CHAPTER I

DISPUTES AND TENSION OVER SIR BUSSY'S DINNER TABLE

This mutual frequentation of Sir Bussy and Mr. Parham necessarily had intermissions, because of Mr. Parham's duty to his university and his influence upon the rising generation, and because also of perceptible fluctuations in Sir Bussy's need of him. And as time went on and the two men came to understand each other more acutely, clashes of opinion had to be recognized. Imperceptibly Sir Bussy passed from a monosyllabic reception of Mr. Parham's expositions of the state of the world and the life of man to more definitely sceptical comments. And at times Mr. Parham, because he had so strong a sense of the necessity of dominating Sir Bussy and subduing his untrained ignorance to intelligible purposes, became, it may be, a little authoritative in his argument and a trifle overbearing in his manner. And then Sir Bussy would seem almost not to like him for a time and would say "Gaw," and turn away.

For a few weeks, or even it might be for a month or so, Mr. Parham would have no more abnormal social adventures, and then quite abruptly and apropos of any old thing Sir Bussy

would manifest a disposition to scrutinize Mr. Parham's point of view again, and the excursions and expeditions would be renewed.

A hopeful friendship it was throughout on Mr. Parham's side, but at no time was it a completely harmonious one. He found Sir Bussy's choice of associates generally bad and often lamentable. He was constantly meeting people who crossed and irritated him beyond measure. With them he would dispute, even acrimoniously. Through them it was possible to say all sorts of things at Sir Bussy that it might have been undesirable to say directly to him.

There were times when it seemed almost as if Sir Bussy invited people merely to annoy Mr. Parham, underbred contradictory people with accents and most preposterous views. There was a crazy eclecticism about his hospitality. He would bring in strange Americans with notions rather than ideas about subjects like currency and instalment buying, subjects really more impossible than indecency, wrong sorts of Americans, carping and aggressive, or he would invite Scandinavian ideologists, or people in a state of fresh disillusionment or fresh enthusiasm from Russia, even actual Bolsheviks, Mr. Bernard Shaw and worse, self-made authors, a most unpleasant type, wild talkers like Mr. J. B. S. Haldane, saying the most extravagant things. Once there was a Chinaman who said at the end of a patient, clear exposition of the British conception of self-government and the part played by social and intellectual influence

in our affairs, "I see England at least is still looled by mandolins," whatever that might mean. He nodded his gold spectacles towards Mr. Parham, so probably he imagined it did mean something. Most subtly and insidiously Sir Bussy would sow the seeds of a dispute amid such discordant mixtures and sit in a sort of intellectual rapture, mouth dropping, while Mr. Parham, sometimes cool but sometimes glowing, dealt with the fallacies, plain errors, misconceptions, and misinformation that had arisen. "Gaw!" Sir Bussy would whisper.

No support, no real adhesion, no discipleship; only that colourless "Gaw." Even after a quite brilliant display. It was discouraging. Never the obvious suggestion to give this fount of sound conviction and intellectual power its legitimate periodic form.

But the cumulative effect of these disputes upon Mr. Parham was not an agreeable one. He always managed to carry off these wrangles with his colours flying, for he had practised upon six generations of undergraduates; he knew exactly when to call authority to the aid of argument and, in the last resort, refer his antagonist back to his studies effectively and humiliatingly, but at bottom, in its essence, Mr. Parham's mental substance was delicate and fine, and this succession of unbelieving, interrogative, and sometimes even flatly contradictory people left their scars upon him—scars that rankled. It was not that they produced the slightest effect upon his essential

ideas of the Empire and its Necessary Predominance in World Affairs, of the Historical Task and Destiny of the English, of the Rôles of Class and Law in the world and of his Loyalties and Institutions, but they gave him a sense of a vast, dangerous, gathering repudiation of these so carefully shaped and established verities. The Americans, particularly since the war, seemed to have slipped away, mysteriously and unawares, from the commanding ideas of his world. They brought a horrible tacit suggestion to Sir Bussy's table that these ideas were now queer and old-fashioned.

Renegades! What on earth had they better? What in the names of Queen Elizabeth, Shakespeare, Raleigh, the *Mayflower*, Tennyson, Nelson, and Queen Victoria had these people better? Nowadays more and more they seemed to be infected with an idea that they were off and away after some new and distinctive thing of their own.

There they were, and there were a hundred and twenty million of them with most of the gold in the world—out of hand. It was not that they had any ideas worth considering to put in the place of Mr. Parham's well-wrought and tested set. Positive suggestions he could deal with. One foolish visitor breathed the words "World State." Mr. Parham smiled all his teeth at him and waved his fingers.

"My *dear* sir," said Mr. Parham, with a kind of deep richness in his tone. And it sufficed.

Another said, "League of Nations."

"Poor Wilson's decaying memorial," said Mr. Parham.

All the time, behind his valiant front this gnawing away of Mr. Parham's confidence went on, his confidence that these ideas of his, right though they certainly were, would be honestly and properly endorsed and sustained, at home and abroad, when next they were put to the test. In 1914 they had been tested; had they been overstrained? Imperceptibly he drifted into that state of nervous uncertainty we have attempted to convey in our opening section. Was history keeping its grip? Would the game still be played? The world was going through a phase of moral and intellectual disintegration; its bonds relaxed; its definite lines crumbled. Suppose, for example, a crisis came in Europe and some strong man at Westminster flashed the sword of Britannia from the scabbard. Would the ties of Empire hold? Suppose the Dominions cabled "This is not our war. Tell us about it." They had already done something of the sort when the Turks had returned to Constantinople. They might do it again and more completely. Suppose the Irish Free State at our backs found our spirited gesture the occasion for ungracious conduct. Suppose instead of the brotherly applause and envious sympathy of 1914, a noise like the noise of skinners sharpening their knives came from America. Suppose once again in our still unconscripted land Royal Proclamations called for men and that this time instead of another beautiful carnival of devotion like that of

1914—how splendid that had been!—they preferred to remain interrogative. Suppose they asked, "Can't it be stopped?" or, "Is the whole thing worth while?" The Labour Movement had always a left wing nefariously active, undermining the nation's forces, destroying confidence, destroying pride in service, willingness to do and die. Amazing how we tolerated it! Suppose, too, the business men proved even more wicked than they were in 1914.

For Mr. Parham knew. They had been wicked; they had driven a bargain. They were not the patriots they seemed.

An after-dinner conversation at Carfex House crystallized these floating doubts. When it took place Sir Bussy had already embarked upon those psychic experiments that were to revolutionize his relations to Mr. Parham. But this dinner was an interlude. The discussion centred upon and would not get away from the topic of the Next War. It was a man's dinner, and the most loquacious guest was an official from Geneva, Sir Walter Atterbury, a figure of importance in the League of Nations Secretariat, an apparently unassuming but really very set and opinionated person. But there was also an American banker, Mr. Hamp, a grey-faced, elderly, spectacled man, who said strange things in a solemn manner, and there was Austin Camelford, the industrial chemist, who was associated with Sir Bussy in all sorts of business enterprises and who linked with him the big combinations of Romer Steinhart Crest & Co. He it was

who recalled to Mr. Parham's mind the cynicism of the business men in 1914. He was a lank and lean creature with that modern trick of saying the wildest nonsense as though it was obvious and universally recognized fact. There was also a young American from one of these new-fangled Western universities where they teach things like salesmanship and universal history. He was too young to say very much, but what he said was significant.

At first it was Atterbury did most of the talking and he talked evidently with the approval of the others. Then Mr. Parham was moved to intervene and correct some of the man's delusions—for delusions they plainly were. The talk became more general, and certain things that came from Camelford and Hamp brought home to Mr. Parham's mind the widening estrangement of industry and finance from the guiding concepts of history. Towards the end, Sir Bussy by some fragmentary comments of an entirely hostile sort, set the seal to a thoroughly disconcerting evening.

Sir Walter, trailing clouds of idealism from this Geneva of his, took it for granted that everyone present wanted to see war staved off forever from the world. Apparently he could conceive no other view as possible in intelligent company. And yet, oddly enough, he realized that the possibility of fresh wars was opening wider every year. He showed himself anxious and perplexed, as well he might, distressed by a newborn sense of the inadequacy of his blessed League to ward off the

storms he saw gathering about it. He complained of the British government and the French government, of schools and colleges and literature, of armaments and experts, of a world-wide indifference to the accumulating stresses that made for war. The Anglo-American naval clash had distressed him particularly. It was the "worst thing that had happened for a long time." He was facty and explicit after the manner of his type. Four or five years ago one did not get these admissions of failure, these apprehensions and heart sinkings, from Geneva.

Mr. Parham let him run on. He was all for facts from well-informed sources, and so far from wanting to suppress Sir Walter, his disposition was to give him all the rope he wanted. If that weekly had been in existence he would have asked him to write a couple of articles for it. At the normal rates. And then flicked aside his pacificist implications with a bantering editorial paragraph or so.

At this dinner he resorted to parallel tactics. For a time he posed as one under instruction, asking questions almost respectfully, and then his manner changed. His intelligent interrogations gave place to a note of rollicking common-sense. He revealed that this official's admissions of the impotence of the League had been meat and drink to him. He recalled one or two of Sir Walter's phrases and laughed kindly with his head a little on one side. "But what did you *expect?*" he said. "What *did* you expect."

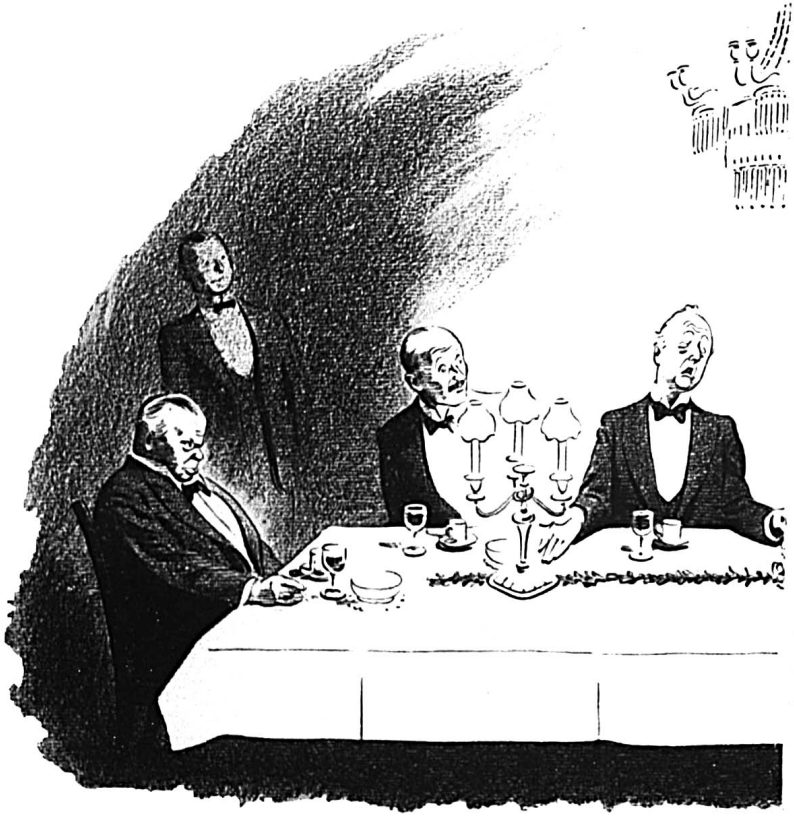
And after all was said and done, asked Mr. Parham, was it so bad? Admittedly the extravagant hopes of some sort of permanent world peace, some world Utopia, that had run about like an epidemic in 1918, were, we realized now, mere fatigue phenomena, with no force of will behind them. The French, the Italians, most lucid-minded and realistic of peoples, had never entertained such dreams. Peace, now, as always, rested on an armed balance of power.

Sir Walter attempted contradiction. The Canadian boundary?

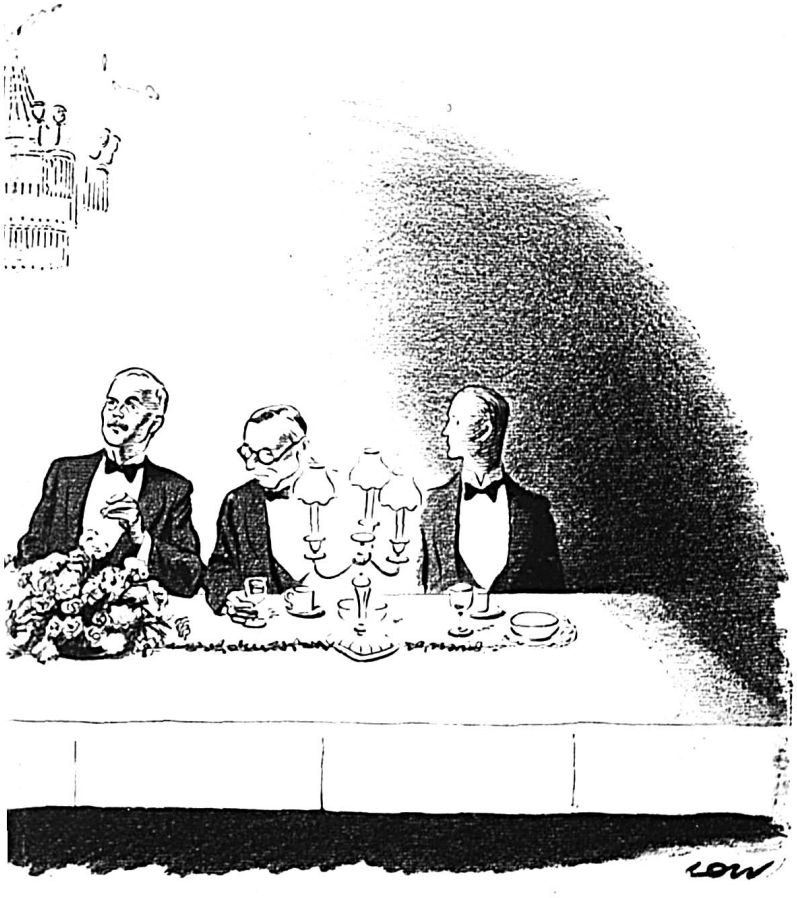
"The pressure in that case lies elsewhere," said Mr. Parham, with a confidence that excluded discussion of what these words might mean.

"Your armed balance of power is steadily eating up every scrap of wealth industrial progress can produce," said Sir Walter. "The military force of France at present is colossal. All the European budgets show an increase in armaments, and people like Mussolini jeer at the Kellogg Pact even as they sign it. The very Americans make the clearest reservation that the Pact doesn't mean anything that matters. They won't fight for it. They won't let it interfere with the Monroe doctrine. They sign the Pact and reserve their freedom of action and go on with the armament race. More and more the world drifts back to the state of affairs of 1913.

"The most serious thing," Sir Walter went on, "is the increasing difficulty of keeping any counter movement going. It's the obstinate steadiness of



"'Here,' said Mr. Parham, 'in the very



centre of the Old World . . . is *Russia.*'"

the train, and on her return her husband's valise went astray from the booked luggage and never turned up again. That was the state of affairs before the strong hand took hold.

"*No,*" said Mr. Parham in a clear, commanding tone, so as to keep the rostrum while he returned to the general question. "As to the facts I see eye to eye with you. Yet not in the same spirit. We enter upon a phase of armament mightier than that which preceded the Great War. Granted. But the broad lines of the struggle shape themselves, they shape themselves—rationally and logically. They are in the nature of things. They cannot be evaded."

Something almost confidential crept into his manner. He indicated regions of the tablecloth by gestures of his hands, and his voice sank. Sir Walter watched him, open-eyed. His brows wrinkled with something like dismay.

"Here," said Mr. Parham, "in the very centre of the Old World, illimitably vast, potentially more powerful than most of the rest of the world put together—" he paused as if fearing to be overheard—"is *Russia.* It really does not matter in the least whether she is Czarist or Bolshevik. She is the final danger—the overwhelming enemy. Grow she must. She has space. She has immense resources. She strikes at us, through Turkey as always, through Afghanistan as always, and now through China. Instinctively she does that—necessarily. I do not blame her. But preserve ourselves we must. What will Germany

do? Cleave to the East? Cleave to the West? Who can tell? A student nation, a secondary people, a disputed territory. We win her if we can, but I do not count on her. The policy imposed upon the rest of the world is plain. *We must circumvent Russia;* we must encircle this threat of the Great Plains before it overwhelms us. As we encircled the lesser threat of the Hohenzollerns. In time. On the West, here, we outflank her with our ally France and Poland her pupil; on the East with our ally Japan. We reach at her through India. We strive to point the spearhead of Afghanistan against her. We hold Gibraltar on her account; we watch Constantinople on her account. America is drawn in with us, necessarily our ally, willy-nilly, because she cannot let Russia strike through China to the sea. There you have the situation of the world. Broadly and boldly seen. Fraught with immense danger—yes. Tragic —if you will. But fraught also with limitless possibilities of devotion and courage."

Mr. Parham paused. When it was evident he had fully paused, Sir Bussy whispered his habitual monosyllable. Sir Walter cracked a nut and accepted port.

"There you are," he said with a sigh in his voice, "if Mr. ——?"

"Parham, sir."

"If Mr. Parham said that in any European capital from Paris to Tokio, it would be taken quite seriously. Quite seriously. That's where we are, ten years from the Armistice."

Camelford, who had been listening hitherto, now took up the discourse. "That is perfectly true," he said. "These governments of ours are like automata. They were evolved originally as fighting competitive things and they do not seem able to work in any other way. They prepare for war and they prepare war. It is like the instinctive hunting of a pet cat. However much you feed the beast, it still kills birds. It is made so. And they are made so. Until you destroy or efface them that is what they will do. When you went to Geneva, Sir Walter, I submit with all respect you thought they'd do better than they have done. A lot better?"

"I did," said Sir Walter. "I confess I've had a lot of disillusionment—particularly in the last three or four years."

"We live in a world of the wildest paradox today," said Camelford. "It's like an egg with an unbreakable shell, or a caterpillar that has got perplexed and is half a winged insect and the other half crawler. We can't get out of our governments. We grow in patches and all wrong. Certain things become international—cosmopolitan. Banking, for instance"—he turned to Hamp.

"Banking, sir, has made immense strides in that direction since the war," said Hamp. "I say without exaggeration, immense strides. Yes. We have been learning to work together. As we never thought of doing in pre-war days. But all the same, don't you imagine we bankers think we can

stop war. We know better than that. Don't expect it of us. Don't put too much on us. We can't fight popular clamour, and we can't fight a mischievous politician who stirs it up. Above all, we can't fight the printing press. While these sovereign governments of yours can turn paper into money we can be put out of action with the utmost ease. Don't imagine we are that mysterious unseen power, the Money Power, your parlour Bolsheviks talk about. We bankers are what conditions have made us and we are limited by our conditions."

"*Our* position is fantastic," said Camelford. "When I say 'our' I mean the chemical industries of the world, my associates, that is, here and abroad. I'm glad to say I can count Sir Bussy now among them."

Sir Bussy's face was a mask.

"Take one instance to show what I mean by 'fantastic,'" Camelford went on. "We in our various ramifications, are the only people able to produce gas on the scale needed in modern war. Practically now all the chemical industries of the world are so linked that I can say '*we*.' Well, we have perhaps a hundred things necessary for modern warfare more or less under our control, and gas is the most important. If these sovereign Powers which still divide the world up in such an inconvenient way, contrive another war, they will certainly have to use gas, whatever agreements they may have made about it beforehand. And we, our great network of interests, are seeing to it

that they will have plenty of gas, good reliable gas at reasonable business rates, all and more than they need. We supply all of them now and probably if war comes we shall still supply all of them—both sides. We may break up our associations a bit for the actual war, but that will be a mere incidental necessity. And so far we haven't been able to do anything else in our position than what we are doing. Just like you bankers, we are what circumstances have made us. There's nothing sovereign about *us*. We aren't governments with the power to declare war or make peace. Such influence as we have with governments and war offices is limited and indirect. Our position is that of dealers simply. We sell gas just as other people sell the Army meat or cabbages.

"But see how it works out. I was figuring at it the other day. Very roughly, of course. Suppose we put the casualties in the next big war at, say, five million and the gas ones at about three—that, I think, is a very moderate estimate; but then you see I'm convinced the next war will be a gas war—every man gassed will have paid us, on the average, anything between fourpence and three-and tenpence, according to the Powers engaged, for the manufacture, storage, and delivery of the gas he gets. My estimate is naturally approximate. A greater number of casualties will, of course, reduce the cost to the individual. But each of these predestined gasees—if I may coin a word—is now paying something on that scale year by year in taxation—and we of the big

chemical international are seeing that the supply won't fail him. We're a sort of gas club. Like a goose-club. Raffle at the next great war. *Your* ticket's death in agony, *yours* a wheezing painful lung and poverty, *you're* a blank, lucky chap! You won't get any good out of it, but you won't get any of the torture. It seems crazy to me, but it seems reasonable to everybody else, and what are we to fly in the face of the Instincts and Institutions of Mankind?"

Mr. Parham played with the nutcrackers and said nothing. This Camelford was an offensive cynic. He would rob even death in battle of its dignity. Gasees!

"The Gasees Club doesn't begin to exhaust the absurdities of the present situation," Camelford went on. "All these damned war offices, throughout the world, have what they call secrets. Oh! —Their *secrets!* The fuss. The precautions. Our people in England, I mean our war office people, have a gas, a wonderful gas—L. It's General Gerson's own pet child. His only child. Beastly filth. Tortures you and then kills you. He gloats over it. It needs certain rare earths and minerals that we produce at Cayme in Cornwall. You've heard of our new works there—rather a wonderful place in its way. Some of our young men do astonishing work. We've got a whole string of compounds that might be used for the loveliest purposes. And in a way they are coming into use. Only unhappily you can also get this choke stink out of one of our products. Or

they can—and we have to pretend we don't know what they want it for. Secret, you know. Important military secret. The scientific industrial world is keeping secrets like that for half a dozen governments. . . . It's childish. It's insane."

Mr. Parham shook his head privately as one who knows better.

"Do I understand," said Hamp, feeling his way cautiously, "that you know of that new British gas—I've heard whispers——?"

He broke off interrogatively.

"We have to know more or less. We have to sit on one side and look on and pretend not to see or know while your spies and experts and our spies and experts poke about trying to turn pure science into pure foolery. . . . Boy scout spying and boy scout chemists. . . . It can't go on. And yet it *is* going on. That is the situation. That is where the world's persistence in independent sovereign governments is taking us. What can we do? You say you can do nothing. I wonder. We might cut off the supply of this pet gas for the British; we might cut off certain high explosives and other material that are the darling secrets of the Germans and your people. There'd have to be a tussle with some of our own associates. But I think we could do it now. . . . Suppose we did make the attempt. Would it alter things much? Suppose they had the pluck to arrest us. The Common Fool would be against us."

"The Common Fool!" cried Mr. Parham, roused at last. "By that, sir, you mean that the

whole tenor of human experience would be against you. What else can there be but these governments at which you cavil? What do they stand for? The common life and thought of mankind. And—forgive me if I put you in difficulties—who are *you?* Would you abolish government? Would you set up some extraordinary super-government, some freemasonry of bankers and scientific men to rule the world by conspiracy?"

"*And* scientific men! Bankers *and* scientific men! Oh, we *try* to be scientific men in our way," protested Hamp, seeking sympathy by beaming through his spectacles at Sir Bussy.

"I think I would look for some new way of managing human affairs," said Camelford answering Mr. Parham's question. "I think sooner or later we shall have to try something of the sort. I think science will have to take control."

"That is to say Treason and a new International," flashed Mr. Parham. "Without even the social envy of the proletariat to support you!"

"Why not?" murmured Sir Bussy.

"And how are you superior people going to deal with the Common Fool—who is, after all, mankind?"

"You could educate him to support you." said Atterbury. "He's always been very docile when you've caught him young."

"Something very like a fresh start," said Camelford. "A new sort of world. It's not so incredible. Modern political science is in its

infancy. It's a century or so younger than chemistry or biology. I suppose that to begin with we should have a new sort of education, on quite other lines. Scrap all these poisonous national histories of yours, for example, and start people's minds clean by telling them what the world might be for mankind."

Sir Bussy nodded assent. Mr. Parham found his nod faintly irritating. He restrained an outbreak.

"Unhappily for your idea of fresh starts," he said, "the Days of Creation are over, and now one day follows another."

He liked that. It was a good point to make.

In the pause Sir Walter addressed himself to Camelford. "That idea of yours about the gasees club is very vivid. I could have used that in a lecture I gave, a week ago."

The young American, who had taken no part in the discussion hitherto, now ventured timidly; "I think perhaps you Europeans, if I might say so, are disposed to underestimate the sort of drive there was behind the Kellogg Pact. It may seem fruitless—who can tell yet?—but mind you there was something made that gun. It's in evidence, even if it's no more than evidence. The Kellogg Pact isn't the last proposition of that sort you'll get from America."

He reddened as he said his piece, but clearly he had something definite behind what he said.

"I admit that," said Sir Walter. "In America there is still an immense sentiment towards world

peace, and you find something of the same sort in a less-developed form everywhere. But it gets no organized expression, no effective development. It remains merely a sentiment. It isn't moving on to directive action. That's what's worrying my mind more and more. Before we can give that peace feeling real effectiveness there has to be a tremendous readjustment of ideas."

Mr. Parham nodded his assent with an air of indifference and consumed a few grapes.

And then it seemed to him that these other men began to talk with a deliberate disregard of what he had been saying. Or, to be more precise, with a deliberate disregard of the indisputable correctness of what he had been saying. It was not as if it had not been said, it was not as if it had been said and required answering, but it was as if a specimen had been laid upon the table.

In the later stages of Sir Bussy's ample and varied dinners Mr. Parham was apt to experience fluctuations of mood. At one moment he would be solid and strong and lucidly expressive, and then he would flush, and waves of anger and suspicion would wash through his mind. And now suddenly, as he listened to the talk—and for a while he did no more than listen—he had that feeling which for some time had been haunting him more and more frequently, that the world, with a sort of lax malice, was slipping away from all that was sane and fine and enduring in human life. To put it plainly, these men were plotting, openly and without any disguise, the subordina-

tion of patriotism, loyalty, discipline, and all the laboured achievements of statecraft to some vague international commonweal, some fantastic organization of cosmopolitan finance and cosmopolitan industrialism. They were saying things every whit as outrageous as the stuff for which we sent the talkative Bolshevik spinning back to his beloved Russia. And they were going on with this after all he had said so plainly and clearly about political realities. Was it any good to speak further?

Yet could he afford to let it go unchallenged? There sat Sir Bussy, drinking it in!

They talked. They talked.

"When first I went to Geneva," said Sir Walter, "I didn't realize how little could be done there upon the basis of current mentality. I didn't know how definitely existing patriotisms were opposed to the beginnings of an international consciousness. I thought they might fade down in time to a generous rivalry in the service of mankind. But while we try to build up a permanent world peace away there in Geneva, every schoolmaster and every cadet corps in England and every school in France is training the next generation to smash anything of the sort, is doing everything possible to carry young and generous minds back to the exploded delusions of wartime patriotism. . . . All over the world it seems to be the same."

The young American, shy in the presence of his seniors, could but make a noise of protest like

one who stirs in his sleep. Thereby he excepted his native land.

"Then," said Mr. Parham, doing his smile but with a slight involuntary sneer of his left nostril, "you'd begin this great new civilization that is to come, by shutting up our schools?"

"He'd *change* 'em," corrected Sir Bussy.

"Scrap schools, colleges, churches, universities, armies, navies, flags, and honour, and start the millenium from the ground upwards," derided Mr. Parham.

"Why not?" said Sir Bussy, with a sudden warning snarl in his voice.

"That," said Hamp, with that profundity of manner, that air of marking an epoch by some simple remark, of which only Americans possess the secret, "is just what quite a lot of us are hesitating to say? *Why not?* Sir Bussy, you got right down to the bottom of things with that 'Why not?'"

The speaker's large dark grey eyes strongly magnified by his spectacles went from face to face; his cheeks were flushed.

"We've scrapped carriages and horses, we're scrapping coal fires and gas lighting, we've done with the last big wooden ships, we can hear and see things now on the other side of the world and do a thousand—miracles, I call them—that would have been impossible a hundred years ago. What if frontiers too are out of date? What if countries and cultures have become too small? Why should we go on with the schools and universities that

served the ends of our great-grandfathers, and with the governments that were the latest fashion in constitutions a century and a half ago?"

"I presume," said Mr. Parham unheeded, addressing himself to the flowers on the table before him, "because the dealings of man with man are something entirely different from mechanical operations."

"I see no reason why there shouldn't be invention in psychology, just as much as in chemistry or physics," said Camelford.

"Your world peace, when you examine it," said Mr. Parham, "flies in the face of the fundamental institutions—the ancient and tested institutions of mankind—the institutions that have made man what he is. That is the reason."

"The institutions of mankind," contradicted Camelford, with tranquil assurance, "are just as fundamental and no more fundamental than a pair of trousers. If the world grows out of them and they become inconvenient, it won't kill anything essential in man to get others. That, I submit, is what he has to set about doing now. He grows more and more independent of the idea that his pants are him. If our rulers and teachers won't attempt to let out or replace the old garments, so much the worse for them. In the long run. Though for a time, as Sir Walter seems to think, the tension may fall on us. In the long run we shall have to get a new sort of management for our affairs and a new sort of teacher for our sons —however tedious and troublesome it may be to

get them—however long and bloody the time of change may be."

"Big proposition," said Mr. Hamp.

"Which ought to make it all the more attractive to a citizen of the land of big propositions," said Camelford.

"Why should we be so confoundedly afraid of scrapping things?" said Sir Bussy. "If the schools do mischief and put back people's children among the ideas that made the war, why not get rid of 'em? Scrap our stale schoolmasters. We'd get a new sort of school all right."

"And the universities?" said Mr. Parham, amused, with his voice going high.

Sir Bussy turned on him and regarded him gravely.

"Parham," he said slowly, "you're infernally well satisfied with the world. I'm not. You're afraid it may change into something else. You want to stop it right here and now. Or else you may have to learn something new and throw away the old bag of tricks. Yes—I know you. That's your whole mind. You're afraid that a time will come when all the important things of to-day will just not matter a rap; when what that chap Napoleon fancied was his Destiny or what old Richelieu imagined to be a fine forward foreign policy, will matter no more to intelligent people than—" he sought for an image and drew it slowly out of his mind—"the ideas of some old buck rabbit in the days of Queen Elizabeth."

The attack was so direct, so deliberately offen-

sive in its allusion to Mr. Parham's masterly studies of Richelieu, that for the moment that gentleman had nothing to say.

"Caw," said Sir Bussy, "when I hear talk like this it seems to me that this Tradition of yours is only another word for Putrefaction. The clean way with Nature is dying and being born. Same with human institutions—only more so. How can we live unless we scrap and abolish? How can a town be clean without a dust destructor? What's your history really? Simply what's been left over from the life of yesterday. Eggshells and old tin cans."

"Now *that's* a thought," said Hamp and turned appreciative horn spectacles to Sir Bussy.

"The greatest of reformers, gentlemen," said Hamp, with a quavering of the voice, "told the world it had to be born again. And that, as I read the instruction, covered everybody and everything in it."

"It's a big birth we want this time," said Camelford.

"God grant it isn't a miscarriage," said Sir Walter.

He smiled at his own fancy. "If we *will* make the birth chamber an arsenal, we may have the guns going off—just at the wrong moment."

Mr. Parham, still and stiff, smoked his excellent cigar. He knocked off his ash into his ash tray with a firm hand. His face betrayed little of his resentment at Sir Bussy's insult. Merely it insisted upon dignity. But behind that marble

mask the thoughts stormed. Should he get up right there and depart? In silence? In contemptuous silence? Or perhaps with a brief bitter speech: "Gentlemen, I've heard enough folly for to-night. Perhaps you do not realize the incalculable mischief such talk as this can do. For me at least international affairs are grave realities."

He raised his eyes and found Sir Bussy, profoundly pensive but in no way hostile, regarding him.

A moment—a queer moment, and something faded out in Mr. Parham.

"Have a little more of this old brandy," said Sir Bussy in that persuasive voice of his.

Mr. Parham hesitated, nodded gravely—as it were forgivingly—seemed to wake up, smiled ambiguously, and took some more of the old brandy.

But the memory of that conversation was to rankle in Mr. Parham's mind and inflame his imagination like a barbed and poisoned arrowhead that would not be removed. He would find himself reprobating its tendencies aloud as he walked about Oxford, his habit of talking to himself was increased by it, and it broke his rest of nights and crept into his dreams. A deepening hatred of modern scientific influences that he had hitherto kept at the back of his mind, was now, in spite of his instinctive resistance, creeping into the foreground. One could deal with the financial if only the scientific would leave it alone. The banker and the merchant are as old as Rome and Babylon.

One could deal with Sir Bussy if it were not for the insidious influence of such men as Camelford and their vast materialistic schemes. They were something new. He supplied force, but they engendered ideas. He could resist and deflect, but they could change.

That story about an exclusive British gas. . .

With Camelford overlooking it like a self-appointed God. Proposing to cut off the supply. Proposing in effect to stand out of war and make the game impossible. The strike, the treason, of the men of science and the modern men of enterprise. Could they work such a strike? The most fretting it was of all the riddles in our contemporary world. And while these signs of Anglo-Saxon decadence oppressed him, came Mussolini's mighty discourse to the Italian nation on the eve of the General Elections of 1929. That ringing statement of Fascist aims, that assertion of the paramount need of a sense of the state, of discipline and energy, had a clarity, a nobility, a boldness and power altogether beyond the quality of anything one heard in English. Mr. Parham read it and re-read it. He translated it into Latin and it was even more splendid. He sought to translate it, but that was more difficult, into English prose. "This is a man," said Mr. Parham. "Is there no other man of his kind?"

And late one evening he found himself in his bedroom in Pontingale Street before his mirror. For Mr. Parham possessed a cheval glass. He had gone far in his preparation for bed. He had

put on his dressing gown, leaving one fine arm and shoulder free for gesticulation. And with appropriate movements of his hand, he was repeating these glorious words of the great dictator.

"Your Excellencies, Comrades, Gentiemen," he was saying.

"Now do not think that I wish to commit the sin of immodesty in telling you that all this work, of which I have given a summarised and partial résumé, has been activated by my mind. The work of legislation, of putting schemes into action, of control and of the creation of new institutions, has formed only a part of my efforts. There is another part, not so well known, but the existence of which will be manifest to you through the following figures which may be of interest: I have granted over 60,000 audiences; I have dealt with 1,887,112 cases of individual citizens, received directly by my private secretary. . . .

"In order to withstand this strain I have put my body in training; I have regulated my daily work; I have reduced to a minimum any loss of time and energy and I have adopted this rule, which I recommend to all Italians. The day's work must be methodically and regularly completed within the day. No work must be left over. The ordinary work must proceed with an almost mechanical regularity. My collaborators, whom I recall with pleasure and whom I wish to thank publicly, have imitated me. The hard work has appeared light to me, partly because it is varied, and I have resisted the strain because my

will was sustained by my faith. I have assumed —as was my duty—both the small and the greater responsibilities."

Mr. Parham ceased to quote. He stared at the not ungraceful figure in the mirror.

"Has Britain no such Man?"