided they fuse together. Now God, if there is one, must see the world from every possible point of view, and yet see it singly. And human love (real love, I mean) must be like that, though in a very small way. How do I know? Not having loved, how do I know? I suppose I must have extrapolated from the experiences I have had. For instance, from knowing you, you queer fish. Well, next day I told all this to my Number Two, hoping we should somehow get somewhere. She agreed, verbally; but she didn't really understand at all. So the affair just fizzled out, leaving me richer in a way, but horribly twisted, and desperately lonely; hungry for the thing I couldn't have. And now I realized that the whole approach was wrong. There's something in the old conventions after all; if they weren't so rigid and prude, and so tangled up with sheer snobbery. I mean, people keep the moral code of sex (or pretend to) not because they really see that it's right, but because they're afraid of losing caste. And when they come up against someone who has violated it, generally they are not so much morally outraged (though they pretend to be) as vindictive against someone who is no longer one of us, and can therefore be persecuted, like a sick animal by the herd."

I was impressed by Victor's change of attitude, but I could not resist pointing out that Freud could give a very convincing account of his dissatisfaction with his amours, simply in terms of repressed infantile cravings. Unconsciously he was longing for his mother, and no other woman could give him the peace and comfort that he demanded. Of course, I admitted, it was not really quite as simple as that. The psycho-analyst would be able to discover in him a vast mesh of past experience leading inevitably to just the particular reaction which had actually been manifested.

Victor was silent for a moment. Then he surprised me with a curiously hearty laugh. It reminded me of an occasion in my boyhood when my father and I had been completely lost in mist on the hills, and were expecting to spend the night out, drenched and in a cutting wind. Dusk was already far advanced, and we believed ourselves to be many miles from the farm where we were staying. At last we found ourselves going down hill in pitch darkness, into a strange valley. The mist cleared a little, and far away we saw a light. After floundering through hedges and over walls we reached the light, and found it was the lamp in our own sitting-room window. My father's laugh of relief and triumph was echoed now in Victor's.

"No!" he said, "Freud's sometimes too clever to see the truth. It's like pre-Copernican astronomy. With enough epicycles you can make your theory explain anything. But if you had been through my researches you would see that Freud, brilliant and valuable as he is, has missed the key to understanding the--well, the most developed, most conscious kind of human relationships."

I was not convinced. But now, near my sixtieth year, I see what he meant.

Henceforth, I believe, Victor refrained from continuing his sexual researches. Instead he seemed to devote himself more earnestly to research into society. Once more he was seldom available in the evenings, because he was so frequently engaged at the Boys' Club, or at political meetings and on other activities, not merely of undergraduate societies but in the town, and occasionally in London. I soon came to realize that, though he was very ready to talk about most of these activities, something was afoot about which he was being secretive. He told me quite freely that with the aid of a small group of working-class acquaintances of his he was seeking first-hand experience of the conditions of the poorer sections of society. He haunted pubs. He was taken into houses in back streets, not as an officious social worker, but as a friend of a friend of the family. And through his extraordinary gift of imaginative insight into the minds of others he was able to discover the right approach, so as to establish a genuinely friendly relation. "The class barrier," he once said, "is like one of those deep trenches that divide animals from spectators in the newest sort of zoo. You can see each other quite clearly with nothing in the way, and yet you can't possibly get at each other. At least, in the human zoo you can make contact, but in one way only. You must be doing something that puts you definitely on their side, not on ours. And you must be able to convince someone on their side (whom they know to be sound) that you really are doing it, that you mean business. Once you have got yourself accepted by him, he can get you accepted everywhere. You find yourself across the trench. You get into that other world of theirs. Of course you're not really one of them. You can't possibly be. But you'll be a welcome visitor instead of a bloody intruder. And if you are quick in the uptake and a bit imaginative, you'll learn a lot, oh, the hell of a lot! You'll learn their language, the language of their minds, I mean. And you'll see 'us' looking mighty different from what we look like to ourselves."

When I asked Victor what it was that he had been doing, that was a passport to that other world, he looked at me hard and long, and said, "I mustn't tell you."

It soon became clear that he was giving more and more of his time and his thought to his exploration of the "other world ", and that he was over-straining himself. I saw very little of him. It was as though he were in a desperate hurry to finish some task before it was too late. Long afterwards, on his wedding day, he told me that at this time he was expecting to 'die' at any minute, to slip back irrevocably into his normal sluggish state. He never knew whether, if he allowed himself to sleep at night, he would wake up in the morning as himself or the hated other. He was therefore desperately anxious to make the fullest possible use of his remaining days or hours, or minutes. Whether through the soporific influence of his recentdisappointing sexual adventures, or through the actual strain of his new social exploration itself, he was becoming subject to frequent lapses into a state of drowsiness in which, though he was still (he said) at heart his awakened self, histhoughts wandered and the desires and purposes of the awakened self lost something of their power. In fact he was a little red; and yet outraged by his own boredom. Sometimes, too, he caught himself secretly fingering and even relishing memories of his own unregenerate past. Occasionally he even made cautious advances to the more human of his former friends.

For days at a time he would not come near me. If I sought him out, I was generally received with a show of friendliness, but somehow conversation flagged. None of the subjects which we usually discussed with such zest seemed to have any significance for him. Often I suspected that he had simply forgotten nearly everything connected with our previous talk. I was shocked and bewildered by his lack of intelligent grasp of the very problems which formerly his keen wit had illuminated for me. Sometimes even superficial friendliness was allowed to lapse. He would even speak with an affected "Oxford drawl", to shame my North Country accent. In fact he would use every means short of slamming the door in my face to make it clear that I was not wanted. Yet, strangely, no sooner did he see that I was leaving than he blurted out apologies, and excused himself on the plea of "feeling rotten", or "having a thick head", or "being quite unfit for decent people to talk to today". It was obvious that something queer had happened to him; but I never suspected that the Victor who rebuffed me was a distinct personality struggling to oust the Victor who was my friend.

One incident is worth recording. I went round to Victor's rooms to return a book which he had left with me on the previous evening. I found to my surprise that he had with him two of his former friends, Biglands, prominent as a speaker in Union debates, and Moulton, a minor aristocrat. All three were a bit sozzled. They were sitting round the table, from which the cloth had been removed, playing a childish game with pellets of bread. A whole loaf had been disembowelled to provide the material for the dozens of bread-pills with which the game was being played. The three of them were frantically blowing pellets across the smooth table at one another. I was so surprised that I stood in the doorway silent. Victor's face, red from much blowing, was itself a playing-board where conflicting emotions struggled for mastery. Presently he said, "Come in, Tomlinson, old man. We want a fourth player. Have a drink, won't you?" The words were harmless; the drawling voice was obviously meant to tell his companions that, though of course he had to seem friendly to this wretched outsider with whom he had somehow got himself entangled, he deplored the intrusion. "No, thanks," I said, and turned to go. With my hand on the door-knob, I heard Victor's voice again, but this time its tone was altered. In a couple of seconds, apparently, his temper had changed from bleak east wind to bright warm sunlight. "Harry, don't go, please!" He had risen; and as I turned, he took me gently by the arm, to lead me into the room. "I want to make a public apology," he said, "for being offensive to you, Harry, and for saying false and spiteful things about you before you came in." Turning to the others, he added, "I'm sorry to be so inconsistent, but before, I was not myself." A glance passed between Biglands and Moulton, signifying that Cadogan-Smith was evidently still crazy. Biglands rose with a bored look. Moulton sat tight, and said, "Very well, C.S., give us some more beer and we'll have Tomlinson in the game." Victor looked at the mess on the table for a moment. "No!" he said. "If you don't mind, I think perhaps we had better stop." Victor was looking extremely uncomfortable. He flashed an appeasing smile at the couple. "I enjoyed the game," he said, "but now, in a new light, it looks a bit silly. I mean, for people who are no longer kids. Oh, well! Sorry, you two! Maybe we'll have a return match some time. But I really must talk to Harry Tomlinson just now." He picked up a few pellets and looked at them with an awkward little snigger. In a voice that developed into a rapt recitative, he said, "People in America or somewhere tilled the ground and sowed the seed. Rain, sun, wind. A waving sea of corn to the horizon. People come with reaping machines, working from dawn

to dark. Stooks everywhere. Threshing machines. Grain in railway trucks, and in elevators; poured into ships' holds. Wild Atlantic weather. The look-out freezing and the stokers sweating. Docking the ship. (Ticklish work. Like coaxing a shy horse.) More trains. Mill hands hard at it in the mills. The corn becomes flour. Some reaches the baker who serves this College. Dough. Lovely loaves. One of them came here. And now look! God! I don't know what you fellows feel but I feel a swine. Well, I started it." Biglands and Moulton had looked very uncomfortable during this harangue. After it, Biglands merely said, "O Christ, I'm going." His companion followed him.

One morning the college was fluttered by a rumour that Cadogan-Smith was in gaol. Apparently he had been mixed up in a fight with the police over in Cowley. It was no ordinary undergraduate brawl. Victor was the only undergraduate, and his associates were said to be extremely undesirable characters who were known to be ring-leaders in recent disturbances at the factory. Rumour had it that the police had finally tracked the culprits down to a certain house in the working- class district, that a scuffle had followed, and that C.S. had given one of the constables a black eye.

With great difficulty I managed to gain access to Victor while he was in custody. It all sounded a pretty bad business, and probably he would have to serve a term in gaol, so the least I could do was to see if I could help him in any way. On my way to the police station I wondered what mood I should find him in, whether exultant that he had made a protest against social tyranny, or calm and self-contained. It was a shock to find that he did not really want to see me as a friend at all, though he was very ready to make use of me. It was a still greater shock to find that he was thoroughly ashamed of his recent escapade, and indignant with his accomplices for having enticed him into it. He did not at the time divulge the fact that he had no memory of the incident, and that all his scanty knowledge of it was gleaned from his gaolers. His behaviour to me was so bewilderingly inconsistent with his past attitude that I found myself completely at a loss. 1 felt an odd sort of vertigo. Needless to say, I was hurt and angry, but I told myself that, of course, the whole affair must have put him to a great strain, and that he had momentarily lost his bearings. He looked at me from under the drooping eyelids of a camel, I thought, and with a camel's sulky pout. Yes, and with that air of aristocratic and offensive superiority which camels innocently wear. When I tried to make contact by leading the talk round to subjects formerly interesting to us both, he looked at me in a puzzled and hostile way, casting occasional anxious glances at the warder who was supervising our meeting. When I referred to recent events in which he had shared, he seemed to have only a very confused recollection of them. I tried to get him to talk about the incident that had landed him in prison, but he kept on saying, "Hell, hell! I must have been tight or mad or something." The only thing that seemed to interest him was the hope of gaining his liberty as quickly as possible. He implored me to go round to certain big-wigs who, he thought, might be able to use their influence to interfere with the normal process of the law and set him free. He was desperately anxious to persuade these big-wigs that he was not really a reprobate but a young man with generous though misguided impulses who had got himself into a scrape through sheer love of adventure. Naturally I felt very uncomfortable about his attitude. I was ready to pull wires for him if I could, but I wished he had not asked me to do so. It was a relief when, after staring silently at me for several seconds, he said, "No, Tomlinson, I'd rather you did nothing. You would probably do more harm than good. I'll get Biglands and Moulton on to the

job." Having come to this decision he made it clear that he had no further use for me, or interest in me. Our conversation fell dead between us. I remember feeling that the real Victor had simply disappeared, and that the creature in front of me was a sort of animated husk with no real inner life of its own. It was as though one had reached out to grasp the hand of a friend, and had grasped nothing but air. With a vague shame and guilt, which I irrationally felt on my own account, I left him.

The Cadogan-Smith Incident caused a flare-up of the inveterate "town and gown" feeling in the local press. Editors demanded that an example should be made of this turbulent undergraduate. Let him stand his trial with his accomplices and serve full sentence. But presently the tone of the press began to change. It was said that C.-S. turned out to be a decent young man who was mentally rather unbalanced and had had some sort of mental storm through over-working. In this condition he had been led astray by evil company. Severe punishment would probably turn him permanently toward anti-social behaviour. Let him finish his university career. Give him a chance to turn over a new leaf.

We had all supposed that C.-S. would at the very least be sent down from the university, but to our surprise he suddenly appeared once more in residence, and was merely gated for the rest of the term.

I made several efforts to open up friendly relations with Victor again, but he resolutely rebuffed me. He had become once more the young "blood" who had invaded my room at the beginning of the previous term. We were in our last year, and by the end of our university career we were practically strangers.

Reading over this chapter, I feel that I have presented only one side of Victor's character as he was during our undergraduate days. I have been so concerned with what may be called his supernormal powers that I have failed to show him as a real human being with idiosyncrasies and weaknesses like the rest of us. He was no superman, and no saint. Much in him seemed to be even a sheer reaction against the conventional virtues of his own other self. For instance, the somnolent Victor had always scorned sweets as inappropriate to the mature men that undergraduates took themselves to be. But the awake Victor made a point of being rather a pig about sweets. Indeed, on one occasion he made himself sick by eating a large box of fudge at a sitting. I was righteously indignant; but he, wiping his greenish face and blowing his nose after this disgraceful incident, remarked with a wan smile, "Harry, you're just an unimaginative prig. I despise you. Damn it, it was worth it, if only to discover one's limitations. Some day I shall do it again."

The somnolent Victor was a very methodical and tidy creature; but the awake Victor seemed incapable of keeping his possessions in their right places. He was apt to drop things where he had last used them. His rooms in college soon lost their former neatness, and became a chaos of books, papers, clothes, cakes, sweets, pipes and all sorts of queer oddities which he had picked up on our country walks. He had become something of a jackdaw with an irrational itch to collect attractive trifles. There were about a dozen large pieces of flint, some of which he had laboriously chipped into arrow-heads, celts and "leaf-blade" knives. Once,

when he had bashed his own thumb by mistake, he said, "This is the way to learn respect for our paleolithic ancestors. Not for nothing did they have brains rather bigger than ours." I noticed, by the way, that though his first efforts would certainly have been a disgrace to the prehistoric craftsmen, he learned rapidly, and in the end produced several presentable celts and one really beautiful little translucent arrow- head, like an accurately cut jewel. Of this he was unashamedly proud, carrying it about in his pocket, and showing it to everyone likely to admire it. This exquisite little object became one of his most treasured "toys". For Victor had a thoroughly childish craving to finger small articles which he invariably carried in his pocket for this purpose. In conversation, and even during serious writing or reading, he would absent-mindedly play with his arrow-head, or with one of the pebbles, acorns, crystals, and so on, that had taken his fancy on our walks. Amongst his most valued treasures were two heavy silver Ptolemaic Egyptian coins that he had bought in an old junk shop. While talking, he would finger one of these amply moulded pieces, or gaze intently at the detail of the profile or coiffure. Yet his attention never seemed to wander from the subject of conversation. In his rooms, all sorts of objects generally lay about on table, desk, couch and chairs. Along with notebooks and works on history and philosophy, were tobacco-pipes, queer old books of prints, two small granite boulders (one grey and one pink), a number of bits of wood that showed an attractive grain, a seventeenth-century silver spoon, a fallow deer's antler (acquired from the Magdalen herd), and a number of unframed pictures of young women who appealed to his rather queer taste in feminine beauty.

Strangely, he never seemed to have any difficulty in finding what he wanted in this chaos. He could always go straight to the desired object with the precision of a monkey finding its way among the chaos of branches in the jungle.

Another queer and often exasperating trait was this. In spite of his remarkably coherent, integrated behaviour in all important matters, his extravagantly keen zest in the life of the senses often led him to sacrifice a seemingly major end to a seemingly trivial sensuous experience. He would become so enthralled with a particularly good brew of cider (not a popular drink in those days) that he would keep me waiting for half an hour while he savoured every sip, with all the seriousness of an expert wine-taster. Often our planned walk was completely upset while he strayed about watching the flight of gulls or swallows, or the hovering of a kestrel. Once, when this had led to our missing a train and an important Union debate, I protested rather violently. He rounded on me with scorn, declaring that if only I had used my eyes and my wits properly I should have got far more out of those birds than a "gas-bag politician" could ever give.

Victor seemed to have a special feeling about birds, a combination of primitive lust in the chase, scientific and aesthetic interest, and something else, difficult to define, but in a way almost religious. When an unfamiliar bird appeared, he would throw all his plans to the winds to stalk and watch it. He made a careful study of bird-flight, particularly in the case of gulls, swallows, hawks and other expert fliers. He would often spend hours experimenting with little home-made gliders, made of paper for indoor work, and of wood and oiled silk for the windy crests of ridges. He was fascinated by the admirably functional shapes of the master fliers among birds. Evolution, he used to say, had moulded them to fit beautifully into the air-streams that their speed created. He

was fascinated not only by their perfection of form and action in the air but also by their temperament, their attitude to life. "Man", he once said, "concentrated on intelligence, birds on artistry. And in a way all their art is sacred art." When I protested, he laughed, and said, "Watch a gull cruising around. No doubt he's in search of food, spying after titbits, but that is not all. How he lives in the sheer skill of flight, like a skater! His cruising is flight become a religious exercise, an ecstatic harmony with the universe, only possible to creatures that have I perfected their adaptation to the environment; quite impossible for man, that half-made clumsy flutterer in a more difficult medium." I broke in with the remark that a gull's cruising was no more religious than a woman's cruising for bargains in a general store. He laughed again, and pointed out that the gull had been fashioned by millions of years of life in the air, and the woman had not been fashioned by general stores, or not to the same extent. He said, "On a fine day, and with a reasonably full belly, the gull's cruising is a sheer act of worship. Can't you feel into it enough to recognize that? And think of all the rest of the pure artistry of birds. Think of courtship, nest-building, and song. No doubt the robin's song begins as sheer sexiness or sheer defiance to his neighbours; but the immediate end is soon overlaid with pure artistry, and worship. If you took more notice of birds, you old stick-in-the-mud, you might be able to get inside them a bit and feel how they feel."

Another consequence of Victor's addiction for "living in the moment" was one which, in spite of my vaunted emancipation from the conventions, I regarded as reprehensible. Whenever he saw a girl that strongly attracted him, he used to watch her with frank delight, and if possible find some way of striking up a casual conversation with her. Such conduct might pass unnoticed today, but when we were undergraduates, before the First World War, it looked bad. Besides, it was annoying to me because it often upset our plans. My expostulation seldom availed to bring him to his senses. Nearly always he scornfully insisted that it was sheer folly not to gather rosebuds while one might. It must be admitted that these casual encounters were very different from the minor flirtations of other young men. I cannot think of a better way of describing Victor's technique than by saying that, in spite of his unconcealed admiration, he seemed rather to aim at establishing a comradely relation than to invite dalliance. If the girl reacted by putting up a veil of virgin modesty or, on the other hand, by "leading him on", he would promptly turn away. He once told me that he supposed what he really wanted of these brief encounters was to "add to the picture-gallery of his memory", so that by contemplating these treasures he might improve his sensitivity both to physical beauty and to the beauty of personality. I remarked that his taste was very different from mine, and that he seemed to fall for very queer-looking girls. He replied with spirit, "Damn it, man, it's time you outgrew the mere chocolate-box lovelies. They are too easy to appreciate. The really enthralling girls are rare. That's why I have to pursue them a bit, lest I should miss a treasure." In passing, perhaps I should remind the reader that though the awake Victor had a rather odd taste in feminine beauty, the somnolent Victor's taste was strictly orthodox. Hence Edith. I sometimes felt that Victor's interest in strange girls was a special case of his lively zoological interest. All through his life Victor retained what I used to regard as a childish interest in birds and all animals. Once he dragged me up to London to visit the Zoo. I was soon as tired as a middle-aged uncle piloting a vigorous young nephew around. Or rather Victor did the piloting, and I trailed after him. I was really more interested in Victor's reactions than in the beasts. Some cages he passed after half a minute's careful study, but others enthralled him. He would stand perfectly still with an expression in which scientific scrutiny, schoolboy delight and sorrowful insight succeeded each other like moments of sunshine and shade. In those days the

"newest type of zoo" had not yet been adopted in England. The creatures were kept in much more wretched conditions than is now customary. They were all quite obviously bored prisoners, and their despond affected Victor deeply. After a while, to my embarrassment, he took to talking to the beasts, as a completely unselfconscious child might do. But what he said was not childish. Speaking quietly, and as to an equal, he would express diffident compassion, apologizing for the unimaginative and ruthless conduct of his own species toward other species. Onlookers sniggered at him; but he turned to them with his wry smile that was half comic, half tragic, and said, "Well, it's true, isn't it?" The onlookers ceased to snigger. We came to a polar bear that was pacing ceaselessly behind its bars, ignoring the spectators. As it turned at the end of its cage, it rubbed its shoulders against the partition. This endlessly repeated action had resulted in a patch of bare skin on each shoulder. Victor watched in silence for some time; then he said, "You poor devil! It's a change from the Arctic! You're cut out for ice and snow hunting, and look what we do to you." Surprisingly, the bear came to a halt and faced him. It sniffed at him through the bars and gave a rumbling whimper, for all the world as though in some obscure way it recognized a friend.

I mention this incident because it gave me a little shock at the time, and because it fell in line with a number of other queer encounters between Victor and dumb animals. The strange thing was that they often seemed to notice him and like him even when he was not attending to them. I have no plausible explanation to offer, but it is a fact that animals took to Victor. Dogs, for instance, had a habit of attaching themselves to him for companionship on a walk. Several times when we sat down to rest in a field a dog arrived and settled itself against him for no apparent reason.

Once, when we were sitting talking in a field near a village, an obviously verminous tike accosted him in this way and he gently threw it off; but it kept on returning. "Go!" he cried, "Hop it! Va t'en! Imshi!" He made fierce noises at it, and pretended to throw a stone, but it merely wagged its tail. Then it calmly sat down against him and began catching fleas. Victor jumped to his feet and said very firmly, "Look here, brother! You have fleas and I haven't, so kindly keep off." The animal put its head on one side and looked at him in a puzzled genial way, again vaguely wagging its tail. Victor dropped on one knee, took its head between his hands, looked into its eyes, and said very solemnly. "I know we're friends. I know mutual understanding binds us eternally as comrades. I know you're horribly misunderstood at home and you still retain a glorious faith in humanity in spite of everything. But for reasons not apparent to you I suggest we love one another at a distance." He then gently pushed the creature away and sat down again beside me. The dog hesitated for a moment, then squatted where it was, looking reproachfully at Victor. Presently it turned its attention once more to its fleas. When we continued our walk, it came with us for some distance, but after a while it wandered off on its own.

I once asked Victor why dogs liked him. "God knows!" he said. "Perhaps I smell right."

Children also seemed to take a fancy to him. He never made advances to them, but when they opened up relations with him, he responded in his detached though friendly man-to-man way, and was at once taken into partnership. He had little experience of

children, but he seemed to enter imaginatively into any child's point of view. When he was drawn into a child's play, he behaved sometimes, of course, with humour and mischief, but often with great seriousness, as though the game were quite as important to him as to the child. For example, once we entered a crowded London train, and a compartment in which a tired and disheartened mother was trying to cope with a tired and cantankerous little boy. It so happened that I sat next the woman, and Victor opposite. We buried ourselves in our books. The ceaseless complaining kept up by the child made it impossible for me to concentrate, but Victor was soon wholly absorbed in his History of Socialism. The child fidgeted and whined and yelled. Presently it fell silent, gazing at Victor. Though I was next it, it took no notice of me. It leaned forward from its mother's lap and banged Victor's knee. He looked up, smiled, and continued reading. It grabbed at the pages; he gently removed its fingers. The mother scolded the unruly infant, but it continued to take an interest in the mysteriously attractive young man sitting opposite. When other methods of approach had failed, the little boy took the chocolate out of his own mouth and offered it to Victor. The spectators laughed, but Victor said politely, "It's awfully good of you but I'd rather you had it." Meanwhile he had closed his book, and after fumbling in a pocket he produced (of all unlikely things) the curb-chain of a horse's bridle. This treasure he had acquired a few days earlier at a village saddler's. We had been passing through the village, and he was attracted by the window full of harness, curry-combs and horse-cloths. He insisted on entering the shop in search of a new treasure, and presently he hit on the chain. Evidently it had been in his pocket ever since. He now laid the six inches of shining metal neatly on his knee, remarking, "Nice, isn't it?" Then he picked it up and twisted it into a tight spiral, then shook it out into its normal looseness and handed it to the child, who took it and examined it with solemn eyes. Victor returned to his reading. But presently the child, still holding the chain, reached forward with both arms toward Victor, and said "Dadad ", to everyone's amusement. Victor closed his book with a sigh and received the infant. For half an hour he entertained his new friend with the contents of his pockets, telling him a simple story about each article, and obviously enjoying himself.

I record these little incidents because they throw light on Victor's character as a young man. But indeed throughout his life incidents of this sort were apt to occur to the awake Victor. And even when he was nearly sixty he still combined with his exceptionally adult nature many childlike, or positively childish, traits. The toy habit remained with him. Dogs and even horses continued to follow him about. And throughout my acquaintance with him he was apt to allow immediate sensory pleasures to upset relatively serious enterprises, and to be completely unashamed of doing so. He once said, "No doubt man triumphed by taking thought for the morrow, and he must learn to take thought even for a very distant morrow, thousands of years ahead; but sometimes the present's claim is more urgent than the future's. And if you never live in the present moment, never let it soak right through you at every pore, you never really live at all."

4 - BUSINESS MAN AND SOLDIER

From 1912 to 1919

I HAVE TOLD about the beginning of my friendship with Victor as it appeared from my point of view. On his wedding day, while we were on our walk, he went over those already remote events, describing his own side of the experience. And so the whole affair took on a new meaning for me. His occasional lapses into unfriendliness, and his final complete withdrawal, all of which had at the time seemed such gratuitous and wilful violations of a valued relationship, now appeared in a new light. Victor had not betrayed our friendship. He had simply ceased to exist. The Victor that I knew had been spirited away. I could no more blame him than I could blame an unconscious man.

This discovery that Victor had not been himself, and so had not betrayed our friendship, had a surprisingly deep effect on me. Evidently I had never quite realized how much the friendship had meant to me, and how its breakdown had disturbed the foundations of my mind. Now that the explanation had been given, I felt a rather extravagant elation, which I was at pains to conceal. Somehow the whole universe took on a different aspect. Friends might die, or might helplessly suffer a psychological change; but friendship remained, after all, a reliable thing.

After we left Oxford I saw nothing of Victor for some years; but I had occasional letters from him, written (I now learned) during periods in which the more lucid personality held the field. He passed into the shipping firm where his father had a certain influence. I, lacking his opportunities, took a post as English master in a secondary school. We were stationed in different parts of the country, and our paths never met. My report of the next phase of his life therefore depends entirely on his own account, given to me on his wedding day.

Nothing unusual happened during his first year as a businessman. Like so many young university men flung into office life, he found the routine very irksome, and was much more interested in his leisure occupations than in his work. He became a typical young provincial man-about-town, of the lazier and more genteel sort. He was made a member of one of the leading clubs. He danced. He was thoroughly spoilt by the daughters of the business community on account of his good looks and a certain lordly carelessness in his attitude to them. He took them out in his sports car, always returning them safely at night. He played a good deal of tennis, and was a brilliant three- quarter in the first fifteen of the best local rugger club.

On several occasions he was probably on the verge of waking to his true self, for he had strange bouts of restlessness, in which the great shipping firm became a clear and rather exciting whole in his mind. In these spells he would stay late at the office, reading up old correspondence files, studying the plans of ships, puzzling over problems of naval architecture, examining the ledgers, and the accounts of individual voyages, particularly those which showed a loss, and were dramatically recorded in red ink. But his chief interest, during these spells of semi-lucidity, was in the working conditions of crews, dockers and other employees. He would take every possible opportunity of being present when one of the directors interviewed a ship's captain at the beginning or end of a voyage. On one occasion he got himself assigned to work in connection with the actual loading of ships in dock; and ten days later, when the mood had passed, he cursed his folly; for when the interest had wained, the practical upshot

was simply that he had removed himself further from the centres of his pleasure.

The difference between his brighter moods and his normal apathetic condition was distinct enough to attract the attention of his superiors, particularly on one occasion. While he was doing a spell of work in the naval architect's department, he hit upon a bright idea for a new form of rudder. At first the professionals treated it lightly, as the extravagance of a bright young man. But in spite of themselves they kept on discussing it; and finally, after a great deal of calculation and draftmanship had been devoted to it, the finished design was adopted by the firm as the standard rudder of all their ships. But, long before this happened, its inventor had slipped back into his normal phase. During the preliminary stages of the detailed consideration of the rudder he had been intensely interested, and fertile in suggestions. But suddenly he seemed to lose both interest and ability. He was unable to make any useful contribution, and indeed could scarcely conceal the fact that he could not properly understand the point of his own brilliant idea. So marked was the difference between his former brightness and his subsequent dullness, that those who had not actually seen him at work in the creative period were inclined to believe that young Cadogan-Smith had simply stolen his great invention from someone else. But those who had worked with him, and remembered his leaping imagination, rejected this theory. Victor himself now ceased to take any spontaneous interest in his achievement, save as a means of acquiring credit in the eyes of his superiors.

In his "half-awake" state Victor seems to have been not only rather more interested and rather more intelligent than in his normal state; he was also rather more aware of others as persons. Hence his concern for the living conditions of the employees. He went so far as to agitate discreetly for improvements in the crew-accommodation in the fo'castles of the company's ships. He even suggested an innovation which in those days seemed quite fantastic, namely that each member of the crew should have a single-berth cabin. Victor's criticism of existing accommodation somewhat outraged the directors, as they prided themselves on being in the forefront in respect of amenities for crews, and the suggestion that they should raise the standard of comfort even further seemed to them "sheer idealism ".

"My dear boy," said the head of the firm, "if we were to carry out your plans, we should soon fail to pay dividends. After all, the company is not a charitable institution. And anyhow, surely you must realize that the class of man who goes to sea as a deck-hand or stoker simply doesn't need the sort of thing you want to give him. And he wouldn't know how to use it properly. Everything would go to rack and ruin in no time." As soon as Victor saw that his philanthropy was damaging his reputation with his superiors, he dropped the subject. This surrender was not entirely due to cynical self-regard. He was genuinely persuaded that his ideas were Utopian, and that if he wanted to be a successful business man, he must outgrow that sort of thing.

On one occasion only, during his early business career, did Victor pass beyond his "half-awake" state and attain full clarity of consciousness. Having served some time in each of the departments of the great office, he had been appointed secretary to the directors. In this position he would gain some experience of the general policy of the firm; and in due course he himself, if all

went well, might become a junior director.

One day he was present at a discussion on pilfering at the docks. The firm had employed detectives to bring the culprits to book, but without results. Victor was at the time in his "partially awake" condition. He had evidently shown some intelligence in the discussion, for his suggestion that he himself should do a bit of detective work at the docks was accepted.

I had better describe this incident as nearly as possible in Victor's own words, as he recounted the adventure to me while we were returning from our walk on his wedding day.

"In my half-awake state," he said, "I was rather more sensitive to people's minds than in my normal somnolent state. I was able to make use of this power in a number of ways in the service of the firm. I don't think telepathy played a part. I was just more sensitive to people's reactions. I seemed to read in their faces and their gestures and tones of voice what they were feeling. Another thing that probably helped me in my adventure was my experience with the lads in the factory at Oxford. Mind you, I couldn't remember about that, because it belonged to my fully awake phase; but automatically I seemed to behave ill the right way to make contact with working people. I intuitively put on the right mental disguise. I was able to pose effectively to the dockers as a bloke who had seen rather better days, and was now forced to take to dock-labouring for a living. I was the helpless and amiable novice who had to be initiated into every side of the dockers' life, and I gradually got myself accepted as 'one of us.'

"I was supposed to be completely reliable, and of course I made a point of persuading everyone that I was entirely on the side of the workers against the employers. On this subject I took a high moral line, which increased my reputation. Presently I discovered that there was an organized system of pilfering and selling the swag for the benefit of certain down-and-out families. The gang had a very strict moral code of its own, a rigid 'honour among thieves'. If anyone in the gang was known to be pilfering for his own private use, failing to deliver the proceeds for the common purpose, he suffered for it. One man, who was believed to be a spy in the pay of the detectives, was got rid of by an ingeniously staged fatal accident. He was cleverly induced to pitch himself head first into an empty hold, seemingly through sheer carelessness. This incident made me a bit anxious lest 1 should eventually share his fate. So 1 made up my mind to retire to my own world on the following day. But something happened that upset my plans. 1 woke. Suddenly, as 1 was coaxing a swinging case of machinery into the right position for stowing (1 believe it was at the very moment when my docker's hook gripped the wood) I saw the whole wretched affair as it really was. 1 saw myself as a supporter of an economic tyranny spying on a group of people who, whatever their faults, felt themselves to be under no obligation towards their masters, and were stealing for a very laudable purpose, namely to succour the distressed. I saw that, though in a just society the pilfering would have been inexcusable, in our unjust society one ought at any rate, to approve of the courage and comradeship and self- dedication in a generous cause. Of course one couldn't approve of the murder, but one really couldn't take a high moral line about it. Now 1 was faced with a very unpleasant problem. 1 had the necessary information for convicting the gang not only of pilfering but of murder. This information must be kept from the authorities. So long as 1

remained fully awake, it was safe. But 1 might go somnolent again at any time, and then 1 should certainly blab.

"I went on working in the hold, with a mate who was also in the gang. He was a hearty lad who kept up a patter of mildly obscene humour. He had an angel's smile, and red hair on his bare arms. Looking at him, 1 saw quite clearly that I must be loyal to him and his mates at all costs. But how save the situation? 1 racked my brains for a plan. Should I write a note to the office saying that 1 felt 1 was going mad, and any stories 1 might tell would be pure fabrication? Too feeble! Should I give myself up to the gang and let them dispose of me? Not fair to saddle them with another crime. And quite unnecessary. For gradually it dawned on me that the only way to save the gang was to dispose of myself. At first this, seemed a silly quixotic thing to do. But the more I thought about it, sweating with the labour of shifting those packing cases, the more important it seemed to save the gang: and the less important to keep my own life; such a scrappy, ineffective life as it was."

At this point of Victor's narrative I interrupted to say that his resolve to kill himself seemed to me quite fantastic. He was silent for a few seconds, and then replied, "I had another motive also, an obscure sense that in sacrificing myself I should be performing a symbolic act, sacrificing one of the exploiters (my baser self) for the welfare of the people." To this I snorted something about sheer sentimentality; but Victor said only, "Oh, well, that is how it struck me."

Presently he continued his story. "How I remember slogging away in that hold, with the fine feeling of muscles skilfully used; and gradually facing up to the fact that I must kill myself! While I was working I got the hell of a bump from one of the swinging cases, and in my awake state it hurt extravagantly. And yet deeper down I was merely smiling at it. In the same way, the prospect of death hurt like hell, and yet I was also contemptuously laughing at it. I did so want to live. Everything was so vivid and difficult and beautiful, from my mate's heavenly grin to the smooth steel of my hook. And yet--what matter? If I didn't have it, other 'I's would have it. So long as it was had, what matter? I hung on to that thought, like a drowning man to his straw; till at last I began to feel that in some queer way the 'I' that was now choosing death was identical with all the other 'I's'; and therefore would in some sense not die at all. And yet I was convinced that in some other, simpler, sense I should cease to exist.

"Well, as we were leaving the ship for the dinner hour, I looked round for something heavy, and found a large iron pulley, for one of the derricks. When I thought no one was looking, I picked this up and began to tie it round my neck with a bit of line. Unfortunately a stevedore had been watching my strange antics, and when he saw what I was up to he came at me. I had to hurry with the tying, and didn't get it done properly before I had to go overboard or be caught. I went over, hugging the thing; but presumably when I lost consciousness I let it go, and the pulley dragged itself free. Anyhow, they got me out and brought me round with artificial respiration. I woke in the somnolent state; and very confused, because, of course, I couldn't remember what had happened in the awake state. But I did remember all that had occurred before I woke. I had enough evidence to convict a bunch of men of theft and one or two of murder."

"Naturally my attempt at suicide caused a stir, and had somehow to be explained. Of course, I gave my true name, and accounted for my disguise. I made my report to my future father-in-law, who came to see me at the hospital. I said that spying had got on my nerves and given me an irrational sense of guilt to such an extent that I daren't face the world any more. This was certainly a good line. Everyone was full of sympathy and admiration, and I acted up to the part very thoroughly. In due season ten men were accused. At the trial, I gave my evidence with seeming reluctance and distress, and I pleaded for mercy. But at heart I didn't feel any distress at all. I simply felt I had done rather a good piece of work, and the men must take the consequences of their anti-social behaviour. All received heavy sentences. The two who had brought off the murder were hanged, poor devils. Or lucky devils. May be they really fared better than the others."

By the time that Victor had finished this story, we had almost completed our circuit in the country, and were hurrying to catch the last bus back to our hotel. In the bus he mentioned that after this incident he had formed much more steady business habits, even though he was in his normal somnolent state. Whether this change was due to some slight infection from his suppressed personality or to a natural bent for business, I do not know. Certainly it is fairly common for young men flung from the university into business to go through a phase of restlessness before finally accepting the routine of office work. But the single-mindedness with which he devoted himself to his business career was remarkable. He was determined, at all costs, to "make good". The firm was so pleased with his new keenness and shrewdness that they planned to give him managerial status, sooner than had been intended.

But in 1914, when war was declared, Victor at once began to feel restless. (It was while we were sitting at dinner in our hotel after the abortive wedding that Victor told me about his war experiences.) All the most reputable young men were soon flocking to the colours. And the normal Victor was very susceptible to public opinion. After a few months of restlessness, during which the firm did its best to retain him, he enlisted, and became an infantry officer. When he had told me this, Victor lapsed into one of his silences, so I had to prompt him again. I knew that he had been at one time in disgrace, but I did not know why. I also knew that he had redeemed his character, and ended in some fairly important staff job. At first he seemed reluctant to talk, and I assumed that he did not want to tell me about his disgrace. When I deliberately made it easy for him to divert the whole conversation, he looked at me sharply, and said, "You think I'm ashamed of being court-martialled. (The first time it was for cowardice, the second for insubordination.) No! It's something else that I find distasteful. However, here goes!"

He told me that "the somnolent cad" quickly made himself known for intelligence and dash; and that, as he combined these qualities with great docility toward his superiors, he soon began climbing the ladder of promotion. But on two occasions the true Victor woke into being, and nearly wrecked the laboriously built-up reputation of the somnambulist.

"When it first happened," he said, "I was still a subaltern. There was to be an attack. Throughout the preparations, when everyone was anxiously concealing his fear and loathing of the whole bloody prospect, I was--well, 'magnificent' is the inevitable word. I

put heart into the platoon, and into my brother officers. I was full of exultation and eagerness for the coming battle. Of real fear I felt practically nothing, for I was hypnotized by the idea that I was going to behave splendidly and cover myself with glory. The whole affair was just an opportunity for self-display. My imagination was too sluggish to realize anything but the romantic aspect. I had to pretend to feel some anxiety (pretend even to myself, I mean), so that I could triumph over it with a brave face. But I really felt no more than the stage- fright that a schoolboy feels before going out to bat for the school. Well, zero hour came, and I led my lads over the top with my customary dash. Several of the poor devils dropped. One showed signs of turning tail, so I promptly shot him. Soon we were using bayonets in the enemy's first-line trench, and soon our position was secure."

Victor was silent for a moment, and began eating faster, as though trying to release some pent-up energy. Presently he said, "Then it happened. I don't know what actually caused the waking, perhaps the appealing look on the face of a dying German, like a mouse in a trap. But that was nothing new. Perhaps the real cause was that the Boche's face was a bit like yours. I remember noticing that. Or perhaps it was just that when the scrap was over I had time to feel that I had a splinter under my thumbnail. Anyhow, I, the real I, suddenly came on the scene, and found that everything was silly and horrible, and very terrifying. Shells were falling unpleasantly near; and now, of course, I could imagine quite well what might happen. If I had been fully awake, I could have faced it; but I wasn't. I was just abnormally sensitive, but not properly integrated, I suppose. And so I was frightened clean out of my wits. No, not out of my wits, for I didn't rush about screaming. I just waited in a cold sweat for the next move in the preposterous game. The folly of people driving themselves to face all this just to capture a bloody ditch made me terrified of my own kind, and of myself. The whole war, which I had never really thought about, but only talked about parrot-wise, suddenly appeared as a huge and diabolical booby-trap. All the high-sounding phrases that I thought I believed seemed now sheer mockery. 'A War to end War!' 'Making the world safe for democracy!' Christ! It suddenly became clear to me, as of course it had done to many others, that killing people just wasn't the way to make a decent world. It suddenly appeared to me that every human life was absolutely sacred and must never be destroyed. And I remembered the lad I had shot for hesitating. You see, I wasn't fully awake, just tormented by quickened sensitivity. My thumb, for instance, was hurting like a violent toothache. And I had no comprehensive vision that could put my pain in proper perspective, still less put the war in perspective. And I had no self-detachment. I just stood there fidgeting; torn between the impulse to bury my face in my hands and blub, and the impulse to jump on the parapet and shout 'God is Love'. Then came an order to advance, and I think I did scream out 'God is Love', and then I collapsed in a whimpering heap in the mud. The lads went over all right, and left me. They probably thought I had been hit. Well, that was what I was court- martialled for. Long before the time of the trial, of course, I was my normal somnolent self, and quite ignorant of the events of the awake spell. I was let off lightly, on the strength of my previous record, and the obvious fact that I was a bit crazy. But it dished my precious career for some time. I was sent home for a rest-cure, and supervision by the psychiatrists. They were not very clever in those days, and I managed to conceal the fact that I had always been subject to spells of dissociation of some sort. They just treated me for 'shell shock', and gave me a good holiday. Of course I (or the somnolent ass who masqueraded as me) was terribly upset at the damage done to my career, and impatient to start again, and anxious lest another slip should once more bring me to the bottom of the ladder. No! I must be fair to the fool. He had been badly wounded in

his self-respect, and he had betrayed his soldierly ideal, and guilt gnawed at him. He didn't really know that he cared far more for his own career than for a victory for the Allies."

Victor paused; then, stabbing at his potatoes with his fork, he said bitterly, "Fancy being tied for life to an insensitive snob! It's like being a Siamese twin, and the other partner a half-wit."

I began to commiserate; but to my surprise he brushed my sympathy aside, and said, "Have you noticed the girl who is serving us?" I had not; and I was surprised that he had been able to do so while he was absorbed in telling me about events that were obviously still very much on his mind. But I remembered that one of the most striking characteristics of the awakened Victor was his power of attending to two things at once.

He said, "I have been watching her ever since we came in. And this morning at breakfast, when I was the Dolt, I couldn't keep my eyes off her. I thought her the ugliest thing I had ever seen, and thanked my lucky stars for Edith. But now--god, she's lovely! I wonder whether seeing her had something to do with waking me. Look at her! Look at her!"

I could see the girl in the big mirror on the opposite wall. She was serving the sweet at the table behind me. She was a well-built wench, certainly, but there was a juvenile or country clumsiness about her action, and her shape was somehow rather unfinished, rather like a statue in the rough, that still needed a lot of trimming. And as to her face I should have advised the sculptor to begin again on fresh stone. The eyes were very wide apart, and of a curious dark grey, the colour of tarns overhung by rocks; but with flecks of russet in the grey, like the ruddy weathering one sometimes sees on grey slate or shale. The eyes were indeed quite good eyes. Remembering them afterwards, I had to admit that they were striking eyes, large and intelligent, serious, but rippled over with laughter when a small boy, whom she was serving, carefully selected the biggest jam tart. Strange eyes, certainly, with lashes and eyebrows of an unusual red-brown, as though they were originally black, but had gone rusty. The hair, too, was rust-red, but bright, heavy, and voluminous. It threatened to collapse on the large shoulders at any moment. But the nose! The sculptor must have broken the first nose and tried to do something with the stump. It was broad and flat, merely a place where a large nose might have been. The mouth was fantastically wide and full. The sculptor had evidently been frightened of having another accident, so he had left a great deal of spare rock to play about with. The complexion was surprisingly good. The rock's texture was silky and even. The sculptor could not spoil the actual material, save by misshaping it. Nor could he extinguish the warm glow that seemed to come from some inner fire. Suddenly I realized that the girl was blushing.

I looked at Victor. He was gazing at her with a frank grin of admiration, most out-of-place in the circumstances. "She reminds me of a hippopotamus," I said. "Me too," he answered gaily, "a lovely blushing hippo!" He added more seriously, "The tragic thing is that a human face may perfectly express a lovely soul, and yet have no soul at all behind it. Has she a soul, do you think?"

"Maybe she has," I answered, "but if so, the tragic thing is that it's not able to express itself through a face like that."

"Good God, man," he protested, "have you no eyes, no eyes? Insensitive blockhead!" He was laughing, but genuinely outraged.

He suddenly changed the subject. "I must tell you of the other waking I had during the war. I was in command of a I company, and we had been left in a tight place during an unexpected German attack. Our instructions were to hang on I at all costs. My somnolent self gloried in the situation, at first, and behaved with his customary rectitude. We were very heavily shelled, and had a lot of casualties. Presently the Boches came at us from their trench, and in our reduced state we hadn't an earthly." Victor paused, thinking. Suddenly he said, "Oh, hell! What do the details matter! The point is that the survivors, en masse, gave up resisting, and made off down a communication trench. My morale then broke too, and I followed them, helter-skelter. Suddenly I woke; more thoroughly than on the previous occasion. As before, there was the increased vividness of sensation, but also something else, which I can only describe as an increased grasp of the total situation, both military and-well, cosmological. When I woke, I was already mixed up with the others again, stampeding; and the surprise of waking was so startling that I came to a standstill and laughed, crouching in that trench. I was terrifically conscious of my body, and of the strained faces of the lads staggering past me. But also, I was aware of all this as one might be aware of animalcules on a brilliantly illuminated microscope slide. I felt a sort of lofty pity for us all, but I was utterly remote and detached; because I was also at the very same time intensely aware of so much more. I saw us as simply the visible bit of mankind. I knew vividly that just round the corner, so to speak, there were all the armies, all the peoples, all the historical ages of man's floundering struggle; and enclosing the whole thing, black heaven, pointed with stars. This happened in a flash, and was mixed up with thoughts of Socrates and Jesus Christ and the problem of good and evil.

"Of course it's nonsense to talk about all this happening 'in a flash'. But something happened in that flash, something that I cannot describe in any other way. Well, suddenly it was borne in on me that this business of running away to save my skin was somehow a surrender of my spiritual freedom, in fact a sorry act of self-destruction on the part of-well-not simply on the part of me, Victor, in this skin, but of humanity in all its skins, or (better) the very spirit in us all. How that word makes me squirm! But what other is there? Well, something had to be done to re-assert the universal thing in me, in us all, I mean; the supreme thing that really matters. I cautiously looked over the top, and spotted a machine-gun that was enfilading the next lap of the trench, where most of my men were still struggling along. There was a chance that I could get at it from the rear without being noticed, if I crawled round by a line of overlapping shell- holes. It was a very poor chance, but what matter? Even if I didn't get through, I should have 'asserted the spirit '. So I set about and did that little job, and had the luck not to be spotted. Note, I didn't do it out of patriotism, or because I believed that an Allied victory was necessary to humanity. Nor did I do it out of simple self- pride. I just did it because I had to do something to assert the integrity of the universal thing in us. I took the German boys completely by surprise, poor devils, and pitched a hand-grenade at them. It was a messy business. One of them was still able to cause trouble when I ran in, but I put a bullet in his face with my pistol. As I did it, I felt a strong friendliness toward him, but this didn't make me hesitate,

any more than I had hesitated to chuck away my own life. I did both things just because the something in me had undertaken a job and must carry it through."

At this point I interrupted Victor to get him to explain more fully what he meant by the "something" in him. He considered for a while; at least I suppose he did, but his far-away look seemed to focus on the ugly waitress, who was serving at the other end of the room.

At last he said, "I can only repeat that something universal in me protested against my individual cowardice. Or perhaps it was as though the little ordinary 'I' woke to be the universal 'I' for a few minutes. I woke to be something more than Victor, even the awakened Victor. Did I? I wonder!"

Before I could ask him to pursue the explanation, he continued. "This affair, of course, put me in the limelight. I was recommended for a Victoria Cross. But I never got it, because of subsequent events. You see, after that show, I remained awake for some months, carrying on with my job in a mood of glorious detachment and amusement, much as an adult may enter into a children's game. For in my prevailing mood at that time I generally felt as though I were an actor; yes, an actor playing a part in a children's game, entering into it with immense zest, but enjoying it mainly out of a nostalgia for my own long-lost childhood. In fact I was playing at soldiers, keeping the rules meticulously, but always with secret amusement. I never really cared which side won, so long as the game itself was interesting."

"But, Victor," I interrupted, "you were not like that when I knew you. You took sides. You did care which side won. You once said you were on the side of the light, against darkness."

He laughed, and replied, cryptically, "My dear fellow, there's a time for protest, and a time for acceptance. But best is to do both at once, always. But that, believe me, takes some doing. And I had still to learn it. You'll see."

He paused again, and I urged him to go on with the story. "Well," he said, "I was an immense success with the children. I played soldiers so well that they too played better. They had been flagging, poor boys, because they really had struck a pretty gruelling patch in the game. But now they were all keyed up again. Somehow I kidded them into thinking that mud and blood were rather stimulating. I knew they couldn't stick it indefinitely, but I might keep them up to scratch till we were relieved. Of course the high-ups were vastly pleased with me, and I was obviously invaluable to them. But presently I spoilt it all (from their point of view) by breaking the rules. We had been on a very tough job, and done it well, and come out of the line to rest, those of us who were left. And, God, we needed it. Most of us were just at breaking point, and it was touch and go. Well, the day after we had come down from the front we happened to be inspected by a brigadier who was a blockhead. He found the men's rifles dirty, and he raised hell. Suddenly, I realized that I had done with acceptance, and was all set for protest. The bloke was quite entitled to

take the line he did, according to the rules of the game, but I had had enough. I just quietly told him what I thought of him, and what I thought of brass-hats in general, and the whole bloody war. I was court- martialled again. But again, because of my record, and because the brigadier was known to be a cad and fool, I was let off lightly. I was sent home for a long rest. Of course I never got the cross, which didn't at all matter to me; but while I was in England I went somnolent again; and the somnolent me, when he had succeeded in piecing the past together from what people said, was bitterly mortified."

Victor paused, but before I had said anything he added. "How I detest that somnolent self of mine! And yet of course that's quite unjustified. He can't help being like that. And of course, when I think quietly about him, I don't detest him. I don't even despise him. I'm just sorry for him, and determined to keep awake as long as I can. I wonder how long I shall have this time. Somehow I feel more solidly awake than ever before, more secure. But one can't tell. This may be the last five minutes."

I said, "Is it at all in your own power to keep awake? You said he couldn't help being himself. Can you do anything to avoid slipping back into being him?"

Victor answered, "I really believe I am beginning to learn. But I shall probably need help." His eyes turned to the waitress. (Did that look mean anything, I wondered?) He beckoned her over to us, but all he said was, "We should like our coffee in the lounge, please."

We found two fairly secluded chairs where we could carry on our conversation. But for a few seconds we sat silent. Victor was looking at our fellow guests, and I at him; for I was again struck by the extraordinary change in his appearance since the morning. It seemed to have affected even his profile; for not only were the eyes now wide open and alert, the lips seemed at once fuller and firmer.

Presently Victor said, "Does it strike you, Harry, that several of these people are trying not to wake, and trying all too well?" I turned to look at the very commonplace crowd, sipping their coffee in little groups. I said they didn't seem to me to be trying to do anything at all. But Victor snorted and declared. "They've been trying so long (some of them), and so hypnotically, that they don't know they're trying. Look at that bloke lighting his pipe. Watch his action. There! He has blown out the match with unnecessary vigour. It's his own soul he blows out every time. But, unlike the match, his soul somehow comes alight again always, often inconveniently."

The coffee arrived, brought by the same waitress. As she put the tray on the table, Victor said to her, "Do you try to keep your soul from waking? I bet you don't." She tried to prim up her hippopotamus lips, but a smile broke through. Then, with a queer sort of Scotch accent that I could not identify, she said, "My soul, sir? I haven't got one. The management doesn't allow them."

She left us, and Victor laughed after her, trying to recall her.

Waiting for him to continue our conversation, I watched his expression change from merriment to tenderness and deep seriousness. Presently I said, "I believe you have fallen for that girl." To this he answered, "Oh, I have, I have; but I was thinking of Edith. She really has a soul, you know, but she won't give it a chance. And I did my best to kill it for her. And now, well, I have given her a nasty knock, poor girl. But perhaps that will shock her into life. God, I wish I could do something about her. But probably it's best to leave her alone."

"She'll get over it," I said, "but your name will be dirt with the whole family, and the office too."

"Yes," he said, "and with my father. It has been the hell of a knock for him. Curious! I care much more for our father than my doltish other self ever did. Between my father and me there's a gulf, but I can see him across the gulf fairly clearly. The Dolt, though he's on our father's side of the gulf, can't really see him at all, can't appreciate him as he really is; but I can, perhaps better than our father can appreciate himself." Victor was lighting his pipe, but at this point he paused, looking intently at the flame of the match that he had not yet used. It burned right back to his fingers, till the sudden heat forced him to notice it and blow it out. "Yes," he said, "the somnolent ass thinks our father is a sentimentalist. And so he is, in a way, but so much more besides. He's a sentimental imperialist and a sentimental careerist. But all that is just an addiction that he cannot properly control, a sort of mental hiccough that he's really ashamed of, but can't stop. The Dolt thinks he reads our father like a book. But he doesn't really. He sees him as a 'realist' whose nerve fails every now and then; for instance when he begins caring for some wretched 'hard case' of a black man rather than the white man's colonial government." Victor nodded slowly, as if well satisfied with his insight into his father. "In a way," he said, "my father's character contains both the Dolt and me in a single personality. For instance, of course he's a snob and a thruster, but he knows he is, and tries quite hard not to be. And even when he does behave snobbishly he laughs at himself. Yes, and though he generally treats people as pawns in a game, sometimes he upsets the whole game for the pawn's sake. And the game, mind you, is not just his own career (though that is certainly fatally dear to him). No, the game is really History with a big H, with himself as one of the pawns, zestfully and conscientiously playing its part in the game; but always with an underlying tenderness toward his fellow pawns, a tenderness that he sometimes quite deliberately allows to break all the rules. That is what the Dolt thinks is mere muddle-headed weakness, but by God it's not. It's far-seeing wisdom, and it needs courage, for a man like my father, in his position. I sometimes wonder what my mother was like. Probably like Edith." He laughed, sourly.

Then at last he lit his pipe, and pulled at it in silence.

After a while I fetched him out of his reverie by remarking again that the wedding fiasco would make it very difficult for him at the office. He said, "Oh, I shall not go back to that life, not so long as I am awake." I asked if he had any plans, No, he had not; but he must do something that offered scope for "absorbing the world"; and something that afforded some possibility of action,

"some creative paying back to the world". He said, "I must get to know what people are like, all sorts of them. Maybe it's Just revulsion from the Dolt, but I do feel I want to learn a lot from people, ordinary decent people. Those dockers, for instance, could have taught me a lot, if I had been awake," He deplored his wasted opportunities, and his ignorance. "I shall plan," he said, "for a long life. But, of course, it may all be over before I finish this pipe."

We talked well into the night, and gradually a decision formed itself in his mind, largely owing to scraps of information that I was able to give him. After a lot of desultory consideration of many possible lines of action, he suddenly remarked, "Yes, of course! I see what to do. When I have cleared up the mess here, I shall cut right adrift, settle in another town and try to get some kind of adult educational work. That way, I shall both absorb and create, in a small way. At first, of course, there'll be very little creating, but it's clear I must do a great deal of absorbing before I can attempt anything much in the way of creating."

Lest he should be expecting too much of this work, I suggested that he might find it irksome to be constantly dealing with uneducated minds. Journalism, I thought, might afford him more diverse and stimulating contacts, and might be used as a stepping-stone to a literary career.

His reply was emphatic. "No, no!" he said. "Reporting murders and football matches, and occasionally having an article accepted by a literary weekly, would not satisfy me at all. I need a solid foundation of understanding of the lives of ordinary people, preferably working people. I want to work with minds that have not already been stereotyped by middle-class education and comfortable middle-class values. Those dockers taught me something, and I think I can teach them and their like something in return. Strange, isn't it? Although, while I was with them, I was the somnolent ass, now, looking back, I find I have stored up a lot of valuable material from those days." To my suggestion that he was sentimentalising them in reaction against the snobbery of his somnolent state, he answered frankly that I with my lower-middle-class origins and unconscious respect for my social "superiors", was the real snob, and that I could not be fair to the workers.

"Besides," he added, "you yourself have often said that the only hope for our rotten old society is education, real education, not for the few privileged people but for all of us. Democracy can't possibly work unless there is a truly educated mass of citizens. Well, I shall try my hand at this most important of all jobs, educating ordinary adults. Oh, I know it's a pretty hopeless task. And of course it can't be done properly so long as economic conditions and the whole social climate are forcing us in the wrong direction. But we must make a beginning. And it's going to be my job to help. Yes, I see quite clearly that this is my job." Then he made a remark that stirred me in spite of my scepticism. "Some day, Harry, probably long after we are dead, the great majority of people in this island, yes, and in the world, will be decent, friendly, well-balanced, informed, critical, really human beings. And then, God, what glorious new horizons will begin to open up for our species! At present we are a self-frustrating, self-wounding, hobbled species, blinded by its conditions. But then we shall find ourselves."

As I had to leave by a very early train next day, I brought our conversation to a close. Persuading Victor not to rise early on my account, I said "goodbye" there and then in the lounge. I promised to do what I could to help him to secure the kind of work he wanted, and he thanked me for befriending him in his crisis. Of course I replied that I was very glad to have been taken fully into his confidence, and that I hoped we might see more of each other. To this suggestion he heartily assented. I went upstairs to pack my hired wedding garments.

5 - NEW START

From 1921 to 1924

IT WAS NEARLY THREE YEARS before I saw Victor again. A few weeks after the wedding fiasco I put him in touch with a friend of mine in the adult education movement, and in due course he was accepted as staff tutor for extra-mural work under one of the northern universities. I had hoped to meet him during the latter part of the summer, but we could not arrange a date suitable to both of us. Meanwhile I had an attractive offer of a post as teacher of English in a school in France. Before I left the country, Victor wrote to say that he was hard at work preparing his lectures for the winter. He was doubtful about his capacity for the job. "Honour Mods" and "Greats", Greek and Latin Literature and Philosophy, seemed a poor equipment for teaching English artisans and housewives industrial history and economics. But in those days a classical education was thought to fit one for any kind of teaching post, certainly for the informal work which Victor had chosen. Moreover Victor was a very attractive candidate. His enthusiasm could not be doubted, for he had given up a brilliant career in business for the sake of adult education; and he obviously had a gift for personal contacts and for interesting people ill the life of the mind. I had no doubt that he would make a success of the job; but he was anxious, and he felt compelled to devote the remainder of the summer to studying his new subjects. So he settled into cheap lodgings in the great provincial town which was to be his headquarters, and divided his time between study and making contacts with local people connected with the movement. While I was in France I occasionally wrote to Victor, and I received a few very brief and uninformative notes from him. Evidently he was making a good start. The work, he said, was "immensely stimulating, but exasperating ". We planned to meet during the summer vacation. But when I suggested a walking tour in the Lakes, it proved impossible to fix a date. He had to attend summer schools where members of adult classes gathered together to combine further education and holiday-making. "Also," he said, "I have new ties, which I will tell you about sometime."

It was clear that Victor felt no need to see me; and so, with some disappointment, I refrained from pressing the matter. I tried to persuade him to write to me about those "new ties", but he remained silent.

The same thing happened when I suggested a meeting during the second summer; and again in the third.

But late in the fourth summer, when I was already in London on my way back to France, I received a note from Victor, forwarded from home by my mother. He proposed that we should meet and have a talk about "something important to me and interesting to you". The reasonable reply was that unfortunately it was too late, as I was crossing the Channel on the following day. And after all, why should I put myself out for someone who had practically ignored me for three years? But where Victor was concerned, 1 often found it hard to be reasonable. I telephoned to him, saying that if he really wanted to see me, he must come up to London on the following day. To my surprise, he agreed. I booked a room for him at my hotel, for the one night. Then I cabled to France postponing my arrival for a day.

Next day, I met him at Euston, and we went to a modest Soho restaurant with a Balkan flavour. When we had given our order, we smilingly studied each other, and made small talk. I reminded him of the 'previous occasion when we had fed together; and I asked him if he remembered the ugly waitress. He paused for a moment as though trying to recollect, then said, "Oh, yes, of course. Ugly, but very beautiful. Curious how blind you are in some directions, Harry!" He fell silent, and I waited.

Over our minestrone we at first talked at random, and I studied his appearance. He had not changed much, but he did look appreciably older. His forehead bore upright lines above the nose. Crow's feet spread from the corners of his eyes. But he seemed physically fit, and his eyes were obviously the eyes of the awake Victor. There was no camel-like droop of the eyelids, no mulish complacency about the mouth.

Before we had finished our soup I brought Victor to the point by reminding him that he wanted to discuss something. He hesitated.

"Well," he said, "I thought I'd like to tell you a thing or two. In the old days I often found I could straighten things out in my mind by talking to you: You're such a damned good listener."

Then he fell silent again, and seemed wholly intent on the flavour of his beer. I waited some time, and then I said, "I hope your job is suiting you." He raised his eyes to mine with an expression (I thought) of relief.

"Oh, yes," he said, "it suits me alright. Things haven't quite gone according to plan, but they're certainly going somewhere."

He poured out a long and interesting account of his work, but I suspected that he clung to this theme in order to put off opening up some other, more ticklish subject. He said he was kept fairly busy, with five evening classes a week, and occasional lectures at week- ends. Much time was occupied by travelling. One of his classes was in the university itself, but the others were in towns ranging from thirty to a hundred-and-fifty miles distant. He had constantly to be working up his subjects, and he had acquired the

habit of doing a lot of serious reading and lecture-preparing in the train.

"My real trouble," he said, "is that I don't feel that economics and industrial history are the right medium for genuine education. Of course they're very important. People who are already more or less educated can use them, and indeed must have them; but for uneducated people they can be the very devil. A lot of people who come to us are simple souls who are generously aware of the rottenness of society, and impatient for a theory about it; and eager for action. Others are badly warped by sheer class-hatred (I don't blame them), and they simply want to have material for proving the capitalists wicked and the workers saints."

I suggested that you could only educate people through subjects that interested them and had some relation to their own lives.

"Oh, yes!" he said, "In theory that's fine; but if the subject is too close to them, they can't think objectively about it at all. They have made up their minds before they begin to study; like a certain brass-founder in one of my classes, who was stumped by some argument of mine, so he just looked at me with great ox-eyes, and said, 'Young man, I don't rightly know where you're wrong, but I know you are wrong!'"

Victor gave me one of his boyish grins. Presently he continued, "You see, we are supposed to be creating an educated democracy, but we haven't really even begun to tackle that job yet; and I don't see that we ever shall, unless we change our whole approach. We are supposed to be giving something like a university education to the working population of this country. But of course we can't possibly do anything of the sort, except in a few cases. A university education involves all sorts of things that the members of our extramural classes can't possibly bring. It involves young and supple minds full of vigour and curiosity. It involves access to plenty of books. It involves intensive tuition, and heaps of time for reading and writing. But our students are mostly far from young; their minds are already set; they come to the job after a hard day's work; they're not capable of serious study, because they have never learnt what serious study means; they can't read heavy books; they find great difficulty in expressing themselves in writing; they mostly mistake asseveration for genuine discussion. Then again, we are supposed to be appealing to every man's latent passion to be an intelligent and responsible citizen and a fully conscious human being; but even if Everyman unwittingly needs culture, the need is seldom a conscious desire, let alone a passion that will drive him to surmount the frightful difficulties that stand in his way. The good souls we do get hold of don't really want the life of the mind at all. They want either a little easy entertainment after the serious part of the day is over, or the cachet of being an educated person. Or else they come in search of data and propaganda to use against their political opponents. Mind you, I don't blame them for these motives. In their circumstances they were bound to want these things. But you can't create an educated democracy on that basis. We are supposed to be building Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant minds (and, God, they're green all right); but we are not going about it in the right way. Mind you, we are doing something well worth doing, in its own little way. But we are not doing what we pretend we are doing; because (a) we are affecting only a minute proportion of the total population, and (b) the few that we do catch absorb merely a smattering."

Victor's tirade was interrupted by the arrival of the waiter with our pseudo-exotic Balkan dish. To my surprise Victor asked the lean and swarthy young man whether he had read the works of some writer with a Slavonic name, unknown to me. The waiter froze into immobility, with my helping of vegetables poised in the air. Then he looked down at Victor's upturned face for a moment, and said with emphasis and a smile, "Yes, and you?"

"No," said Victor, "but I have heard of him. You are not afraid?"

The waiter replied, "Because of him I must leave my country." He moved away.

"You see," said Victor, "lots of these fellows from the backward fringes of Europe are ready to take risks for what they regard as education; but our people, mostly, just don't care." I protested that the man must be unique, and I asked how Victor had spotted him as one of the few who cared. Victor refused to admit that the man was unique. "His sort are a minority, no doubt, but a considerable minority. How did I spot him? Surely it's written all over his face, his walk, the way he moves his hands. And didn't you see how he handled the book I asked him to put aside for me?"

Without waiting for my reply he continued, "What I want to know is, why is there no such considerable minority in this country? Why are we nearly all such bone-headed philistines, and proud of it? Is it, I wonder, just because bad education has been forced on us at school, so that we are hardened against the life of the mind for ever? You ought to know, as a schoolteacher. What do you really do with the little animals when you have them in your clutches?" I pointed out that the school was forced to concentrate on fitting the child to earn a living in a commercial society, which involved simply drumming in the three R's and a lot of necessary facts. "Yes," he said, "That's the snag. But do you or don't you try to make it all come alive in their minds? And do you help them to get some sense of life as--well, a spiritual adventure?" I laughed, and protested that this was impossible, in view of the mental limitations of the average child and the economic limitations of the average home. But I claimed that some few of us did try; and still fewer actually succeeded, in a small way, with a few of our pupils. But most teachers themselves lacked the vision, and anyhow they were much too hard pressed to do anything about it. Victor sighed, and said, "Oh, yes, I know, I know. In fact we're in a vicious infinite regress. You can't educate adults unless they have been properly educated as children; and you can't get them properly educated as children unless you have enough properly educated teachers, and a sound educational system, and unless in their homes they are in contact with educated parents. In adult education we are supposed to satisfy a native need for culture. I'm not saying there's no such need, but simply that in this country it has been suffocated. And so, instead of attracting millions to our adult classes, we laboriously rope in thousands."

I protested that the movement had done wonders, in spite of everything. He replied, "Oh, no doubt, in a way, particularly in the early days; and with quite a different sort of result from what was intended."

I asked him to explain. For some moments he ate in silence, then said, "The pioneers of our great; movement (and it is a great movement in spite of everything) had a romantic purpose. On the one hand were the universities, seats of culture and refinement, on the other the workers, unconsciously needing culture and refinement, starving for it, though unwittingly. Or again, on the one hand, the universities could provide the inspiration for dispassionate study and objective investigation; on the other the workers could provide the drive for thoroughgoing social change. Our movement, obviously, was intended to bring the two together. What the pioneers had to do was to present culture to the workers in the right way (not the academic way precisely, but a warm, human, simplified wayn that was yet academically sound), and the workers would come flocking to the movement. And so, in time there would arise a new kind of democracy, in which the plain man would be right-hearted, and right-headed, reasonably well informed about society and about true values, capable of wise action and wise voting. It was a glorious vision. At last philosophers would rule; because power would lie with the people, and the great majority of the people would be philosophers. Well, it's difficult enough to produce one philosopher, let alone forty-five million."

I said he was exaggerating. The aim was not to produce philosophers but responsible citizens. I insisted that the ordinary human being had it in him to be a responsible citizen, given decent conditions. "Oh, quite," said Victor, "he has it in him while he is a baby, but conditions go all wrong from then onwards."

After a pause, he continued, "But that is not the whole trouble. In fact there are two other troubles. First, the best academic brains, the really first-class people, are (quite rightly) so intent on research, and so hard pressed with teaching and administration in the university, that they don't take on extramural work and do it whole- heartedly. And, anyhow, few of them have the gift for it; for, believe me, it demands a very special technique, which we are only just beginning to learn. So the job has to be done largely by people who, though they may be first-class human beings, are not quite first-class academically; because, no matter how intelligent they may be, their hearts are not wholly devoted to academic study and research. What they really care about is rather kindling the masses. Take me, for instance; though perhaps I am worse than the average, because, of course, I simply had to cram to do the job at all."

I interrupted, "But what does it matter that they're not quite first- class academically? They have to teach the essentials not the minutiae. It's their gift for teaching that matters. And I'm sure you have that."

"Oh, yes," he said, "the teaching-gift does matter a lot, but so does the academic expertism. If you haven't got it, you can't always deal properly either with honest criticism or with the propaganda bilge; not absolutely adequately. But this is where my second point comes in, and it's more fundamental. The whole idea of giving the essence of culture without the details, in fact of 'university standard' without minutiae, is impossible. It's trying to have the cake and eat it. The result is that some of our adult students, hypnotized by the academic ideal, plunge for thoroughness, get mental indigestion, and are obsessed with the idea of

'seeing both sides of every question', so that they become paralysed, and useless for the revolution, which, after all, is the supreme goal; while others, feeling in their bones that something is amiss, become more prejudiced and propagandist than ever."

Suddenly Victor saw that my plate was empty and his own scarcely touched. He attacked it with fury, while I sat wondering how to bring him to the point. When he had finished, the waiter returned to take away our plates. Victor said to him, "Do you find time to read much over here?"

"Not much time," he answered. "Here I read only English, difficultly."

I asked him what he had read. With a deprecating shrug he replied, "Lord Byron, Shakespeare (he is difficult), Mill ('On Liberty'), Bertand Russell (on happiness). But why," he said with animation, "do the English not read their own great literature?"

Victor laughed triumphantly, and said, "Because at school they are made to hate it."

I was increasingly wondering what it was that Victor had come all the way to London to talk about; so over the sweet I challenged him to come to the point. Instead of answering, he plunged back into the old subject.

He said, "Don't suppose I think the thing we are doing is just a waste of time. It's quite important as a first step. We are not creating an educated democracy, but we are creating-I was going to say 'an educated élite' within the great Labour Movement; but I had better say, a socially informed élite who have at least some idea of what the aim of education ought to be. I foresee a time when the House of Commons will be dominated by a Labour Party whose members will mostly have been mentally formed in our classes. It's tempting to think that such a House will really get going on the job of creating an educated democracy. But it won't be able to do it unless it forms an adult education movement of a new kind, not giving sham university education, but working out new aims and methods, much freer and less formal. Yes, and if those enlightened Labour M.P.s mean business, they will have to insist on compulsory adult education for everyone." Here I burst in with a protest that real education could never be compulsory. He replied, "That's an over-simplification. The stalwarts of our movement insist on it, but I'm beginning to doubt it. We shall have to change our minds in the end, otherwise we shall never catch the people who need education most. Of course, when they are compelled, we shall have to find out how to make them glad they were compelled. People will put up with compulsion all right if the aim of the compulsion is manifestly a good one, and if they believe that they themselves gave power to the compelling government. Think how much compulsion is accepted in Russia, for the sake of the new revolutionary state."

I snorted indignantly, but he carried on, "Oh, yes, you'll see. What I'm afraid of is that sooner or later some semi-political or pseudo- religious movement, that really has the courage of its convictions, will persuade the masses to accept compulsion for

quite wrong ends. Maybe it won't happen here, but it might quite well happen in some socially tormented and half-crazy country; like Germany, for instance, when the pathetic republic has gone phut. And then!"

Over the coffee I tried again to bring Victor to the point. "Do you ever regret your old life?" I said. "Do you ever-slip back into your old self?"

"No," he answered, "I certainly never regret the old life; and so far I have not slipped back into my old self. But I don't feel really secure. Sometimes I have a sort of dizzy feeling, which is a warning. And sometimes I feel I must have more than my normal two or three hours sleep. So I may slip away at any time. That is why every moment is so precious. As for regretting the old life, good God, no! There's so much more to be learnt and enjoyed in the new one, exasperating as it is. I like the people better. Not that I have a grudge against business people. Fundamentally they're just as good stuff as the artisans, teachers and housewives that I deal with. But they're under the spell of the commercial system that they run. They can't see that it's played out. And so they're mentally backward, and it's very hard to make any real contact with them. I don't mean they're unintelligent. Probably on the average they're brighter than our people. But they can't use their intelligence except within the commercial universe of discourse. They are incredibly backward in social, thought; and they're blinkered by a false view of human nature, inherited from the nineteenth century, and the doctrine of economic man. They tend to believe that man is 'fundamentally' or 'essentially' a self-regarding animal. And, of course, this is a fine excuse for cut-throat commercialism. Even when they want to be genuinely loyal to things other than themselves, they tend to feel ashamed of doing so, regarding it as 'sheer sentimentality', And when at last their nature rebels against commercialism, they tend to flounder back into a very naïve Christianity."

I said I thought all classes had come under the influence of the false view of human nature, and that artisans and teachers were really just as backward as clerks and business magnates.

"Many of them, no doubt are," he said. "But some really are breaking away from the old ideas and values. They can't very well help it. Their circumstances force it on them. You see they're up against it. The men are either actually unemployed or scared stiff of becoming unemployed. They see and feel the system breaking up; and the old values breaking up, too. Individualism stinks in their nostrils. And they feel they're all members of one another, dependent on one another. And so there's quite often a very effective social goodwill about them; which is rare among the business people, just because they're mentally hobbled by the commercial ideology. But, of course, the social goodwill of the workers is often restricted to working- class loyalty, or side-tracked by the bread-winner's desperate need to fight individualistically in the struggle for a job. And, of course, there are plenty of rotters, people who think nothing matters so long as one spouts class war; people who are socialists in theory and individualists in action. For instance, there's a man in one of my classes, always gassing, always propaganding, always dishonest in argument, never reads the stuff I set, never writes an essay, always arrives late and expects to be recorded on the register as present (for grant-earning purposes), always imputes bad motives to the secretary (who keeps the register and doesn't falsify it), or to me, or

to the wicked capitalists. Contrast that blighter with another talkative bloke, superficially similar, but how different! He's fat, keen, equally doctrinaire, theoretically a hard-boiled materialist and stern self-seeker, but; in practice he's well above the average of kindliness and self-sacrifice; in fact, unwittingly a worshipper of the Christian God who is Love, whom he consciously pokes fun at on every possible occasion, much to the annoyance of other members. Then there's an old grey-head who is an orthodox rationalist. He keeps giving me ribald verses about Jesus Christ and the Church, and about Queen Victoria. One of the best men I have come across is a boiler- maker. Sometimes I have a meal in his home. A real good type, but desperately harassed. Likely to be sacked any day, because trade is bad, and a real slump is coming. Wife and two children. Nice clean little kitchen-sitting-room, overcrowded with nicknacks--china dogs, toby jugs, bright copper kettles, antimacassars, and the proverbial aspidistra. Last time, I noticed that the piano had gone. They didn't refer to it, and I didn't like to be nosy, but I feel sure it has been pawned. Bright little talkative wife, but too obviously anxious to keep the skeleton unseen in the cupboard. Boy at the local grammar school; girl hoping for a scholarship at the university. The father is pathetically keen to give them both a good education, but his very real enthusiasm for the life of the mind gets on the boy's nerves. In fact he is reacting pretty violently against it. He obviously prefers toughness, and is always getting into scrapes as leader of a gang of hooligans at school."

Victor paused, so I said, "And the women?"

"Educationally," he said, "they are generally below the male standard. And it's very difficult to get them talking. But they are certainly quite as intelligent as the men; only less informed, and diffident."

Maliciously I asked if any attractive ones came to the classes.

"What you mean," he said, "is, have I succumbed to any of them. Of course not. It would interfere with business. Besides, the younger ones are mostly rather dim; though a few are quite charming in a way--sweet rosebuds blighted by a hostile climate. The really attractive girls mostly don't come, because of course, they have a better way of amusing themselves. Some of the women who do come take it very seriously. But most of these are middle-aged. There are a good many hard-working housewives, who obviously have no time to read or write, but like to be on the fringes of intellectual life. Then there are the inevitable spinsters who have nothing else to do, and are apt to take the line that if only people would be kind to each other, we shouldn't have any social problems. The more frustrated women, of all ages, are too ready to fall in love with the class tutor, which complicates matters. The unfrustrated ones naturally have other fish to fry." After a pause, he added, "And so have I."

He did not develop this statement, but called the waiter for the bill. After a polite wrangle as to who should pay, in which Victor, as usual got the best of it, I suggested that we should go to the hotel and find a quiet corner where we could discuss whatever it was that he had on his mind. He nodded assent as he paid the bill.

I was staying in a cheap little hotel near Euston, run by a Swiss couple, and much patronized by foreigners. As we entered the stuffy lounge, a babel of foreign speech assailed us. I remember a middle- aged man with hair cut en brosse, who was leaning forward earnestly talking German to a sullen woman with smooth black hair and a streamlined black velvet; dress. Further afield, two children were building cardhouses, and occasionally exclaiming in French. A Nordic god was arguing in too-correct English with a scraggy little Cockney. Slavonic speech came from a group clustered round a table.

We found a vacant couch with the leather split and horsehair protruding, and I ordered drinks. When we had toasted each other, I said, "Well?"

"Well," said Victor, "I'm ready now. I wanted to get the background clear for you first. And I wanted-to see how my problem felt in your presence, before I began telling you about it. I guess you've guessed that it's concerned with the ugly waitress, the superbly beautiful Maggie."

He then plunged into his story; but 1 shall not attempt to report it in his words. Instead, I shall give my own account of it, based partly on his version and partly on what I subsequently learned from Maggie herself. Not that there was any serious discrepancy. But Maggie's comments were often enlightening.

Evidently she had had a deeper effect on him than I had supposed. He had stayed on at his hotel for some days in order to make a secure contact with her. Apparently his courtship was of a very eccentric kind, and her reception of it was equally odd.

On the morning after the wedding day, he had met her in a corridor. "Good morning," he said; and she replied with her hippopotamus smile, "Good morning, sir." He smilingly barred her way, and remarked, "You are the loveliest thing I have ever seen." With a gasp of indignation, she turned to retreat; but he said, "Hi! Don't run away! This is important for us both, and you know it is." She turned and looked at him (he said) with contempt; and he felt so abashed that he could do nothing but stare dumbly at her. She said, "It's cruel to tell a girl she's lovely when she has a face like mine." There were tears in her eyes as she added, "I suppose you think you'll get me cheap because I'm ugly. I suppose you think I'm so ugly I'll do anything for a bit of flattery." He still gazed at her, and said nothing. (She afterwards told me that he looked like a dog asking for a tit-bit.) Presently he said, "The night before I came here, when I was falling asleep, I saw your face as clearly as I do now, just for a moment, and then you were gone. I have seen your face, between sleeping and waking, off-and on ever since I was a child. I can't really remember the time when I didn't see it. At first it was always the face of a very little girl, but as I grew it grew. When I was a schoolboy, I was rather annoyed that a silly, little, podgy girl should butt in like that. Later I got interested, and tried to hold you longer, but you always vanished after a few seconds. Sometimes I saw you in a brown jersey, sometimes in a little black sou'wester."

She interrupted, "It's a pretty story, but it won't do. On the first day when you were here, you took no notice of me, except to scowl at me as if I was a mess. What's more, you seem to forget that you have dined here lots of times before, generally with the young lady you didn't marry yesterday. And you never took any notice of me, except once when you looked at me and then said something to her, and you both laughed."

He answered, "I can explain all that, but it's a strange story, and it will take some time. First, I can easily prove that I really have seen you, in that drowsy state before sleeping. As a schoolgirl you used to wear your hair in two heavy pigtails hanging down in front of your shoulders. One night, about five years ago, when you were in the late teens, I saw you with your left eye tight shut, with blood and tears oozing out of it, and tears streaming from the other eye. After that you used to have a black shade over the left eye. It was many months before I saw you without it."

This bit of information had startled her. In a serious voice she said, "I fell against a fence with a big nail in it. They thought I should lose the eye."

At that moment their conversation was interrupted by someone walking along the corridor. They parted.

Later, he contrived to meet her again, and said, "About my not noticing you on those times-" But again they were interrupted. He had only time to say, "When is your day off? I must tell you more. It's important for both of us." She moved off without replying.

However, two days later he did secure her for her free afternoon. At her request, he took her to walk in the country. She was a country girl; and although she had deserted the country for the town, she liked to use her free time for fresh air and exercise. They travelled out by bus, and she took him along one of her favourite tracks through fields and woods.

He told her about his divided personality, and explained that, though he could have his waking dream of her in either of his two states, yet in the somnolent state he could never remember anything about it. Consequently, when he actually met her in that state, she meant nothing to him, except that he felt an unreasonable loathing of her. But in the lucid state he could remember even the occasions when she had appeared to him in the other state. "When at last," he said, "I (the real 'I') met you in the flesh, I recognized you at once."

After a while they rested in a meadow. She lay at full length with her hand behind her head (so he told me), and her ample breasts (very unfashionable in those days) rising and falling under her cheap cotton dress. The sun was full on her face, and her eyes were shut. Her sturdy coltish legs, in the precious black silk stockings that were then displacing cashmere, were crossed like a crusader's on his tomb. She was chewing a feathery grass stem.

He said, "How I long to make love to you, but I won't, not yet. I want to explain things properly first." She turned her head and looked at him quizzically through one screwed-up eye, because of the sun. "Aren't you a caution!" she said "But go on, it's interesting."

"Well," he said, "before I met you (before 'I' met you, not the other blighter that I hate), I grew to get a terrific kick out of your rare visitations. I don't quite know why. It wasn't just that I had grown to see that you were beautiful, in a queer way that I had never come across before; in addition I seemed to make some sort of direct contact with your personality, simply through my visual image of your face in all its fluctuating expression,"

"Don't be so pompous," she said. "Speak ordinary. I'm not a public meeting. And I'm not clever."

He explained his meaning in simpler words, and added, "Funny isn't it? I don't know anything about your life; and yet I do know, just from knowing your face so well, that you're intelligent and sensitive, and quite able to understand anything I want to say to you, so long as I don't use words you're not used to." Maggie told me later that at this she was secretly pleased, because she had always wanted to be intelligent and sensitive, and able to appreciate the subtleties of language. But she would not tell Victor this; not at this early stage of their acquaintance. She said, "You think you know me, but I bet you don't really. You have told yourself a lot of pretty rubbish about that face you used to see. And it just happens to be a bit like my awful mug."

"We shall see," he said. "And what about the damaged eye? Anyhow, one thing I am absolutely sure about. We need each other. Neither of us can be fully alive without the other."

Laughing, she threw her chewed grass in his face, and said, "Speak for yourself, Mr. Stranger! I'm quite happy without you." She jumped up, like a fresh colt, and said, "Come along! I want my tea." They continued their walk.

They came to a stile; and as she was climbing over it, her foot slipped on the mossy wood, and she fell rather heavily. She expected him to rush to her assistance and lift her to her feet, and fuss over her; but though he made a quick movement, he stopped, and stood with his hands in his pockets, while she sat on the ground rubbing her knee and grieving over her torn stocking. He merely said, "Bad luck! The step must be slippery," and waited for her to pick herself up. She clambered to her feet again, and limped along the path. They walked in silence, and she deliberately maintained the limp after the knee had recovered. She could not help being mortified at his indifference. Also she was startled to find how disappointed she was that he had not put his arms round her to lift her, nor even offered her an arm for walking. A horrid thought haunted her. He was not really in love with her at all. He was in love with his dream-pictures of her. Probably he secretly found her repulsive, as so many other men obviously did. He wouldn't let himself see this fact; but when an opportunity arose to touch her, he couldn't bring himself to do

so. The thought hardened her against him. She suddenly felt desperately lonely.

As if in answer to this thought, he lightly, fleetingly, and yet (she said) lingeringly held her hand, and murmured, "To find you at last is to find home."

"You are a queer one," she said, "not my sort at all."

He promptly answered, "Oh, yes I am. You'll see. But there's something I must make quite clear before I clamour for you. You see, I earnestly want to spend all my life with you, but the other fellow, my hateful other self, may oust me at any moment. And he loathes you, and he would treat you horribly. So I must; make you see the danger you are up against in loving me."

She stood still and faced him. "Look here," she said, "you're forgetting something. It takes two to make a love affair, and I'm not in love with you."

"No," he said. "Thank God you're not--yet. That's why I want to get it all clear at once. Because when you are, you will find it hard to judge the situation dispassionately.

"You and your long words!" she said. Then she added, "I suppose it never struck you I might have other fish to fry?"

He answered, "Oh, yes, I know. Just as I had. But you and I belong together. You will soon find that's true--unless we nip the whole thing in the bud right now. But I don't really think we can keep apart; we are tangled up togeher fundamentally, somehow."

At this she exclaimed, "But I tell you I don't feel the slightest need of you. I don't know you at all, except that you are a bit cracked. And you don't know me at all."

He answered, "I know almost nothing about you, and yet I know so much. I know you want to be--well, fully alive, awake. To experience as fully as possible, and--to behave creatively." She sighed, and said, "I don't even know what you mean by that. All I want is to have a good time, and a job I can enjoy doing. I'm quite happy at the hotel for the present."

They walked on in silence, for the length of a field. Then Victor said, "Well, I'm putting my cards on the table. I'm certain we need one another; but there's my accursed other self. Yet, in spite of that, I'm sure it's really best for you that you should take me on. But you must realize the danger fully, and face it calmly. So must I, on your account. Some men in my position would just hold off, for the girl's sake; even if they needed her as desperately as I do. And indeed, my dear, I do need you desperately. If you

won't have me, I shall never be fully myself. I shall break up, sooner or later. But objectively that doesn't greatly matter. The point is that for your sake, quite as much as my own, I believe we should unite. What I offer you is a possibility of real fullness of life, though a life that will often be unhappy and may bring you disaster. But without me you will certainly miss what is best in life."

"Look!" she said, "I'm not in love with you, but if I was really in love with you, I wouldn't funk it because of the danger. I'd go through hell for you. And even now, when I don't love you, I don't say 'Keep off, it's not fair to make love to a girl if you know you may betray her.' No! If you can show me that you are the man for me, I'll not be afraid. I'll take you on." She swung round, smiled squarely at him, putout a hand, and said, "Shake on it!" Laughing, he took her hand, shook it heartily, and held it till she took it from him.

6 - MAGGIE'S EARLY LIFE

From 1897 to 1921

THE CRISIS OF VICTOR'S WALK with Maggie was now over. After a little silence, they began talking happily about indifferent matters. Presently they came to a little cottage that offered teas. They had their meal in the garden, sitting together on a bench before a rickety little table, facing the view. Maggie told me that through that meal and the rest of their walk she had an increasing sense that they had known one another for many years. Again and again they anticipated each other's thoughts, as though each knew beforehand what to expect of the other. Yet consciously they knew very little of each other, and their minds were very different--Victor with his background of public school and Oxford, Maggie a country girl with simple tastes and a veneer of town experience. Yet so long as they did not discuss their own future, they talked easily and happily. In spite of differences of accent and social class, each delighted each by quick intuition of the other's point of view.

Maggie was soon telling Victor about her own life. Her early years were spent in Shetland. She was born in a minute crofter's cottage beside one of the larger "voes" or fjords. Her father was a typical Shetlander, who made a precarious living by a combination of fishing by line or net from a boat, tending the little hardy though soft- fleeced sheep, and tilling the impoverished and storm-swept soil, which yielded oats and rye as dwarfed as the sheep and the famous ponies. Rambingly and with evident nostalgia, Maggie told Victor how she used to take part in the fishing; how, holding the line, one had to feel for the gentle tremor when the fish nibbled the bait, distinguishing between the different action of whiting, haddock and the rest; how in the old days cod were plentiful in the coastal waters and within range of small boats, but now they had to be sought far off in the Arctic by long-ranging steam trawlers; how the herring fishery, at one time prosperous, had retreated to the south, leaving behind broken-down jetties and the rotting remains of the fishing fleet in almost every village; how her father used to take out his gun and shoot

the seals from the cliff, and the dead or merely wounded creatures, tortured by the salt water in their wounds, would be left on the rocks by the next retreating tide, to be retrieved at leisure by the men of the crofts; how the cruel business distressed her, but gradually she hardened herself to it, knowing well how much the meat and oil and skin were needed; how, when she was about twelve years old, one of her elder brothers was lost in a storm, having gone out beyond the headlands in an unseaworthy boat, against his father's advice; how she herself, weeks later, happened on his decaying body on the rocks, damaged, bloated, blackened by corruption, but still recognizably her brother; and how this experience had "somehow opened a window on to the evil of the world ", so that for years afterwards she was prone to "waking nightmares" in which she was paralysed by the shocking memory of that strange thing that had been her brother; how her eldest brother became a deck-hand on a liner, and would periodically return from the Far East with strange gifts and stranger stories; how these homecomings used to fill her with a fierce determination to see the great world, though she was only a girl; how the eider-ducks piloted their flotillas of tiny babies on the turbulent waves, and in among the rocks; how the stylish arctic skuas and the great brown "bonxies" would dive screaming from the sky to threaten the head of any child venturing too near their nests; how the gannets, dagger-beaked, creamy headed, wing-tipped with ink, would drop like stones into the sea for fish, and the cormorants would come up from the deep with their writhing bulky catch, and struggle valiantly to swallow it, till at last it showed merely as a great swelling in the bird's neck; how a dead whale was once stranded at the mouth of the voe, and how it stank; how one of the boys once carried home on his shoulder a whale's vertebra, a lump of sea-polished solid bone as big as a new grindstone, but triangular and with a hole in the middle for the great spinal cord; how she and her school friends used to play in a near-by "broch", a stone-built Pictish fortress, on a high cliff over the sea; how her mother used to plant their cabbages in queer little circles of stone wall, like miniature brochs, to protect them from the ruthless winds; how at midnight in the summer, the grass was still green and the water blue; but in winter, noon was just an evening between two interminable dead black nights, relieved sometimes by the pale or rosy Northern Lights; how the whole family would sometimes go by boat, sailing or rowing, inland to the head of the voe to cut peat on the low moors, and stack it to dry (like slabs of moist ginger cake, she said); and how, long afterwards, they would go again to load the dried peat on to the boat and bring it home; how in fine weather one could see far out on the horizon a small, tall, lonely island where several families won a meagre living from the ocean and the scanty pasture, and sometimes (it was said) great storms swept their houses over the cliff into the seas; how she was sometimes taken by her father on sheep-dipping or fleecing expeditions, with a party of men, boys and dogs from the neighbouring crofts, generally by boat to some remote promontory, to spend the day in the orchestration of bleatings, barkings, human shoutings, the cries of gulls, and of course the wind; how the "national sport" of the Shetlanders (Shelties, she sometimes called them) was racing their Norse-looking sailing craft at regattas in one little port after another; how the family boasted about their own old elegant and often successful boat, and their father's seamanship; how she used to walk over the hill to the village school beside a neighbouring voe, often in wild weather, dry in her little black oil-skins; how on Sundays the whole family, father, mother, two aunts, three boys and two girls, would follow the same track over the hill to the little Methodist chapel, all dressed in their precious Sunday clothes, she with her wild red hair tightly plaited and her sturdy little legs clad in the inevitable home-knitted black woollen stockings; how on one occasion a blue-eyed young lay preacher, who was also the local blacksmith (idolized by the young girls for his mighty prowess at the anvil, and for his radiant kindliness), gave

them a terrific sermon all about hell-fire and shipwreck; how the fire, he said, rose up from the depth of the ocean and devoured the proud ships with their ungodly crews, and sucked them down into the nether pit for eternal damnation; how, after the service, when the young man stood at the chapel door to shake hands with each member of the congregation, she dared hardly take his hand, though she saw, incredulously, that he was once more beaming with good will; how, when her father once took her to the far-off town of Lerwick, on the way she saw for the first time trees, little stunted trees round a house in a sheltered valley, but to her they were symbolical of all the world's forests and jungles; how Lerwick seemed to her in those days a great bewildering glamourful city, but in fact it was a small fishing port with narrow cobbled streets and an all- pervading smell from the salting of innumerable herrings; how she marvelled at the trawlers, the smart fisheries gunboat, and the little old mail steamer; how she longed to go in the steamer all the way to far-off Scotland, but such a trip was beyond the family's means; how, even in those early days she began to be aware that she was living only on the outermost fringe of a great exciting dangerous modern world, in comparison with which her home life and all its values were old-fashioned, niggardly and superstitious; how, as a girl in her teens, she used to steal sweet meetings with a boy from Glasgow, a very young engineer, who used to come to the village on a motor-bike in connection with the setting up of a pumping engine; how he scorned Shetland, and told her about the gay city life; how he once took her for a wild pillion-ride on his motor-cycle, and her father heard of it, and was furious; how, in the long dark winter evenings, her mother and aunts, and often the two girls also, would sit spinning the near- white or richly brown ("murrat") home-grown wool, or knitting, or mending clothes, fishing-nets or lines, while her father with a clay pipe in his mouth would be doing repairs to some tool, or mending a wicker lobster-pot; how sometimes he would tell them stories of the old days, or read aloud from "improving" books or Sir Walter Scott's novels; for they had a couple of shelves stocked with well-used classics and religious works, as in so many of the Shetland crofts; how sometimes she would listen to her father with a deep sense of peace, loving the little cramped, dark, overcrowded home and the feeling of continuity with a mysterious romantic past; but sometimes she was restless, aloof, exasperated with her grown-up relatives because of their open contempt and secret fear of the new ways which were constantly eating into the old; how she and her elder sister sometimes went to the tiny croft of their Great-Aunt Abigail, to be given bannocks and a glass of precious ginger-wine, but the old woman herself would generally find some excuse for indulging in neat whisky or rum; how the dark little croft was crammed with furniture and treasures collected throughout a lifetime; how the kindly but alarming old witch (for such she looked, with her tousled grey hair and bushy brows that met over her nose, and her face of wrinkled leather) would sit by the fire with bright and frightening eyes telling stories of tragic loves and quarrels, of murders out at sea, of Pictish and Norse tradition, of kelpies and howling invisible fiends that rode on the storm, and could lift a man from his feet and throw him from a cliff; how sometimes in a low voice her great-aunt would tell of her own reputedly occult powers of second sight and control of people's behaviour; how, for instance, she foretold the greatest storm of a century, and the wreck of a full-rigged ship on the rocks below the broch; how she triumphed over a wicked laird, who was the harsh landlord of all that district, by compelling him to throw himself from a high cliff.

Maggie told Victor that she herself, being a very level-headed child, was sceptical about all these stories, and yet fascinated by them.

One thing she did not tell Victor till long afterwards. When Great- Aunt Abigail was at the point of death she summoned her favourite great-niece, Maggie, to a strictly private interview, and prophesied that she, too, would develop strange powers. Meanwhile, she said, Maggie herself, under the influence of the "great unbelieving world" would grow to neglect "the old wisdom", till at last in suffering she would discover that she, too, was a witch, with powers that she might use for good or evil. The old lady said, "You will find, Maggie dear, that you can be strong both in the old wisdom and in the new wisdom, about which I know nothing but that the two clashing wisdoms are at bottom one true wisdom." Her tired old eyes, that were still lit with frightening fire, looked fixedly at the young girl; and presently she said, "They will call you ugly, but you are beautiful. Most people are too blind to see your beauty, and if any of these ever calls you beautiful, he will be lying. But the very few, who can see, will see that you are lovely with a very ancient and forgotten kind of loveliness, or perhaps a new kind, still to win men's praise. I don't know which." She gazed at the fascinated child; then said, "You must try to do much better than I have done, wasting all my powers, and all my life." She fell silent for some time, while Maggie gazed at her in awe. Then Great-Aunt Abigail said, "Goodbye, dear Maggie. Remember always what I have said. And now, go!"

With mingled fright, repugnance, affection and exaltation, Maggie stooped and put her lips to the ancient leathery brow. But Great-Aunt Abigail said, faintly but sharply, "On the lips, little fool; even if it makes you vomit." Maggie brought herself to comply, murmured, "Dear Great-Aunt Abigail!" and fled.

This exciting suggestion that she herself was a witch worked deeply into young Maggie's mind; the more so since on one or two occasions she had had dreams that seemed to turn out obscurely prophetic.

Maggie did not tell Victor about this death-bed scene; partly because, though almost unconsciously she still cherished it, she had long ago ceased to take her great-aunt's prophecy seriously, and had ceased to have any of those ambiguous experiences that had seemed to confirm it. Moreover, she feared that, if she told Victor, he would think her credulous. Instead, she rambled on about her ordinary memories, while Victor occasionally interjected some question or friendly comment.

The sun was now sinking behind the trees, and the chill of evening made them sit closely together, like well-tried brother and sister.

Maggie recounted how, when she left school, her parents reluctantly sent her into "service" in Lerwick, to add to the family earnings; how she wept on the day of departure, but how, as she settled into the new life she became more and more dependent on the excitement of this minute metropolis, and more determined to seek her fortune in some great glamorous city in Scotland; how her parents sternly opposed this intention, but in the end, without their consent, she bought a passage with her savings and at last boarded the mail steamer with a friend, Katie, who was returning from a holiday at home to a post as chamber- maid in a

hotel in Aberdeen; how the two slept on deck under a tarpaulin, but were drenched by a wave; how the friend secured her a place as scullery-maid; how she marvelled at the city of grey granite, feeling that at last she was in the great world; how nevertheless she often found herself longing for the voes and the crofts and the Shetland speech, and her still dear family; how she was torn between love and contempt for the old life, between fascination and vague disgust with the city; how in due season she became a waitress in the same hotel and, in spite of her ugliness, was a success, not merely through efficiency but because of her knack of pleasing people of very different sorts; how she spent her free time mostly on solitary walks in the country or the town itself, watching its life; how her ugliness was a protection against unwanted attentions, but also a barrier between her and the boys; how she occasionally went with Katie to see the thrilling new moving pictures of life in New York or Monte Carlo; how Katie had a succession of love affairs, but she herself was merely everybody's dear sister; how, still seeking fullness of life, she presently moved on to posts in Glasgow, and then to the North of England and her present job; how her ambition was to reach London.

While Maggie was happily telling Victor about her life, the afternoon had advanced into evening. The trees in front of them were silhouetted against a golden sky. The two sat closer together, and Victor had allowed himself to slip his arm under hers, and to hold her hand. She responded with gentle pressure, but said, "We may as well be friendly, even if I'm not going to take you on."

Victor told me that he had been wondering how it was that a girl who had missed her due of admiration from young men could be so detached and even guarded against his own cautious advances. Intuitively he felt that sex was somehow repugnant to her; and yet, according to her own account, she had regretted her exclusion from normal love- experiences.

"Tell me!" he said. "Even though most young men were too blind to see your beauty, surely some must have wanted you? You don't behave at all like--like a plain girl who is always longing to be loved." She did not answer. He felt her go rigid. Her face was turned away from him.

Presently she turned toward him, and seemed to study his face in the fading light. Then she said, "Inquisitive, aren't you? Why should I have to tell you all about myself? But you're sort of understanding, like my brother Tom, who was drowned."

Then she suddenly disengaged herself and rose, saying that it was getting late, and they mustn't miss the bus. He did not press her to say more. When he had paid for the meal, they walked down the garden, and he held the gate open for her. As she passed through, the evening light lent mystery to her face. "You are lovely to look at," he said, "but that is not all. There is something strange about you. I think you must be a witch. Do you see the future, or stick pins in waxen images of your enemies, or put potions in people's beer? Or do you just cast spells on them by giving them waking-dreams of your face?" She was startled, thinking of Great-Aunt Abigail's now almost forgotten declaration. But she said, rather sharply, "I don't believe in such things. I'm modern. I should like to go in a submarine or fly an aeroplane, or be a great surgeon. I believe in science. I'm bored with the old dope about witches and magic and second sight." He said, "Then what about my dreams of you?"

She answered, "Oh, that's your affair. Probably you are just kidding yourself."

"Well, Miss Modern," he said, "you must have had lots of lovers. Tell me about them!"

She answered only, "Nosing again!" And when he attempted to take her arm, she gently freed herself. But as they walked unlinked down the dark road, under trees, she said, "Oh, well. Perhaps I shall tell you some day."

She did; at a much later date, when she had come to know him much better. And Victor, sitting; with me in the hotel lounge, told me vaguely that she had indeed, as he suspected, "encountered the seamy side of sex", and been "severely wounded by her experiences". Not till long afterwards did I learn from Maggie herself the details of this unhappy side of it' her life. But I had better give some account of them now, since without some knowledge of them the reader would be unable to understand the course of her early relations with Victor.

During her time in Aberdeen she suffered increasingly from the sense of inability to attract men, and from her privation of all the normal dalliance and "walking out" which meant so much to her friend Katie. Moreover, her longing to be "modern", and to have all kinds of "modern" and "emancipated" experiences, disposed her to a freedom and even licentiousness that was still rare in those days before the First World War. So when she found that some men would, with a little encouragement, make advances to her, she was very ready to accept them. But the men who took notice of her were all of the kind that Katie condemned as riff-raff or "wrong 'uns". Maggie, however, was ready to believe that they were the sensitive ones who could see the beauty to which most men were blind. She chose to ignore her great- aunt's warning that some of the blind would lyingly praise her. Thus it was that she stumbled into a very unfortunate affair in the dockside underworld of Aberdeen. She struck up an acquaintance with some undesirable creature to whom no decent girl would stoop. His advances were of the crudest, but he was able to pose to her as an unfortunate and fundamentally gentle cave-man whom society had maltreated. Maggie frankly responded, and was ready to see in him virtues which no one else could see. She allowed him all sorts of liberties with her person. Gradually and very reluctantly, she discovered that he was not more sensitive than other men, but more coarse-grained and brutal, that his crude praise of her looks was quite insincere, that he had come to her not out of admiration and love but simply in the expectation that such an ugly girl would be ready to give him what others refused, namely bodily intercourse. Such a discovery was, of course, bitterly galling. But such was her hunger for experience and "emancipation" that she swallowed her shame and allowed herself to be led right up to the point of going to bed with her "lover". At the last minute violent repugnance seized her, and she broke from his arms, and began to dress. The man, of course, was furious, and attempted rape; but Maggie was not one to give in easily, when loathing had conquered craving. She put up a spirited fight, and cooled her assailant's ardour by inflicting painful damage. Thus, battered but victorious, she technically preserved her virginity.

Some time after she had recovered from the shock of this affair Maggie became involved with another unattractive specimen of the opposite sex. But this time disillusionment supervened at an earlier stage of the relationship, and she dismissed her man before she was seriously implicated. In spite of these two unfortunate incidents her passion to be experienced and "modern" forced her to try again and again. Each time, disgust supervened at an earlier stage than before, until at last she shrank from the slightest contact with any man.

In Glasgow, where she was barmaid in a low-class hotel, she had an adventure of a different pattern. She met a Negro. He had a frightful cough, was probably tubercular, and was desperately lonely. He longed to get back to West Africa, but he had no money. The girls treated him like dirt because he was black, broken-down, and simple. He had the remains of a well-knit and powerful body, and dog's eyes. Out of compassion, Maggie befriended him, mothered him. He responded with adoration and great gentleness, never presuming to touch his goddess. To her surprise she found that when he did accidentally touch her she was not repelled, He had a sweet nature, she felt, that could never harbour the brutish lust that was the sole motive of her other lovers. He treated everyone, even his persecutors, with fundamental respect. He was ready to accord to everyone the benefit of the doubt. Maggie gradually conceived a great affection for him. And so, like a queen condescending to a trusted subject whom she had chosen as a consort, she gently led him into making love to her. At first he could scarcely bring himself to commit so small a sacrilege as stroking her hand. But stage by stage he reached the point of undressing his goddess, with all the reverence of a priest unveiling the holy of holies. She felt neither repugnance nor fear, but only a warm glow of affection and expectation. But then, to her surprise, his trembling hands were withdrawn from her, and he muttered in a thick husky voice, "I must not, I must not. There is a devil in me, and he would hurt you." This declaration only increased Maggie's confidence in him, and her readiness to give herself to him. She quickly overcame his scruples, and with an almost religious reverence and gentleness he took her.

The two lived together in very humble quarters, kept by Maggie's earnings and the intermittent wages that he won from such casual labouring as he could secure. For a while she was content. But little by little she became restless and lonely. She craved equal comradeship and common enterprise. Her Negro, though infinitely patient and gentle, and in a way personally understanding, was too remote from the "great world" which had cast its spell on her. "I wanted," she told me, "a man of my own kind, who would wake me, and--ride me rough-shod to the stars; who would free something creative in me that had always been chained up." Such high-falutin language was quite beyond her at the time; but later, under Victor's half-assimilated influence, this was how she described her feelings at the close of her adventure with her Negro. She was beginning to feel that she was losing contact with the great world, and becoming more and more tangled in responsibility toward her lover. Further, she was frightened that she might have a child. Such preventives as she knew were far from reliable. Little by little, her manner toward him changed. She cooled. Sometimes she would unintentionally let little spiteful remarks slip from her tongue; and the effort to comfort the wounded man after these lapses became increasingly burdensome.

One night she was particularly horrid to him, hinting that he was not really good enough for her, and that she had only accepted him out of charity, and that his love-making was too humble. She even forgot herself so far as to say that it would be too awful if she had the burden of a little nigger baby. This foolish remark woke something in him that had been long suppressed. He went savage. It was as though the spirit of the black race took possession of him to avenge itself upon the whole race of white tyrants. His eyes flashed, his teeth gleamed in his dark face. He said, "Right I I'll make love to you in another way. It's your own fault if you don't like it." Recounting this incident to me, she said, "Then he went at me like a tiger, tearing off my clothes, biting and tearing at my flesh, and doing unspeakable things." She screamed and fought; but presently he sprang away from her, and collapsed in a heap on the floor, blubbering and begging her pardon. She, in spite of her fright and the rough handling, was feeling very guilty herself; and soon she was kneeling over him and comforting him, with blood on her neck and breasts. In ten minutes they were friends again, and making tea.

However, on the following day, the Negro, who seems to have been, at heart a remarkably generous and sensible person, decided that they must part. He could no longer trust himself with her. It was obvious to Maggie, too, that she could not trust herself not to torment him. So it was agreed that they must part. And they parted in style. They spent all their cash on food and drink for the celebration, prepared a feast in their cheap room, ate as much as they could manage, toasted one another, and then the black race and the white race, and the amity of the two, toasted everything and everybody, got happily sozzled and sentimental, petted and embraced one another, and finally, to the surprise of both, fell to serious love-making, and retired to bed together. Maggie, generous and courageous, was determined that the previous night's mishap should be, so far as possible, wiped out by something better. The Negro was equally anxious to make amends for his past obsequiousness and for his recent brutality. The sense of her danger and of their imminent parting exalted Maggie to respond to him with a new fervour; and her warmth in turn had a tonic effect on him, so that for once he was able to be gentle without being abject, and ardent without being brutal. They slept in peace together; and next morning they parted.

For Maggie, the upshot was that, having at last copiously tasted the forbidden fruit, and having found it both sweet and bitter, she no longer craved it for its own sake. She would henceforth be violently repelled by all sexual contacts that were not patently the vehicle of true love between equals. For with her Negro she had at least experinced enough to be able to imagine what sex could be when it was indeed the expression of full personal love.

Such were the experiences that Maggie refrained from recounting to Victor as they walked along the dark road, side by side, but unlinked. He made one more attempt to gain her confidence. He said, "There's something painful in your memory, and something you're a bit ashamed of. If you were to trust me, and share the pain, and the shame too, I might be able to wipe them out for you." She answered, "No! Not yet, anyhow. You're not my father inquisitor." The odd phrase amused him; and he wondered, but did not enquire, whether it was deliberate or due to ignorance. He pressed her no further, but turned the conversation to more general subjects. In the bus, they sat snugly together, but he refrained from holding her hand; and for this she was grateful, yet vaguely

disappointed. When the time came to part, he did take her hand. It was a large and capable hand, and the skin was rather coarse. Ineradicable dirt was ingrained in the thumb and forefinger. He raised the hand to his lips, and said, "Think it all over. I'm leaving tomorrow, but I shall come back soon."

7 - UNCERTAIN HAPPINESS

From 1921 to 1924

VICTOR TOLD ME that when he had established himself in his job, he formed a habit of going over to see Maggie every few weeks. They became increasingly friendly, and their friendship (so Maggie subsequently told me) opened up new mental horizons for her. She had always been something of a reader, but her tastes were very undeveloped. Victor introduced her to contemporary writing; and though at first she found much of it exasperating, or too difficult, or downright horrid, she soon, with his help, began to understand what writers like D. H Lawrence and James Joyce were trying to do. She was driven on by her prediliction for the modern; but she did not allow herself to be hypnotized by literary fashion. A fundamental sincerity and common sense saved her from persuading herself that she appreciated, or even that she understood, works that were beyond her.

Of T. S. Eliot, she said that it all sounded marvellous, but she couldn't make head or tail of it. The scientific fantasies and sociological novels of Wells she could understand, and she read them with zest, and a sense of mind-stretching; but also, she said, with a vague feeling that the whole of this "modern wisdom" was somehow incomplete, perhaps superficial. When Victor introduced her to Freud, she had reacted first with revulsion, then with an exciting sense of emancipation, and finally with mingled enthusiasm and suspicion. "I can see," she told Victor, "that we are more or less what Freud says we are; but I just can't believe that is all there is to us." It was the same with Marxism. She could not bring herself to read more than the Communist Manifesto; but Victor's own account of Marxist theories fascinated her. It made her realize for the first time the power of economic conditions over men's minds and actions. But again she had a nagging suspicion. "It's all terribly clever," she said, "and I suppose it's true. But--there must be another truth, too, of a different sort. I mean-people are not just like what he says they are."

Victor also passed on to her in their many talks a great deal of scrappy scientific and historical information that had never before come her way; information about human evolution, Mendelian laws of heredity, pre-history, the new theories of the structure of atoms, the life-story of stars, and of the great nebulae. Sometimes he overdid it. He would ramble on, absorbed in his own intellectual interests, so that she lost the thread, and her attention would wander. Presently she would break in on his monologue with some bit of frivolity, to bring him back to earth. Then, she told me, she could feel a momentary shock pass through his mind; but almost at once he would adjust himself to her mood. Never was he hurt or superior. Often he was apologetic for his "prosiness". Latterly, as they became more sensitive to each other, he would himself break off into lighter talk before she had

begun to tire. As time passed, she became less easily tired, more determined to worry through to the heart of each subject.

He sometimes put her into a state of fascinated bewilderment by sketchy references to the new physical theories of relativity and the quantum. He himself had absorbed a good deal on these subjects in his scanty spare time, and I have no doubt that he had a gift for presenting it in a vivid way. Maggie herself, though of course she could not follow complicated mathematical arguments, was evidently enthralled by the new picture of the universe that was gradually presented to her. And the scientific attitude itself seems to have been very attractive to her. This, she felt, was the real "modern spirit" that she had always longed to master. Just what she meant by the "modern spirit" she probably could not have said. She might have called it common sense and contempt for superstition. Much later she would have described it as a blend of common sense, daring imagination and rigorous intellectual integrity. Seeing it through Victor's mind, she saw it at its best. And with his help, and her own freshness of approach, she saw also its snares.

The upshot of all this strange "course in modern thought ", that Victor gave her, was that she came to grasp something of what her Great-Aunt Abigail had meant when she said that the old wisdom and the new wisdom were both necessary and each incomplete without the other.

During this period her relationship with Victor was almost entirely "platonic", a warm friendship, with the sexual aspect kept well in the background. Sometimes they walked arm-in-arm or hand-in-hand. Sometimes, when they said "goodbye", she would allow herself to be kissed, and he would respond (she said) with thrilling gentleness but without trace of passion. Little by little she realized that this very odd kind of courtship was having a deep effect on her. Victor became the dominant factor in her life, and she looked forward with impatience to every visit. Moreover, toward him she felt none of that revulsion against physical contact that she had acquired from her unfortunate experiences in Scotland. On the contrary, she found herself longing for greater physical intimacy with Victor.

Yet for many months he remained more like a devoted brother than a lover. Well on in the second year of their acquaintance she herself began to make shy advances. She would cling to his hand, lean enticingly against him, permit herself a new ardour in the parting kiss. But though he certainly never rebuffed her, he responded always with affection rather than passion. Once more the bitter suspicion arose in her mind that he was after all not really physically attracted by her, even if he was not actually repelled. Bewildered and hurt, she ceased to try to "make things easy for him", and even went so far as to adopt a colder manner, and to refuse ostentatiously even the slight physical contact that he offered. On the rare occasions when he took her hand, she withdrew it.

I learned from Victor himself, in our conversation in my hotel, that his policy had been deliberate. At first, suspecting that she had had unhappy sexual experiences, he determined to win her affection without making any sexual advances to her. Later a new

motive confirmed him in this policy of refraining from wooing her. Already before the time when she herself had begun to treat him more warmly, he was becoming painfully aware that his awake personality was, after all, not as securely established as he had supposed. And in these circumstances he felt that he must not take advantage of her new disposition. Indeed, he even thought of putting an end to his visits. But the trouble was as yet slight, and he persuaded himself that so drastic a course was not necessary. (This decision, he confessed to me, was too easily reached, and therefore itself an indication that he was no longer in his most fully lucid state.)

He had been seriously overworking, and he was sometimes desperately tired. At these times he suffered from fierce head-aches, which always ended in an irresistible "attack of sleepiness". The dread that if he did sleep he might wake up as "the other" drove him to resist sleep to the utmost of his power. He would read or write far into the night, and in the end collapse into heavy sleep in his chair. Several times he remained in this condition till the afternoon of the following day, when he awoke cold, frightened, and unrefreshed. The very fact that he was frightened added to his fright; for when he was really awake he could regard every kind of danger, even the danger of slipping back into his old self, with lofty detachment. He noted also that when he re-examined any work that he had done on the previous evening, it generally seemed to be of poor quality. His only comfort was that, tired and distressed as he was, he at no time lost his grip on the true values. He never reverted to the conventional and snobbish values of the Dolt.

In consequence of this change of his condition, then, Victor was determined not to let himself make love to Maggie. He could not tolerate the thought that she should become entangled with the Dolt. On the other hand, he felt an increased need for her company. And always, when he had seen her, he found himself immediately restored to full clarity of mind. The bracing effect of her presence lasted for several weeks. But sooner or later the trouble would return. After each attack he longed uncontrollably for her; and this very passion, he suspected, was itself evidence that even after the attack had passed, he was not fully himself. For in his most lucid mood, though he longed with equal ardour, his detachment, his fundamental dispassion, enabled him to stand outside his passion and control it. But after an attack, he was so transported with longing for Maggie, that he had no thought but to arrange a meeting with her as soon as possible. Until he found himself actually in her presence he could think of nothing but her, and his own desperate need of her. Yet, strangely, as soon as he reached her, the fog vanished from his mind, and he was completely self-possessed. Though indeed he longed to hold her closely to him and kiss her with ardour, he was entirely capable of treating her with the usual calm friendliness. To do more than this, he felt, would be utterly base.

When Maggie began to make it obvious that warmer treatment would be acceptable, the effect was to make Victor realize even more clearly that it would be unfair to respond. But he was in a dilemma. Things had by now gone too far. If he were to tell her frankly that his grip on himself was weakening, and that he must therefore keep away from her, she might well (since she was of a generous and courageous nature) give herself to him when he was recovering from an attack and unable to control his passion for her.

Another policy suggested itself. He might deliberately give her the impression that he no longer loved her, and so compel her to free herself. But again, he knew that after each attack he would vitiate this plan by clamouring for her. Moreover, he found, to his own surprise, that to deny his love for her was somehow morally repugnant to him. Vaguely he felt that it would be a violation of something more important even than Maggie's happiness. The thing that he had hoped for, their spiritual unity (as he called it) had already been conceived in their deepening friendship. To destroy this by acting a lie to her, even for her own individual comfort, would be murder of something spiritually vital. Besides, he told himself, even from the point of view of her individual happiness, this ruthless policy would not really succeed. Already she was deeply dependent on him. To break with her would be not merely to inflict on her a period of sharp distress but also to make her feel for ever after that love, even in its fullest expression, was after all open to decay. Such a feeling, coming on top of her past unhappy experiences, might well turn her into an embittered cynic.

Victor spent much of his precious time with Maggie brooding on his dilemma; and this absorption no doubt increased her impression of his aloofness.

The crisis came after a particularly bad attack. He woke from his heavy sleep late in the afternoon; too late to catch the train to an outlying town where he was due to take one of his weekly classes. He woke in a state of overwhelming depression. He was conscious, too, while he was lying between sleep and waking, of a definite revulsion against his whole present life and all his interests. He felt a vague, guilty nostalgia for his former circumstances. Realizing the significance of this little experience, he sprang from his bed in terror that his lucid personality was at last being submerged. But he was still more or less himself; though distraught, and so not himself at his best.

He took a cold bath, dressed, shaved, asked his motherly landlady to give him a meal, and telephoned to the university to say that he was ill and could not keep his appointment. After his meal he wrote a long and emotional letter to Maggie, explaining his past coolness and his present plight, and imploring her to save him and herself by coming to live with him. He also said that he would visit her in a couple of days (on her next free afternoon), so that they could talk the whole matter over and make the necessary arrangements. He ended with passionate endearments, and the statement, "I need you desperately; and you, me. If you come to me, you may suffer terribly, but you will live."

The receipt of this letter naturally threw Maggie into a state of violent agitation. It was no use to write to him, as he would have left his lodgings before the letter could reach him. When he arrived, she was waiting for him in the little crowd at the exit from the platform. He dropped his bag, seized her in his arms, and pressed his lips hungrily to hers. She responded without reserve, and broke down in tears. The crowd tried not to watch them. It was Victor who disengaged himself, with a heavy sigh. They walked off arm-in-arm, with her hand clinging to his. "Oh, why, why," she said, "didn't you tell me about it long ago?" By now Victor

had regained full clarity, and was deeply regretting his letter. After a silence, he said, "You must forget all that I wrote to you. At least you must ignore it. I was not myself. I was grossly exaggerating. Now that I am with you, I am properly awake again, and I see how silly I was. The letter simply wasn't written by me, but by some sort of sleepy half-me. In the train I was longing, longing to have you, and I didn't care how bad it would be for you. But now I see that I mustn't drag you down with me. And I mustn't win you by appealing for your pity. No, the whole thing makes me squirm, now." She was protesting. "No! no! You have got it all wrong. You must let me come to you and help you. My life is meaningless without you." But he insisted that he must fight his own battle, and that he would win through; and that when he was quite right again, he would come back to her, and ask her to marry him, and she would be able to choose freely. She replied that she had already made up her mind to join with him. She added, "And don't you see, the harm is done. We are far too tangled up together for me to live without you, whatever happens. I shall come right away with you now, and stick to you through everything." He said he could not possibly risk her finding herself married to the Dolt. "But, my dear," she said, "we needn't get married. We are married at heart now. We'll fix things with the law later, when we have won through, and children are coming." But Victor was immovable. "I should never forgive myself," he said, "and my shame would spoil everything for us."

Maggie tried a new line. She said, "You are simply too proud. I don't believe you do really love me, after all. If you did, you would be glad to let me help you. You love your proud self more than me. You want to let me stay stranded and miserable and useless, just so that you can prove that you don't depend on anybody. The Victor that I love is not the proud one but the one that cried to me for help." This remark shook him. But he said, "It's not myself that I love better than you; it's--well it's--O God, I don't know! It's something not me and yet in me, using me; something I must be true to at all costs, 'I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honour more.' But it's not honour merely. It's--some would say 'God' but I don't know anything about God. It's--well, the spirit. I must not sin against the spirit. And you mustn't want me to."

This conversation was carried on in undertones as they sat with their heads together in the bus that was taking them out to their usual haunts. On the walk itself he tried in vain to lead her off into impersonal matters, but she kept reverting to their problem. Before they parted he promised that he would be more careful not to overtire himself, and he explained that he was going to practise a "new technique of mental discipline" which he felt sure would strengthen him. He added, "You have strengthened me immensely today. Now that I know you know all about it, I feel I shall never slip again." But she clung to his hand, and wailed, "I want to help, I do so want to help by being with you always." She made him promise that if he felt that he was not succeeding with his task, he would tell her, and let her come to him at once, before the danger threatened too seriously. He readily promised, and pointed out that in the confused state after an attack he apparently could not help rushing to her. And then, looking into her strange slate-and-russet eyes, he said, "Powerful witch! You had cast your spell on me even before I met you. I think, too, that it was your magic that saved me when I so nearly tied myself to Edith. It was the sight of you at breakfast that did the trick, repulsive creature though you seemed to me then. And it is your magic that jerks me fully awake when I meet you after my attacks." He kissed her hand, and added, "But remember, you must keep your magic off me for a bit, till I have regained my self-

respect." She agreed, but with misgiving.

During this little speech, Maggie had thought of her great-aunt's never wholly forgotten prophecy. She wondered.

All she said was, but with the tenderest smile (so he told me), "Proud, selfish man! You don't really know what love is. I do. Once I didn't, but now I do. You taught me; and yet you don't really know, yourself. If you really, really loved me, you wouldn't stand on your dignity. You'd just say, 'Look! We are in for a bad time together, but we'll win through together. And even if we don't, its' together we must face the disaster'." But he replied, "No, my dear, you don't understand. When I first saw you, we met as equals. I did not know how weak I was. But now--I know I'm morally sick, and I must conquer the devil in me with my own strength before I can meet you as an equal once more." To this she replied, "My father used to tell us that man could never save himself with his own strength alone. If he could, my father said, it would be bad for him, because it would make him proud; and so, after all, he would be damned. Father used to say it was Christ's work alone to save us." Victor thought for a moment, before saying, "I do see that there's important truth in the old view. I can only be saved by something other than just me; but by something universal, not by another person, not even by you and your magic. Only the spirit itself can save me; and only by simply revealing itself to me more commandingly."

It was time to part. Lowering his face toward her, he said, "One kiss might be allowed the patient, don't you think?" Their lips met. She said, "I shall pray for you. I don't think I believe in God, but I must pray for you." He smiled, and stepped into the train.

Victor went back to his work greatly refreshed and strengthened. For a month or so, in fact till the end of the winter, all went well. He wrote to her often, and welcomed her letters; but he did not go to see her. He was careful not to overstrain himself, and he pursued his "unorthodox spiritual discipline", by which he hoped to banish "the Dolt" into the dungeon of his unconscious for ever. He did not tell me much about this new technique, beyond saying that it involved concentrating his attention on the "spirit" at frequent intervals throughout the day, and practising certain spiritual exercises every night before going to bed, and while he was falling asleep. He gave up the policy of resisting sleep. On the contrary, he allowed himself as much as he wanted, which in his lucid state was seldom more than four hours, and generally much less. He told Maggie that the attacks had ceased, that he hoped to be secure in a couple of months, and that he was longing to see her.

Then suddenly the stream of his brief letters ended. She continued to write to him, imploring him for news; but vainly.

8 - A DISTRESSING INTERLUDE

From 1923 to 1924

ALL THIS WHILE, it seems, Maggie had kept her promise not to "use her witchcraft on him". It was an easy promise, for she had no idea how she could break it. But with a view to the possibility that later she might have to exercise whatever powers she had (if indeed she had any), she set about exploring and experimenting. She was handicapped by complete ignorance, and a vague revulsion against the whole matter. For years she had been leaning more and more toward common sense, matter-of-factness, natural science. Apart from shadowy memories of her great-aunt's stones, and of her own doubtful paranormal experiences in early youth, and the obviously quite uncritical beliefs of some of her acquaintances, she had no reason to believe in "the occult ".

She began to attend some sort of spiritualist seance that was held weekly in her neighbourhood. She tried to test the medium by asking for an interview with her dead brother. The results were not completely negative, but far too ambiguous to satisfy Maggie's shrewd intelligence. On the other hand, she could not help being impressed by the fact that the medium at once treated her as a colleague, and told her that she must "learn quickly to use her powers, or it would be too late". But each week she became more violently hostile to the emotional atmosphere of the seances. Had she attended the meetings in her early impressionable period, under the influence of her great- aunt, she might well have accepted without question these all-too- human communications from the dead, these carefully ambiguous prophecies, these bits of platitudinous advice given to simple souls in the grip of real heart-rending conflicts, or misfortunes. On the other hand, had she encountered "spiritualism" in the stage when she was reacting strongly against the old ways and values, she would have scornfully dismissed the whole matter as trickery. But now, under the influence of Victor's cautious criticism alike of the old and the new superstitions, and moreover stirred by the mystery of her relation with him, she was unable either to accept or reject, but was forced to remain in painful doubt. Something real and out of the ordinary, she felt, was indeed sometimes at work in the seances; but far more often nothing happened that could not plausibly be explained as a combination of coincidence and deception.

On one occasion tile medium gave a display of "psychometry". A sitter would hand her some personal article such as a glove or scarf or watch, and after fingering it for a while she would make pronouncements abut the character or circumstances of the owner. Maggie produced a pencil that Victor had formerly carried in his pocket. The medium handled it in silence for some time; then, in a voice no longer luscious and soothing but staccato and uneasy, she said, "There's something queer about this, something that goes beyond my powers. There's someone who is--well more than human, more than ordinary-human; but-torn apart, somehow. He needs help. But he's proud. Help him at once, even if he's too proud." She paused, then hastily returned the pencil, saying. "Take it! I'm frightened." Naturally Maggie was impressed by this reaction; and alarmed by the advice. But later, during a very emotional scene in which "ectoplasm" was supposed to have issued from the medium's mouth. Maggie had an access of revulsion and scepticism. Several of the company were profoundly impressed, and in a state verging on hysterics. Maggie, on a sudden impulse, reached out and snatched the "ectoplasm ". which turned out to be a piece of crepe. There was an uproar. The medium angrily maintained that the "young witch" had used her powers to change the genuine ectoplasm into a seeming piece of

crepe, and that she herself was gravely damaged by the loss of part of her psychical anatomy. She then screamed, and fell into a coma. So at least most of the group believed. But Maggie was convinced that she was shamming, and watching all the while under lowered eyelids. Maggie ceased to attend the meetings.

But she was undertaking experiments of her own. In the hotel dining- room, when she was standing waiting while the residents finished a course, she would concentrate her attention on one of them, and try to will him (or her) to turn and look at her, or to sneeze, or show a change of mood. Occasionally she seemed to have a striking success; but generally nothing happened. She could not exclude the possibility that her seeming successes were illusory.

One of the residents was a sad and taciturn old lady. Maggie determined to make her talk to people and enjoy life. After a week or so of concentration on her "patient ", Maggie was delighted to see the ancient dame looking about her at her fellow guests with a bright and interested expression. Next day she actually opened a conversation with a young woman who sat alone at the next table. She seemed to have pleased the girl, for henceforth they shared a table, and were at no loss for conversation. This remarkable change in the old lady went far to convince Maggie that she had indeed supernormal powers. But her conviction was shaken when she overheard "her patient" remark to the younger woman that her doctor's new medicine seemed to have worked a miraculous cure of the indigestion that had overclouded her life for twenty years.

Another of the residents was a morose man well advanced in middle age, who drank far too much, and indeed seemed to have nothing else to do. Mindful of Victor, Maggie considered him a very suitable subject for experiment; for he was obviously, as she put it to herself, "a decent sort gone wrong". Her general aim was to find some way of "waking" people to what Victor would have called the most lucid and sensitive range of consciousness possible to them. If she could learn this art, she would be equipped to help Victor to keep the Dolt at bay for ever.

She had no certainty that she had any powers at all; but if she had, they seemed to consist at bottom in the power to direct the "patient's" attention to something within the range of his vision but persistently ignored.

She began her new experiment by trying to make her man notice things in the room; the sunlight falling on a vase of daffodils, the sleek dignity of the hotel cat as it paced across the floor, the man-to-man relations of a mother and her small boy at a neighbouring table, the crisply rippling patter of two French voices at the far end of the room, the far from obvious expression of saintliness that sometimes interfered with the sophisticated manner of the young woman at the old lady's table. After some days she was inclined to think that she was having a certain amount of success. She now tried to direct her "patient's" attention to the opinion that the other residents had of him, carefully selecting those who did not loathe or despise him but were grieved that a man who must formerly have been well-set-up and attractive should have gone to pieces. After a few days she thought he was spending less time in the bar. Then he gave up alcohol entirely. Maggie was convinced that her experiment was succeeding. Then

one day as she was about to enter the lounge to attend to the fire, she heard her "patient" within the room earnestly saying, to someone unseen, "By simply being yourself, you have saved me. If you won't accept me, I shall go to pieces again." Maggie stood to listen. The voice of the sophisticated young woman replied, "I tell you it's no good, I hardly know you. I don't intend to marry you for your money, and I didn't save you. You must have saved yourself. Please let me go!" There was a sound as of a slight scuffle, and Maggie hastily retired. Later, as she was serving at dinner she overheard a snatch of conversation between the young woman and her aged friend. "I merely smiled at him, no more; and now I am supposed to be his guardian angel."

The upshot of this experiment, like the others, was that Maggie was still uncertain whether she really had "magical" powers; but on the whole she was sufficiently encouraged to pursue her experiments. It even seemed that she was working in the right direction for their development as a means of helping Victor.

When it was clear that the flow of letters from Victor had ceased, she felt that she was absolved from her promise to refrain from influencing him, and she applied such technique as she had acquired to the task of strengthening the lucid Victor against his somnolent other self. But this was a far more formidable venture than any of her experiments, since Victor was at a distance. And she had no means of knowing how, if at all, he was responding. On the whole, she felt that the most hopeful method was to transmit to Victor clear images of her own face, and memories of their most stimulating conversations. With this end in view she used to steal moments to gaze at herself in a mirror, so that she might have as precise an image as possible to send to Victor.

Meanwhile she was becoming more and more anxious and impatient. At last she decided to go over to Victor's town and make enquiries at his address, well aware that by doing so she might compromise both herself and Victor. What she learned from Victor's landlady was very disturbing.

I will tell the story as I was told it by Victor himself in our London hotel. After his last visit to Maggie, he had no further attacks. He conscientiously practised his new "discipline" and avoided overstrain. As time passed, he became confident that he was once more firmly established, and little by little he turned less careful. At the end of the session he attended a "social" organized by the students in a distant town. On this occasion, in order to enter into the spirit of the party, he allowed himself a dispensation from his temporary total abstinence from alcohol, and he drank a fair amount of beer. I have already mentioned that in his awake state he was little affected by alcohol. On this occasion, however, he noticed a slight dizziness. He therefore refused any more drinks. It is not clear whether the disaster was brought on by alcohol or by the fact that on the journey home in the train a heavy suitcase fell from the rack above him on to his head, and for a moment he was stunned. He arrived in his lodgings very tired, and with a splitting headache. He went straight to bed.

Next day he awoke as "the Dolt". He had therefore no recollection of events since he stood at the altar to be married to Edith two years earlier. He woke in broad daylight and in a completely unknown and rather cheap little bedroom. Under the pillow he found

his own wrist- watch. It registered 10.20. He sprang out of bed, bewildered, and with a throbbing head. On a chair were clothes, some of which he recognized. On the dressing table was some loose cash, a wallet, pen, pencil, and so on, most of which he recognized. He put on his familiar dressing gown, which was far shabbier than he had supposed it, and opened the door, which led into an obviously "lodging-house" sitting- room. The fire in the grate had been recently fed. The table was laid for breakfast for one, but had not been used. A newspaper lay folded on the plate. It was the Manchester Guardian, a very wrong-headed paper from the Dolt's point of view. Victor glanced at the date, February 24th, 1923. He subsided in an easy chair, feeling sick and frightened.

On the opposite chair was a pile of books and papers. He reached out for some of these. The books were mostly inscribed "Victor Smith" (not Cadogan-Smith), and were dry tomes on industrial history. The papers were written in a handwriting that was presumably his own, but there was something strange about it. Though neater and more legible, it struck him as less impressive than his own dashing hand.

Casting the papers aside, he opened the other door of the sitting- room, in search of the lavatory and bathroom. After a hasty wash and shave, he went back to his bedroom to dress, then returned to sit by the fire and consider his position. Taking out his wallet, he found in it two pound notes and an opened letter addressed in a careful but unformed hand to "Victor Smith" (not even Mr.), c/o Mrs. Wheelwright, at an address in a Yorkshire provincial town. Inside were a letter and a photograph of a remarkably ugly girl whom he recognized as one of the waitresses at the hotel where he had stayed for his wedding. The letter began "Dearest Victor", and continued in the same strain, with many references to someone called "The Dolt", against whom the writer, "Maggie", wanted to help Victor in some mysterious way. Victor felt an irrationally violent surge of hostility to the girl. He threw letter and photograph into the fire.

By the mantelpiece there was a bell-push. Victor pressed it. After a while a smiling, motherly, middle-aged woman appeared. She said, "Good-morning, Mr. Smith! You have had a good lie-in!" Then she noticed something unusual about her lodger. In a rather affected voice, very unlike the voice she knew as Victor's (so she told Maggie), he demanded his breakfast. This was a shock to Mrs. Wheelwright, for it had been his habit to go downstairs and talk to his good friend and landlady while she cooked his bacon. Bewildered, she stood silent for a moment. Victor added coldly, "As soon as possible, please." She left him.

Continuing his exploration of the room, he found a cheque-book, a bank passbook (showing a balance of some forty pounds), several folios of neat notes on economics and industrial history, a file of correspondence, mostly about adult educational arrangements, and a small collection of letters from Maggie. These he read through with increasing disgust and horror. In one of them Maggie told the story of her relations with low-class men in Aberdeen, and ended with an account of her adventures with her Negro lover. When the Dolt had finished reading the whole bundle, he flung them into the fire and stabbed at them with the poker till all were safely burnt. This act of self-emancipation gave him (so the awakened Victor told me during our long talk in

the hotel) an extravagant vindictive satisfaction.

Mrs. Wheelwright returned with the breakfast. He announced that he would be leaving during the afternoon, and asked for his bill. She expressed surprise that he was starting on his holiday so soon. He said he was leaving for good. She was distressed, and said, "But you have always seemed so happy here. And you know how I love having you. You are like a son, more than a lodger." Tears were in her eyes, and she approached to put a hand on his shoulder, saying, "Please, tell me what's the matter." He shrank away from her, and said merely, "I am changing my work, and leaving this town. The bill, please." She left him. Over breakfast he looked up trains to his father's home. When his meal was done he piled all the notes and correspondence together. Mrs. Wheelwright brought the bill. He wrote a cheque, and made no offer to pay her I anything additional on account of leaving without notice. She did not mention the matter, being more concerned with their personal than their financial relations. He told her to burn the lecture notes and correspondence, and dispose of the books as she thought fit. He then went in search of his bank and drew out all that would remain of his balance after the payment of Mrs. Wheelwright's bill. Returning to his lodgings, he packed his possessions in two large suitcases that he found under the bed, telephoned for a taxi, gave his tearful landlady a perfunctory "goodbye", and left for the station.

My account of Sir Geoffrey's dealings with his son at this time is based partly on a long conversation with the old gentleman himself in the following year, while I was still in France. Knowing my admiration for, and intimacy with, his son, he asked me to meet him in Paris when he was on his way through to the Riviera. I gave him all the help I could in his effort to understand Victor's case; and in return he told me, with considerable emotion, about the happenings which I am about to relate. I was surprised to find him so ready to help. As I shall tell in due course, he had come to feel a sharp conflict of loyalties in his own heart over the two antagonistic personalities of his son. Evidently it was a relief to him to unburden himself.

At the time when "the Dolt" suddenly appeared at Sir Geoffrey's country house, the father had long ago overcome the indignation which he had felt over his son's marriage fiasco, and he had several times written to Victor to persuade him to come back and start a new business career. But the awake Victor had always firmly though amiably refused, declaring that he must, for a while at least, make a complete break with his past. He never told his father that he regarded his former self as not himself at all.

But now at last Victor had come of his own accord. He was obviously in a state of great distress and confusion. He at once told his father that he had lost all memory of the events that had happened since he stood at the altar for marriage. When his father told him of his outrageous conduct, and that he had not married Edith after all, he was overwhelmed with mortification. The consequent ruin of his business career deemed to distress him far more than the harm he had done to Edith.

Sir Geoffrey suggested that his son ought to have medical attention, but Victor was violently opposed to "getting into the clutches of the doctors". It was decided that for a while he should remain quietly at home to rest and consider his plans. Sir Geoffrey was

much distressed by his son's distress; and at the same time relieved to learn that Victor's disgraceful conduct had been due to definite mental aberration. He was eager to believe that the young man's other personality must be no more than a perverted and crippled part of his "true self". How otherwise could he have treated Edith so shamefully, and sacrifice his own career just when he was finding his feet? How otherwise could he have got himself entangled with a waitress, and moreover with one who, so Victor affirmed, was so plain, uneducated, and coarse-grained. The Dolt had at first intended to keep silent about this disreputable business, but in the end he had been unable to refrain from seeking his father's sympathy and advice. In former days he had seldom taken his father into his confidence, but in his present suffering he seemed to long to pour out his woes.

It was through this new talkativeness that he first made Sir Geoffrey wonder whether the Victor whom he had known in the past, and had now with him, was quite such an admirable person as he had formerly supposed. Evidently in the old days the son had successfully maintained a mask such as his father could respect; though even then Sir Geoffrey had sometimes felt disturbed by Victor's ruthless "realism" in dealings with persons less fortunate than himself. Now, the harsh snobbery and careerism of the boy was becoming painfully obvious. His father was eager to excuse this as an exaggerated revulsion from the other personality; but he did seriously begin to wonder which of his "two sons" was in fact the more developed and integrated person.

In the end Sir Geoffrey decided on two actions. He would privately consult a personal friend who was a distinguished psychiatrist, telling him all that he knew of Victor's case, and arranging for his friend to meet Victor casually and "accidentally", so as to be able to study the unhappy young man without betraying the fact that he was doing so.

In addition, Sir Geoffrey decided to make some discreet investigations about the doings of the other personality during the previous three years. He wrote to the Extramural Department of the university under which Victor had worked, saying that his son had come home suffering from a serious mental breakdown, and requesting, for medical purposes, an account of his recent life, and the opinion of his employers about him. Did he, for instance, ever show signs of mental disorder? Sir Geoffrey received a prompt reply, to the effect that Victor's disappearance had surprised and distressed all who knew him, and that he was an able scholar and a brilliant teacher universally admired and liked. The letter continued, "Far from showing signs of mental disorder, he struck us as thoroughly sane. No doubt some of his opinions were novel and daring, but as a person he was always completely reliable and capable of shrewd judgment about individuals. His, obviously, is a very original mind, and he has an extraordinary gift of sympathetic insight into the minds of others. If all goes well, he should some day make an outstanding contribution to social thought." Enclosed was a cheque for Victor's services during the recent session. This, it was explained, had been returned from his lodgings, which he had left without giving an address.

Pursuing his researches, Sir Geoffrey contrived to visit Victor's recent landlady, of course without telling the young man himself. Mrs. Wheelwright was overawed by the well-dressed, and slightly pompous visitor, who introduced himself with a visiting card inscribed "Sir Geoffrey Cadogan-Smith". But the two had a common interest in Victor; and she was soon unburdening her heart

of warm feelings and anxiety on behalf of her lodger, who, she said, had been more like a son to her. He gave her no trouble, he helped her with odd jobs in the house, he nursed her and cooked for her when she was down with 'flu, he had a way of making her feel "wanted", and often she found herself talking freely to him about her private affairs, including her great tragedy, the loss of her husband and only son in the recent war. She assured Sir Geoffrey that "he was one in a thousand, was my Mr. Smith". Sir Geoffrey made discreet enquiries about Victor's relations with a certain young woman. But on this subject she could not or would not help him. She said merely that Victor had spoken of a young lady whom he hoped to marry some day, but he must not do so until he was sure he was good enough for her. He had shown her the girl's photograph. A strange-looking young lady, not a beauty, but she might be very good- hearted. Probably she was not really half good enough for Mr. Smith.

Sir Geoffrey was too much of an aristocrat (or would-be aristocrat) not to feel that his son's hob-nobbing with persons of the lower orders was a mistake. It sprang from sentimental idealism, and was probably a morbid reaction against the snobbery of the other Victor. All the same the father could not help being impressed by the way in which his "unknown son" had won people's hearts.

Hoping for some further insight into Victor's mind, he said he would take a glance at his son's books. As he was casting his eyes over the shelves, he was disturbed to notice, along with the solid works on economics and history, which were the tools of Victor's trade, a number of socialistic and even Marxist tracts. There were also works on psychology by that dirty-minded fellow, Freud, who was becoming fashionable; also a few volumes on the new mind-twisting theory of relativity; and a sprinkling of modern poetry, which, Sir Geoffrey felt, was going badly astray.

While Sir Geoffrey was poking about among his son's books, Mrs. Wheelwright had continued prattling on about Victor. But presently she made a statement that attracted her visitor's attention. On the day of his departure Victor had told her to burn all his notes, but she had not been able to bring herself to do so. She had stored them in her own room. Perhaps it would be a breach of confidence to let the father see the son's private papers; but perhaps, for her lodger's own sake, she ought to show them, in case they threw any light on his "trouble". Sir Geoffrey urged her to let him take them away to study at leisure; but this she firmly refused to allow. Finally it was agreed that he should stay on for a few hours to study them in her house. She gladly provided Sir Geoffrey with a meal, and left him to himself.

Most of the notes which she entrusted to him were material for lectures, quite unexceptionable from Sir Geoffrey's point of view, save for a general tendency to argue that throughout history the rich had given the poor a raw deal, and that this, would continue until the control of "the major means of production" was in the hands of the representatives of the people. But there was also a crowded notebook which was obviously the first draft of a book in which Victor was attempting to state his whole philosophy of life. Sir Geoffrey was soon deeply absorbed in this. Much struck him as wild and dangerous stuff, much he sadly recognized, was simply beyond him, parts expressed with great clarity ideas that he and his generation had been vainly trying to formulate.

Gradually it was borne in on the father that, however wrong-headed and revolutionary his "unknown son" might be in some respects, his was indeed a very original mind. Sir Geoffrey even began to entertain the possibility that, when they differed, the son might not always be in the wrong. But no! The boy was still young and extravagant; also, perhaps, unbalanced owing to his mental disorder. Sir Geoffrey came to a passage of veiled autobiography stating that each of us is really two men, a dolt and a being of sensibility and intelligence. There followed a very moving account of the struggle between the two. Suddenly the father became painfully conscious of the fact that he was prying. Reluctantly he closed the notebook, summoned Mrs. Wheelwright and gave all the manuscripts back into her charge.

Before he left, the landlady showed him a treasured photograph of her recent lodger. Sir Geoffrey was struck both by the likeness to his known son, and to certain differences. The eyes were alert and smiling, the mouth fuller yet firmer. Sir Geoffrey looked long at the photograph, then handed it back in silence.

On the journey home he had much to occupy his mind. His researches had gone far to confirm his suspicion that his other, unknown son, was indeed a completer man than the son to whom he was now returning. What then ought he to do, or rather, try to do? It was all too likely that he could do nothing. Then what, at any rate, should he hope for? Should he desire the re-establishment of his familiar Victor, of whom in the past he had often been proud on account of his successes and his rather stereotyped brilliance; and for whom, in spite of misgivings, he still-retained a strong paternal affection? Or should he hope for the final annihilation of the familiar Victor for the sake of that other Victor, whom he did not know, and had never even met; that eccentric, remarkable, rather wrong-headed and dangerous but warm-hearted, creative intelligence? Or should he perhaps rather look for some sort of integration of the two Victors in one complete individual? On the whole his intellect affirmed that the familiar Victor was by now, at any rate, a poor creature, and the other an outstanding personality. But to his paternal heart the familiar though no longer respected son remained irrationally dearer than the brilliant stranger. To work for the familiar son's annihilation seemed like murder.

When Sir Geoffrey met his son at home, he was oppressed by the contrast with Mrs. Wheelwright's photograph of the other son. The sagging eyelids, the drooping ends of the mouth, gave an impression of humourless self-concern. The father reminded himself that this morbid condition was, of course, exaggerated by the boy's present unhappy state. His conversation, too, contrasted unfavourably with the other's manuscript which Sir Geoffrey had so recently been reading. The present Victor seemed to be obsessed with anxiety to wriggle back into his former post. Could his father pull wires for him? After all, he argued, in spite of aberrations his record had not been undistinguished. And what about Edith? Was there any chance that she would forgive him and marry him after all? When he learned that Edith was already married he was distressed, but not broken-hearted. Indeed, to his father's shame he was soon making enquiries about other eligible girls.

When Sir Geoffrey suggested that he had better not worry over marriage till he was cured of his illness, Victor replied with some

warmth, "But don't you see! I must get myself legally tied to some decent girl as soon as possible. If I go sick again, I may marry that awful slut. But if I am already legally tied to another, the second marriage will be invalid." Sir Geoffrey was shocked by this heartless remark. He protested that it was a low trick to marry a girl simply to render a subsequent marriage bigamous. Victor hastily added that of course he was assuming that he would find a girl whom he really loved. Sir Geoffrey could not help contrasting the present Victor's attitude with the other's scruples about marrying Maggie.

In due course Sir Geoffrey's psychiatrist friend turned up, and contrived to have a good deal of conversation with Victor. He was also told the results of Sir Geoffrey's researches. He was convinced that the other Victor was the real Victor, or rather the more developed part of the whole Victor, and the present Victor a mere splinter. Integration of the two personalities, he suggested might produce a Victor no less brilliant than the absent one, but also better balanced. He insisted that the case could not be tackled unless the young man was brought to his private mental home for constant treatment. Sir Geoffrey promised that he would try to persuade his son voluntarily to comply with this suggestion. But when he broached the matter, Victor responded with neurotic anger and self-pity.

The weeks slipped by. Nothing was done about recovering Victor's job. Sir Geoffrey was convinced, but did not say so, that the boy was in no fit state to undertake responsibility. He was still subject to attacks of black depression, and he sometimes fell into a state verging on coma. When he was more or less fit, he spent most of his time motoring very fast about the country. (His sports car had been preserved for him.) He also did a good deal of shooting. And he tried to stage a comeback into local society. In this he was not very successful, for people were on their guard against anyone who was known to have hehaved eccentrically.

After a couple of months it was clear to Sir Geoffrey that his son was not making any progress. He complained of violent headaches, which often ended in a twelve-hour sleep. On one occasion he declared that he was fighting desperately for sanity "against the forces of darkness". Pressed to amplify this statement, he said that ideas utterly alien to his nature kept breaking in on him, crazy fragments of thought about social strife, about irreligion, about sexual licentiousness. Also he complained that he was being haunted by "the filthy face of the slut". Sir Geoffrey reluctantly decided that the time was at hand when it would be necessary to over-ride Victor's wishes and send him away for treatment.

The idea did cross his mind that Maggie might possibly be able to settle the conflict of the two Victors by restoring the one whom she loved. He considered making contact with her, but postponed doing so, fearing awkward complications. It was Maggie herself who finally took action.

When at last she visited Victor's lodgings, she found his landlady very much on her guard, for she did not consider that this ugly girl was good enough for her dear lodger. However, Maggie's obvious sincerity and distress gradually won her, and she told Maggie of Sir Geoffrey's visit, and gave his address. Maggie promptly wrote, telling him the main facts about her relations with

his son, and imploring him to let her meet Victor, in the hope that her presence might "restore him to sanity". Meanwhile she privately redoubled her efforts to cure him by telepathic influence.

Sir Geoffrey feared that if Victor were confronted with Maggie in person he would be driven to frenzy, and might break down completely. But the father came to feel that at least he had better meet the girl himself to form some opinion of her character, with a view to enlisting her help in some way or other, if in his view she passed muster. So he replied to her letter cautiously, and said he would prefer to discuss the whole matter with her before allowing her to see his son. He therefore proposed to meet her. At first he found himself in some doubt about the correct way of effecting an interview with a servant girl on such a delicate subject; but a little consideration made him realize that, if Maggie was to be of any use at all, she must be treated with the respect due to the woman whom Victor had admired. He therefore arranged to have her to lunch on her "day off" in a respectable though unobtrusive restaurant in the town where she worked.

Maggie's presence had a disturbing effect on Sir Geoffrey. Like the Dolt, he found her face repugnant; but like the true Victor he was attracted by her direct and genial personality. Indeed, by the time they had reached the coffee he was beginning, in spite of his conventional standards of feminine beauty, to feel a fascination even in her strange face. Obviously she was of far too lowly a social class to be a desirable match for the son of a successful colonial administrator; but, damn it, she was not the slut that the present Victor had described. Indeed, much to his surprise Sir Geoffrey found his manner changing from formal politeness to real friendliness. But he refused to let Maggie see his son. The shock, he insisted, would be too great. Instead, he proposed to tell Victor that he had met her, and to build up in the young man's mind a true picture of the girl whom, in his other phase, he loved. With this end in view he encouraged Maggie to tell him more about her past relations with his son, and her own past life. This she gladly did, trying (as she told me) to infuse the old gentleman's mind with a sense of the joyful harmony and mutual dependence that had sprung up between Victor and herself. Excusably she said nothing about the more sordid side of her life in Aberdeen and Glasgow.

When Sir Geoffrey reached home and met Victor again, his son seemed to sense that his father had somehow betrayed him. Indeed, he became so suspicious and despondent that Sir Geoffrey felt it would be unwise to tell him about the recent interview while he was so unbalanced. Next day Victor complained of a "terrible headache", and vertigo. "That foul woman," he said, "has been attacking me again, It's worse than ever." Sir Geoffrey changed his mind and took the plunge. "You have got the girl all wrong," he said. "I have seen her, and though she certainly is remarkably plain, she strikes me as being an admirable person." Victor had stretched himself out on a couch, and at this information he fell into a spluttering, trembling, impotent rage. Presently he closed his eyes and assumed the expression of a martyr. His father felt acute disgust in watching his son, so he rose and walked about the room, recounting his impressions of Maggie. Presently he stopped, and noticed that Victor was apparently asleep, with his head back and his jaw dropped. His father tried to wake him, but he was in a deep coma. Wondering what to do next, Sir Geoffrey sat down and watched his son. Presently the mouth closed, the eyes opened. Sir Geoffrey noticed a subtle

change of expression. The eyes were wide and alert. The father saw at once that he was confronted with the face of the photograph in Mrs. Wheelwright's possession. Victor sat up, stretched his arms, and laughed. He said, "Thank God I'm awake again!" For a few seconds only, he looked about him in some bewilderment. Then his eyes met his father's with a steady, smiling gaze. Presently he said, "Thanks, Dad, for being so good to me during these wretched weeks, and coming round to take my side against that somnolent ass that masquerades as me." Sir Geoffrey said nothing. He was fascinated by the change in his son. Victor said, "Look! After lunch I'll rush off to see Maggie and get everything straight. Then, if I may, I'll come back here some time, and tell you all about her. Believe me, I appreciate my father much better: than that other son does; specially after these weeks, and after what you said about Maggie just now." He smiled brightly, like the photograph.

The new Victor was, of course in possession of the old Victor's memories. After his moment of bewilderment, he knew perfectly well where he was, and had a clear recollection of all the Dolt's conversations with his father. "Of course," he told me, "I was not awake at the time, but after only a few seconds of confusion I could remember all that I had done in that foul sleep-walk of a life." Latterly the Dolt had been tormented by obsessive images and thoughts that (said Victor) must have originated with Maggie. He felt confident that some strange telepathic influence from Maggie had been the main cause of his waking to his true self. His one desire was to see her at once and tell her that she had saved him. His father tried to persuade him to stay at least for one night to rest, but Victor said that he would feel much more secure if he could be with Maggie that very day. Sir Geoffrey admitted the force of this argument.

Father and son had a long talk before they parted. Sir Geoffrey admitted that he had read part of Victor's manuscript, and they drifted into a general discussion. The upshot for Sir Geoffrey was that he had no further doubt as to which was the better Victor; and he saw that this new Victor must be helped by every possible means to become firmly established. Yet he could not feel for the new Victor the warm parental affection which he had always felt for the familiar Victor, even when he had been most critical of him. This new son of his was a stranger; a brilliant and a generous-minded stranger, no doubt, but a person whom his father did not really know, and one whose opinions were in many ways rash and subversive. Though the old Victor had treated him with a kind of respectful contempt, the father had never felt resentful; probably because he so earnestly longed to be able to regard his son as his superior. On the other hand, the new Victor treated his father with man-to-man equality and friendliness. But at every turn his quick mind had to wait for the old man to catch up. When the father had occasion to protest against the wild views of the son, Victor attended earnestly to his criticism, but demolished it ruthlessly, not hesitating to charge his parent with sheer muddle-headedness. His attitude was that of a friendly but outspoken equal. Sir Geoffrey had been accustomed to deference. At first he was a little bewildered.

Victor wired to Maggie to expect him that evening, and to Mrs. Wheelwright to re-engage his rooms, if they were still vacant. When he met Maggie he told her that she had saved him. The detached reader will note that there is no real proof that she ever did on any occasion actually exercise any supernormal or occult powers over him. The dreams and visions that plagued the Dolt

might well have risen from the suppressed side of his own nature. On the other hand, the final changeover to the true Victor may, of course, be fairly plausibly explained as the work of some sort of telepathic influence from Maggie, director through the medium of Sir Geoffrey, whose mind had so recently been deeply affected by her. This is what Maggie and Victor believed; but the sceptic is quite entitled to his doubts. Subsequent events, which I shall relate in due course, do not suggest to me that Maggie's supernormal powers, if they existed, were very effective. Victor, however, was always convinced that they had saved him, and that he constantly depended on her influence.

Maggie was now determined to live with Victor so as to use all her influence to keep the Dolt at bay. She proposed to give a month's notice to her employers and have the wedding as soon as she was free. Victor was torn between the desire to be united with Maggie as soon as possible and fear of tying her to the Dolt. She confidently believed that the Dolt could never return as long as she was constantly with Victor. The awake Victor was still dismayed by the recent dominance of the Dolt, and therefore hesitant about involving Maggie in a permanent relationship. In the end it was agreed that they should wait for a few weeks to see how things went.

Time passed, and it did indeed seem that Victor was thoroughly re- established in self-possession. He met Maggie every week, and they slid easily back into the old life, with the difference that they were now acknowledged lovers, and she proudly wore an engagement ring. They frequented all their old haunts, and everything was transfigured by the knowledge that now at last they were pledged to one another. Yet the future was uncertain, for Victor still retained his scruples.

The time came for Maggie to have her short annual holiday. In the past she had generally used it for a hasty visit to Shetland, though on one occasion she had joined Katie in a trip to London. This time, both she and Victor assumed that the two of them would spend Maggie's holiday together. But in what capacity? As newly-weds? As unmarried lovers? If so, they would certainly have to masquerade as a married pair if they wanted to share a room. But the scruples which held Victor back from marrying Maggie, prevented him also from having a temporary union with her. He himself (he told me) scarcely understood his motive. Obviously it was not conventional morality that restrained him, for it had not restrained him before. Vaguely he felt that to consummate their "spiritual marriage", even without a legal union, would entangle her too deeply with him to allow her to free herself if the Dolt were to return. Always he was haunted by the fear that he might at any moment give place to the Dolt. Moreover, he felt that, quite apart from his own uncertainty, it would be wiser, in view of Maggie's former revulsion against sex, not to mate with her until they were even more deeply involved mentally.

In view of these scruples, Victor suggested to Maggie that they should go on holiday together as brother and sister. This proposal distressed Maggie. It revived her old suspicion that, in spite of all his affection for her, Victor suffered from an unacknowledged physical repulsion. This suspicion in turn, made her behave less warmly toward him.

However, they spent their holiday as he wished. They did a walking tour in the Lakes, from Youth Hostel to Youth Hostel; and they walked so strenuously that their vow of chastity was re-enforced by fatigue. They climbed all the main heights, for Maggie was a sturdy young woman and eager to prove her mettle. Victor persuaded her to venture on a little rock-climbing, "just to know what it's like", but she soon decided that "risking one's neck for the mere thrill of it was a mug's game". Sitting on the loose summit of Nape's Needle, she vowed that if she got down safely she would never climb again. Victor did not press her. Indeed, he admitted that, if you felt no need to test yourself, it was foolish to do so. Rock-climbing therefore gave place to scrambling and walking, watching buzzards and ravens, admiring the skill of sheep-dogs, conversing with their masters, bathing in tams, and looking forward to the next meal. One day on High Street they encountered seven red deer, including a "stag of ten". This incident stirred them both, but especially Victor. "Extraordinary," he told me, "how the wild animal in its native environment seems quite a different creature from the same kind in the zoo. Those free beasts were so lithe and lean and sleek, in fact in perfect training. They stood for a moment taking the scent of us with dilating nostrils, then turned and cantered away over the deep heather with their easy bounds, like sailing boats in a fair breeze, breasting the waves. Somehow we felt that, though we were much cleverer animals, they had something more important than cleverness, something that we had lost, perfect rapport with the environment, harmony with the universe, intimacy with God!" Victor laughed, apologizing for this fantasy.

It was shortly after this holiday that Victor wrote to me to suggest a meeting.

Talking late into the night in the hotel lounge, he at last completed his story. He looked at me quizzically, and said, "Well, what would you do in my position? Marry her? Live with her 'in sin'? Carry on still longer in the present uncomfortable way? Or cut adrift altogether?" All I could find to say was that if he did not want to entangle her, he should not have allowed himself to see so much of her. He said, "Of course! But here I am, in a fix. What would you do now?" After a long silence, I brought myself to say, "Either marry her as soon as possible, or give her up completely. Don't go on havering." For some minutes he said nothing. Then, knocking out his pipe and rising, he said "Well, thanks! You are a damned good listener. Queer how talking to you clears my mind, even if I don't finally act on your advice." We both went up to our rooms.

9 - VICTOR FORGES AHEAD

From 1924 to 1929

IT WAS OVER FIVE YEARS before I met Victor again. During most of this time I was teaching in India. I had always wanted an opportunity to see the East; and when the chance came to take up a post as lecturer in English in an Indian college, I accepted it. Not till 1929 did I return to England on leave. Victor had occasionally written to me, but he was not a painstaking correspondent, and I knew little of his affairs except the bare fact that, very soon after I had seen him, Maggie had come to live

with him. In the eyes of the law they were still unmarried, because he was still anxious lest he should have another relapse. But in spirit they were man and wife. The actual marriage was not to come till later, when Victor felt himself completely secure, and it was time for Maggie to have children.

When at last I visited them, I found them established in a little suburban house in the north-country town which was the centre from which Victor worked. Victor opened the door to me himself, and greeted me warmly. As we held each other's hands in greeting, I stared at him. For he had changed. The years had naturally left a mark on his face, but there was something there besides the signs of maturity. There was a new expression which I could not yet decipher, a curious combination of gentleness about the eyes and hardness or perhaps bitterness about the lips. I stared so long that he laughed and said, "Oh, yes, I've weathered a lot. So have you, but you look quite well, though a bit dried up with the sun."

He took my hat and coat, and called for Maggie. She emerged from the kitchen with a welcoming smile that gave me some hint of the beauty that Victor alone could see in her. Her features were even more pronounced and strange than they had been when I saw her some eight years earlier, as a waitress. But in spite of the years, and a few lines on the forehead and round the eyes, she looked quite young; partly, no doubt because her face was bronzed from a recent holiday, but more because of a general air of well-being and zest.

The little sitting-room was sparsely furnished, mostly in the light wood that was then becoming modish. Over the mantelpiece was a print of a Breughel. On another wall were some rather luscious forest scenes which I could not believe to be quite in accord with Victor's taste. Altogether the room was a mixture of the highly sophisticated and the naive. The curtains suggested a lodging-house, a thoroughly nice lodging-house; but we drank sherry out of Swedish glasses. Strangely, this curious combination of styles throughout the house did not offend me. They effected a sort of humorous harmony which, I suspected, symbolized the relation between Victor and Maggie themselves.

It was soon clear that the unofficial marriage was a great success, and that in many ways Victor depended on Maggie for security. His eyes would often quickly seek hers as though for confirmation of something which he had just said to me. And once, as he passed behind her chair to fetch something, he fleetingly laid a hand on her shoulder.

Later in my visit, while Maggie was preparing a meal, and Victor and I were sitting in the little garden, he remarked that before she had come to him he must have been spending a great deal of energy in "merely keeping the Dolt at bay", but that with her daily presence to strengthen him he had far more energy to spare, and a new sense of peace and security. Only on occasions when they were separated for a week or more did he feel anything of the old need to watch himself, and then merely as a vague loneliness and anxiety, not as a real threat.

In more practical ways also, Maggie was helpful. Not only did she look after the house, but also she entered actively into Victor's affairs. She had visited all his evening classes, and had struck up a real friendship with several of his students. Evidently she fulfilled an important function in his work. She said, "When Victor works up a new subject, he always tries it on the dog first, namely me. Sometimes the poor animal finds it heavy going and can't keep awake. Sometimes it has a nervous breakdown, like those unfortunate dogs he told me about that some great Russian experimenter tormented with intelligence tests that were just a bit too difficult for them. Sometimes this adoring dog just sits enthralled, forgetting its knitting. Sometimes it asks such a lot of silly questions and raises so many difficulties that poor Victor gets quite cross with it." Here Victor put in, "And then I have to go away and rewrite the whole thing. Oh, she's a useful critic, though exasperating, and wilfuly stupid. Then--how I hate her!" On the occasions when she visited his classes, her function (I gathered) was partly to watch the reactions of the members, and partly to watch Victor himself. On the journey home she would report her findings; protesting, perhaps, against Victor's mannerisms, or suggesting that some disheartened or timid individual needed special treatment. "In fact," said Victor, summing it all up, "her function is to give me hell."

On one occasion during my brief visit, Victor expressed perplexity about a certain class secretary who had shown more zeal than honesty by marking on the class register attendances that had not occurred, What ought the wretched tutor to do about it? Should he turn a blind eye, or make a fuss, and cause endless trouble with the authorities? The question was not a real request for advice but rather a statement of 'perplexity. I was amused by Maggie's technique for dealing with Victor on this occasion. I saw her take a sidelong glance at her man, and then she continued her knitting in silence. Presently she said, "What would happen if you made a fuss?"

"Trouble, hate, and a shindy with the B. of E."

"What would happen if you turned a blind eye?"

"Nothing! It wouldn't even make a difference to the Government grant earned by the class, because there'll be more than enough attendances anyhow."

"Which do you care for most, educating the workers or personal righteousness?" He laughed, and turned to me. "It's terrible," he said, "to be linked for life with an immoral woman. Instead of being a force making for righteousness, she leads me into temptation at every turn."

She too laughed, and remarked, "Poor Victor! He never has the moral courage to be immoral; so when he wants to be, he always has to get me to take the blame for him. Then he can do it with a good conscience."

Maggie had also been of service to Victor in the writing of the book which he had begun some six years earlier. This incipient masterpiece had been rewritten several times, and was now radically different from the early draft that his father had seen. "He calls it," said Maggie, "his web, and himself Penelope." He explained, "The trouble is, I'm mentally growing up rather fast, and everything I wrote even a year ago begins to look puerile." I suggested that he should not hold it back, but publish it in its present form as a sort of interim report. "No good," he said, "It would all have to be got into shape and polished, and I can't be bothered to do that with stuff that I have already outgrown. Besides, there are far too many half-baked books already."

Maggie seemed to regard her function in relation to the book as twofold. She must stimulate him into finishing it and publishing it as soon as possible, and she must force him to write so that ordinary intelligent people could follow him without undue effort. But Victor, who regarded his "web" neither as educational nor as propaganda but as sheer self-expression, rebelled against both these orders. "After all," he said, smiling at Maggie, "it's meant for educated people, not for country wenches and the scum of provincial towns, like you." Ignoring the sally, she said, "He'll never publish anything really worthwhile unless I stand over him with a rolling-pin. Of course there were those very respectable contributions to highbrow magazines, political and philosophical. They really began to make a name for him. But he gave up that sort of thing long ago because he said his ideas were still in the melting-pot, and he must get them clear before inflicting any more of them on people. Then at one time he used to write marvellous little articles for Leftish journals, but even that has stopped now. And anyhow he can't really put the whole of himself Into that sort of thing. It's time he got his teeth into something that will call out all his powers." Victor insisted that the book certainly did that. She said, "Well, yes, in a way; but it's like a rough sketch that is always being rubbed out and begun again. For your soul's health it's necessary to produce a finished bit of creation. Otherwise you'll go bad on my hands."

She looked at him long and anxiously. He replied in a serious voice. "No, Maggie, I have to judge for myself in that field. You can help me a lot, but you can't dictate the sort of thing I want to write. At present I am mentally in a muddle, and it's no use rushing into print until I have straightened things out. And as for being intelligible to ordinary people, you always claim to be one of them, and you seem to follow it all pretty well."

"But," she said, "I don't follow it until I've made you rewrite it all in simpler language. And of course, I'm no longer really ordinary. I have been hopelessly infected by you. If I had not been, I shouldn't be able to make head or tail of the stuff."

"The fact is," he said, "you're so anxious to react as the ordinary person that you over-compensate, and affect a sort of wilful, pigheaded stupidity that goes far beyond ordinary people." He gave her a love-signalling smile, to which she replied in kind.

"The fact is," she said, "you think ordinary people are like the people in your classes, but they're not. They are far stupider, and moreover they don't want to think." He closed the matter by saying, "Well, anyhow, I'm not writing for ordinary people. I reach

them (more or less) in my teaching. In my writing I'm writing for myself, to straighten out my own mind. But unfortunately my mind C won't stay put. It keeps seeing new things which involve restating everything."

I wanted to find out what Victor's book was about, and if possible to persuade him to let me read the manuscript. All he would say was, "The jumping-off point was dialectical materialism, but by now it's neither dialectical nor materialist in any but the most Pickwickian sense." When I asked him point blank if I could read it, he answered, "Of course, if you like; when I have straightened out a few things." But he was still straightening them out when I left.

Altogether, I found it impossible to form a clear picture of Victor's state of mind at this time. He was not very communicative. I learned that he had been drawn more and more into Left Wing political activity, and that there had been difficulties with the university. He had joined the C.P. His articles in Left Wing journals had in early days all been written under a pseudonym; but later this secretiveness irked him, and he took to using his own name, in the form "Vic Smith". It was this frankness that had caused difficulties with the authorities. There was also trouble over his expression of "Communistic" opinions in his classes. The work of adult education was supposed to be "non-political", in the party sense. It was concerned with teaching people to think for themselves, not with political propaganda. Certain prominent Conservatives in the town started an agitation against spending public money to aid classes that were hotbeds of "Marxism". Further, Victor had been mixed up in scandals connected with the unemployed. Once, for instance, he had entertained a party of them at the city's most exclusive restaurant. He had also been mixed up with disorders that had occurred when a procession of unemployed was refused admission to the Town Hall. He was arrested, and had to spend a night in a police cell, but was released because the evidence against him was insufficient. That night, Maggie suffered acute anxiety, fearing that the shock might recall the Dolt. But he returned to her as his normal self, and indeed elated. He said, "A little direct action is exhilarating after all the mere talking."

The upshot of all this activity was that his employers reluctantly warned him that his rashness was damaging to his authority as a teacher, and that unless he would promise to avoid entanglement in party politics, he would have to go. Victor firmly rejected this ultimatum, much to Maggie's distress.

His father also was much upset. The old gentleman had maintained friendly, though intermittent, relations with his "new" son. On Victor's brief visits to the old home there had always been violent arguments, but always an underlying mutual respect. Not until Victor's name began to appear in the press as an agitator and a revolutionary, did the father try to assert his paternal authority. Of course he failed; and according to his own ethic he was left with no alternative but to "disown the boy" and refuse to see him again. Sir Geoffrey was now beginning to threaten to disinherit his son. Natural affection, however, in the end triumphed over his political principles. Worry brought on by this conflict in the old man's mind seems to have hastened the stroke from which he died.

Victor was much distressed at the breach with the parent for whom he had conceived a warm though critical respect. His first impulse was to renounce the small amount of capital which came to him, and hand it over to some worthy cause which would have been approved of by his father. But the practical Maggie, with an eye on Victor's precarious future and her own future maternity, dissuaded him from this course.

Meanwhile the university authorities who employed Victor were no less distressed than his father; for they regarded Victor with respect and affection, and also as a valuable asset. Every effort was made to persuade him to agree to refrain in future from compromising activities; but in vain. So Victor was regretfully dismissed. This was shortly after the end of his winter classes.

But, to everyone's surprise, before work began again in the autumn, he had accepted the conditions and was preparing for his usual classes.

Naturally I was curious to know what it was that had brought about this change of attitude. It was quite incredible that Victor should simply have taken the line of least resistance. It was not until my last evening that he made any serious attempt to explain himself. Hitherto, when challenged, he had merely said, "I just had to get away from it all and think," or "I found I wasn't really sure of my own foundations after all." But on the last evening I managed to provoke him into fuller explanation.

We were all three in the little sitting-room. Maggie was working through a pile of mending. Victor, who liked to have some manual work on hand when he was carrying on a desultory conversation with an easy guest, was repairing an electric iron. I sat idly smoking.

I pressed him to tell me why he had given up political action. For a while, he merely went on fiddling with the intestines of the iron; but presently he said, "Well, it was like this. When I was trying my hand at agitation for the unemployed, I met a lot of people in that line whose hearts were fight (up to a point) but their heads all wrong. And their wrong heads kept pulling their hearts askew, so to speak. They were afire with generous passion for the underdog, but they had theories that didn't go deep enough; theories about human nature and historical forces. Misinterpreting Marx, they believed that human nature was simply an expression of environmental influences, whereas, of course, in truth, at every stage of evolution, there's always something inside reacting to something outside. This mistake led inevitably to a muddle over morality, and in the end to sheer opportunism. Then there were others whose trouble began in the heart and reacted on the head. Their real motive was not a generous passion, though they thought it was, but some sort of bottled-up hate. And this, of course, messed up their ideas. Mind you, the work we were doing had to be done. It was important. But sooner or later it was going to be important to have the right ideas behind it, otherwise it would all go bad on us. And as no one else seemed to be worrying about that side of the thing, it was clearly up to me to do something about it. That meant giving up active political work, for a while anyhow, and trying to digest what I had learnt through it. For really did learn a lot, about human nature, and about myself. But I had an increasing feeling that I needed new

light if I was to form clear ideas about social problems, and about man's nature. In fact what I needed was to think things out with all possible concentration, and without distraction from current urgencies."

He lapsed into silence, intent upon the dismembered iron, It was Maggie who prompted him, saying, "Come on, Victor, tell him what you did learn."

"I learned," he said, "the huge difference between man's best and his worst. And I learned more about the oddness of my own nature, compared with other people's. And I saw that all ordinary people are in a way a mixture of me and the Dolt, and that my relation with the Dolt threw light on the whole social problem."

Again he fell silent, working with his pliers. But Maggie prompted him, "Tell him about the demonstrations of the unemployed."

He began reluctantly, "Oh, well! It sounds flat in the telling, but it really is significant. Unemployment was already very bad in this unhappy town. The Communists began organizing mass meetings of the workless, and I had a good deal to do with this job. I found the unemployed utterly disheartened and cynical. They were poisoned by the sense of being 'not wanted', chucked on the scrap-heap. Many were so used to idling that they seemed to have lost all power of exerting themselves. Some of the long-timers, though not all, had turned apathetic through and through, even toward their own wives and families. And they had lost all self-respect. Yet, if once an idea or an ideal could penetrate their fop; of misery, and really present itself to their minds, they might respond magnificently with acts of real generosity or comradeship. Thus the very same man who was so wrapped up in his personal misery that he had no heart for anything else; shrugging his shoulders over his child's illness, might suddenly feel the child's reality and nurse it with the utmost devotion. The man who lost job after job through irresponsibility or sheer slacking, or who habitually pilfered from his mates, might suddenly be lit up by the idea of a mass protest for human fellowship, and work splendidly for the cause. Mind you, many Leftish journalists sentimentalized the unemployed, making out that they were all saints. They weren't. A few were magnificent. Most were just normal people for whom there were no jobs going, and of course most of these had been morally damaged by their bitter fate. Quite a lot were simply wasters and riff-raff. Inevitably in a labour glut there are bound to be unemployed of all calibres. It was cheering to find that nearly all but the lowest grade could see (with help) the idea of the march not merely in terms of individualistic clamouring for decent treatment but as a gesture for the idea of brotherhood. And for the sake of this gesture they could rise to heroism."

Again he was silent. Maggie put in a word. "And it fell to Victor to wake these people; and to keep them awake, because they were always apt to break down under some silly little temptation."

"And that," he said, "was what made me realize so clearly the difference between them and myself. When they behaved in the awake way, nine times out of ten they had a grim moral struggle, and came through heroically. Even when they had formed

regular habits of social loyalty, there was a perpetual tension in their minds. But with me, there's no serious tension at all, I just see the thing to do, and wholeheartedly want to do it; even if from the point of view of my own self-interest it is very objectionable. To refrain from doing it would be repugnant and painful. It's queer, I know, but there it is. Obviously I can't take any credit for this. The credit belongs only to the moral heroes who struggle against temptation, and gloriously triumph; if credit is a meaningful notion, which I sometimes doubt."

Maggie interrupted. "I think you make it clearer when you say, not that you have no struggle, but that the struggle does not enter into yourself. Once you said it went on outside your very self, like the struggle of the white corpuscles to conquer invading micro-organisms, which consciousness knows nothing of."

"Yes," he said, "it's like that, except that I am not strictly unconscious of the struggle. I am conscious of it clearly enough, but objectively. For my consciousness there's no internal struggle at all. The end, the goal, simply possesses and uses me."

I felt incredulous about his claim to have no moral struggle, and I said so. After some thought he replied, "Yes, in a way you are right. I do have moral struggles sometimes, but they are all on a different plane from the ordinary ones that torment most people. So far as sheer individualistic self-interest is concerned, I really don't have any struggle at all. I quite happily want to do the thing that others often find it impossible to will effectively. But I do have moral struggles of a kind. For instance, I have had a severe moral struggle to give up the C.P. and renounce political activity. You see, both political activity in general and the C.P. in particular still felt right for me; but little by little it was borne in on me that I ought to give them up to pursue another goal. It would have been much easier to carry on politically, but I had to take myself in hand and conquer my established moral habit. Yes, Harry, in a way you're right."

At this point I may as well break the historical sequence to mention a future moral struggle that Victor was to have. After turning away from political action and the C.P. he had inclined more and more to pacifism. This was during the earlier part of the inter-war period. Later, as the Nazi menace increased and the farce of "appeasement" developed, Victor was to be forced very reluctantly to see that even the sacred principle of non-violence must in certain circumstances be qualified. But he had formed such a strong moral habit of pacifism that he was faced with a grim moral struggle to break with that habit.

But I must revert to his situation during my visit in 1929, and his abandonment of political action. Victor had a good deal to say about his experiences over the demonstrations by the unemployed. "Of course," he said, "The Communists had a lot to do with organizing the unemployed in this town. And though inevitably some Communists were mere wasters or spitemongers, most worked splendidly. Now some of these seemed almost to have passed beyond the stage of individualistic moral struggle, seeming to serve the cause with single-hearted passion. When they were at their best, temptation to put self-interest first didn't seriously touch them at all. They really were 'possessed'. But with them the trouble was that their view of the goal and of the policy was

often distorted by subterranean hungers. Some, for instance, were loyal to the Revolution not through love, but because under its banner their unwitting vindictiveness could find a sanctioned outlet."

Maggie said, "At first the Communists admired him immensely. Some called him the English Lenin, because he was so good at inspiring and organizing. But when there were difficulties over the party line, they reviled him."

Victor continued. "They had seen something of the true goal. (Call it fullness of life for all.) It really did, in a way, possess them. But they had only seen it superficially. They didn't really know what fullness of life involved. Rebelling violently against individualism, they made a god of society, the ideal communist society, of course. The free democratic society was their ultimate goal, but meanwhile they were concerned only to establish the close-knit revolutionary state. What they could never see was that, though one must identify oneself with society, one must also, even for society's sake, be true to oneself, even if that meant going against the party line. Then again, they couldn't see that flouting the best moral tradition of society was a seriously harmful thing to do, even from the point of view of the Revolution itself. The end justifies the means, yes; but only if the means do not in the long run poison the end. The trouble with them was that they were too impatient ever to think of the long run. For the urgency of the Revolution you might steal and lie and beat people up, and even betray your friend, regardless of the effect of it all on the quality of the Revolution."

Silence again. Victor seemed absorbed in the electrical problem, or in his own thoughts. Maggie prompted him. "Tell him how you came to loggerheads with them."

"The turning point," he said, "was when they expected me to write articles in the local press to the effect that the organization of the unemployed was entirely spontaneous, and not inspired by the Communists in the first instance. I was also to tell my university friends the same lie. When I protested, they replied that it really didn't matter lying, even to personal friends, if it was for the Revolution. The important thing was to make people believe there was a real popular protest, non-political in origin. That was the only way to rouse the public and start up serious political action, and so on. When I refused to do this bit of bare-faced lying, they said I cared more about keeping my hands clean than serving the Revolution; or else more about keeping in with my employers; or else that I had not freed myself from the spell of bourgeois morality. We had many long and heated arguments, in which they simply insisted that the Revolution justified any means whatever, and I insisted that a reputation for irresponsible lying would do the cause no good. To this they merely answered that the lie would never be found out. Neither side gave way an inch. In the end I just said I wouldn't do the job, and if they persuaded someone else to do it, I would publish the truth."

I asked Victor if that was the end of his active political work.

"No," he said, "I carried on as before for a while, but the comrades who had called me the English Lenin now turned violently

against me. Mind you, I don't blame them. They sincerely believed I was a menace to the Revolution. Some even persuaded themselves I was actually working for the capitalists. So everything I did was misrepresented, often deliberately. Most of the politically conscious unemployed were turned against me, and some of those who were not politically conscious at all were caught by the rumour that I was a police spy."

Maggie said, "But give credit where it is due. Many of the non- politicals who knew you fairly well just laughed at the whole slander, and said they knew you were sound."

"Yes," said Victor, "and of course that was gratifying. But when a general meeting was held (at my request), It became clear that I could no longer hold the mass of the unemployed as I had done. The Communist line was easier for them to grasp, and from their point of view the charges against me were damning. I put my case as simply as I could, and at the time they took it superbly. I said the particular issue was a minor one, but a principle was at stake that was immensely important for the Revolution. I asked them what they really wanted, just a successful agitation in our town, or a whole new and radically transformed society, based on friendliness and mutual confidence. I tried to show what would happen if the Revolution turned savage, and what might happen if we won through without sacrificing the goal for immediate petty gains."

Maggie again, "And when he sat down they raised the roof."

Victor sighed, "Yes! I thought I had done the trick. I thought this might be the little significant event that would change the course of history. But I was mistaken. The comrade who was put up to defend the orthodox line was a local party leader, one of those who see everything black or white, and will go through hell for the white. He was an artisan, and he had devoted his life to the class war. He never spared himself, and his health was undermined. I had always respected him for his courage, and in a way for his sincerity; though I suspected he was deceiving himself about a lot of things, and I had never been able to make a real human contact with him." Here Victor jerked out an exasperated lit de laugh. "Queer!" he said, "I was always sparring with that fellow, and I felt he was really an evil influence, and yet, damn it, I couldn't help liking him, even loving him. And in a furtive sort of way 1 believe he liked me too, but he tried hard not to. And so there was always a barrier, even when we were working harmoniously together. The trouble was that he was proud of being a fanatic, and proud of being Machiavellian. Really I think he was at heart a muddled sort of saint who had forced himself to be tough and ruthless and a demagogue. Well, he enjoyed fighting me on that occasion. He began by saying I had almost persuaded him to change his mind and speak on my side. (They cheered.) But cold reason, he said, had saved him. Then he went through my speech point by point, giving a false interpretation to everything, and quoting Marxian texts against me very skilfully. Little by little he worked up to the charge that this unrealistic idealism would hamstring the Revolution, and finally he indulged in a lot of scurrilous stuff (which I am sure he believed) to prove I was sexually' incorrect', and politically a bourgeois Liberal, consciously or unconsciously on the side of reaction. When he sat down there was an uproar, mainly favourable to him. There were other speakers, for and against; but those on my side were

obviously rattled. When my turn came to reply, there was so much noise I couldn't get any coherent answer across at all. I Inight have been trying to talk to a crowd of excited apes."

I said, "But I don't see how this made you any less sure of your own position, your own foundations." He remained silent for some time. Maggie said, "The poor dear felt he had failed, and this was almost a new experience for him, on such a scale. So he reckoned there must be something wrong with him if he couldn't hold the crowd back from lapping up dope."

Victor spoke again. "The whole business got me down rather badly. I was dead tired and sleepy and fed up. I even began to wonder whether my line really had been crazy idealism, and my unconscious motive really had been to secure my own position in the status quo. Also, I felt a sudden stab of wounded vanity; and of course I knew very well that personal vanity, however fleeting, was a danger signal meaning that the Dolt was stirring in me. So I had to run to Maggie for help."

Maggie said, "I put him on to mending a broken chair, and then digging in the garden, till he could take a balanced view again."

"Yes," he said, "but the fact remained that I had completely failed to fortify those people against the over-simplified ideas of the party. I felt I must, after all, have a wrong conception of the springs of human action. It had seemed to me that, if people could be made to see what was good, they would certainly will it--as the audience did during my speech. But after all I had evidently underestimated the power of the positive evil will to take charge of them, to blind them to the good that they had seen. Of course, I am not identifying doctrinaire Communism with the evil will. Its main driving force is often the good will. But unfortunately the evil will in us can use the good will for its own ends, turning it subtly bad in us without our knowing what has happened. In my Communist opponent, for instance; and in the Dolt. I had assumed that the whole difference between me and the Dolt was that I could see more clearly than he could, and so I inevitably willed more wisely. But now I began to realize that there was something more positive in him than mere blindness, mere absence of vision. Something or other could destroy vision, and so destroy the good will. Of course I knew in a way that this thing was just the primitive will, rebelling against the developed will; or the perverted will, obsessed with primitive ends, resisting the more enlightened will; or the somnolent self, opposing the awake self; or the unregenerate spirit striving to prevent the birth of the twice-born spirit. But all this was metaphor. What positive thing was there, blotting out the vision, perverting the will? In my own case, I felt that there was some very positive power holding the Dolt together against the truer vision; and that Maggie, in keeping the Dolt at bay was struggling against something more than a mere blindness."

He paused, but before I had thought of something to say, he concluded, "So you see, I had to give up political action to face up to this fundamental problem. Otherwise I might do more harm than good."

Victor had finished mending the iron, and was clearing up his tools. While he was out of the room I noticed that Maggie's hands

lay idle, and that she was gazing with wide and glistening eyes at the empty grate. Uncomfortably I felt that she was not far from tears. I did not like to question her; but in the light of future events it seems well to record this little incident. Suddenly she rose, and went out, saying that we all deserved a cup of tea.

While I was thinking over all that Victor had said, he returned and settled into an easy chair. I remarked that he must find Maggie a great source of strength. He answered quietly, "I cannot live without her. I cannot. Without her I should soon die into the Dolt for ever." I protested that, after ail, he had been himself before ever he met Maggie "Yes," he said. "Those early spontaneous flashes of awakeness maintained themselves; and indeed they increased, as though I were gradually strengthening my hold. But now-well, I am beginning to wonder whether growing old doesn't favour the Dolt." Suddenly he turned an earnest face toward me, and said, "It's Maggie I am anxious about. Of course I used to care frightfully on my own account about being my real self, but now, well, I don't much mind really for myself. But I do care very much for Maggie's sake. She'd be in such a hole if the Dolt took over permanently. And she'd be so distressed for me. I sometimes feel terrified for her. (And this terror itself means I am not quite awake.) Yet I know it was right to link up with her. It was the way of life for both of us. Then there's another thing. Of course it was glorious for both of us that she was able to rescue me from the Dolt; and it's good that we both need each other so much, and that each quickens the other so much; but it's bad that I should depend on her for my very existence. For both our sakes I must be able to stand permanently on my own feet."

At this moment Maggie returned with the tea-tray. Glancing at it, he said, in his most Oxford accent "Waitress! That cake's a bought one. I shall complain to the management, and you'll be dismissed." She laughed. "Complain, if you like, sir." she said, in her most outlandish speech. "But I'm marrying the management."

Over our tea I led Victor back to his story. I asked whether he had made any progress in getting his foundations clear since the clash with the Communists. "I think so," he said. "Of course, in a way the problem is simple enough. Something or other blinds the Dolt to a whole aspect of experience which is clear to me. But what is it that blinds him? Is it just a strong physiological mechanism that invariably comes into action at the critical moment, a kind of reflex shutting of the eyes whenever they turn in a certain direction? If so, would some drug or other break the reflex, and so destroy the fictitious personality, and keep me permanently in the field? Or is that whole theory too simple. Then is there some psychological method or technique that would do the trick? I made enquiries about drugs, but got nowhere. Then I tried the mystics, eastern and western."

He fell silent, munching the bought cake.

Presently he said, "I haven't got my mind clear about mysticism yet, and perhaps I never shall. But if I had to make a sort of interim report, it would run something like this. (Make yourself comfortable. Have some more cake, though it's only a sort of ersatz of the real Maggie cake.) And fortify yourself to listen to a lecture."

At the risk of overburdening the reader, I must give a rather full report of Victor's comments on mysticism at this stage of his life. For his attitude on this subject seems to me significant for understanding his whole character. It is not easy for me whose mind is so pedestrian, to do justice to his views, because I cannot accept them without grave reservations. But I must do my best.

After Victor had continued for some time to sip his tea in silence, he said. "First, it is obvious that the great mystics had something enormously important to say. Second, they could only say it in human language and in terms of contemporary thought and values. And, as they themselves insist, human thought and language are far too clumsy for the task. Third, in their cultural environment, and with their contemporary thought, it was impossible for them to recognize that any statements about ultimate reality must be overwhelmingly more false than true. Consequently, in spite of their insistence on the ineffability of God, and so on, they persist in making far-reaching statements in the faith that they may be more true than false. They claim that in some significant sense they come into a special relation with 'God' or the 'Whole' or 'Reality', or what-not. Well, I believe that all such statements, taken in the sense in which they were intended, are completely unreliable. But, fourth, taken in another sense, simply as statements about the nature of consciousness or individuality, in relation to the depth behind depth of objective reality, they are often profoundly true. I mean: though it is utterly beyond our power to know whether consciousness is or is not at the heart of all things, it is quite possible for us to be wakened somewhat beyond our ordinary somnolent mundane level of awareness, so as to see or feel a little deeper into objective reality than we normally do. My own special case proves this rather strikingly; but really there is plenty of evidence of it in ordinary experience. The mystics have very much help to give us in this venture of deepening our awareness. Fifth, very roughly, what they tell us on this subject is this. Man cannot 'save' himself, cannot wake to a higher level of experience simply by the will to do so, on the part of his normal mundane self. Something other than his normal self must help him, must in some sense invade him, kill his normal individualistic self, and so possess him that he becomes a new kind of self, with new experience, new desires, a completely new orientation. The mystics say that this something other is 'God' or 'Reality' or the 'Whole'; but to say this sort of thing is to forget the limitations of human understanding. All that can legitimately be said is that something other than his normal self must intrude within his consciousness, with shattering effect upon his normal self, killing it, and creating a new self. This is the justification of all the talk about 'self-naughting', self- destruction, self-transcendence, and so on. Beyond this claim about something intruding, one other statement can safely be made. It is a statement implied in all that the mystics say. The 'something' that intrudes presents itself simly as a sphere of objective reality hitherto ignored, a wider, deeper, more subtle sphere; or better, not a distinct sphere at all but a whole system of new aspects of familiar reality. So to speak, all familiar things are transfigured by a new illumination, so that one experiences them more fully, more deeply, and discovers in them new kinds of value, hitherto unsuspected; much as the child wakes up from the purely animal values to discover the values of personality, in himself and others."

The lecture seemed to be finished. Victor concentrated on his food. I remarked that his attitude to mysticism seemed to me an ingenious attempt to have the cake and eat it. To accept the validity of mystical experience and yet deny the mystic's claim to

have some sort of contact with God, or ultimate reality, seemed too clever by half. With his mouth full, Victor said merely, "All new ideas seem at first too clever by half. But this one works. It's true to the actual experience."

At this point I queried, "You claim, do you, to have actually had the actual experience? With so many modern mystics one can never be sure that they speak from their own' experience and not merely from their reading of mystical classics." Victor answered cautiously, "Naturally I don't really know what actual experience the great mystics really had; but certainly I myself have actually experienced something which is the guiding star of my life. Indeed, so long as I am fully myself, I am constantly experiencing it. When I begin to lose it, I know the Dolt is in the offing, and I must discipline myself."

I was not yet satisfied, so I challenged him again. "You have it constantly, you say. Now for instance?" He answered promptly, "Yes, now. While I am talking to you I am compellingly aware of our universal setting. Not only do I feel us as little individual members of this planet's gropingly intelligent species, surrounded by a formidable pregnant cosmos of galaxies, but also I am constantly, though obscurely, aware of my fundamental identity with you and all personal beings, through the underlying ground of all being. Is that definite enough?"

I could not make much of this; but I took careful notes of our conversation, and subsequently Victor himself vetted them.

As he seemed to have settled once more into silence, I stimulated him again by asking him to tell me how all this bore on politics. "Well," he said, "the bearing is rather depressing. Granting that political action is necessary, how is it to be kept sweet? Not, certainly, by the Communist method of sacrificing everything to immediate political opportunism. But, on the other hand, not, as the mystically-inclined sometimes think, by the withdrawal of the best people away from the field of political action so that they can peacefully contemplate the 'Whole'. Somehow the political leaders must themselves be contemplatives, up to a point; to keep them true to the spirit. But how can they? Politics is a whole-time job. And so is religious contemplation. Moreover, so long as the masses are what they are, that sort of leader will never gain power. The masses themselves live on too low level of experience to care at all deeply and constantly for the spirit. But the Revolution, some sort of drastic social change, becomes increasingly urgent. The only hope is that the leaders and the masses will be a little more clearly aware of the spirit than they have been in the past. Really we are in a dilemma. We can't get the true Revolution without a general rise in spiritual awareness; but we can't have that until the Revolution has abolished some of the conditions that fix people's attention on individualistic power-lust or on herd passions."

Again he paused, but soon continued, "And now one final point, concerning me personally." I saw his eyes meet Maggie's. He continued, "I see now that, for me at any rate, there are no short cuts, no special technique for securing my position against the Dolt. At present I am maintained against him largely by Maggie's power, by something which is in a way magical or in a way like prayer. My own native power or responsiveness to the spirit is no longer quite what it was. Probably I shall never fully regain that

youthful sensitivity. So I must compensate for its loss by more earnest and continuous attention to the objective vision of the spirit, which distinguishes me from the Dolt. Here ends my second lecture."

He handed his cup to Maggie to be refilled.

Little more happened before I left the Smiths next morning. I hoped to see them again before leaving for India, but we did not succeed in arranging a meeting. My general impression of Victor's condition was that, in spite of his sense of psychological insecurity, he was really very firmly established, and indeed on the threshold of a triumphant career.

While I was in India I received an occasional letter from Victor telling me odds and ends about his work, speaking of articles he had written, books he hoped to write, and people he had met. Then came a letter announcing that the couple had been legally married, and then the news that Maggie had borne a son, and that both were doing well. This was followed by increasingly rare letters, in many of which the child figured a good deal. Evidently Victor was taking parenthood very seriously. In one of his letters, he said, "Children must be allowed to develop in their own way, of course, and learn their own lessons; but one tries to help them to avoid some of one's own mistakes. Probably one nevertheless treats them unwittingly all wrong in some way or other, so that they develop a set of troubles all their own."

Before closing my account of this period of Victor's life I had better mention a matter about which I did not learn till long afterwards, when I returned to England. Quite early in their married life Maggie had been made seriously anxious lest Victor's continued interest in other young women should lead sooner or later to distressing complications. Victor assured her that his inveterate habit of falling in love with any girl that was specially attractive to him could not lessen his feeling for her. But inevitably she felt insecure; and jealous, in spite of her modern theories. She was tormented by the fear that from one of these light-hearted relations with other women some serious attachment would arise. It seemed to her that they must spring from some inadequacy in herself. Evidently she could not permanently satisfy her husband. This idea Victor vehemently rejected. He said (so Maggie told me) "For me you are, and always will be, the dearest, in fact the very best of all possible mates. But, damn it, I won't blind myself to other women! And you must not blind yourself to other men. Of course, of course, monogamy, the single life-long partnership, is the only way to fullness of love; but don't you see, don't you feel, that If monogamy excludes every other attraction, If it turns-well, monastic, it may miss fullness of love after all." Then he added, garbling a famous quotation, "Besides, I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not other girls quite a lot."

Honesty compels me to record that Victor's behaviour in this matter seemed to me rather heartless and irresponsible. Even if he did know that his attachment to Maggie was unshakable, she had every reason to be distressed; and surely it was cruel and selfish to let her suffer. When I said this to Victor, he replied emphatically that for both their sakes he was justified in these occasional loves. For himself, he was justified because they quickened him (so he said) spiritually for his work, and because they did

actually deepen his love for his wife. And on Maggie's account too he was justified because (he insisted) only in such experience, however painfully, could she learn the truth about him, and about herself, and about love.

Well, this all sounded to me rather specious. Yet I find I have to reserve judgment. I have no illusion that Victor was perfect, even in his most lucid state; but so often he has proved himself far more sensitive than my very commonplace self! As for Maggie, she claims that she now entirely approves of Victor's conduct. But then, she was always too forgiving.

10 - CHECK

From 1929 to 1939

IN 1933, I RECEIVED a long and distressing letter from Maggie. Victor had relapsed into the Dolt condition. The following account is based on her letter, and on subsequent conversations with her and with Victor, when I returned to England in the spring of 1939.

Victor had been very busy with his adult education work, and at the end of the winter he was definitely over-tired. At this time Maggie had gone down with a bad attack of gastric flu. Victor had given up everything to nurse her and look after the child, who by the way had been named Colin. Shortly after Maggie was once more on her feet, Victor himself succumbed to the disease. He had an extremely bad attack, and his recovery was slow. The change of personality had occurred while he was still confined to his bed.

Maggie was actually sitting with him at the time. He had been rather sluggish and despondent during the day, but Maggie had supposed this to be a natural symptom of convalescence. She was sewing. Colin, now over two years old, was playing on his father's bed.

Maggie asked a question which Victor failed to answer. She looked up from her sewing, and was startled to see him staring at her with an expression of bewilderment and horror. At this point Colin clambered along from the foot of the bed to play with his father. Apparently he thought the expression of repugnance on his father's face was all in the game, for he laughed. Victor cried sharply, "Take the child away!" and pushed the still laughing Colin toward Maggie. She seized the wriggling and cheerful creature and held him to her. Victor started to get out of bed. She said, "Don't get out, dear, you're not really strong yet." He stood up, then fell back exhausted. He stood again, and demanded his clothes. She tried to persuade him to lie down. He cried out, "Don't touch me. Kindly leave the room." She hesitated, and slowly moved toward the door. Meanwhile the exertion of opening a drawer convinced the Dolt that he had better go back to bed. He crawled dejectedly between the sheets.

So it happened that the unfortunate Dolt had to stay in bed and be nursed by the ugly waitress. She, of course, had known at once what had happened to Victor, and she heroically determined that she would turn the disaster into some sort of a triumph. The Dolt himself also knew vaguely what had happened; but he needed to know more. "You had better stay," he said in a voice that was meant to be haughty but sounded merely querulous. "You had better tell me what has happened. All I can remember is, being in my father's house. He is Sir Geoffrey Cadogan-Smith."

Maggie found herself regarding the Dolt as still essentially Victor, though Victor very sick. She felt none of the distaste that the true Victor himself felt for his secondary personality. Maggie longed to put her arms round Victor and comfort him, but she realized that this would be a grave tactical error.

She returned to the chair beside the bed, still holding the child. She said, "You have had a very bad attack of flu, and now you're--not quite yourself." He asked her how long it was since he was with his father. She hesitated, then said, "A very long time, in fact about ten years." The Dolt was visibly distressed. He said, "Where am I now? Why are you here? You're a waitress, not a nurse. I remember you."

"Victor, dear," she said, "this is your home, and I am Maggie, your wife, and we love one another very much, and this is our little boy, Colin." He looked at her with perplexity and revulsion, then at the child, then about the room. There was a long silence. Then Victor said, "As soon as I am fit I shall go home to my father: I will see that you are provided for."

"But Victor, darling," she said ruefully, "this is the only home you have now. And we have been so happy. Can't you remember any of it?"

He looked at her blankly, then enquired, "Is my father dead?" To her affirmative nod he responded with a sigh rather of exasperation than of grief.

For ten days Maggie nursed the Dolt in his bed. Then he got up; and remained in the house for about a week more. Maggie behaved with the utmost devotion, without ever claiming his affection. She hoped thus in time to win his love, even if he remained the Dolt. But she seemed to make no impression. At last he announced that he would leave next day, and nothing she could say dissuaded him. He went through all his possessions, packed all his clothes, and gathered all the lecture notes and other manuscripts into a pile. Maggie discovered that he intended to burn these in the garden. Suddenly she flared up in indignation, upbraided the startled Dolt for a heartless, spiteful half-wit, and carried away the bundle to lock it in a cupboard. This incident seems to have impressed the Dolt. He could not help noticing that the woman had abandoned her usual sweetness only for the sake of his interest, or what she conceived to be his interest.

The Dolt departed. Maggie was greatly distressed, but she had put a cheerful face on it, and told him she felt sure he would come back soon. She then reverted to her supposed telepathic powers, seeking from afar to wake him to his true self. This she did by trying to make him feel her presence, vividly and constantly, and to rouse in him memories of their past happiness together. She also tried (but this task she felt to be far more difficult) to flood him with that "vision of the spirit" which he himself had formerly tried to impart to her.

After a few days she made enquiries at the bank, and learned that he had drawn a large sum, shifted his account to another town, and left no address. But he had arranged for her to draw a small amount weekly from the old bank.

The Dolt stayed away for about a month. I learned later from the awake Victor that he had spent the time in a rather expensive hotel in the seaport city of his former business career. At first he was entirely absorbed in trying to establish contact with his business acquaintances. He had little success. His hope of finding his way back into the shipping office came to nothing. He was forced to begin looking for some other job, but nothing attractive came his way.

Gradually he began to feel strangely divided against himself. He remained still the Dolt, in that all events of his awake phases were still inaccessible to him; but he was no longer wholly satisfied with his Doltish values. He had a vague yearning for something different from the triumphs of a successful business man. Even Maggie, though still physically unattractive to him, he remembered with something like affection, or at least with a self-centred yearning to be loved by her, or someone. The feeling of loneliness and futility became intolerable, and hotel life repugnant. Also, he realized that he could not afford such expensive accommodation with no income in prospect.

At last he wrote to Maggie to say that he would be returning next day, "to discuss certain matters with her".

He arrived in a taxi, with all his luggage. She opened the front door to him, and was ready to fall into his arms, but a single glance told her that he was still the Dolt. In spite of his Doltish condition, she could gladly have hugged him, but instead she offered a hand, which he took without emotion.

There followed a strange phase in which Victor alternated between standing on his Doltish dignity and allowing the kindly influence of Maggie and of home life and the irrepressibly friendly Colin to soak more and more deeply into him. Maggie treated him as a guest in the little house, fearful lest too much domesticity should repel him. He occupied the spare room, and took no part in the housework, nor in the care of Colin. Much of his time was spent in solitary walks; but much also in talks with Maggie about their common past. She was determined to rebuild little by little the whole fabric of his lost experience. But, do what she would, she could not change it from mere reported history to living memory. After recounting some incident or other, connected

perhaps with his work or the upbringing of the child, she would appeal, "Don't you remember?" But he would always shake his head, either impatiently or sadly. Once she dared to allude to some amatory incident dear to the awakened Victor. But the Dolt at once "went into his shell". Henceforth she carefully refrained from mentioning such things.

A good deal of the Dolt's time was spent in the little study, reading Victor's books. One day, with diffidence, he asked Maggie to let him see the notes which he had wanted to destroy. He said, "Let me read them in the evenings, when you can watch me all the time, in case--I should lose my head and want to destroy them." Maggie agreed. She also produced the manuscript of Victor's still unfinished book. With more concentration than understanding the Dolt tackled this work, while Maggie sat sewing. Now and then he would ask her to explain ideas that were unfamiliar to him, and she would try to reproduce the explanations that the true Victor had formerly, given to her. Sometimes he came on passages in which scorn of "the doltish mentality" was frankly expressed. Gradually the Dolt realized that these passages were in a way directed against himself. On one occasion he was so upset that he angrily tore the page; and then, seeing Maggie's outraged expression, he set about carefully mending it with transparent adhesive tape.

The summer was advancing. Inevitably the time was coming when normally Victor would be returning to his winter classes. Already he had been approached with regard to lecturing at a summer school. It was very difficult for him to refuse, but impossible to accept, as of course the Dolt was entirely unequipped. He had been forced to excuse himself on grounds of health. Maggie had privately informed the authorities that he had suffered another breakdown, but was recovering, and would probably be ready for his winter's work.

The change in the Dolt's temper had gone so far that he was now positively interested in the work and the character of the other personality. At first this interest was resentful and hostile, but little by little he came to recognize, though grudgingly, the values sacred to the other; and began also seriously to consider carrying on the other's work. The task would be formidable, because he had lost all knowledge of the subjects to be dealt with, and all recollection of the students. However, he announced his intention of tackling the job, with Maggie's help. She, of course, promised to do her utmost. The task would have been quite impossible but for one fortunate fact, not uncommon, I am told, in cases of multiple personality. Victor was able to relearn the old material very quickly. Similarly in the matter of students, Maggie was able, with the aid of a group-photograph of a festive gathering, to restore much of his knowledge of the personalities with whom he would be dealing. But in spite of his facile relearning of material that had been formerly acquired by the true Victor, the Dolt was not nearly as quick as the true Victor at picking up new facts; and he soon discovered that many of the awake personality's most original ideas were almost incomprehensible to him. At first he was inclined to regard this as a sign that the other was after all mentally unbalanced or deranged. But talks with Maggie forced him to revise his opinion. Over and over again she was able to pass on to him the insight which the awake Victor had passed on to her.

Little by little a queer ambivalent relation developed between the Dolt and Maggie. More and more he became dependent on her.

More and more he respected her, and even in an obscure way cared for her. But his affection was rather filial than marital. Physically she remained unattractive to him, or even repellent. She on her side was constantly exasperated not only by his intellectual inferiority to the true Victor but also by his emotional obtuseness. His affection, such as it was, was little more than a sentimental adulation of his dear nurse, his substitute mother. Indeed, though at first she had felt toward the Dolt as toward Victor sick, little by little she became conscious of a serious conflict in her heart between her identification of the Dolt with the true Victor and her dissatisfaction with the Dolt himself. Desperately she longed for the true Victor; increasingly she pitied and despised, and yet conscientiously mothered, the Doltish substitute. Yet physically the Dolt was identical with her own cherished man, and his physical coldness toward her constantly distressed her. The Dolt, it seemed, required of her only maternal tenderness and service. But her maternal feelings, were all for Colin. Yet the Dolt was indeed Victor. She still clung to the hope that some day he would wake again; and secretly she assiduously used all her supposed "magical" powers to restore her husband to his right mind. This she could never succeed in doing; but she inclined to believe that the steady improvement in the Dolt's own character was due to her paranormal influence.

At last the time came for Victor to start his winter classes. Maggie had privately warned his colleagues and some of his students that he was not yet fully himself, but she assured them that he was fit for work. She was confident that this was true, for she had carefully coached him, and he had very earnestly set himself to the task of mastering the work that was formerly so familiar to his other self. He faced his students with courage; and, apart from occasional "lapses of memory" and muddled presentation, he was academically proficient. But he had lost much of his old brilliance as a teacher, and he was far more easily tired and exasperated than the Victor that his students had formerly known. I took the trouble at a later stage to enquire from some of his students about their feelings toward Victor at this time. They had gradually discovered that his temperament had changed. Formerly everyone had found him exceptionally easy to make contact with, but now there was a barrier. They felt that he sincerely tried to overcome it, but it was always present. As one woman put the matter, "Mr. Smith's great gift in the old days was that he knew at once what you wanted, often better than you did yourself. But after his illness he lost this power. He never seemed able to realize you."

One other important event took place during my absence in India, namely the birth of a second child. Not till 1939, when I returned to England on holiday, did I see the Smiths again.

This time it was Maggie who received me. Victor was away at a class, but would be back that night. I noticed at once that: she had aged a good deal. Her ruddy hair was as voluminous as ever, but its lustre had diminished; and age or anxiety had produced a few white threads. The eyes, I thought, had a new tenderness and sadness. They were surrounded by a filigree of little creases. The wide mouth was more severely moulded; and the lips were slightly drawn back, as though from a sour taste.

As Maggie was leading me up to my room, Colin appeared. He was a well- grown boy of eight. His features owed much to Victor, but the mouth was a youthful version of Maggie's, and his hair showed a ruddy glint. He greeted me without shyness, but

with an obvious reserve. Later I learned that early experiences of his father had made him form a habit of approaching all men with reserve.

When I had deposited my baggage in my room, Maggie led me to see her younger child, Sheila, who had just been put to bed. She was now about three. She lay in her cot with very wide-awake blue eyes and a mop of fair hair. Unlike Colin, she at once greeted me with a genial smile. Having come into the world later than her brother, she had missed the period of her father's erratic behaviour toward his offspring.

We then went downstairs to share a high tea with Colin; and when he had gone off to bed, Maggie settled to her sewing, and told me all the family news. Victor, she said, was generally in the less-awake state. (Maggie, I noticed, never used the label "Dolt", which Victor awake had invented for his secondary personality.) There were only occasional brief wakings into the true Victor. To Maggie these spells were very poignant, because when they occurred Victor treated her with great tenderness and ardour. With a wry smile, she said, "You see, I have my own darling Victor for a few days every two or three months. The rest of the time I have an unsatisfactory substitute, who does not love me, does not really seem to know how to love anyone. He generally treats me with sentimental respect. In the early days he sometimes gave me a bad time; but he has come to need me in a lot of ways, and sometimes (I think) he begins to feel a trace of affection for me. But now and then he swings over into dislike, and--well, sometimes life becomes a bit difficult."

On the rare occasions when the true Victor awoke, he found his life in chaos. The Dolt was not the gifted teacher that Victor's students had known and admired. So far as actual knowledge of his subjects was concerned, he was by now tolerably efficient, with the aid of the awake Victor's notes and his own respectable "First-Class Honours" intelligence. But he was not nearly so good as Victor either at inspiring people with the will to understand and to work, or at helping them over difficulties. And he was erratic; sometimes painstaking, sometimes careless and contemptuous. The result was that attendance at his classes was not nearly so satisfactory as it had been. Consequently, in the sole class where the secretary's loyalty to the class was greater than his moral scruple, a good deal of falsification of the registers had been indulged in. The Dolt connived at this, although it amounted to a rather serious acquiescence in obtaining money from the State on false pretences. When the awake Victor appeared at a class, he found himself in a very awkward position. It was necessary to contradict a good deal of the Dolt's teaching; and also, in the one class there were difficulties over the register. It was taken for granted that he approved of the mildly dishonest practices that had become customary. Once or twice he had made a fuss, and this unexpected behaviour had caused much soreness.

On the occasions when the true Victor had taken a class, he used to tell Maggie in detail about the session, so that she could pass on the information to the Dolt. Sometimes he actually wrote a letter to his other self, informing him of the steps taken to defeat his malpractices. These letters he used to address ironically (though correctly) to "Captain J.V. Cadogan-Smith, M.C., M.A." It amused him to begin them "Dear Cad", and to sign them "Your better half, Vic Smith". I learned later that when the Dolt had

treated Maggie extremely badly, and the true Victor had presently appeared, he wrote a witheringly contemptuous letter to his other self, ending "I warn you! If you can't treat my wife decently, I may be forced to put a bullet through our common head."

In other ways, also, Victor's affairs were in confusion. It was quite impossible for him to carryon those "spiritual researches" which were to have been his special contribution to the life of his society. This work was now impossible for two reasons. First, though the Dolt had read the true Victor's unfinished book and other papers with increasing interest, he was quite incapable of the kind of experience which had given rise to it. Consequently it was only in the brief spells of his lucidity that Victor could make any progress either in what he called "spiritual research", or in writing. But in another way also the work was rendered impossible. The awake Victor himself was no longer capable of the clarity of experience that it demanded. The Dolt did not keep the common body and mind in strict training, did not keep his appetites under control, and his attention constantly upon such vision as was possible to him. Sometimes he did make serious attempts to do this; but all too soon he would lapse. Consequently when the awake Victor appeared, he inherited a sort of hang-over. Neither mind nor body were keyed up to concert pitch. Nothing less than several months of clean living and continuous meditation could possibly fit him for his work. And such a spell was never allowed him. The task which he had most at heart seemed to have become permanently impossible.

There was yet another source of distress for the awake Victor. The Dolt had begun to exploit such wisdom as the true Victor had already expressed in his unfinished book. For the less awake personality did not wish to remain indefinitely in adult education. Though he had by now been seriously influenced by the true Victor's values, he looked for something more spectacular and more lucrative than lecturing in evening classes. So he planned to write a number of popular books based on the philosophical and religious ideas of the awake personality, rashly confident that he had understood those ideas, and that he could even improve on them by making them more intelligible and less extravagant. The first book was to be a novel about a modern mystic who alternated between otherworldliness and participation in public life. He had already written most of this book. The awake Victor, who of course inherited the "memory" of the Dolt's actual writing of the book, and had also scrutinized it afresh after his waking, was bitterly contemptuous of this garbled version of his thought. He recognized that the Dolt had carried out his plan with considerable skill. Indeed, he feared that the novel might actually turn out to be a best seller, and its author might earn a spurious reputation for profound religious experience and literary artistry. But to the awake Victor the book was subtly false through and through. He could not tolerate the prospect of being saddled with responsibility for what he regarded as a glib and insincere work.

At a later date, I asked Victor to throw some light on the difference between his own ideas and the Dolt's interpretation of them. He answered with a long disquisition, most of which was almost meaningless to me. He would expound some conception of his own, and then give the Dolt's version of it, ending contemptuously with, "You surely see how he messed up the whole thing." In one case, however, I did gain some notion of his point. In his manuscript the true Victor had devoted much space to careful study of the distinctively human personal relationship of fellowship or community. He had described it realistically in terms of self-awareness and other-awareness and the creation of a psychical "symbiosis", in which each individual becomes necessary to and is

moulded by the other. The Dolt, I gather, had interpreted this to mean that a common spirit or soul emerged, with a life of its own over and above the life of the individual. The true Victor was infuriated by this "sentimental and romantic notion". And his own distress dismayed him, for the very fact that he could not maintain serene detachment seemed to indicate that he himself had gravely deteriorated.

The Dolt had kept his book secret from Maggie, perhaps vaguely feeling that she would disapprove of it. But of course, when the true Victor reappeared, he told her all about it, and showed it to her. He then announced that he would destroy the manuscript. But Maggie begged for its life, for to her it did not seem so base an imitation as to Victor himself; and she felt (so she told me) that drastic criticism would be more appropriate than destruction. In her view, even if the work was over-simplified and crude, and partly insincere, it also gave evidence of a quite sincere groping after truth. Might not her poor somnolent Victor clarify his mind in the writing of this book? And might not she, if she was sufficiently tactful, help him by passing on to him the comments of the lucid Victor? Might she not persuade him to rewrite it on a higher level of experience?

Maggie confessed to another motive. It was desperately important for her to gain the complete confidence of the unhappy secondary personality with whom she had to spend most of her life. She therefore wanted to be able to tell him that she had saved his book from destruction.

In the end her policy was agreed upon. Victor himself wrote an outspoken criticism of the book, and entrusted it to Maggie. She promised that, after due preparation of the author's mind, she would show him the devastating comments of the true Victor. The Dolt's book was never published, never even completed. Criticism on the part of the true Victor combined with a gradual change in the Dolt's own outlook to disgust him with his literary ventures.

Maggie made it clear to me that the less awake Victor was divided against himself. He was sometimes quite sincerely and earnestly concerned to follow as nearly as possible in the path set by the awake Victor, though well aware that he could never attain to the other's sensitivity and constancy of purpose. But often he rebelled; though never, so to speak, fundamentally. Formerly, the completely unregenerate Dolt had been determined to live a kind of life entirely different from that chosen by the awake Victor, a life of go-getting, self-display and individualistic enjoyment. But by now he was at heart orientated (though unclearly orientated) toward a different kind of life; and his rebelliousness, though often violent, was only a spasmodic kicking against the pricks and over the traces, with no clear alternative to the aims which he had grown to accept from his more lucid self. In fact he had in many ways greatly improved as a person. On the other hand, when he did revolt he could no longer revert to the respectable and efficient business man; and consequently he was at these times completely disorientated, disillusioned and disheartened. And so he was apt to fall for every passing temptation.

"For one thing," said Maggie, putting her sewing aside and clasping her hands tightly together in obvious distress, "at those times

he is apt to drink far too much. And of course that makes him worse. There have been complaints of his lecturing in a fuddled state. If he doesn't stop this sort of thing, he will lose his job, sooner or later. It's tragic. You see, his lapses are not very frequent, but they do so much harm. Normally my poor substitute Victor is all too respectable, and very conscientious up to a point. He really does want to make good. It's not his fault that he can't be really original or brilliant. (Though, mind you, he is just as intelligent as ever, in his own conventional way.) It's not his fault that he doesn't love me, and yet uncomfortably worships me. And all the while, you see, I know he is really at heart still Victor, my own glorious Victor; and so I easily forgive him, and in spite of everything I love him, and I just wait longingly for him to wake and be himself again. But, oh, dear, it's so distressing when he breaks out; and even more so when the bout is over, and he is abjectly ashamed." She paused, then added, near to tears, "He would hate me for telling you all this. But my own Victor wouldn't. Indeed he would want me to tell you. And it's a relief to be able to talk to someone about it all."

I asked Maggie what she had meant by saying that he had sometimes treated her badly; and I added that the awake Victor would want her to tell me. She took up her sewing again, and concentrated her attention on it. After a long silence, all she said was, "Oh, he just hates me and gets angry, and says horrid things, and sometimes does horrid things too." She was evidently reluctant to tell me more, and I did not press her.

Presently she said, "A little while ago he bought a sports car, though we really can't afford it. He spends a lot of time rushing about in it. He has always been a very good driver, you know; and doing trips in record time gives him a boyish delight. He generally manages to motor to his classes; and the night-driving amuses him. Once or twice he has taken me in the car for a week-end. It means making arrangements with a friend to come and stay here with the children. And, of course, that is sometimes difficult. And often he changes his mind when the arrangements have been made. Anyhow those week-ends never go properly. I get bored in a car; I prefer walking. And he hates walking, and wants to spend all the time in the car. So we go far afield, and never have any time to walk when we get there. Besides," she added with a nervous laugh, "he insists on having separate bedrooms at the hotels. On one occasion he started a bit of painfully false love-making on the journey. But it was too awful, and we both turned to ice. It seems so utterly fantastic for that to happen between me and Victor. You see, deep down under his revulsion from me he does really love me. I know he does. And I think he knows it too, but he won't face up to it. The loathing always wins. Sometimes he seems to love the car far more than me. When he is not driving it, he is always fiddling about with it. On one of the rare visits of my own Victor, we used the car to take us all to Patterdale. Of course Victor and I made a bit of a honeymoon of it. On the second day the other reappeared, and of course he was furious to find himself sharing a room with me; and furious also because the car (he said) had been overloaded He insisted on my taking the children back by train at once."

I asked Maggie if she felt sure that things really were improving, or the reverse. She said, "My true Victor comes no more often; but on the whole I do think the other is more reconciled to his life, and to me. Also he is more interested in the children than he used to be. He used to say, 'They're not my brats, and I don't see why I should bother about them '."

I inferred that Sheila, who had been born since the Dolt had ousted the true Victor, had been conceived during one of the rare awake phases of her father's strange life.

Maggie continued, "I feel somehow that if only I could win him emotionally, things might be much better. But he still finds me repulsive. Most men have always thought me just ugly, but he finds me repulsive." She suddenly rose, saying she must put the kettle on, as Victor would be back soon.

While I was thinking over Maggie's story, there was the sound of a car stopping at the gate, and Maggie went to let Maggie in. She brought him straight into the sitting-room.

"Hello, Henry, old man!" he said. "Glad to see you again at last." Victor greeted me with formal politeness, and a pathetic attempt at the lordly condescension of former days. I was shocked by his appearance. Not only was his hair much greyer (so, no doubt, was mine), but his face had gone flabby. The heavy eyelids half covered the eyes, in the manner typical of the Dolt; but occasionally they were raised in a disconcerting and exaggerated stare, as though in caricature of the true Victor.

There was an awkward little pause. I said something about being glad to see him again after all these years. "Years and years," he said, "and we both show it, me with my hair falling out, and you with that dried-up leathery face of the East." We both laughed. He said, "Do you remember how I had to valet you when you were my best man?" His voice faded out. It was as though he had forgotten and suddenly remembered that though (as the Dolt) he had not seen me since the wedding fiasco, the true Victor had since met me in London and had a long conversation. I tactfully laughed, and tried to think of something to say.

Victor had his supper from a tray, sitting by the fire. He kept up a flow of desultory talk, and I interjected an occasional platitude. I vaguely felt that we were both manoeuvring for position. When he had finished his meal, and Maggie had gone out to wash up, he said, "I suppose you think the other Victor is the true Victor, and that I am only a feeble and perverted imitation." I was never any good at tact, and now I squirmed and stammered. Before I could say anything, he continued.

"You're wrong. The other me is a brilliant but hopelessly unbalanced and extravagant creature. I have not his imaginative power, but I am balanced, sane. In fact I am the true synthesis of him and the practical go-getter that I used to be."

Taken aback, I could find no better comment than, "That's very interesting."

Victor looked at me shrewdly for a moment, then remarked, "Maggie has been talking to you. She's a wonderful woman, in spite

of her looks, poor thing; but she has got me all wrong. Just because I am not sexually attracted to her, she thinks I cannot be as sensitive as the bloke she married. Her trouble is that she can't keep her mind clear of sex. I suppose it's inevitable in an unattractive woman. Not that Maggie is simply unattractive. Long acquaintance with her reveals a most disturbing animal or diabolic power that one has increasingly to guard against."

At this point, noticing perhaps that I was showing signs of protest, he hastened to add, "But, as I say, in her own way she really is magnificent. She's devoted to me. If it had not been for her, I should never have discovered that my other self had anything good in him at all. She has been an invaluable liaison officer. She has helped me a lot to see things from his point of view. She has helped me to begin synthesizing the two of us. Take politics, for instance. He is a wild sort of Communist, and I used to be a rather conventional Tory. Well, with Maggie's help I have progressed a lot, and now I think I have really found the balanced view. At heart I am a kind of Liberal Socialist, but I am practical enough to see that the right road to socialism is through enlightened conservatism. My other I self, with his Marxism, is far too impatient to accept this position."

I pointed out that the other personality was not strictly a Marxist, though he had learnt very much from Marx. Victor ignored my interruption.

He continued, "Then all this religious stuff. Of course it is fundamentally sound and very important, but my brilliant brother (as I call him) is too clever by half about it, The things he writes are too subtle to get across to ordinary people. I sometimes wonder whether they are really so profund as he seems to think. I suspect they sometimes merely express brilliantly a fundamentally confused state of mind. But I am using his work a lot. Oh, yes, I shall be able to make something good out of it."

The Dolt's complacency took my breath away. Not until subsequent conversations did I discover that all this was a façade. He was building up a character that he wanted me to believe in. But he did not really believe in it himself. Under this patronizing assurance toward the true Victor I gradually began to sense a very different attitude. Not till quite late in my visit did the truth begin to appear.

I had, of course, watched with great interest the relations between Victor and Maggie. Generally he treated her with a rather crude kind of gallantry in which I detected an undercurrent of malice. On one occasion Maggie appeared in a new coat and skirt of plain design, Victor eyed it silently for a moment, then remarked, "Charming, charming, my dear; to those who can appreciate your peculiar style of beauty." He paused, then continued, "But those who can't, might feel that only an obviously attractive woman could carry off such a severe fashion," Thus he gave a veiled expression to his own dislike of Maggie's appearance, and yet at the same time claimed that he was sensitive enough to appreciate her.

On another occasion he expressed his hostility more openly. Sheila had been sick in the night, and Maggie appeared at breakfast

in her dressing-gown. A rather large area of creamy bosom was visible. Victor said, "For God's sake don't expose yourself like that. Even if your body is more attractive than your face you are not entitled to display it." Maggie clutched her dressing-gown tightly round her, turned Crimson, and replied with spirit, "Don't make yourself ridiculous!" I protested that there was nothing at all unseemly in her dress, and made it quite clear that Victor s remark had shocked me.

There was an awkward silence. Then in a different voice he said, "Maggie, please forgive me. I suppose I'm hypersensitive, or neurotic or something."

That evening, after Maggie had gone upstairs, Victor asked me to stay and talk to him. He offered me a drink; but, knowing his weakness, I refused. He brought out the bottle of whisky and tried to persuade me, but I remained firm. For a moment he hesitated, then put the bottle back, and sat down opposite me by the fire. Filling his pipe, he said in a dull voice, "I have talked a lot of rot since you came." I awkwardly protested, but he continued, "All that gassing about my being the synthesis of the two Victors is just rubbish. I wish it were true, but it isn't." He lit his pipe and gazed moodily into the fire. He said, "Of course I know quite well, really, that the other is the better man. But it's distressing, and so I pretend to patronize him. I don't really feel at all superior to my brilliant better half. I pretend to, but the pretence is becoming more and more transparent, even to me; specially under Maggie's eagle eye. I know quite well that everything worth while in me comes from him, mostly through Maggie. Really, I want to be him, even though at times I loathe him. I know I can't be him; but at least I want to do what I can to stand for the things he stands for. I want to learn from him all I can. I want to do his chosen work, not just because he chose it but because I myself have learnt to see how important it is today. But, hell, I'm not bright enough. Mind you, I'm bright enough by ordinary standards, quite as bright as you, you old stick-in-the-mud. But--well, there are things he wrote in his notes and his book that I can't really grasp. And, what's worse, even now that I accept his values, I can't stick to them and stand up for them as he did; because--well, I suppose I'm not possessed by them as he is."

Victor brooded in silence. His pipe had gone out. I had to say something, but all that came was, "I wish I could help somehow."

Then I added, "But Maggie is helping you a lot, isn't she?"

"Yes," he said, "she's wonderful. "Then in a burst of frankness he unburdened himself about her. "The trouble is, she can't realize she's not my style. I never married her. I'm not her husband. I really do see her merits. I profoundly respect her. I even love her, in a way; as long as she keeps her distance. But the sight of her and the touch of her simply don't appeal to me. In fact they repel me. I'm repelled all the more because I do feel there's a repulsive fascination about her. She's--well, a female ape with a woman's intelligence, and a superhuman generosity.

"'His Monkey Wife'!" Victor laughed harshly.

I felt a surge of indignation, and I protested hotly that he was being grossly unfair to her on the score of looks. She was certainly not a beauty, but it was untrue and false to say that she was repulsively fascinating. "Indeed," I said, "your other self has taught me to see something of her strange beauty, now and then." He replied, "Oh, well, that is how I feel about her myself. And so, when I do find myself attracted by her I can't help feeling it's a disgusting perversion that must be resisted at all costs." I scornfully rejected this idea, and urged him to let himself go the next time he felt her attraction, and perhaps that would cure him of his silly notions. "Christ!" he said. "If I did let myself go I should savage her. No! I must keep a hold on myself."

One morning I came downstairs to find both Maggie and Victor at breakfast. This was unusual, for generally Victor appeared late, often staying in bed for the meal. What was more unusual was that both were laughing happily. The children also were in high spirits. Once glance at Victor told me that he was himself again. The alert eyes, the uncurbed lips, were unmistakable. "Yes," said Victor, "I am myself again, at last. I'm afraid the Dolt has given you rather an uncomfortable visit, so far, Harry." I asked him when the change had happened. He answered merely, "Last night, about two o'clock." After breakfast, when the children had gone off to play, I was told more about it. Maggie said, "In the middle of the night I was awakened by a knock at my door. It was Victor, the real Victor. I recognized his voice at once. He said, 'Let me in, Maggie darling.'" (I noted that she had locked her door, but I made no comment.) Victor took up the thread, "So she let me in, and we did our best to add to the family." Maggie protested, her eyes sparkling, her colour rising.

The atmosphere of the whole house was changed. The children seemed delighted to find their father in a friendly mood, and each was determined to have as much as possible of him while he lasted. It was as though Victor were a soldier home on a short leave. The same poignant happiness, the same sense of brevity and precariousness, the same alternation of easy talk and awkward silence; and between the married pair the same tendency to keep hold of each other. I began to wonder whether they would rather that I left the place to them. But when I suggested this, they both vehemently protested.

It happened that Victor was due to take a class that same evening. He asked Maggie to arrange for someone to mind the children, so that she and I could both accompany him. "Let's go by train instead of the car," he said, "it's friendlier."

We arrived rather early in the schoolroom where the class was to be held. As the members arrived, Victor talked to individuals here and there about their work. When some twenty-five adults were uncomfortably seated at desks meant for children, Victor began his talk. He started by saying that he did-not intend to cover any new ground on this occasion, because he wanted to clear up a number of points that he had not dealt with satisfactorily earlier in the session. "I have not been in very good form recently," he said, "but I'm wide-awake now, and I had better make the best of it." The class had already tumbled to it that he was brighter than usual, and there was an unmistakable air of expectancy in the room. I noticed that the various corrections and qualifications

that Victor made to his own earlier statements were all such as to give a more balanced view, and a view less easily acceptable to the class. Evidently the Dolt had been accustomed to take the line of least resistance by allowing a good many extravagant Leftist pronouncements to go unanswered, and even by pandering to such opinions in his lectures. The awake Victor, though in some ways far more to the Left in politics than the Dolt, would not tolerate unfair or uncritical propaganda. On this occasion he had a passage of arms with an ardent Communist who was outraged that Victor should now be anxious to insist that there had been much real good-heartedness and self-sacrificing social work among employers. The young man rose and made a formal protest, deploring "this change of heart in our respected tutor ", and plainly hinting that Victor had to talk like that for fear of losing his job. Victor laughed, and then let himself go on the subject of over-simplifying history and human nature for the sake of a theory which was largely true but not the whole truth. He turned the incident to good account by a short statement on the terrific complexity of the universe, and the fact that none of the great questions could be properly answered, because they were all at bottom false questions. Always what we had to do was to ask new and subtler questions. When someone remarked, "Yes, but we must have some certainty to live by," Victor said, "You can't have it, and it's no use pretending." Then he corrected himself and said, "You can find in your own heart the only certainty that matters, namely that the way of community, of love and friendliness, is good, and that we must strive to live that way if we are to fulfil our nature. But certainty about the universe--No! Impossible! Let's just be humble about it, and reverently agnostic."

I think it was on the third evening after this that Victor told me about his ill-treatment of Maggie when he was in his less-awake phase. We were all three sitting round the fire, Maggie sewing, Victor mending crockery, I as usual idly smoking. (Mending crockery, by the way, was an operation which the Dolt had always refused to undertake. Consequently a collection of broken cups and plates had always accumulated for the true Victor to cope with on his rare visits. The little "daily help" who worked for Maggie at this time was more amiable than careful.) I had noticed, as the days advanced since Victor's waking, an increasing sadness in his relations with Maggie. This was to be expected, since his lucid state was not likely to last much longer. I could also detect a growing anxiety on Maggie's account. On one occasion I had overheard Maggie say to him, "It's all right, Victor dear. I can deal with him." And Victor replied, "God! I think you ought to learn jujitsu or carry a pistol." She laughed.

On this evening of the crockery-mending the truth came out. Carefully fitting two bits of a saucer together, Victor said, "Maggie may not have told you how rottenly the Dolt sometimes treats her. She's too kind."

Maggie looked uncomfortable and said, "Oh, surely the details don't matter. I did tell him there had been trouble."

Victor insisted, "The details do matter. I am very anxious about it all. Do you know, Harry, the Dolt, once went at her with a knife. I, Victor, once went at Maggie with a knife. Fortunately she was able to lock herself into the lavatory, and stay there till I cooled down."

"Yes," said Maggie, laughing, "and of course while Victor, poor dear, was crazily stabbing at the door the laundry van came. We missed sending our clothes that week. Afterwards, of course my unfortunate husband was bitterly ashamed of himself, and I think he would have stuck the knife in his own gizzard if I had not taken it from him."

I asked what the cause of the trouble was. Maggie said, "I thought Victor was out of the house, because I had not heard the car come back; and I was walking about in my petticoat because it was so hot. But Victor had left the car at the garage for repairs and walked home. So he caught me unawares. The sight of me like that sent him crazy. Heavens it was a picnic! And so funny, somehow I But it all happened ages ago. He has been a lamb for ever so long now."

"Yes," said Victor, "but things might quite well go wrong again any time. And there was that other affair."

Maggie brightly said, "Oh, that was earlier still. And now, as you know, I lock my door at night." Victor said," I had not been able to sleep. At the class where I had been that I evening there was a rather seductive girl. When I was going over some written work with her after the class squashed against her in one of those ridiculous little desks, I got all sexy. After that, I had a sleepless night. My mind was going round and round about sex and Maggie. What I regarded as the bestial fascination of her began to get the better of my repugnance. At last I just went to her room."

Maggie intervened. "I heard the door open, and for a moment I lay still with my heart thumping. Then I said 'Is that you, Victor?' There was no answer. He simply rushed straight at me. I very soon knew it was not my own darling Victor after all, but just the poor other Victor. He was rough and savage, and cruel too. I said I wouldn't be made love to like that, and I fought. I bit his shoulder hard, but he took no notice. Then it suddenly came over me that after all he really was my own Victor at heart, and I gave up."

Victor continued, "Presently it came over me that I was being a disgusting brute, and I ran away."

"After that," said Maggie. "I locked my door every night."

Victor turned to me and said, "Now do you wonder why I am anxious?" But Maggie insisted that it was all ancient history, and the other Victor would never do that sort of thing now. "And some day," she said, "he is going to love me, properly." When I suggested that some day the true Victor would be permanently established, they both sadly rejected this possibility. Maggie said, "The best we can hope for is that his visits will not become rarer and shorter and finally cease altogether." "But it's a slender hope," Victor said. "We have plotted the curve of the phases for the last eight years; and extrapolation suggests that I shall have vanished entirely by 1948 or 1950. And if it had not been for Maggie's help. I should probably have vanished long ago."

I had no clear idea as to how Maggie helped Victor to remain awake, so I asked her to tell me. Victor interposed. "Mainly just by being Maggie, and loving me."

"Yes," said Maggie, "mainly by loving him. But also by what one might call telepathic support, or (more accurately) by inducing the common spiritual soil, in which we are all rooted, to nourish the spirit in him."

This sort of talk made me turn all sceptical and cynical, but I report it as faithfully as I can. Victor said, "She likes to put it that way; but the truth is inexpressible. One might just as well call it prayer, and leave the whole matter unexplained."

The plight of these two was indeed strange and distressing. Victor had reconciled himself to the expectation that his times of lucidity would cease altogether, and that he would never be able to pursue effectively his chosen work. He was naturally very anxious that the Dolt should not give the world a garbled version of that work. He vaguely hoped that he and Maggie would be able to induce in the other a greater humility and a greater sincerity. But little progress had so far been made. In spite of this gloomy prospect, however, Victor seemed to be fundamentally reconciled to his fate. He said, "Evidently it is not in the pattern of history that I should be the one to clarify man's consciousness about his relation to the heart of things; but someone, some day will do it. Or some other race somewhere in the universe will see what I am trying to see. Indeed, maybe they have done so, long ago. And ultimately, Harry, what supremely matters is not that this or that individual or species should find peace (or' salvation ') through the intruding vision of the spirit, but that the spirit should somewhere or somewhen be perceived with full clarity and worshipped with full intelligence." This remark of Victor's greatly perplexed me, but I record it for what it is worth.

With regard to Maggie his position was very distressing. They would meet less and less often; and each time he would inherit memories of the Dolt's insensitive treatment of her. Occasionally, even the true serene Victor, when he was not quite at his best, would suffer bitterly on this score. In relation to Maggie's misfortune he could never quite maintain, the sublime acceptance which was natural to him in relation to his own misfortune. She herself, however, put a brave face on it. Though she obviously longed to have the true Victor always, she maintained a gallant confidence that in time she would win the poor substitute Victor wholly to the true Victor's values, and to real love for herself. "And then," she said, "he will really be my true Victor, though without my darling's brilliance." And she claimed that she herself was beginning to love the lesser Victor for his own sake and not merely because she knew that at heart he was the true Victor. This remark intrigued me, and I asked her to explain. After a silence she said, "I suppose I am beginning to love him maternally, with tenderness toward his weakness, and charity toward his perversity, and pride in his struggle to rise above himself. You see, he really is trying. He is having a desperate moral struggle. The Victor that is with us now has no struggle, not against sheer selfishness, I mean. He has said so, time and again. So he has no need of me to mother him." Victor interrupted, half in jest, half in earnest. "God!" he said, "I'm beginning to feel jealous of the Dolt. He is going to have so much of you, and I so little. Of course, in a way I have you all the time, because it's me you love in

him, and because when I wake I have all his experience. But it's dismal to remember how he falls short of loving you properly. And Maggie, I do need you; not to mother me, merely, but to keep me from dying utterly into him." Maggie suddenly rose from her chair, and put her arms round Victor's neck.

To complete the picture of Victor as I found him in 1939, I will say something of his relations with his children. Maggie had told me that in the early days of the Dolt's return, Victor had not tried to conceal his resentment against Colin. On several occasions he had treated the child rather brutally, once thrashing him severely for some paltry offence. But gradually he had made clumsy advances, and in the end a tolerable relationship had been established. Maggie had told Colin vaguely about his father's illness. She had done her best to persuade the boy that, when his father was in his ordinary state, he was not really "himself" at all. He was living in a kind of long bad dream. She told Colin much about the gentleness and humour of Victor in the days before he "fell ill", and insisted that even the ordinary Victor was like that at heart, and was gradually recovering his former genial nature. To me it seemed almost a miracle that she succeeded at all in winning her son over to this view. But, then, she was something of a witch. And in spite of his detached man-to-man behaviour, he loved and respected her very deeply. It was clear to me that the boy had come to model his behaviour toward Victor on his mother's forbearance and patience toward her husband in his less attractive phases. This admirable conduct would probably have been quite impossible to Colin but for the fact that he had first-hand acquaintance with the true Victor as a very satisfactory sort of parent. With the less awake Victor, the happiest incident had I been when Colin had been severely ill, and Victor was so far roused out of his habitual indifference that he had eagerly and devotedly taken his share of the nursing, and had done his best to entertain his son during the long convalescence. This affair had established better relations both between Victor and Colin and between Victor and Maggie.

One morning early in my visit, while the lesser personality was still on the scene, Victor found himself in the mood for playing with Colin. I had noticed that, hitherto, father and son had, on the whole, left each other alone, so Victor's announcement that he proposed to play with Colin surprised me. He explained, "I want to keep in touch with the lad. And it will be refreshing after last night's class. Come, Harry! You must join in." It was a wet morning. Colin was absorbed in drawing, for which he showed a considerable talent. Victor said to him, "I have a bit of time to spare, so would you like to get the railway out?" Colin cheerfully said, "Righto," but continued drawing. After a couple of minutes, during which Victor was showing me one of the locomotives, he turned to Colin, and said, "Well, what about it?" After one more careful stroke of the pencil, Colin went to the cupboard and fetched out a large box of railway lines. The three of us worked for a while, laying a complicated track from the playroom along the landing and into the far end of the guest-room. There were stations, a tunnel under my bed, sidings, and so on. The set was a magnificent electric system, built up birthday by birthday. When the track was laid, Colin was stationed in the playroom, I in the guest- room, and Victor took charge of the siding on the landing. There followed a very absorbing game with three trains and a great deal of work at the points. I noted that though Colin entered into the spirit of the game quite well, he was apt to snatch every opportunity for returning to his drawing. Once, when he failed to dispatch a train at the right moment, Victor was quite cross. It was also Victor, not Colin, who was cross when Sheila, wanting her dolly to have a ride on the train, tripped over a station and

disintegrated the line. Altogether, I got the impression that it was Colin who was entertaining Victor, not the reverse. And very gracefully he had done it, apart from one malicious moment, when (I suspect) he deliberately staged a head-on collision.

The behaviour of father and son over the model railway had given me a clearer view of the character of the less awake Victor at this time. Whenever the true Victor appeared (so Maggie said) the general change of atmosphere affected Colin very noticeably. Even the small Sheila seemed to be aware of a propitious change. I myself had witnessed this change in the children on the morning when the true Victor reappeared. After the happy breakfast had come to an end, and the table had been cleared, Colin came along to his father with his cherished drawing- book, and said, "Daddy, I've done heaps of drawings since I last showed you. Look!" He dragged Victor to a chair and put the open book on his knees. Victor turned over the pages, and said, "Marvellous! You have done a lot! But look, there are so many! I think we had better wait till this afternoon. I want to talk to Uncle Harry now." Colin protested, "No, Daddy, please look now! You may be different this afternoon. Please!" Victor's heart was touched, and he said, "Right! We'll get Uncle Harry to help." Colin dragged a chair beside his father's, and told me to stand behind and look over their shoulders. Victor studied each drawing carefully and then made a few comments, jocular or serious. Sometimes he reacted with critical approval, sometimes with ribaldry, but always he did his best to be helpful. There were drawings of animals (with something of the vigour of paleolithic paintings), of cars, ships, aeroplanes; and dramatic sketches of people having lurid adventures. Victor would say, "That's no picture at all. Every line in it is quarrelling with every other. There's no oneness to it," Or else, "That's not a bad effort, Colin, but this fellow has a side-face with a front-face eye in it. If you really intended that, to get both front and side-face into the picture, for the picture's sake, well and good; but I can't help feeling you just got muddled." Of another of Colin's creations he said, "Gosh! That poor blighter's legs never grew big enough for his body. And what's this man with the string bag emptied on his head?" Colin indignantly explained that it was a woman with fuzzy hair. When Victor came to a drawing of a steamer in a rough sea, he pointed out that the smoke was going one way and the flags another. Sometimes Victor would make little drawings in the margin, and Colin would watch intently.

A loose piece of paper slipped out of the book. Colin grabbed at it, with obvious embarrassment, but Victor was already holding it and scrutinizing it. Anxiously, Colin said, "I forgot that was there, Daddy," and tried to retrieve it. But Victor, laughing with relish, held it out of reach. It was a drawing of a face. And crude as it was, it was obviously Victor himself, wearing his most Doltish expression. Victor handed up the drawing to me, and started a playful brawl with Colin.

Nothing else need be reported about my visit to the Smiths in 1939. The true Victor was still in occupation when I left, but it was clear that both he and Maggie expected each day to be their last. Latterly the poignancy of the situation had been difficult for me to bear. They both behaved with normal calm, but there was a vague tension in all that they did. I was glad when the time came for me to leave them to themselves.

11 - GLOOM

From 1939 to 1946

THE SECOND WORLD WAR prevented me from seeing the Smiths again till 1946, for I was forced to remain in India till the war was over and I could secure a passage home. During the war years I occasionally had a letter from Victor or Maggie, but they were neither of them prolific correspondents, and I learned only the salient events of their lives. Another baby, appeared, Margaret. Victor added a little to his slender income by occasional writing. I gathered that the awake Victor's 'appearances became rarer and rarer, but that the secondary personality was becoming a reformed character.

At the outset of the war, the secondary Victor, believing himself to be acting according to the best lights of his more gifted "brother", declared himself a pacifist. This decision had been taken after much heart-searching, and under the influence of notes and articles written by the awake Victor during the early years of the inter-war period. Maggie too was still much influenced by the attitude that Victor had adopted in those days; but the awake Victor himself, on his brief re- appearances, had gradually come to take up a different view. On each occasion he spent much time re-assessing the memories of the other about the reports of Nazi ruthlessness in Germany and elsewhere, and the disastrous appeasement practised by the democratic powers; and little by little he was forced to the conclusion that this war had indeed to be fought. I have already referred to the fact that over this matter he had a genuinely moral struggle. It was difficult for him to abandon the pacifist's habit of mind, and to face the fact that, potent as "non-violence" is, it cannot solve all problems. Pacifism, he now affirmed, would be a betrayal of urgent concrete duty for the sake of an abstraction. He gradually persuaded Maggie to this view; and through her he tried to influence his own other self. But the bewildered other at first resisted strongly, regarding his brilliant "brother" as a renegade. In declaring himself a pacifist the Dolt had satisfied his increasing loyalty to the values of his other self; yet in stubbornly clinging to his pacifism in spite of the true Victor's change of opinion, he seems to have enjoyed asserting his own independence. However, what with the arguments brought to bear on him by the converted Maggie and a written communication left for him by the awake Victor, and (above all) the pressure of circumstances, he was at last painfully driven to recant.

He then swung over to a sense of his military obligation. His career in the previous war had been erratic but brilliant. He therefore decided to apply for some sort of army job in the new war. Maggie told me that after he had renounced his pacifism, and was awaiting the result of his letter to the War Office, he went through a phase of scarcely veiled self-importance, as though the whole defence of the Empire rested on his shoulders. Occasionally, however, a schoolboy gaiety would break through his solemnity. It was obvious that he was extremely glad to be relieved of the burden of pacifism. His heart's desire now was to find himself once more in khaki. But alas! His application was rejected on psychological grounds. After a spell of profound mortification and self-loathing, he brought himself to stoop so far as to join the Local Defence Volunteers, later called the Home Guard. Gradually he restored his self-respect by devoted and no doubt thoroughly efficient work in this connection. So enthusiastic and energetic was he, that he soon rose to a very responsible position. For him, the Home Guard now appeared as the

true backbone of Britain's defence. All this while, he managed also to carry on his normal adult educational duties. Owing to the pressure of war conditions these civilian evening classes were gradually much reduced; but a new kind of adult education began to be organized, namely in the Forces. Victor threw himself into this with enthusiasm, and throughout the greater part of the war years it was his main occupation. He said little about it in his rare letters to me, for reasons of military security. But after the war, when I met him again, he described it in some detail, and in due course I shall record the main facts, in so far as they bear upon the theme of this book.

Such was my scanty knowledge of Victor's affairs during the years between 1939 and 1946. Shortly after the end of the war I managed to secure a passage home; and once more I visited the Smiths. Owing to the housing shortage they were still in the same little surburban villa, though it was now much too small for them. Eleven years and the strain of wartime life had affected them both rather severely. Maggie received me at the door; and, as so often happens when one meets an old friend after a long absence, her welcoming smile flooded me with a sudden sense of her personality. I was so taken aback that I stammered out some bit of admiration. She laughed and coloured, gave me an unexpected kiss, and said, "I'm an old woman, but I have never come in for many compliments, and I still like them." She had indeed aged. Her brilliant mane was reduced both in bulk and in splendour. I thought of ploughed red earth sprinkled with lime. Her face had weathered to a healthy russet. It was the eyes and mouth that gave me that sudden vision of beauty. Suffering, hope deferred and much service of others had tempered her face to an expression of great delicacy. It was as though an inner spiritual beauty had conquered the uncouthness of her features and forced them to be lovely.

As I entered, Victor came in from the garden, apologizing for his dirty hands. Again the greeting told me much. There was a real friendliness, which contrasted with that remembered formal and patronizing greeting of seven years earlier. But Victor was obviously aging rapidly. He looked older than his fifty-six years. The grey hair had retreated from his brow. His face was gaunt and pale and heavily lined. The flabbiness that had shocked me in 1939 had given place to an extreme leanness. The eyes were still half-veiled by the Dolt's drooping lids, but there was a curious change. The lower lids seemed to have risen to meet the upper. This gave an impression as of a person habitually straining to overcome short-sightedness, or constantly suffering from a headache, or perhaps struggling to understand some awkward problem.

When I came down from my room I met Sheila, now a girl of ten. In her, the father's regular features tempered the mother's oddities, and I guessed that Sheila might well develop an intriguing beauty. She seemed to be a happy child. I learned later that though her main interest at present seemed to be tennis and the "flicks", her school record suggested that she might in due season capture a university scholarship, if she could put her back into her work. Colin I did not seee. He was away at boarding school. His parents spoke of him with a faintly anxious but respectful affection. They had expected him to take up some form of plastic art; but toward the end of the war he had conceived a passion for flying. Victor remarked, "Oh, Colin is capable; but a dark horse." Maggie added, "A dear dark horse." The third child, Margaret, now about five, had a rather charming little monkey face,

and a great capacity for mischief. She was nearly always able to get her own way with her doting father.

In my many talks with Victor and Maggie, sometimes separately and sometimes together, I formed a fairly clear picture of their life during the years since I had last seen them. It was now some eighteen months since the true Victor had last appeared; and he had vanished again on the very next day. But the established Victor was a very different person from the disorientated and distracted creature whom I had met seven years earlier. There were no more of those phases of revolt against all that the true Victor had championed. The former "Dolt" now consciously and rather pathetically modelled himself on his "vanishing brother". Also, he had now quite overcome his physical repugnance to Maggie. This had happened very shortly after my previous visit. I heard of the change from Victor himself; and also from Maggie, separately. Though factually their accounts were identical, their commentaries were strikingly different. Victor regarded the whole incident with a mixture of shame at his antics and thankfulness at their outcome. Maggie adopted an attitude suggestive, I thought, of the parents' rejoicing over the return of the prodigal son.

Shortly after I had left England in 1939, Victor had formed a sentimental attachment to a certain Amabel, a young woman of naively intellectual tastes. She sought distraction from the uninspiring job of looking after an invalid mother whose tastes were far from intellectual. Socially she was a cut above the average of his students. She always dressed with a quiet distinction. She had the correct figure and the kind of good looks that are popularized by commercial artists. She regarded Victor as a brilliant intellectual who had married beneath him and had need of refined companionship. Obviously it was her mission to supply the need. Without any clear thought of the future, the two began meeting one another outside the classroom; and in due season Victor persuaded her to spend a night with him in a hotel. This became a habit. He explained to Maggie that after the class he was too tired to come home on the same evening. Maggie soon suspected that there was more to it than that, and little by little she found out the main facts. She never challenged him, but he gradually realized that she knew all about it. Maggie was surprised to find how fiercely jealous she could be at heart while maintaining a façade of detachment. "And yet," she said, "I could not really blame my poor Victor. He was not really being unfaithful to me, because he had never been my lover." Though she managed to maintain an appearance of calm indifference, Victor's affair had a deep effect on her. Resentment against him for all the disappointment and suffering that he had caused her froze all her tenderness towards him. She behaved in a way that was superficially correct according to her established standards, but her inner hostility showed through at every turn.

Meanwhile on Victor's side his love affair proved a source of far more torment than delight. For even to the somnolent Victor it soon became obvious that Amabel was a poor creature compared with Maggie; and that Maggie was necessary to him. When her new coldness toward him had developed into a fixed habit, he became uncontrollably miserable and lonely. He told me, "It was as though the air I had breathed for so long without paying any attention to it had turned to acid fumes."

In passing, it is worth while noting the awake Victor's reaction to the Amabel affair. On the rare and brief occasions when he appeared, he was torn between exasperation and detachment. Remembering that the Dolt was after all at bottom identical with

himself, and that it was indeed he, Victor, that had made love to Amabel, he could not but feel self-ridicule and annoyance. He could escape this mood only by exercising his most "awake" powers of standing right outside himself, and regarding himself with objectivity as a particular human individual among countless others.

Though the awake Victor could well appreciate Amabel's physical lusciousness, he saw this animal ripeness itself blighted by a mildew of cultural affectation. It was as though a simple and comely farm house had been painted over to look like marble. He writhed at the memory of the sentimentality and self-deception that each of the pair had evoked in the other, pretending that what was in fact just an honest-to-God animal lust sprang from a deep spiritual affinity. For the awake Victor, Amabel's mincing voice and meticulous choice of words, her pathetic attempt to be a blue-stocking, somehow eclipsed her physical charms.

As for the Dolt, his feeling for Amabel gradually changed from attraction to contempt, and he began shamefacedly courting his wife. His repugnance was slowly displaced by a late discovery that the powerful spell which she had always exercised over him was not, after all, bestial or diabolic, but (to use his own adjective) "angelic".

At an earlier stage Maggie would have greeted Victor's advances with frank enthusiasm, but now, to her own distress, she was completely cold. But in the end her feelings were changed in a rather crucial incident. The true Victor had been in command for a few days and though he shared the common body with the faithless other Victor, Maggie felt no repugnance against that body when the true Victor possessed it. As usual they slept together. Apparently the lesser Victor awoke one night to find himself in bed with Maggie, and being ardently embraced by her. He realized at once that her caresses were meant for his brilliant "brother", who had gone to bed with her. The lesser Victor had the presence of mind to continue his "brother's" love-making without letting Maggie suspect the change. Not until the crisis was passed, and they were lying peacefully in each other's arms, did he tell her what had happened.

This incident was the beginning of a new relationship between them. Little by little Maggie s bitterness passed, and the two at last lived as man and wife. They shared a bedroom, thereby allowing more space for the children. At the time of my second visit from India, in 1946, there was obviously a great tenderness between them. It is difficult to say how I knew this, for they were not at all demonstrative toward each other. Both were now well advanced in years. The ardours of youth had long since passed. But I noticed that each addressed the other with a voice subtly different from that which they used to other people.

I must not give a false impression. In a long talk with Maggie one evening, when Victor was away lecturing, I learned more about her feelings toward her substitute husband after the Amabel affair. That distressing incident had happened some six years earlier. Shortly after its conclusion, when she was already near the age when childbirth would no longer be safe, Margaret was born. And now Margaret was a junior schoolgirl.

Though Maggie was at last fully mated to the Victor who had for so long rejected her, and though indeed she loved him dearly, yet it was only the other Victor ("my own true Victor") who kindled her fully. Him she adored. Toward the other, she felt a love that was three parts pity. With the true Victor she attained that passionate friendship between equals which is the fullest expression of love; though (she insisted) it was only through his powerful influence on her that she was able to rise to be in a manner his equal. To her he seemed always godlike, though through his power she had become his equal lover. He had raised her, formed her spirit. For him and with him she had become more than herself. In fact he was Eros to her Psyche. But to the other Victor she felt a tenderness which, in so far as it was more than an echo of that deeper love, was motherly. She had given him her body, not with the exultation of surrender to a god, but almost as she had given her breast to her baby, with a kind of ardent compassion.

From Victor himself I gathered much the same impression. He said, "I know quite well that I can never be to her what my brother is. But it was not only for his sake that she came to love me. Strangely, I could give her something which he could not give, or not in the same degree, namely a man to mother."

On one of my days with the Smiths, Maggie suggested that Victor and I should avail ourselves of the lovely winter weather, and the fact that he had no engagements, by going for a longish walk on the moors outside the town. She wanted to get us both out of the way while she did some early "spring-cleaning".

Victor took me in his ancient sports car, which he had kept in action throughout the war for travelling to the military units where he had to lecture. Now that the basic ration of petrol was restored, it was possible to use the car occasionally for private purposes. He was no longer the keen driver that he had been, but he still found motoring agreeable. We left the car at a point where the road passed over the shoulder of a hill. Thence we set off up a lane that had been badly chewed up by tanks and guns. After a couple of miles we reached a deserted military post of some sort, where empty huts were surrounded by a disgusting litter of old cans and other refuse. Thence we struck out by a footpath toward the moor. There was snow on the upper levels, and the bright morning was giving place to a sombre east-wind noon.

Life in India does not keep one in training for rough walking, and it was soon apparent that Victor was a good deal the more active of us. This was convenient, for it enabled him to talk while I was labouring up the hillside. Occasionally I paused for breath, and to look about me. The valley from which we had emerged was one of the many deep grooves in the great plateau of moorland. It was a largely industrialized region, and the smoke from its chimneys contributed to the black haze of the east wind. In one direction the valley lost itself among the sweeping moors; and in the other the view was blocked by the smoke pall of the town. After a while I suggested stopping for lunch, and when we had found a tolerably sheltered spot we settled down behind a wall and took out our sandwiches.

Over lunch the conversation turned to the relations between Victor's two personalities. "My 'brother'," he said, "is an optimist of the deepest dye. He still believes that mankind will turn the corner into some kind of glorious Utopia, though he admits we may destroy ourselves with atomic power. How I wish I could feel as he does I But I can't. He has faith in mankind because he has such superb faith in himself. Perhaps it is because I have lost faith in myself that I am losing faith in mankind. Much as I admire him, I can't help regarding him as in a way my younger brother. He retains the buoyancy of youth. After all, he is young compared with me. His actual conscious life has been far shorter than mine. Add up all his periods and then mine, and he can't be half my age. Of course he has all my memories, but he never has time to digest them all properly and turn them to his own account. So he is really quite inexperienced." Victor seemed to sense my unexpressed disagreement, for he added, "Of course, I know he is brilliant, and his mind works far more rapidly than mine; but he can't really keep up, and so he is always in danger of missing the tragic impact of the years. Of course he shares my old body, with all its little accumulating breakdowns and weaknesses; but it doesn't seem to make him old mentally." Victor paused, and I remarked that, compared with me, he seemed very fit and active. "Oh, I'm in fairly good condition," he said, "for my years. But--well you know as well as I do how senescence hampers one. The odd thing is that it doesn't seem to hamper him, except by making him appear less often."

There was silence again. We munched our cake, and thought our own thoughts. Then he said, "I am convinced that my imposing other self doesn't really know what wretched stuff average human nature is. If our average had been just a little more intelligent and a little more sensitive, we might have made quite a different sort of world. But think of that filthy camp we passed, and the messed-up valley, and our whole industrial civilization, and the war, and the Nazis. It's very simple really. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. And that's what we are, nearly all of us, just sows' ears. I know very well that's all I am myself, and really I'm quite good average stuff, indeed rather brighter than average in some ways. But my other self is a real ready-made silk purse. Hence his one big glorious mistake of supposing that everyone has a nice piece of real silk somehow hidden away inside his sow's' ear." We both laughed. I insisted that he himself really had a lot of silk in his make-up, otherwise he would have remained merely the Dolt. He shook his head. "That was just my brother's influence," he said, "and perhaps Maggie's magic." I rather warmly declared that we were all really pretty good at heart, but spoiled by circumstances. He pulled a wry face, and said, "I have seen a good deal of the plain man (and woman) in the Forces, and I know his limitations, and hers; just as I know my own. He's unimaginative, self-centred, conventional, vindictive, and he won't think if he can possibly help it. Damn it! I have good reason to know the plain man, because I am the plain man though uncomfortably raised a little by outside influences. And because I have had an ideal imposed on me, by outside influences, and I haven't the strength (or the effective will) to live up to it, deep in my heart I hate the things I love. And so I keep queering my own pitch with sudden acts of resentfulness and cruelty, hurting or insulting the very things I love; hurting Maggie, just because she's too good for me, and because she was forced on me by my other self; spoiling my work in the classes by sudden indifference and irresponsibility or positive malicious provocation of the tiresome people I am supposed to teach. And in all this I am not exceptional at all. I am just what the plain man is. O God, how I hate myself sometimes; and him, and everything. I hate the bad things for being bad and the good things for being good."

This distressing talk left me dumb. Though I felt painful pity for my unhappy friend. I was also hostile, and inclined to blame him for lacking grit.

We had finished our lunch, so we rose to our feet and continued our way over the gentle slopes of the great moorland plateau. To break the black silence that had descended on us, I asked Victor to tell me more about his work in army education. He said, "I suppose we did rather more good than harm, and sometimes it was quite stimulating both to lecturer and audiences. Yes, one did sometimes feel that the discussion kindled people. But my 'brother', who only took my place very seldom, thought it was all marvellous. He used to write copious notes afterwards, to help me. And they really were very useful. He was always surprised to find these very average 'cross-section' audiences so thoughtful. He insisted that people were all waking up at last; and that, if they were not led up the garden path by devilish propaganda, they would found a new world after the war. Well, there's some truth in that view, but look at the world now! Everyone's just clamouring for a good time. You see, my brother's trouble was simply this: being so good at stirring people up and making them think seriously, he never realized how they flopped again when he had left them."

Victor explained the aims and methods of that great venture of education in the Army, the Air Force and the Navy. The problem was very different from the civilian one, with which he was so familiar. For the civilian audiences, attendance at classes was of course voluntary, and those who came were all drawn by some sort of desire for education, however vague a desire. The service audiences were mostly audiences of educational conscripts. In the early days, apparently, Victor often found himself faced with a group who had no interest whatever in the matter in hand. They regarded the occasion simply as an opportunity for idleness or even sleep. Sometimes there was open hostility. People would ostentatiously read a paper, or snore, until a sergeant intervened. Or they would sit with their backs to the lecturer. There could not have been a worse atmosphere for education. "But after all," he said, "the situation was a challenge. Somehow one had to make those people glad they had been forced to come. No doubt my other self always succeeded. But for me it was necessary to learn the right technique very laboriously. One had to combine school-boy humour with unmistakable sincerity and enthusiasm for the subject. No wonder in those early days the atmosphere sometimes cowed me completely. Then the whole affair would be simply a nightmare. However, as time passed, the troops themselves got more used to the idea of serious discussion, and we lecturers got more skilled. Latterly I generally came away with a feeling that on the whole something worth while had been accomplished. And occasionally even I had the exciting experience of seeing those ordinary beer- drinking, pin-up-girl connoisseurs and football fans begin to sit up and take notice, and fire off volleys of questions or comments. But this was rare."

It was clear that my companion had a gnawing sense of failure. "I ask myself," he said, "did I in any of those meetings give anyone the beginnings of a real longing for the life of the mind. One or two, here and there, perhaps. And perhaps one or two would be just very slightly more tolerant and understanding than they could have been otherwise. Perhaps! That is what one hopes for as the result of all that travelling about in crowded wartime trains, in planes, in Army trucks, R.A.F. trucks, Navy

trucks, to remote batteries, searchlight sites, camps, islands. It wouldn't be so horribly depressing if I didn't know that my 'brother' would have done it all incomparably better. He would always hold their attention, always give them something worth while, always leave a lasting effect. Damn him!"

The weather had greatly deteriorated, and conversation petered out. The wind was biting, and sleet was beginning to drive into our faces. Those Yorkshire moors have a restrained grandeur of their own, and bad weather enhances it. The snow added to their severe beauty; and to our discomfort, for as soon as we left the path, we found ourselves in difficulties. We came into a region of innumerable peat hags, miniature canyons, the bottoms of which were black bog or peat. They were now partly filled with snowdrifts. Then came a blizzard of blinding sleet, and presently a heavy cloud swept along the moor and engulfed us. Conversation had ceased. We were far too busy floundering in concealed holes or leaping from tussock to tussock. Presently Victor stopped and said, "We shall get hopelessly lost in this mist. Let's give up the round, and go back to the car." I was quite glad to do so, but rather surprised that Victor, the more active of us, should lose heart so easily. Neither of his two personalities had been easily daunted by physical discomforts or risks.

Victor must have sensed my surprise; for he said, "I suppose it's a bit pusillanimous to turn back, but why should two old buffers like us go floundering on in this uncomfortable mess? This weather might have been exhilarating thirty years ago, but at our age it's too much of a good thing. Besides," he laughed nervously, "it frightens me." Of course I raised no objection to turning, but as we retraced our steps I asked him what he meant by saying he was frightened. I could not see any danger. "Of course there's none, really," he answered. "We can easily make our way down into some valley or other even if we do get lost. But--well, the whole scene is too poignantly symbolical of the universe. The desolation of these sweeping moors, the savage sleet, the labour of every step, the early darkness, the whole physical world's complete indifference to man, the way man himself has messed up everything, for instance in that derelict camp. The fact is, life is getting me down, and any little thing can take the lid off hell for me. Everything is so bleak and hopeless, everything. And I do everything in such a second-class blindfold way. Fancy never having got beyond being a journeyman in adult education after all these years!"

I protested that things were not nearly so bad as he thought. Surely Victor had had his share of good fortune-a useful job well done, a splendid wife, and a family that did them both credit. Almost with resentment he said, "Oh, of course I ought not to complain. I'm well, have enough to live on, and am harmlessly occupied: And of course Maggie is superb. I shudder to think what I should have been without her. She is incomparably the best thing in my life. But all the while I know I'm not really what she wants. Yon see, after all, she's simply far too good for me. She really does love me; I know; but always she longs for that other Victor. Christ! How I hate my better self sometimes!"

We walked on in silence for a while. Presently Victor continued, "And then there's Colin. He's a fine lad, I know; but I just can't make head or tail of him. Except of course that he sees through his wretched father pretty thoroughly. How could he help it, after

my unsatisfactory behaviour to him while he was a child! Now, of course, I have learnt sense, but it's too late. He just gangs his ane gait. If ever I try to advise he is painfully polite and really takes no notice at all. Indeed he is always so considerate that I feel he is treating me as a mental patient. Sometimes I could wring his neck. Then Sheila! Certainly an attractive girl, isn't she; but in no real sense my daughter. She is quite simply not interested in me. But Margaret-- she's really mine, and I think I live in her more than in anything else. I didn't damage her as I damaged Colin. And I can appreciate her. And I, myself, begat her. She's not the other's child. We're very good friends, as you know. But she knows quite well by now that I'm a man beaten by his own shortcomings. She still has a real affection for me, but she admires only my 'brother'. Oh, yes, she is beginning to see through me already. And now, of course, I'm getting old. I might be her grandfather. I can't help her as much as I used to. Soon she'll leave me far behind."

All that Victor had said was in a way true, but I felt unreasonably annoyed with him for being so depressed about it, and for dragging it into the open, so that I had to make some comment. The root of the trouble seemed to me to be that he was too self-absorbed, and too conscious of his inferiority to the true Victor. Somehow I didn't feel like telling him this.

Victor continued, "There's a coherent pattern in your life. In mine there's only a chaos of abortive patterns. But I'm not claiming to be uniquely unfortunate. The plain fact is that all men are unhappy in one way or another. At least I have never found anyone who wasn't. Get them talking, and people all confess to some gnawing misery or other; except those that are ashamed of it, or so frightened they can't admit it even to themselves." I protested against this fantastic idea; and he admitted he might be exaggerating. "No doubt," he said, "the death- wish is warping my judgment. Intellectually, and even in a way spiritually, I know (at least I sometimes know) that to give up would be treason to the spirit; but my terrible fatigue and disillusionment keep spawning arguments for death."

We walked in silence for a while, for the blizzard had redoubled its force, and conversation was impossible. When respite came, I babbled vaguely of the loveliness of the world. The English countryside, I said, even in this harsh weather, was enough to hold me to life, no matter how depressing my personal career. He said, "One can't live for scenery." I tried another line. I argued that, even if as an individual one was futile, yet in a way one was more than an individual, having a part in the great struggle of humanity to find its soul. He laughed bitterly. "It's not finding its soul," he said. "It's damning itself. Within fifty years' time it will probably have wiped itself right off the planet with atomic warfare. But look! Why is it that all individuals today, at least all who are socially conscious, are in one way or another tortured by social guilt? Because whatever they do is fatally false, falsified by the pressure of an utterly false society. If you live solely for individual contacts and personal service, then you betray your obligation to the suffering millions with whom you have no contact. If you live for economic or social and political action to cure the sick world, then, either you will be entirely ineffective, or else you will gain power, and so be corrupted by power; and then you will contribute to the burden of the institutionalism and mechanized tyranny that is turning all men into robots. If you withdraw from the world to purge your soul of the world's poison, seeking a lone salvation in religious discipline and

contemplation, then again you betray your immediate obligation to your fellows, even if you innocently suppose you will discover truth invaluable to a future generation. No! As I see it, do what you will, you are damned, just because you are all of a piece with a damned world, a damned species. No wonder death is coming to seem more and more desirable."

At this point I asked Victor if he had told Maggie about his death- wish. He had not; and I urged him to do so, so that she could help him to overcome it. "It would distress her," he said, "and she wouldn't understand. She's so wedded to life."

Brushing aside this interruption, he continued, "Probably the root of the whole trouble is that as a species we are neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring; neither sheer brute nor fully personal. As some writer or other said (perhaps Wells), man is not perfected for flight in his chosen element, like the bird; he's just a clumsy first experiment, like the old flying lizards. And like them he will sooner or later come to grief. My 'brother' is probably an earnest of the higher type that might be able to make a good thing of this planet. The rest of us are poor tortured misfits. But the chances are that his type will never establish itself. And even if it does, it will probably complicate its world society to such an extent that it will be beaten by circumstances, just as we are being beaten on our more lowly plane. But, anyhow, what does it matter? In my clearest, coldest moments I begin to see that existence is in the last analysis simply pointless. That is just what my hearty 'brother' in spite of his brilliance, can never see."

This kind of talk filled me with despond, and with exasperation at Victor. It was so devastatingly true; but I felt there must be an effective answer to it. I longed for the true Victor to appear and provide the answer. Indeed I felt that one breath from the other Victor would dispel this fog that engulfed the poor secondary personality. Presently it occurred to me to point out that if Victor (the present Victor) really regarded his 'brother' as being gifted with a more penetrating insight than his own, surely he must credit him with some solid ground for optimism. To this my companion replied, "In theory you are right. But he seems to me to be constantly misled by his own personal beatitude. To him, with his fundamental peace of mind (however caused) all is bound to seem ultimately for the best. But we who cannot see his vision cannot really feel the ultimate rightness of things. And it's no use pretending. Besides, he may be wrong. He may be merely projecting his own well-being on the universe." I stammered something about the lovely and glorious things in the universe redeeming the evil. "After all," I said, "some things do matter. And you ought to be content to have lived and worked for the things that matter."

"They matter," he replied, "to us; but we, perhaps, don't matter to the universe. And anyhow I can't believe that I matter to anyone very much."

"To Maggie," I protested. He answered quietly, "Not much, really. If I were to fade out, finally giving place to my 'brother', she'd be glad. And if I were to put an end to the two of us, she would merely be upset at losing my 'brother' for ever. Frankly, I'd be glad to be done with the whole business, if I could get out in some easy way. Tell me, Harry! Do you find life still worth living?"

I thought before I answered. "Well," I said," I have no illusions about my own importance, and if I were to find myself under sentence of death tomorrow, I shouldn't really mind. But I should be a bit annoyed all the same. Everything is so frightfully interesting. One's own life has been pretty futile, of course; but the life of the species is so exciting, and most of all in our own age."

He answered, "To me the whole of contemporary existence begins to seem merely like the last and dullest scene of a rather tiresome play. I want to get away and go to sleep."

For a long while we trailed down the moor in silence; till at last we came out below the mist, and the murky valley spread out before us. Presently we reached the car, and packed ourselves into it. (Our feet left pools on the floorboards.) I was feeling thoroughly dejected, and cross with Victor, and yet I couldn't produce a satisfactory answer to his pessimism. But he, having got the matter off his chest, was beginning to cheer up. He was obviously enjoying the driving. Here at least was a job he liked and could do with precision and elegance. Presently he said, "Sorry I was so gloomy. It's not really as bad as all that, I know. I do feel it in my bones that things are worth while, and that what my idealistic 'brother' calls 'the spirit' matters much more than we do, and that one must go on blunderingly serving it. I feel it in my bones; but O God, I can't feel it clearly and commandingly."

Nothing else worth reporting happened during my visit. The awake Victor did not put in an appearance. Maggie said she would telegraph to me if he did so before my leave was finished; for I had a great desire to see him again. I payed another short visit before I returned to India, but the situation was much as it had been.

12 - STRANGE TRIUMPH

From 1946 to 1948

I RETURNED TO INDIA for a short spell of work before retiring to the home country. My long stay in the East had already told on my health, and I looked forward eagerly to some modest and unexacting job in England to keep me going for a few years until the time should come to retire completely from active life. I promised myself that I would first take some post in England, something not too arduous, that would allow me enough leisure to work up a full-length biography of Victor. He had agreed to this project, on condition that the book should not be published till after his death. If I should die first, which seemed to me quite likely, the manuscript was to be held by my executors until Victor had followed me. I looked forward to seeing much more of Victor when I finally settled in England, and I hoped to gain a much more intimate understanding of the true Victor's ideas. If he failed to publish his ever-rewritten book before his death, I was to have the task of editing it and publishing at least a large part of it posthumously.

My plans were frustrated. Some nine months after my return to India I received a disquieting letter from Maggie. Victor's condition seemed to have deteriorated. He was faithfully continuing his work; and indeed, when he had sufficient strength to carry out his teaching, he was a more successful teacher than he had ever been; but he seemed to be profoundly and morbidly depressed about himself and the world. He was seriously overworking, both in preparing his official lectures and in reading book after book on religious or philosophical subjects. He generally stayed up half the night reading, or just thinking. Maggie could not make up her mind whether he was heroically and forlornly struggling to mimic his 'brother' by finding some great illumination, or whether, on the contrary, he was rebelling against the resented influence of the true Victor.

He had started a course of ruthless asceticism. Alcohol and tobacco he had given up enirely. Food he had strictly rationed to something much less than the official ration. He said that if the Germans had to starve, so must he. Undernourishment had undermined his bodily health, though (so he said) it was quickening his mind. All the same, Maggie learned from his students that he was often too tired to cope with a class properly. All occasional pleasures, such as films and plays, motoring week-ends and country walks, he had abandoned. Had he wanted to walk, he could not have done it, for he had no spare energy. Toward Margaret, on whom till recently he had rather extravagantly doted, he now maintained a strange aloofness, alternating with gleams of hungry love. Toward Maggie herself, though he treated her with even more than his habitual tenderness, he seemed at heart aloof. She had tried to persuade him to tell her what was troubling him, but he refused to be drawn. He insisted on sleeping in a separate room, because (so he said) his nocturnal meditations would disturb her. He never laughed, never smiled, save professionally at his classes. He had apparently lost all interest in the life of the society in which he lived, and in the whole surrounding universe. Even his work he performed rather as a discipline than from a sense of its importance. His attention seemed wholly withdrawn upon his own inner life. But this too, so far as she could judge, gave him no real satisfaction. Maggie was, of course, greatly distressed and frightened. She feared that sooner or later he would have a complete mental breakdown. In her letter to me, she said, "My poor Victor is desperately groping for the light, but I cannot help feeling that the powers of darkness, whatever they maybe, are closing in on him. I think he is putting up a great fight against them, but I am sure he has chosen quite the wrong tactics. Nothing that I can say succeeds in persuading him to live more naturally and openly. Oh, how I long for the return of my own true Victor I But it is now an age since he came, and I begin to fear I shall never see him again."

A few months after receiving this letter, I was shocked by a cable from Magpie announcing Victor's death: An airmail letter followed, saying that one morning he had failed to appear at breakfast, so she went up to his room, and found him apparently asleep; but he was dead. A post mortem proved that he had taken one of the modern poisons which send one quietly to sleep, never to wake again. He had left no last message for her. And she found that all the true Victor's manuscripts had been destroyed. She greatly blamed herself, for having agreed, some ten years earlier, to restore them all to the study, where the secondary Victor (by then a reformed character) could examine them whenever he was in the mood for it.

The disaster of Victor's death, Maggie said, was the more distressing because the true Victor had recently appeared rather more frequently, and his last visit had been prolonged for more than a week. She had begun to hope for his permanent re-establishment. He had told her of the other's intention to kill himself, and she had been anxiously watching him. On one occasion an attempt had actually been made; but in the nick of time the true Victor had re-appeared. She therefore hoped that this happy issue would be repeated whenever the impulse for suicide recurred. In this, alas, she was mistaken.

A long letter from the true Victor, she said, was on its way to me. But it had been sent by the sea mail, and might not reach me for some time.

Maggie allows me to quote the closing passage of her letter to me. "From the bottom of my heart I am thankful for my life with Victor. We both suffered very much. And in the end came a dismal tragedy. But in spite of everything, I feel that the true Victor has won through. In our last week together we were happy, more happy than ever before. He seemed to have an ecstatic peace which was infectious. He was telling me about it, but he disappeared before he had made me fully understand. But I have felt that peace. And now I feel--well, grief, of course, since I shall never see my darling again; but not grief only. Much deeper in my heart, I feel joy. Somehow, in the last week he taught me more than in the whole of the rest of his life. And perhaps he himself learned more. He has tried to express something of this in his letter to you, but words can give only a pale ghost of the peace and joy which his presence radiated through and through me during those most happy days. And even now that he is gone, I feel convinced that in some sense beyond my intelligence he is always with me; he, the true Victor, my pride and my joy."

In due course I received Victor's letter. I will end this inadequate biography of my friend by quoting his last letter in full. It is a remarkable and a moving document. Parts of it are either beyond my comprehension or else sheer verbiage. The reader must judge for himself. My own feeling about it is that while the letter shows the potential greatness of my dead friend, both in intelligence and in large-heartedness and spiritual vision (if I may so put the matter), it also shows considerable traces of mental derangement, due, no doubt, to the strain of his situation. The opening reference to myself, far kinder than I deserve, shows Victor's unfailing magnanimity.

"DEAR HARRY.

"It is unlikely that we shall meet again, and I feel I must say something to you before it is too late.

"First of all, Harry, I want to say' thank you' for your friendship, your patience and kindness through all the years since we were at Oxford. I have never said anything like this to you before. I have always counted on you. I have always accepted from you without any spoken gratitude. And often I have been inconsiderate and impatient. For this I cannot make amends; but let me at least say that our friendship has been one of the happiest and most valued things in my life, and that you, more than anyone else,

have taught me what the relation between man and man should be.

"I woke a few days ago in strange circumstances. I was in bed in the Dolt's room. In the palm of my hand there was a little white pill. Thinking that it was an aspirin, I put it in my mouth. But the Dolt's memories were now flooding back on me, and I quickly realized that he had decided to kill us both. I hastily spat out the pill and rinsed my mouth. My watch told me it was half-past one. I went to Maggie's room.

"If he does it again, shall I again wake in time to thwart him? I cannot feel confident of it. The knowledge that this may be my last few days of life seems to have intensified my vitality. Everything that happens to me, everything that I do, has a new meaning, and glows (so to speak) with an inner light.

"We have seized the opportunity of a complete holiday in this glorious English spring. (Fancy my fool 'brother' wanting to kill himself and me in this weather, with all the buds bursting!) We have been out in the country every day. I don't know which is more delightful, lying on one's back in a field, with Maggie, and listening to larks and an early cuckoo, or swinging across the moor, with Maggie, watching the cloud shadows on the hills, and an occasional hare start up and streak away round the hill's shoulder. 'Swinging across the moor' is a very false image. 'Painfully plodding' would be better; for the Dolt had been starving our common body. But now, there's some sort of fire in me that drives the body far beyond its natural strength.

"What a joy seeing is! Even when it is done through aging eyes that give neither the precision nor the brilliance of childhood's seeing. The poor old physical instrument is no longer 'optically perfect', but the relish, the zest, is as fresh and breathtaking as it was in my still-remembered babyhood. O lovely world; tragic, sordid, brutal, and yet lovely! The sturdy hog-backs of the moors! The frail geometry of a spider's web! This morning I was making the porridge for breakfast. Have you ever noticed how at a certain stage the quick waves of gruel gradually turn to heavy, sluggish, velvet foldings? Rather like the smooth hide rippling on a puma's shoulders. Then the stuff boils. Subterranean explosions in the little molten world form ephemeral craters. You watch the show, fascinated, till a projectile of lava rises into the stratosphere and scalds your hand. Strange how even pain itself has a sort of tigerish loveliness! I mean, when one is really awake, and can experience it with a full sense of its spiritual meaning. But alas, alas! Man can only reach this all-redeeming illumination in his rare and precarious moments of full consciousness. And most of us are doomed never to reach so far. This is the ultimate tragedy at the heart of the universe. Ultimate? No! Seeming ultimate, only while one is in the trance of lonely selfhood. But In fact we are indeed all members one of another, and of the Whole. Even the least of us is at heart the Whole. And in the Whole's glory his suffering is redeemed. But, oh, Harry, how I stammer and drivel, trying to express the inexpressible that I have indeed, though darkly, seen."

"In these few happy days that have been given me, I spend much of my time just looking at things. For instance at Maggie. Aging suits her. She was lovely when I first saw her, so many years ago; but now, though she has lost all the sweet physical freshness, in

another way she's lovelier. The spirit, one might say, shines so clearly through that experienced, that tempered and beautifully weathered smile. If only she could enjoy the present fully, without thought of the future, or without fear of the future! I must show her how to do that before I go. I shall succeed. I shall teach her to see everything from the point of view of eternity. In these few days we are creating something eternally lovely. We are completing our thank-offering to eternity. Our music rises to its last triumphant note. I hope, indeed I am sure, that when I am gone you and Maggie will be very close friends. I am not commending her to your care, for she is strong, and I have no fears for her. But your friendship will mean much to her.

"And the children! That's a joy you have missed, Harry, watching children grow, and being glad to be needed by them, and glad to watch them be themselves, and not what one had wanted them to be. I find it hard to forgive my accursed other self for harming them. Colin will bear the marks for ever. There's a wry twist in his character, a streak of cynicism that need not have been. But he's tough and sane, and complete master of himself. And even the Dolt's clumsy treatment could not seriously mar the gentleness that Maggie taught him. Sheila, bless her, is less damaged. I know no one, not even Maggie, more serene. As for that diabolically attractive minx, Margaret, I expect she'll be all right when she has got over the spoiling that the doting Dolt slopped over her till quite recently. Of course she hardly knows me. And she's piqued because I don't fuss over her.

"How exquisite every moment of experience is! Even such a little thing as the forming of these words with my pen! See! This bit of handwriting shall be a real work of art, in its little way; precise but fluent. Each letter's economical form echoes so much of history, monkish, Roman, Greek, Phoenician, and Egyptian. How long, I wonder, will men continue to Use symbols formed in this great tradition? Will man in the end outgrow the need for writing? Or will man and writing cease together? Well, I may not use these signs much longer. This may be the last time I shall practise this homely, lovely art. Meanwhile, since writing is the matter in hand, I will delight in conforming to its canons. Strange, how even in the careful forming of a single word (that word 'strange' for instance) we can express so much yet fall so short of our intention!

"I am writing in my little study. At bottom it is my study, not the Dolt's. I chose the furniture, and placed it conveniently. But my other self has been in possession so long that he has largely imposed his character on the room. There's a picture of his, sophisticatedly modern, but not quite sincere. There's a pile of back numbers of the Autocar--not mine at all.

"On my desk, here, there's a folded newspaper. Bad paper, smudgy printing, incredibly vulgar advertisements. A symbol of all that is driving my other self to suicide. And yet--I can forgive the thing its wretchedness. Seen as the focal point of a vast tragic symbolism, it becomes strangely beautiful in its pathetic vulgarity. And the poor trapped souls that produced it--I don't insult them with forgiveness; I just salute them as fellow mortals. There's a very bad drawing of a girl in her undies, advertising nylons. Her sex, of course, is wildly exaggerated. Face, laughably debased-lovely. Breasts, pert. Figure, too slim; legs far too long for body. Every line of the drawing, falsely slick. The whole thing is loathsome, of course; but, oh, pathetic! Look hard into it, and you can see the real loveliness that it garbles. Strangely, you can see in it the spirit battling vainly for life against the choking

horror of our civilization, against commercialism's fatal exaggeration of self-interest, of self-display, of self-regarding sexuality. Strange how, in the light of the Whole, the ugly thing itself borrows beauty! Not that we should therefore tolerate it or preserve it; for its virtue lies in its ugliness, in its failure to be beautiful. And the same of evil. In the light of the Whole it is transfigured, redeemed. Not that it is therefore to be tolerated; for its virtue dies in its essential badness, in its tragic failure to be good. In action, our allegiance to the spirit obliges us to struggle with all our strength against evil; and yet in contemplation, when the majestic pregnancy of the Whole obscurely reveals itself to us, and worship is wrung from us, we cannot but accept, and with joy.

"Inevitably the horror of our civilization and of the whole universe, drives the poor blind Dolt to suicide. But that is not what it does to me.. This vulgar little drawing, the whole vulgar tragedy of our civilization--though in action I oppose them all with all my strength, in contemplation 1 find myself accepting them reverently, perhaps quite irrationally. I respect them as I respect a man struggling against a mortal disease or incipient insanity. Because everywhere the spirit shows through, struggling for the light, and yet fatally slipping, slipping, farther down into darkness. To hell with the poor Dolt's death-wish, where indeed it belongs. My wish is wholly for life, life eternal, not just for my own little individuality, which is essentially and rightly ephemeral, but for the spirit that is the perennial and Cosmical music inherent in the lives of all ephemeral individuals.

"Maggie is all the while with me in my study. For I must have all I can of her, and she of me, while it is possible. She is sewing. Her needle moves in and out of the material as she takes up a needleful of stitches. It's like a line of little glistening porpoises threading across a white sea. My life with her has been like that--in and out, in and out. Latterly, alas, mostly out. And now all our intermittent days, weeks, months, and our too few years, come crowding into memory. I examine the stitches of our past. So irregular, but such a bright thread! Compared with the young waitress of so long ago she's physically mere smouldering ash, left after a blazing fire. But to the seeing eye there's another light irradiating the dear dying ash. The Dolt, poor fool, could never properly see that light. He does begin to appreciate Maggie, does love her in a way, but never as she deserves. Incredible to me that living with Maggie, year in and year out, couldn't kill his death-wish! When I think of him as my own baser self, how I loathe him! But when I think of him as something other than me, a poor blind creature vainly groping for the light, I pity him. I even respect him, for in his fumbling way, he put up a good fight, against odds that I never had to face.

"I ask you, Harry, to cast your mind back to that dismal walk you had with me, with my Dolt self, I mean, on the moor in a blizzard. He (or I) bemused you with his plausible death-excuses! What he said was all true in a way, but all half-truth. True, that man's plight is grim. True that poisoned institutions poison all our minds, and falsify every possible act. But we are not doomed. A world where there is sunshine, and where people sometimes love, sometimes think honestly, sometimes make glorious things, is not doomed. Our fate depends at least in part on ourselves; or rather, not simply on our poor frail individualistic selves, but on the strength of the universal spirit in us. Lest you should think I'm going back on my agnosticism, believe me I don't mean by 'universal spirit', a universal 'being' or soul or person; I still mean just the ideal of spiritual living that beckons all half-awakened beings and claims possession of them. Maybe there's more to it than that. Maybe there is the universal soul or person or God. But

since we don't know, and cannot know (being only the poor little insects that we are), let us for God's sake (or for the spirit's sake) be true to our own little insect intelligence, and not pre tend we understand what is beyond our understanding.

"Out of the horror of our contemporary world, out of our sense of doom, our doltish nightmare, comes a new hope of true waking. The war was an alarm clock that disturbed our sleep. We are at last sufficiently shocked for waking; and if we will, we can now wake properly. And people are waking. I saw it whenever I took over the Dolt's discussions with soldiers and airmen. Those groups of bewildered sleep-walkers were all restless for waking, all shyly groping for the light, even when they pretended still to be cynics. Of course, the whole thing may go awry. People may all be drugged into sleep again, or we may wreck the planet with atomic power, before the new temper can take effect. But now, at least there is the widespread waking, and at least the possibility of a new world. Strange glorious changes are striving for birth. God! Far from wishing death, I should be glad of a new lease of life, a second and a third lifetime, to play some part in the great waking. I long for it; and yet, while I am fully awake, I find I gladly accept whatever comes. Of course, even if at last mankind does win through, there'll be no Utopia but only a widespread breaking through into rather more lucid experience and more creative ways of living. There'll be new problems, new conflicts, new hopes and despairs, new joys and agonies. There'll be merely an outgrowing of nursery troubles and infantile growing pains and diseases, and at last a hesitant, precarious, painful, dangerous staggering into a world of adult experience.

"But let us for the sake of argument suppose that the very worst does happen, and that within a quarter of a century, or a quarter of a year, mankind destroys itself, and lethal radiation turns the whole surface of the earth into a desert, inhospitable to life--what then? Were those who foresaw it fools to remain alive, vainly striving against it? No! Even the destruction of a living world is worth living through, however painful; if one is awake, if one can see the disaster as an episode in the perennial struggle of the spirit in the innumerable successive hosts of individuals in all the worlds. My own life has been mainly a dismal failure, and yet it was infinitely worth living. And if mankind fails, yet mankind has been infinitely worth while. Already, and whatever happens, this planet, this grain that spawned our imperfect kind, is well justified. The solar system, the whole universe, is well justified; yes, even if man is the only, and a sadly imperfect, vessel of the spirit, and doomed. For no tragedy, not even a cosmical tragedy, can wipe out what man (in his low degree) has in fact achieved, through the grace of his vision of the spirit, his precarious and yet commanding vision of the spirit.

"But how unlikely that man is the sole vessel! Consider the pregnant stars! Consider the great galaxies I Can any sane mind then suppose that man is the sole vessel?

"And I must tell you again, Harry, that in my sadly curtailed spiritual researches and exercises, though I have had little success, at least I have won through (by the grace of the spirit) to feel the indescribable unity that comprises all our severalness. And in my dim sense of that unity of all spirit I have heard (so to speak) the faint, far-off murmur of the hosts of individual lives throughout the cosmos and the aeons. And I have felt--but once more language utterly fails, and thinking also. And yet, though what I have

felt beyond that cosmical murmur is really beyond all telling, I find I must stammer out something about it, however misleadingly. I have felt--oh, how can I put it without falsifying it utterly? I have felt all baseness and pain, and all sorrow, transmuted into glory; all agony, from the pain- flash of a crushed fly to the despair of Jesus on the Cross, turn to joy. But what am I saying? Of course I don't mean that the poor little tortured fly and the tragic disillusioned Jesus and all other sufferers enter severally into everlasting bliss, as individuals. Maybe in some strange sense they do, though it must be a sense quite unsatisfying to those who clamour for individual salvation. But all this is beside the point. The news I am trying to report to you is something of a different kind. Perhaps I can give a hint of it by saying simply that nothing is merely lost. Everything contributes. All the agonies, and the joys too, are gathered up into the whole single music of existence, the music which enjoys itself. And so the agony, which in the loneliness of our finite individuality is unredeemed and hideous and meaningless, contributes to the music, is significant; and in consciousness of its own significance in the whole it is itself transfigured into joy. All this talk, you may say, is sheer verbiage. And of course it is, if you are looking for literal truth. But I know, I know now, that it is poetically true, like the statement that the sun, when he pushes the clouds aside, laughs.

"After re-reading that paragraph I fear it will mean nothing to you. But in its halting way it does mean something to me, in virtue of my actual experience. Does it to you?

"But, Harry, before I say 'goodbye', I must say one other thing. This cosmical transfiguration of all our experience is something quite apart from individual survival of death, whether survival for a while only or for ever. The transfiguration I now know to be true, but I cannot describe it or even clearly think it. Survival, on the other hand, is an intelligible idea, up to a point; but I have no news to give of it. Maybe death is simply the complete ending of us; and if so, let us be grateful for eternal sleep. Maybe we go on from aeon to aeon in subsequent temporal lives, within this formidable universe, for the progressive fashioning of our individual souls; so that ultimately each may contribute fully to the music. Such 're- incarnation' is a possibility that may well daunt us, in view of the weariness that comes to one toward the end even of this single life. But perhaps we start the next one refreshed. And how exhilarating, provided one had the opportunity for creative work! But should I find Maggie? (God! I should want her!) Maybe I should and I shouldn't. Well, I'm for the venture! (What a jest if the Dolt wakes up and finds himself living again! He'd be as sick as a dog!) Then there's another possibility. Maybe we wake in some completely other temporal and spatial (or non-spatial) system of existence, made not of stars and the void, of light and dark and pressure and all our sense characters, but of something--inconceivable to us. Or again, maybe at death we are gathered up at once into eternity. Annihilated as individuals, maybe we wake to remember that all along we have been the eternal spirit, the world soul, or God. Maybe, maybe! But what does it matter? The important thing is that, whatever happens to us as individuals, the spirit does matter, and the spirit is; though even after all those years of puzzling I'm damned if I can say what it is; except that it is just what we all (when we are properly awake) know does matter, just awareness, love and creative action in relation to an objective universe.

"But I still haven't said what I wanted to say. It's this. If I do survive, I shall do my best to make some sort of contact with

Maggie, and with you too, Harry, you old sceptic. So, both of you, please keep an ear open for the telephone bell, so to speak. I may have something important to say. I have told her I shall put a call through to her, if I possibly can. Unless, of course, I become so thoroughly absorbed in the affairs of that other world that I simply forget all about this one; and all about Maggie. But if I do that, shall I be 'I' at all, in any important sense? Surely the surviving thing could not be 'I' if it cared no more for Maggie, if it looked askance at the whole loveliness and horror of this world, and the whole struggle of mankind. And yet-- suppose, when one entered another sphere of being, one were to see clearly that any harking back to this world was a desertion of the other world, and that the spirit must be expressed independently in each? Who knows! But the one supreme thing is sure--the intrinsic and paramount excellence of the spirit, and its fundamental identity in all worlds. Whatever our individual fate, this is enough to make our lives worth while."

"As for me, I find myself entirely reconciled to any of the fates that are surmised. Mr expectation, on the whole, is that when I have died there will be no actual 'I' Victor Smith', any more; though perhaps some queer fragments of my memories may haunt people in this world for a while, like disembodied dreams flitting from mind to mind. But this is unimportant.

"Well, there it is! Goodbye, Harry! Whatever happens, the universe contains you and me eternally as two individual fibres in its texture, and as their friendly contact. Those Oxford days of ours are part of eternity; So are your forbearance and kindness on my abortive wedding day, and all your patience, including your reading of this rather chaotic letter. Enjoy your life's autumn! In a way I am sorry to miss the last phase, for it might be the best of all. But no matter! All's well.

"Good luck, and goodbye!"

"Victor"

THE END