

CHAPTER V

INTERLUDE WITH A MIRROR

THE Lord Paramount had the impression that he was again in the great dugout at Barnet. He was in one of the small apartments that opened out of the central cavern, a sort of dressing room. He was putting on a khaki uniform and preparing to start on a desperate expedition. A young subaltern assisted him timidly.

The Lord Paramount was excessively aware of Gerson's voice storming down the passage. He was always storming now.

They were still in pursuit of Camelford and Sir Bussy, who were reported to be at those strange new chemical works at Cayme in Lyonesse. They had to be caught and compelled if need be at the point of a revolver to subserve the political ideas from which they were attempting to escape. The issue whether the soldier or the man of science should rule the world had come to actual warfare. Strange Reality was escaping, and Tradition was hard in pursuit. Gerson and the Lord Paramount were to fly to Devonshire and then rush upon Cayme, "swift and sure as the leap of a tiger," said Gerson. Then indeed, with the chemists captive and Gas L assured, the Empire could con-

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front all the rest of the world with the alternative of submission or death.

The Lord Paramount adjusted the complex and difficult belt before a mirror. Then he stood still and stared at the reflection before him.

Where was the calm beauty of the Master Spirit?

The man he saw, he had seen in other mirrors ten thousand times before. It was the face, just falling short of strength and serenity by the subtle indications of peevishness and indecision, of the Senior Tutor of St. Simon's. And those troubled eyes were Mr. Parham's eyes. And the hair—he had never noted it before—was turning grey. He knew it had been getting thin, but now he saw it was getting grey. Merely Mr. Parham? Had he been dreaming of a Lord Paramount, and had there never been anyone else but himself in this adventure? And what was this adventure? Was he recovering now from some fantastic intoxication?

With a start he realized that Gerson had come into the room and heard the clear-cut, even footsteps approach him. The organizer of victory came to the salute with a clash of accoutrements. "Everything is ready, sir," he said imperatively.

Mr. Parham seemed to assent, but now he knew that he obeyed.

Like the damned of Swedenborg's visions, he had come of his own accord to his own servitude.