CHAPTER I

WHITSUNTIDE AT FLAMBARD

"Si la conscience qui sommeille dans l'instinct se réveillait, s'il s'intériorisait en connaissance au lieu de s'extérioriser en action, si nous savions l'interroger et s'il pouvait répondre, il nous livrerait les secrets de la vie."

BERGSON, *L'Évolution Créatrice.*

"'But no!' cried Mr Mantalini. 'It is a demn'd horrid dream. It is not reality. No!'"

Nicholas Nickleby.

I. WHITSUNTIDE AT FLAMBARD

I

As I took my place at the dinner-table I realised that I was not the only tired mortal in Lady Flambard's Whitsuntide party. Mayot, who sat opposite me, had dark pouches under his eyes and that unwholesome high complexion which in a certain type of physique means that the arteries are working badly. I knew that he had been having a heavy time in the House of Commons over the Committee stage of his Factory Bill. Charles Ottery, who generally keeps himself fit with fives and tennis, and has still the figure of an athletic schoolboy, seemed nervous and out of sorts, and scarcely listened to his companion's chatter. Our hostess had her midseason look; her small delicate features were as sharp as a pin, and her blue eyes were drained of colour. But it was Arnold Tavanger farther down the table who held my attention. His heavy sagacious face was a dead mask of exhaustion. He looked done to the world and likely to fall asleep over his soup.

It was a comfort to me to see others in the same case, for I was feeling pretty near the end of my tether. Ever since Easter I had been overworked out of all reason. There was a batch of important Dominion appeals before the Judicial Committee, in every one of which

I was engaged, and I had some heavy cases in the Commercial Court. Of the two juniors who did most of my "devilling" one had a big patent-law action of his own, and the other was in a nursing-home with appendicitis. To make matters worse, I was chairman of a Royal Commission which was about to issue its findings, and had had to rewrite most of the report with my own hand, and I had been sitting as a one-man Commission in a troublesome dispute in the shipbuilding trade. Also I was expected to be pretty regularly in the House of Commons to deal with the legal side of Mayot's precious Bill, and the sittings had often stretched far into the next morning.

There is something about a barrister's spells of overwork which makes them different in kind from those of other callings. His duties are specific as to time and place. He must be in court at a certain hour. He must be ready to put, or reply to, an argument when he is called upon; he can postpone or rearrange his work only within the narrowest limits. He is a cog in an inexorable machine and must revolve with the rest of it. For myself I usually enter upon a period of extreme busyness with a certain lift of spirit, for there is a sporting interest in not being able to see your way through your work. But presently this goes, and I get into a mood of nervous irritation. It is easy enough to be a cart-horse, and it is easy enough to be a race-horse, but it is difficult to be a cart-horse which is constantly being asked to take Grand National fences. One has to rise

to hazards, but with each the take-off gets worse and the energy feebler. So at the close of such a spell I am in a wretched condition of soul and body—weary but without power to rest, and with a mind so stale that it sees no light or colour in anything. Even the end of the drudgery brings no stimulus. I feel that my form has been getting steadily poorer, and that virtue has gone out of me which I may never recapture.

I had been in two minds about accepting Sally Flambard's invitation. She is my very good friend, but her parties are rather like a *table d'hôte*. Her interests are multitudinous, and all are reflected in her hospitality, so that a procession goes through her house which looks like a rehearsal for the Judgment Day. Politics, religion, philanthropy, letters, science, art and the most brainless fashion—she takes them all to her capacious heart. She is an innocent lion-hunter, too, and any man or woman who figures for the moment in the Press will be a guest at Flambard. And she drives her team, for all are put through their paces. Sally makes her guests work for their entertainment. In her own way she is a kind of genius, and what Americans call a wonderful "mixer." Everyone has got to testify, and I have seen her make a bishop discourse on Church union and a mathematician on hyper-space to an audience which heard of the topics for the first time. The talk is apt to be a little like a magazine page in a popular newspaper—very good fun, if you are feeling up to it, but not quite the thing for a rest-cure.

It was my memory of Flambard itself that decided me. The place is set amid the greenest and quietest country on earth. The park is immense, and in early June is filled with a glory of flowers and blossoming trees. I could borrow one of Evelyn's horses and ride all day through the relics of ancient forests, or up on to the cool, windy spaces of the Downs. There was good dry-fly fishing in the little Arm, which runs through a shallow vale to the young Thames. At Whitsuntide you can recover an earlier England. The flood of greenery hides modern blemishes which are revealed by the bareness of winter, and an upland water-meadow is to-day just as it met the eye of the monks when they caught their Friday's trout, or of the corsleted knights as they rode out to the King's wars. It is the kind of scene that comforts me most, for there, as some poet says, "old Leisure sits knee-deep in grass." Also the house is large enough for peace. It is mostly Restoration period, with some doubtful Georgian additions, but there is a Tudor wing, the remnant of the old house, which the great Earl of Essex once used as a hunting-lodge. Sally used to give me a room at the top of the Essex wing, with a wide prospect north into the Cotswold dales. The hall and the drawing-rooms and the great terrace might be as full of "turns" as a music-hall stage, but somewhere in the house fatigue could find sanctuary.

I had arrived just in time to dress for dinner, and had spoken to none of my fellow-guests, so my inspection of the table had a speculative

interest. It was a large party, and I saw a good many faces that I knew. There were the Nantleys, my best of friends, and their daughter Pamela, who was in her first season. . . . There was old Folliot, the bore of creation, with his little grey imperial, and his smirk, and his tired eyes. He was retailing some ancient scandal to Mrs Lamington, who was listening with one ear and devoting the other to what Lady Altrincham was saying across the table. George Lamington a little farther down was arguing with his host about the Ascot entries—his puffy red face had that sudden shrewdness which it acquires when George's mind is on horses. . . . There was a man opposite him of whom I could only catch the profile—a dark head with fine-drawn features. I heard his voice, a pleasant voice, with full deep tones like a tragic actor's, and, as he turned, I had an impression of a face full of swift, nervous strength. . . . There was a good deal of youth in the party, four girls besides Pamela Brune, and several boys with sleek hair and fresh voices. One of them I knew, Reggie Daker, who was a friend of my nephew's.

I was on Sally's left hand, and as she was busy with Mayot, and the lady on my left was deep in a controversy with her neighbour over some book, I was free to look about me. Suddenly I got a queer impression. A dividing line seemed to zigzag in and out among us, separating the vital from the devitalised. There was a steady cackle of talk, but I felt that there

were silent spaces in it. Most of the people were cheerful, eupeptic souls who were enjoying life. The Nantleys, for example, sedate country gentlefolk, whose days were an ordered routine of pleasant cares. . . . Pamela Brune? I was not so sure of her, for a young girl's first season is a trying business, like a boy's first half at school. . . . Old Folliot, beyond doubt—he was perfectly happy as long as he was in a great house with somebody to listen to his archaic gossip. . . . Evelyn Flambard and George Lamington and the boys who were talking Ascot and next winter's hunting plans. . . . Lady Altrincham, sixty but with the air of thirty, who lives for her complexion and her famous pearls. . . . But I realised that there were people here who were as much at odds with life as myself—Mayot and Tavanger and Charles Ottery, and perhaps the dark fellow who sat opposite George Lamington.

Sally turned to me, hiding a yawn with her small hand. Her head on its slim neck was as erect as a bird's, and her body had a darting, bird-like poise, but I could see that the poise required some effort to maintain it. She patted my sleeve in her friendly way.

"I am so glad you came," she said. "I know you want a rest." She screwed up her eyes and peered at me. "You look as if you hadn't been in bed for a month!"

"I'm nearly all out," I said. "You must let me moon about by myself, please, for I'm no sort of company for anybody."

"You shall do exactly as you like. I'm

pretty tired also, and I'm giving a ball next week and there's Ascot looming ahead. Happily we're having quite a small party—and a very quiet one."

"Is this the lot?" I asked, looking down the table. I knew her habit of letting guests appear in relays during a week-end till the result was a mob.

"Practically. You know all the people?"

"Most of them. Who's the dark fellow opposite George Lamington?"

Her face brightened into interest. "That's my new discovery. A country neighbour, no less—but a new breed altogether. His name is Goodeve—Sir Robert Goodeve. He has just succeeded to the place and title."

Of course I knew Goodeve, that wonderful moated house in the lap of the Downs, but I had never met one of the race. I had had a notion that it had died out. The Goodeves are one of those families about which genealogists write monographs, a specimen of that unennobled gentry which is the oldest stock in England. They had been going on in their undistinguished way since Edward the Confessor.

"Tell me about him," I said.

"I can't tell you much. You can see what he looks like. Did you ever know a face so lit up from behind? . . . He was the son of a parson in Northumberland, poor as a church-mouse, so he had to educate himself. Local grammar school, some provincial university, and then with scholarships and tutoring he fought his

way to Oxford. There he was rather a swell, and made friends with young Marburg, old Isaac's son, who got him a place in his father's business. The War broke out, and he served for four years, while Marburgs kept his job open. After that they moved him a good deal about the world, and he was several years in their New York house. It is really a romance, for at thirty-five he had made money, and now at thirty-eight he has inherited Goodeve and a good deal more. . . . Yes, he's a bachelor. Not rich as the big fortunes go, but rich enough. The thing about him is that he has got his jumping-off ground reasonably young, and is now about to leap. Quite modest, but perfectly confident, and terribly ambitious. He is taking up politics, and I back him to make you all sit up. I think he's the most impressive mortal I have ever met. Bored stiff with women—as stony-hearted as you, Ned. He's a sort of ascetic, vowed to a cause."

"His own career?" I asked.

"No. No. He's not a bit of an egotist. There's a pent-up force that's got to come out. He's a fanatic about some new kind of Empire development, and I know people who think him a second Rhodes. I want you to make friends with him and tell me what you think, for in your fish-like way you have good judgment."

Sally yawned again, and I respected more than ever the courage of women who can go on till they drop and keep smiling. She turned away in response to a question of Mayot's, and

I exchanged banalities with the lady on my other side. Presently I found myself free again to look round the table. I was right: we were the oddest mixture of the fresh and the *blasé*, the care-free and the care-worn. To look at Tavanger's hollow eyes and hear in one's ear the babble of high young voices made a contrast which was almost indecent. . . . I had a feeling as if we were all on a vast comfortable raft in some unknown sea, and that, while some were dancing to jazz music, others were crowding silently at the edge, staring into the brume ahead. Staring anxiously, too, for in that mist there might be fearful as well as wonderful things. . . . I found myself studying George Lamington's face, and felt a childish dislike of him. His life was so padded and cosseted and bovine. He had just inherited another quarter of a million from an uncle, and he had not the imagination of a rabbit in the use of money. Why does wealth make dull people so much duller? I had always rather liked George, but now I felt him intolerable. I must have been very tired, for I was getting as full of silly prejudices as a minor poet.

Sally was speaking again, as she collected eyes.

"Don't be afraid. This is going to be a very peaceful party."

"Will you promise me," I said, "that I won't come down to-morrow and find half a dozen new faces at breakfast?"

"Honest Injun," she replied. "They are all here except one, and he arrives to-night."

When the women had gone Evelyn Flambard brought his port to my side. Having exhausted horses during dinner, he regaled me with the Englishman's other main topic, politics. Evelyn despaired of the republic. He had grievances against the Budget, the new rating law, and the Government's agricultural policy. He was alarmed about the condition of India, where he had served in his old Hussar days, and about Egypt, where he had large investments. His views on America were calculated to make a serious breach between the two sections of the Anglo-Saxon race. But if he feared the Government he despised the Opposition, though for politeness' sake he added that his strictures did not apply to me. There was no honest Toryism left, so his plaint ran; there was not a pin to choose between the parties; they were all out to rob struggling virtue—meaning himself and other comfortable squires. He nodded down the table towards Goodeve. "Look at that chap," he whispered darkly. "I mean to say, he don't care a straw what he says or does, and he'll have Tommy Twiston's seat, which is reckoned the safest in England. He as good as told George Lamington this afternoon that he'd like to see a Soviet Government in power for a week in England under strict control, for it was the only way to deal with men like him. Hang it all, there's nothing wrong with old George except that he's a bit fussy, if you see what I mean."

I said that I rather agreed with Goodeve, and that set Evelyn pouring out his woes to the man

on the other side. Reggie Daker had come up next me, his eye heavy with confidences. I had acted as a sort of father-confessor to Reggie ever since he came down from the University, but I hadn't much credit by my disciple. He was infinitely friendly, modest and good-humoured, but as hard to hold as a knotless thread. Usually he talked to me about his career, and I had grown very tired of finding him jobs, which he either shied off or couldn't hold for a week. Now it seemed that this was not his trouble. He had found his niche at last, and it was dealing in rare books. Reggie considered that a lad like himself, with a fine taste and a large acquaintance, could make a lot of money by digging out rarities from obscure manor-houses and selling them to American collectors. He had taken up the study very seriously, he told me, and he actually managed to get a few phrases of bibliophil's jargon into his simple tale. He felt that he had found his life's work, and was quite happy about it.

The trouble was Pamela Brune. It appeared that he was deeply in love, and that she was toying with his young heart. "There's a strong lot of entries," he explained, "and Charles Ottery has been the favourite up till now. But she seems a bit off Charles, and . . . and . . . anyhow, I'm going to try my luck. I wangled an invitation here for that very purpose. I say, you know—you're her godfather, aren't you? If you could put in a kind word . . ."

But my unreceptive eye must have warned

Reggie that I was stony soil. He had another glass of port, and sighed.

I intended to go to bed as soon as I decently could. I was not sleepy, but I was seeing things with the confusion of a drowsy man. As I followed my host across the hall, where someone had started a gramophone, I seemed more than ever to be in a phantasmal world. The drawing-room, with the delicate fluted pilasters in its panelling and the Sir Joshuas and Romneys between them, swam in a green dusk, which was partly the afterglow through the uncurtained windows and partly the shading of the electric lamps. A four at bridge had been made up, and the young people were drifting back towards the music. Lady Nantley beckoned me from a sofa. I could see her eyes appraising my face and disapproving of it, but she was too tactful to tell me that I looked ill.

"I heard that you were to be here, Ned," she said, "and I was very glad. Your god-daughter is rather a handful just now, and I wanted your advice."

"What's wrong?" I asked. "She's looking uncommonly pretty." I caught a glimpse of Pamela patting her hair as she passed a mirror, slim and swift as a dryad.

"She's uncommonly perverse. You know that she has been having an affair with Charles Ottery ever since Christmas at Wirlesdon. I love Charles, and Tom and I were delighted. Everything most suitable—the right age, enough money, chance of a career, the same friends. There's no doubt that Charles adores

her, and till the other day I thought that she was coming to adore Charles. But now she has suddenly gone off at a tangent, and has taken to snubbing and neglecting him. She says that he's too good for her, and that his perfections choke her—doesn't want to play second fiddle to an Admirable Crichton—wants to shape her own life—all the rubbish that young people talk nowadays."

Mollie's charming eyes were full of real distress, and she put an appealing hand on my arm.

"'She likes you, Ned, and believes in you. Couldn't you put a little sense into her head?"

I wanted to say that I was feeling like a ghost from another sphere, and that it was no good asking a tenuous spectre to meddle with the affairs of warm flesh and blood. But I was spared the trouble of answering by the appearance of Lady Flambard.

"Forgive me, Mollie dear," she said, "but I must carry him off. I'll bring him back to you presently."

She led me to a young man who was standing near the door. "Bob," she said, "this is Sir Edward Leithen. I've been longing for you two to meet."

"So have I," said the other, and we shook hands. Now that I saw Goodeve fairly, I was even more impressed than by his profile as seen at dinner. He was a finely made man, and looked younger than his thirty-eight years. He was very dark, but not in the last swarthy; there were lights in his hair which suggested

that he might have been a blond child, and his skin was a clear brown, as if the blood ran strongly and cleanly under it. What I liked about him was his smile, which was at once engaging and natural and a little shy. It took away any arrogance that might have lurked in the tight mouth and straight brows.

"I came here to meet you, sir," he said. "I'm a candidate for public life, and I wanted to see a man who interests me more than anybody else in the game. I hope you don't mind my saying that. . . . What about going into the garden? There's a moon of sorts, and tne nightingales will soon begin. If they're like the ones at Goodeve, eleven's their hour."

We went through the hall to the terrace, which lay empty and quiet in a great dazzle of moonlight. It was only about a fortnight till midsummer, a season when in fine weather in southern England it is never quite dark. Now, with a moon nearing the full, the place was bright enough to read print. The stone balustrade and urns were white as snow, and the two stairways that led to the sunk garden were a frosty green like tiny glaciers.

We threaded the maze of plots and lily-ponds and came out on a farther lawn, which ran down to the little river. That bit of the Arm is no good for fishing, for it has been trimmed into a shallow babbling stretch of ornamental water, but it is a delicious thing in the landscape. There was no sound except the lapse of the stream, and the occasional squattering flight of a moorhen. But as we reached

the brink a nightingale began in the next thicket.

Goodeve had scarcely spoken a word. He was sniffing the night scents, which were a wonderful blend of early roses, new-mown hay, and dewy turf. When we reached the Arm, we turned and looked back at the house. It seemed suddenly to have gone small, set in a great alley-way of green between olive woods, an alley-way which swept from the high downs to the river meadows. Far beyond it we could see the bare top of Stobarrow. But it looked as perfect as a piece of carved ivory—and ancient, ancient as a boulder left millenniums ago by a melting ice-cap.

"Pretty good," said my companion at last. "At Flambard you can walk steadily back into the past. Every chapter is written plain to be read."

"At Goodeve, too," I said.

"At Goodeve, too. You know the place? It is the first home I have had since I was a child, for I have been knocking about for years in lodgings and tents. I'm still a little afraid of it. It's a place that wants to master you. I'm sometimes tempted to give myself up to it and spend my days listening to its stories and feeling my way back through the corridors of time. But I know that that would be ruin."

"Why?"

"Because you cannot walk backward. It is too easy, and the road leads nowhere. A man must keep his eyes to the front and resist the pull of his ancestors. They're the devil,

those ancestors, always trying to get you back into their own rut."

"I wish mine would pull harder," I said. "I've been badly overworked lately, and I feel at this moment like a waif, with nothing behind me and nothing before."

He regarded me curiously. "I thought you looked a little done up. Well, that's the penalty of being a swell. You'll lie fallow for a day or two and the power will return. There can't be much looking backward in your life."

"Nor looking forward. I seem to live between high blank walls. I never get a prospect."

"Oh, but you are wrong," he said seriously. "All your time is spent in trying to guess what is going to happen—what view the Courts will take of a case, what kind of argument will hit the prospective mood of the House. It is the same in law and politics and business and everything practical. Success depends on seeing just a little more into the future than other people."

I remembered my odd feeling at dinner of the raft on the misty sea, and the anxious peering faces at the edge.

"Maybe," I said. "But just at the moment I'm inclined to envy the people who live happily in the present. Our host, for example, and the boys and girls who are now dancing." In the stillness the faint echo of music drifted to us from the house.

"I don't envy them a bit," he said. "They have no real sporting interest. Trying to see

something solid in the mist is the whole fun of life, and most of its poetry."

"Anyhow, thank Heaven, we can't see very far. It would be awful to look down an avenue of time as clear as this strip of lawn, and see the future as unmistakable as Flambard."

"Perhaps. But sometimes I would give a good deal for just one moment of prevision."

After that, as we strolled back, we talked about commonplace things—the prospects of a not very secure Government, common friends, the ways of our hostess, whom he loved, and the abilities of Mayot, which—along with me—he doubted. As we entered the house again we found the far end of the hall brightly lit, since the lamps had been turned on in the porch. The butler was ushering in a guest who had just arrived, and Sally had hastened from the drawing-room to greet him.

The new-comer was one of the biggest men I have ever seen, and one of the leanest. A suit of grey flannel hung loose upon his gigantic bones. He reminded me of Nansen, except that he was dark instead of fair. His forehead rose to a peak, on which sat one solitary lock, for the rest of his head was bald. His eyes were large and almost colourless, mere pits of light beneath shaggy brows. He was bowing over Sally's hand in a foreign way, and the movement made him cough.

"May I present Sir Edward Leithen?" said Sally. "Sir Robert Goodeve . . . Professor Moe."

The big man gave me a big hand, which felt hot and damp. His eyes regarded me with a hungry interest. I had an impression of power—immense power, and also an immense fragility.

II

I did not have a good night; I rarely do when I have been overworking. I started a chapter of *Barchester Towers,* dropped off in the middle, and woke in two hours restless and unrefreshed. Then I must have lain awake till the little chill before dawn which generally sends me to sleep. The window was wide open and all the minute sounds of a summer night floated through it, but they did not soothe me. I had one of those fits of dissatisfaction which often assail the sleepless. I felt that I was making very little of my life. I earned a large income, and had a considerable position in the public eye, but I was living, so to speak, from hand to mouth. I had long lost any ordinary ambitions, and had ceased to plan out my career ahead, as I used to do when I was a young man. There were many things in public life on which I was keen, but it was only an intellectual keenness; I had no ardour in their pursuit. I felt as if my existence were utterly shapeless.

It was borne in on me that Goodeve was right. What were his words?—"Trying to see something solid in the mist is the whole fun of life and most of its poetry." Success, he had argued, depended upon looking a little farther

into the future than other people. No doubt; but then I didn't want success—not in the ordinary way. He had still his spurs to win, whereas I had won mine, and I didn't like the fit of them. Yet all the same I wanted some plan and policy in my life, for I couldn't go on living in the mud of the present. My mind needed prospect and horizon. I had often made this reflection before in moments of disillusionment, but now it came upon me with the force of a revelation. I told myself that I was beginning to be cured of my weariness, for I was growing discontented, and discontent is a proof of vitality. . . . As I fell asleep I was thinking of Goodeve and realising how much I liked him. His company might prove the tonic I required.

I rose early and went for a walk along the Arm to look for a possible trout. The May-fly season was over, but there were one or two good fish rising beyond a clump of reeds where the stream entered the wood. Then I breakfasted alone with Evelyn, for Flambard is not an early house. His horses were mostly at grass, but he lent me a cob of Sally's. I changed into breeches, cut a few sandwiches, and set out for the high Downs. I fancied that a long lonely day on the hills would do me as much good as anything.

It was a quiet dim morning which promised a day of heat. I rode through a mile of woods full of nesting pheasants, then over a broomy common, and then by way of a steep lane on to the turf of the Downs. I found myself on

the track where Evelyn exercised his race-horses, for he trained at home, so I gave my beast its head, and had the most delectable of experiences, a gallop over perfect turf. This brought me well up on the side of Stobarrow, and by the time I reached its summit the haze was clearing and I was looking over the Arm and the young Thames to the blue lift of Cotswold.

I spent the whole day on the uplands. I ate my sandwiches in a clump of thorns, and had a mug of rough cider at an alehouse. I rode down long waterless combes, and ascended other tops besides Stobarrow. For an hour I lay on a patch of thyme, drowsy with the heat and the aromatic scents. I smoked a pipe with an old shepherd, and heard slow tales of sheep and dogs and storms and forgotten fox-hunts. In the end I drugged myself into a sort of animal peace. Thank God, I could still get back when I pleased to the ancient world of pastoral.

But when on my return I came over the brink of Stobarrow I realised that I had gained little. The pastoral world was not mine; my world was down below in the valley where men and women were fretting and puzzling. . . . I no longer thought of them as on a raft looking at misty seas, but rather as spectators on a ridge, trying to guess what lay beyond the next hill. Tavanger and Mayot and Goodeve —they were all at it. A futile game, maybe, but inevitable, since what lay beyond the hill was life and death to them. I must recapture

the mood for this guessing game, for it was the mainspring of effort and therefore of happiness.

I got back about six, had a bath and changed into flannels. Sally gave me a cup of tea at a table in the hall which carried food for a multitude, but did not look as if it had been much patronised. Evelyn and the Lamingtons had gone to see the Wallingdon training stables; the young people had had tea in the tennis-court pavilion; Mayot had motored to Cirencester to meet a friend, and Tavanger had gone to Goodeve to look at the pictures, in which subject he was a noted connoisseur; Charles Ottery had disappeared after luncheon, and she had sent the Professor to bed till dinner.

Sally's face wore something between a smile and a frown.

"Reggie Daker is in bed, too. He was determined to try Sir Vidas over the jumps in the park, though Evelyn warned him that the horse was short of exercise and was sure to give trouble. The jumps haven't been mended for months, and the take-off at some of them is shocking. Well, Sir Vidas came down all right, and Reggie fell on his head and nearly cracked his skull. He was concussed, and unconscious for a quarter of an hour. Dr Micklem sewed him up, and he is now in bed, covered with bandages, and not allowed to speak or be spoken to till to-morrow. It's hard luck on poor Reggie, but it will keep him for a little from making a fool of himself about Pamela Brune. He hasn't a chance there, you know,

and he is such a tactless old donkey that he is spoiling the field for Charles Ottery."

But it was not Reggie's misfortunes that made my hostess frown. Presently I learned the reason.

"I'm very glad of the chance of a quiet talk with you," she said. "I want to speak to you about Professor Moe. You saw him when he arrived last night. What did you think of him?"

"He seemed a formidable personage," I replied. "He looked very ill."

"He *is* very ill. I had no notion how ill he was. He makes light of it, but there must be something mortally wrong with his lungs or his heart. He seems to be always in a fever, and now and then he simply gasps for breath. He says he has been like that for years, but I can't believe it. It's a tragedy, for he is one of the greatest minds in the world."

"I never heard of him before."

"You wouldn't. You're not a scientist. He's a most wonderful mathematician and physicist —rather in the Einstein way. He has upset every scientific law, but you can't understand just how unless you're a great scientist yourself. Our own people hush their voices when they mention him."

"How did you come across him?"

"I met him last year in Berlin. You know I've a *flair* for clever people, and they seem to like me, though I don't follow a word they say. I saw that he was to be in London to read a paper to some society, so I thought I'd ask him

to Flambard to show him what English country life was like. Rather to my surprise he accepted—I think London tired him and he wanted a rest."

"You're worried about him? Are you afraid that he'll die on your hands?"

"No-o," she answered. "He's very ill, but I don't think he'll die just yet. What worries me is to know how to help him. You see, he took me into his confidence this morning. He accepted my invitation because he wanted the quiet of the country to finish a piece of work. A tremendous piece of work—the work of his life. . . . He wants something more. He wants our help. It seems that some experiment is necessary before he can be quite sure of his ground."

"What sort of experiment?"

"With human beings—the right kind of human beings. You mustn't laugh at me, Ned, for I can't explain what he told me, though I thought I understood when he was speaking. . . . It has something to do with a new theory of Time. He thinks that Time is not a straight line, but full of coils and kinks. He says that the Future is here with us now, if we only knew how to look for it. And he believes he has found a way of enabling one to know what is going to happen a long time ahead."

I laughed. "Useful for Evelyn and George. They'll be able to back all the Ascot winners."

But Sally did not laugh.

"You must be serious. The Professor is a genius, and I believe every word he says. He

wants help, he told me. Not people like Evelyn and George. He has very clear ideas about the kind of man he needs. He wants Mr Mayot and Mr Tavanger and perhaps Charles Ottery, though he's not quite sure about Charles. Above all, he wants you and Bob Goodeve. He saw you last night and took a tremendous fancy to you both."

I forbore to laugh only out of deference to Sally's gravity. It seemed a reduction to the absurd of Goodeve's talk the night before and my reflections on the Downs. I had decided that I must be more forward-looking, and here was a wild foreigner who believed that he had found the exact technique of the business.

"I don't like it," I said. "The man is probably mad."

"Oh no, he isn't. He is brilliantly sane. You have only to talk to him to realise that. Even when I couldn't follow him I could see that he was not talking nonsense. But the point is that he wants to put it all before you. He is certain that he can make a convert of you."

"But I don't know the first thing about science. I have often got up a technical subject for a case, and then washed it out of my mind. I've never been instructed in the first principles. I don't understand the language."

"That is just why Professor Moe wants you. He says he wants a fresh mind, and a mind trained like yours to weigh evidence. It wasn't your *beaux yeux,* Ned, that he fell for, but your reputation as a lawyer."

"I don't mind listening to what he has got to say. But look here, Sally, I don't like this experiment business. What does he propose?"

"Nothing in the least unpleasant. It only means one or two people preparing themselves for an experience, which he says he can give them, by getting into a particular frame of mind. . . . He's not sure if he can bring it off, you know. The experiment is to be the final proof of his discovery. He was emphatic that there was no danger and no unpleasantness, whether it was successful or not. . . . But he was very particular about the people he wanted. He was looking at us all this morning with the queerest appraising eyes. He wants you and Bob especially, and Mr Mayot and Mr Tavanger, and possibly Charles. Oh yes, and he thinks he may want me. But nobody else. He was perfectly clear about that."

I must say that this rather impressed me. He had chosen exactly those whom I had selected at dinner the previous night as the care-full as opposed to the care-free. He wanted people whose physical vitality was low, and who were living on the edge of their nerves, and he had picked them unerringly out of Sally's house-party.

"All right," I said. "I'll have a talk to him after dinner. But I want you to be guided by me, and if I think the thing fishy to call it off. If the man is as clever as you say, he may scare somebody into imbecility."

Before I dressed I rang up Landor, and was

lucky enough to find him still in London. Landor, besides being a patent-law barrister pretty near the top of his branch, is a Fellow of the Royal Society, and a devotee of those dim regions where physics, metaphysics and mathematics jostle each other. He has published and presented me with several works which I found totally incomprehensible.

When I asked him about Professor Moe he replied with a respectful gurgle. "You don't mean to say you've got him at Flambard? What astounding luck! I thought he had gone back to Stockholm. There are scores of people who would walk twenty miles barefoot to get a word with him."

Landor confirmed all that Sally had said about the Professor's standing. He had been given the Nobel Prize years ago, and was undoubtedly the greatest mathematician alive. But recently he had soared into a world where it was not easy to keep abreast of him. Landor confessed that he had only got glimmerings of meaning from the paper he had read two days before to the Newton Club. "I can see the road he is travelling," he said, "but I can't quite grasp the stages." And he quoted Wordsworth's line about "voyaging through strange seas of thought alone."

"He's the real thing," I asked, "and not a charlatan?"

I could hear Landor's cackle at the other end of the line.

"You might as well ask a conscript to vouch

for Napoleon's abilities as ask me to give a certificate of respectability to August Moe."

"You're sure he's quite sane?"

"Absolutely. He's only mad in so far as all genius is mad. He is reputed to be a very good fellow and very simple. Did you know that he once wrote a book on Hans Andersen? But he looked to me a pretty sick man. There's a lot of hereditary phthisis in his race."

Dinner that evening was a pleasanter meal for me. I had more of an appetite, there was a less leaden air about my companions in fatigue, the sunburnt boys and girls were in good form, and Reggie Daker's woebegone countenance was safe on its pillow. Charles Ottery, who sat next to Pamela Brune, seemed to be in a better humour, and Mrs Lamington was really amusing about the Wallingdon stables and old Wallingdon's stable-talk. I had been moved farther down the table, and had a good view of Professor Moe, who sat next to our hostess. His was an extraordinary face—the hollow cheeks and high cheek-bones, the pale eyes, the broad high brow, and the bald head rising to a peak like Sir Walter Scott's. The expression was very gentle, like a musing child, but now and then he seemed to kindle, and an odd gleam appeared in his colourless pits of eyes. For all his size he looked terribly flimsy. Something had fretted his body to a decay.

He came up to me as soon as we left the dining-room. He spoke excellent English, but his voice made me uneasy—it seemed to come

with difficulty from a long way down in his big frame. There was a vague, sad kindliness about his manner, but there was a sense of purpose, too. He went straight to the point.

"Some time you are going to give me your attention, Sir Edward, and I in return will give you my confidence. Her ladyship has so informed me. She insists, that gracious one, that I must go to bed, for I am still weary. Shall our talk be to-morrow after breakfast? In the garden, please, if the sun still shines."

III

I find it almost impossible to give the gist of the conversation which filled the next forenoon. We sat in wicker chairs on the flags of the Dutch garden in a grilling sun, for heat seemed to be the one physical comfort for which the Professor craved. I shall always associate the glare of a June sky with a frantic effort on my part to grasp the ultimate imponderables of human thought.

The Professor was merciful to my weakness. He had a great writing-pad on his knee, and would fain have illustrated his argument with diagrams, but he desisted when he found that they meant little to me and really impeded his exposition. Most scientists use a kind of shorthand—formulas and equations which have as exact a meaning for them as an ordinary noun has for the ordinary man. But there was no chance for this shorthand with me. He had to

begin from the very beginning, taking nothing for granted. I realised his difficulty. It was as if I had had to argue an intricate case, not before a learned judge but before an intelligent ignoramus, to whom each technical legal term had to be laboriously explained.

There was another difficulty, which applied not to me only but to the most intelligent auditor in the world. Suppose you are trying to expound to a man who has been stone-deaf from birth the meaning of sound. You can show him the physical effects of it, the brain and sense reactions, but the *fact* of sound you cannot bring home to him by any diagram or calculation. It is something for him without sensory vividness, altogether outside his realised universe. It was the same with the Professor's exposition of strange new dimensions, the discovery of which depended on logical processes. I could not grasp them imaginatively, and, not having lived as he had done with the arguments, I could not comprehend them intellectually.

But here—very crudely and roughly—is the kind of thing he tried to tell me.

. . . . .

He began by observing that in the blind instinct of man there was something which the normal intellect lacked—a prevision of future happenings, for which reason gave no warrant. We all of us had occasionally dim anticipations of coming events, lurking somewhere in our nerves. A man walking in the dark was aware

subconsciously of a peril and subconsciously braced himself to meet it. He quoted the sentences from Bergson which I have put at the head of this chapter. His aim was to rationalise and systematise this anticipatory instinct.

Then he presented me with a theory of Time, for he had an orderly mind, and desired to put first things first. Here he pretty well bogged me at the start. He did not call Time a fourth dimension, but I gathered that it amounted to that, or rather that it involved many new dimensions. There seemed to be a number of worlds of presentation travelling in Time, and each was contained within a world one dimension larger. The self was composed of various observers, the normal one being confined to a small field of sensory phenomena, observed or remembered. But this field was included in a larger field, and, to the observer in the latter, future events were visible as well as past and present.

In sleep, he went on, where the attention was not absorbed, as it was in waking life, with the smaller field of phenomena, the larger field might come inside the pale of consciousness. People had often been correctly forewarned in dreams. We all now and then were amazed at the familiarity with which we regarded a novel experience, as if we recognised it as something which had happened before. The universe was extended in Time, and the dreamer, with nothing to rivet his attention to the narrow waking field, ranged about, and might light on images which belonged to the

future as well as to the past. The sleeper was constantly crossing the arbitrary frontier which our mortal limitations had erected.

At this point I began to see light. I was prepared to assent to the conclusion that in dreams we occasionally dip into the future, though I was unable to follow most of the Professor's proofs. But now came the real question. Was it possible to attain to this form of prevision otherwise than in sleep? Could the observer in the narrow world turn himself by any effort of will into the profounder observer in the world of ampler dimensions? Could the anticipating power of the dreamer be systematised and controlled, and be made available to man in his waking life?

It could, said the Professor. Such was the result of the researches to which he had dedicated the last ten years of his life. It was as a crowning proof that he wished an experiment at Flambard.

I think that he realised how little I had grasped of his exposition of the fundamentals of his theory. He undertook it, I fancy, out of his scrupulous honesty; he felt bound to put me in possession of the whole argument, whether I understood it or not. But, now that he had got down to something concrete which I could follow, his manner became feverishly earnest. He patted my knee with a large lean hand, and kept thrusting his gaunt face close to mine. His writing-pad fell into the lily-pond, but he did not notice it.

He needed several people for his experiment

—the more the better, for he wanted a variety of temperaments, and he said something, too, about the advantage of a communal psychical effort. . . . But they must be the right kind of people—people with highly developed nervous systems—not men too deeply sunk in matter. (I thought of Evelyn and the Lamingtons and old Folliot.) He deprecated exuberant physical health or abounding vitality, since such endowments meant that their possessors would be padlocked to the narrower sensory world. He ran over his selection again, dwelling on each, summing each up with what seemed to me astounding shrewdness, considering that he had met them for the first time two days before. He wanted the hungry and the forward-looking. Tavanger and Mayot. "They will never be content," he said, "and their hunger is of the spirit, though maybe an earthy spirit. . . ." Myself. He turned his hollow eyes on me, but was too polite to particularise what my kind of hunger might be. . . . Charles Ottery. "He is unhappy, and that means that his hold on the present is loose. . . ." Sally Flambard. "That gracious lady lives always *sur la branche* —is it not so? She is like a bird, and has no heavy flesh to clog her. Assuredly she must be one." Rather to my surprise he added Reggie Daker. Reggie's recent concussion, for some reason which I did not follow, made him a suitable subject. . . . Above all, there was Goodeve. He repeated his name with satisfaction, but offered no comment.

I asked him what form his experiment would take.

"A little training. No more. A little *ascesis*, partly of the body, but mainly of the mind. It must be disciplined to see what it shall see."

Then, speaking very slowly, and drawing words apparently from as deep a cavern as that from which he drew his breath, he explained his plan.

There must be a certain physical preparation. I am as unlearned in medical science as in philosophy, but I gathered that recently there had been some remarkable advances made in the study of the brain and its subsidiary organs. Very likely I am writing nonsense, for the Professor at this point forgot about tempering the wind to the shorn lamb, and poured forth a flood of technicalities. But I understood him to say that, just as the cortex of the brain was the seat of the intellectual activities, so the subcortical region above the spinal cord was the home of the instinctive faculties. He used a lot of jargon, which, not being an anatomist, I could not follow, but he was obliging enough to draw me a diagram in his pocket-book, the writing-pad being in the lily-pond.

In particular there was a thing which he called an "intercalated cell," and which had a very special importance in his scheme. Just as the faculty of sight, he said, had for its supreme function the creation of an extended world, a world of space-perception, so the instinct which had its seat in this cell specialised in time-perception. . . . I had been reading

lately about telegnosis, and mentioned that word, but he shook his head impatiently. The faculty he spoke of had nothing to do with telegnosis. "You have not understood my exposition," he said. "But no matter. It is enough if you understand my purpose."

It was desirable to stimulate the functioning of this cell. That could only be done in a small degree. A certain diet was necessary, for he had discovered that the cell was temporarily atrophied by the wrong foods. Also there was a drug, which acted upon it directly.

At this I protested, but he was quick to reassure me. "On my honour," he cried, "it is the mildest drug. Its bodily effect is as innocuous as a glass of tonic water. But I have proved experimentally that it lulls the other faculties and very slightly stimulates this one of which I speak."

Then he revealed his main purpose.

"I am still groping at the edge of mysteries," he said. "My theory I am assured is true, but in practice I can only go a very little way. Some day, when I am ashes, men will look at the future as easily as to-day they look out of a window at a garden. At present I must be content to exemplify my doctrine by small trivial things. I cannot enable you to gaze at a segment of life at some future date, and watch human beings going about their business. The most I hope for is to show you some simple matter of sense-perception as it will be at that date. Therefore I need some object which I am assured will be still in existence, and which

I am also assured will have changed from what it now is. Name to me such an object."

I suggested, rather foolishly, the position of the planets in the sky.

"That will not do, for now we can predict that position with perfect certainty."

"A young tree?"

"The visible evidence of change would be too minute. I cannot promise to open up the future very far ahead. A year—two years maybe—no more."

"A building which we all know and which is now going up?"

Again he shook his head. "You may be familiar with the type of the completed structure, and carry the picture of it in your memory. . . . There is only one familiar object, which continues and likewise changes. You cannot guess? Why, a journal. A daily or weekly paper."

He leaned towards me and laid a hand on each of my knees.

"To-day is the 6th of June. Four days from now, if you and the others consent, I will enable you to see for one instant of time—no longer—a newspaper of the 10th day of June next year."

He lay back in his chair and had a violent fit of coughing, while I digested this startling announcement. . . . He was right on one point—a newspaper was the only thing for his experiment; that at any rate I saw clearly. I own to having been tremendously impressed by his talk, but I was not quite convinced; the

thing appeared to be clean out of nature and reason. You see, I had no such stimulus to belief as a scientist would have had who had followed his proofs. . . . Still, it seemed harmless. Probably it would end in nothing—the ritual prepared and the mystics left gaping at each other. . . . No. That could scarcely happen, I decided; the mystagogue was too impressive.

The Professor had recovered himself, and was watching me under drooped eyelids. All the eagerness had gone out of his face, but that face had the brooding power and the ageless wisdom of the Sphinx. If he were allowed to make the experiment something must happen.

Lady Flambard had promised to abide by my decision. . . . There could be no risk, I told myself. A little carefulness in diet, which would do everybody good. The drug? I would have to watch that. The Professor seemed to read my thoughts, for he broke in:

"You are worrying about the drug? It is of small consequence. If you insist, it can be omitted."

I asked how he proposed to prepare the subjects of his experiment. Quite simply, he replied. A newspaper—*The Times,* for example—would be made to play a large part in their thoughts. . . . I observed that it already played a large part in the thoughts of educated Englishmen, and he smiled—the first time I had seen him smile. There was an air of satisfaction about him, as if he knew what my answer would be.

"I see no objection to what you propose," I said at last. "I warn you that I am still a bit of a sceptic. But I am willing, if you can persuade the others."

He smiled again. "With the others there will be no difficulty. Our gracious hostess is already an enthusiast. Before luncheon I will speak to Mr Tavanger and Mr Mayot—and to Mr Ottery when he returns. I shall not speak to them as I have spoken to you."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because they are longing for such a revelation as I propose, whereas you care not at all. But I would beg of you to say a word on my behalf to Sir Robert Goodeve. His co-operation I especially seek."

He raised with difficulty his huge frame from the wicker chair, blinking his eyes in the hot sun, and leaning on a sundial as if he were giddy. I offered my arm, which he took, and together we went under the striped awning, which shaded one part of the terrace, into the coolness of the great hall.

You know the kind of banality with which, out of shyness, one often winds up a difficult conversation. I was moved to observe, as I left him, that in four days I hoped to be introduced to a new world. He made no answer. "To enter, waking, into the world of sleep," I added fatuously.

Then he said a thing which rather solemnised me.

"Not only the world of sleep," he said. "It is the world to which we penetrate after death."

As I watched his great back slowly mounting the staircase, I had a sudden feeling that into the peace of Flambard something fateful and tremendous had broken.

IV

I do not know what Professor Moe said to Tavanger and Mayot. I knew both men, but not intimately, for they were a little too much of the unabashed careerist for my taste, and I wondered how, in spite of his confidence, he was going to interest their most practical minds.

After luncheon I wanted to be alone, so I took my rod and went down to the Arm, beyond the stretch where it ran among water-meadows.

It was a still bright afternoon, with a slight haze to temper the glare of the sun. The place was delicious, full of the scents of mint and meadowsweet, yellow flag-irises glowing by the water's edge, and the first dog-roses beginning to star the hedges. There was not much of a rise, but I caught a few trout under the size limit, and stalked and lost a big fellow in the mill pool. But I got no good of the summer peace, and my mind was very little on fishing, for the talk of the morning made a merry-go-round in my head.

I had moments of considering the whole business a farce, and wondering if I had not made a fool of myself in consenting to it. But I could not continue long in that mood. The

Professor's ardent face would come before me like a reproachful schoolmaster's, and under those compelling eyes of his I was forced back into something which was acquiescence, if not conviction. There was a shadow of anxiety at the back of my mind. The man was an extraordinary force, with elemental powers of brain and will; was it wise to let such an influence loose on commonplace people who happened to be at the moment a little loose from their moorings? I was not afraid of myself, but what about the high-strung Sally, and the concussed Reggie, and Charles Ottery in the throes of an emotional crisis? I kept telling myself that there was no danger, that nothing could happen. . . . And then I discovered, to my amazement that, if that forecast proved true, I should be disappointed. I wanted something to happen. Nay, I believed at the bottom of my heart that something would happen.

In the smoking-room before dinner I found Charles Ottery and Reggie Daker—a rather pale and subdued Reggie, with a bandage round his head and a black eye. They were talking on the window seat, and when I entered they suddenly stopped. When they saw who it was, Charles called to me to join them.

"I hear you're in this business, Ned," he said. "I got the surprise of my life when the Professor told me that you had consented. It's a new line of country for a staid old bird like you."

"The man's a genius," I replied. "I see no

harm in helping him in his experiment. Did you understand his argument?"

"I didn't try. He didn't argue much, but one could see that he had any quantity of scientific stuff behind him. He hopes to make us dream while we're awake, and I thought it such a sporting proposition that I couldn't refuse. It must all be kept deadly secret, of course. We have to get into the right atmosphere, and tune our minds to the proper pitch, and it would never do to rope in a born idiot like George Lamington. He'd guy it from the start."

"You were convinced by the Professor?" I asked.

"I won't say convinced. I was interested. It's an amusing game anyhow, and I want to be amused."

Charles spoke with a lightness which seemed to me to be assumed. He had obviously been far more impressed than he cared to admit. I could see that, since Pamela was giving him a difficult time, he longed for something to distract him, something which was associated with that world of new emotions in which he was living.

The lady's other suitor made no concealment. Reggie was honestly excited. He was flattered, perhaps, by being made one of the circle, and may have attributed his choice to his new rôle as an authority on books. At last he was being taken seriously. Also his recent concussion may have predisposed him to some research into the mysteries of mind, for as he

explained, he could not remember one blessed thing that happened between putting Sir Vidas at a fence which he cleared with a yard to spare, and finding himself in bed with clouts on his head. He was insistent on the need of confidence in the experiment. "What I mean to say is, we've got to help the old boy out. If we don't believe the thing will come off, then it won't—if you see what I mean."

He dropped his voice as Evelyn Flambard and his terriers came noisily into the room.

As I was going upstairs to dress, I found Goodeve's hand on my shoulder.

"I hear you're on in this piece," he whispered jovially, as if the whole thing was a good joke.

"And you?" I whispered back.

"Oh, I'm on. I rather like these psychical adventures. I'm a hopeless subject, you know, and calculated to break up any *séance*. I haven't got enough soul—too solidly tied to earth. But I never mind offering myself as a victim."

He laughed and passed into his bedroom, leaving me wondering how the Professor had so signally failed with the man who was his special choice. He had obtained Goodeve's consent, so there was no need of pressure from me, but clearly he had not made any sort of convert of him.

At dinner we all tried to behave as if nothing special was afoot, and I think we succeeded. George Lamington had never had so good an audience for his dreary tales. He was full of

racing reminiscences, the point of which was the preternatural cunning with which he had outwitted sundry rivals who had tried to beguile him. I never knew anyone whose talk was so choked with adipose tissue, but he generally managed to wallow towards some kind of point, which he and Evelyn found dramatic. . . . During most of the meal I talked to his wife. She could be intelligent enough when she chose, and had a vigorous interest in foreign affairs, for she was an Ambassador's daughter. When I first knew her she had affected a foreign accent, and professed to be more at home in Paris and Vienna than in London. Now she was English of the English, and her former tastes appeared only in intermittent attempts to get George appointed to a Dominion Governorship, where he would most certainly have been a failure. For the present, however, the drums and trumpets did not sound for her. The recent addition to the Lamington fortunes had plunged her deep in the upholstery of life. She was full of plans for doing up their place in Suffolk, and, as I am as ignorant as a coal-heaver about bric-à-brac, I could only listen respectfully. She had the mannerism of the very rich, whose grievance is not against the price of things but the inadequacy of the supply.

The Professor's health appeared to have improved, or it may have been satisfaction with his initial success, for he was almost loquacious. He seemed to have acute hearing, for he would

catch fragments of conversation far down the table, and send his great voice booming towards the speaker in some innocent interrogation. As I have said, his English was excellent, but his knowledge of English life seemed to be on the level of a South Sea islander. He was very inquisitive, and asked questions about racing and horses which gave Evelyn a chance to display his humour. Among the younger people he was a great success. Pamela Brune, who sat next to him, lost in his company her slight air of petulance and discontent, and became once again the delightful child I had known. I was obliged to admit that the Flambard party had improved since yesterday, for certain of its members seemed to have shaken off their listlessness.

While youth was dancing or skylarking on the terrace, and the rest were set solidly to bridge, we met in the upper chamber in the Essex wing, which had been given me as a sitting-room. At first, while we waited for the Professor, we were a little self-conscious. Tavanger and Mayot, especially, looked rather like embarrassed elders at a children's party. But I noticed that no one—not even Reggie Daker—tried to be funny about the business.

The Professor's coming turned us into a most practical assembly. Without a word of further explanation he gave us our marching orders. He appeared to assume that we were all ready to surrender ourselves to his directions.

The paper chosen was *The Times*. For the next three days we were to keep our minds

glued to that news-sheet, and he was very explicit about the way in which we were to do it.

First of all, we were to have it as much as possible before our eyes, so that its physical form became as familiar to each of us as our razors and cigarette-cases. We started, of course, with a considerable degree of knowledge, for we were all accustomed to look at it every morning. I remember wondering why the Professor had fixed so short a time as three days for this intensive contemplation, till he went on to give his further orders.

This ocular familiarity was only the beginning. Each of us must concentrate on one particular part to which his special interest was pledged—Tavanger on the first City page, for example, Mayot on the leader page, myself on the Law Reports—any part we pleased. Of such pages we had to acquire the most intimate knowledge, so that by shutting our eyes we could reconstruct the make-up in every detail. The physical make-up, that is to say; there was no necessity for any memorising of contents.

Then came something more difficult. Each of us had to perform a number of exercises in concentration and anticipation. We knew the kind of things which were happening, and within limits the kind of topic which would be the staple of the next day's issue. Well, we had to try to forecast some of the contents of the next day's issue, which we had not seen. And not merely in a general sense. We had to empty our minds of everything but the one topic, and endeavour to make as full as possible

a picture of part of the exact contents of *The Times* next morning—to see it not as a concept but as a percept—the very words and lines and headings.

For example. Suppose that I took the Law Reports pages. There were some cases the decisions on which were being given by the House of Lords to-day, and would be published to-morrow. I could guess the members of the tribunal who would deliver judgment, and could make a fair shot at what that judgment would be. Well, I was to try so to forecast these coming pages that I could picture the column of type, and, knowing the judges' idiosyncrasies, see before my eyes the very sentences in which their wisdom would be enshrined. . . . Tavanger, let us say, took the first City page. To-morrow he knew there would be a report of a company meeting in which he was interested. He must try to get a picture of the paragraph in which the City Editor commented on the meeting. . . . If Mayot chose the leader page, he must try to guess correctly what would be the subject of the first or second leader, and, from his knowledge of *The Times* policy and the style of its leader-writers, envisage some of the very sentences, and possibly the headings.

It seemed to me an incredibly difficult game, and I did not believe that, for myself, I would get any results at all. I have never been much good at guessing. But I could see the general lay-out. Everything would depend upon the adequacy of the knowledge we started with.

To make an ocular picture which would have any exactitude, I must be familiar with the Lord Chancellor's mannerisms, Tavanger with the mentality and the style of the City Editor, and Mayot with the policy of the paper and the verbal felicities of its leader-writers. . . . Some of us found the prescription difficult, and Reggie Daker groaned audibly.

But there was more to follow. We were also to try to fling our minds farther forward—not for a day, but for a year. Each morning at seven—I do not know why he fixed that hour—we were to engage in a more difficult kind of concentration—by using such special knowledge as we possessed to help us to forecast the kind of development in the world which June of next year would show. And always we had to aim at seeing our forecasts not in vague concepts, but in concrete black and white in the appropriate corner of *The Times*.

I am bound to say that, when I heard this, I felt that we had been let in for a most futile quest. We had our days mapped out in a minute programme—certain hours for each kind of concentration. We would meet the Professor in my sitting-room at stated times. . . . I think that he felt the atmosphere sceptical, for on this last point his manner lost its briskness and he became very solemn.

"It is difficult," he said, "but you must have faith. And I myself will help you. Time—all time—is with us *now*, but we are confined to narrow fields of presentation. With my help you will enlarge these fields. If you will give

me honestly all your powers I can supplement them."

Lastly he spoke of the necessary regime. Too much exercise was forbidden, for it was desirable that our health should be rather an absence of ailments than a positive, aggressive well-being. There were to be no cold baths. We might smoke, but alcohol was strictly forbidden—not much of a hardship, for we were an abstemious lot. As to diet, we had to behave like convalescents—no meat, not even fish—nothing which, in the Professor's words, "possessed automobility." We were allowed weak tea, but not coffee. Milk, cheese, fruit, eggs and cereals were to be our staples.

It all reminded me rather eerily of the ritual food which used to be given to human beings set apart for sacrifice to the gods.

"Our gracious hostess has so arranged it that the others will not be curious," said the Professor, and Sally nodded a mystified head.

I went to bed feeling that I should probably get a liver attack from lack of exercise, if I did not starve from lack of food. Next morning I found a *Times* on the tray which brought my morning tea. Sally must have sent ten miles to a main-line station to get it.

V

It is difficult to write the consecutive story of the next three days. I kept a diary, but, on consulting it, I find only a bare record of my

hours of meditation on that confounded newspaper, and of our conferences with the Professor. I began in a mood which was less one of scepticism than of despair. I simply did not believe that I could get one step forward in this preposterous business. But I was determined to play the game to the best of my capacity, for Moe's talk last night had brought me fairly under his spell.

I did as I had been told. I emptied my mind of every purpose except the one. I read the arguments in the case—it was an appeal by an insurance company—and then sat down to forecast what the report of the judgment would be, as given by *The Times* next day. Of the substance of the judgment I had not much doubt, and I was pretty certain that it would be delivered by the Lord Chancellor, with the rest of the Court concurring. I knew Boland's style, having listened often enough to his pronouncements, and it would have been easy enough to forecast the kind of thing he would say, using some of his pet phrases. But my job was to forecast what *The Times* reporters would make him say—a very different matter. I collected a set of old copies of the paper and tried to get into their spirit. Then I made a number of jottings, but I found myself slipping into the manner of the official *Law Reports*, which was not what I wanted. I remember looking at my notes with disfavour, and reflecting that this guessing game was nothing but a deduction from existing knowledge. If I had made a close study of *The Times* reports,

I should probably get a good deal right, but since I had only a superficial knowledge I would get little. Moe's grandiose theories about Time had nothing to do with it. It was not a question of casting the mind forward into a new field of presentation, but simply of a good memory from which one made the right deductions.

After my first attempt I went for a walk, and tried to fix my mind on something different. I had been making a new rock-garden at Borrowby, and I examined minutely Sally's collection of Tibetan alpines. On my return the butler handed me a note. The Professor had decided to have conferences with each of us separately, and my hour was three in the afternoon.

Before that hour I had two other bouts of contemplation. I wrestled honourably with the incurably evasive, and filled several sheets of foolscap with notes. Then I revised them, striking out phrases which were natural enough to Boland but unsuitable for a newspaper summary. The business seemed more ridiculous than ever. I was simply chewing the cud of memories—very vague, inexact memories.

The Professor received me in Sally's boudoir. Now, the odd thing was that in his presence I had no self-consciousness. If anyone had told me that I should have been unburdening my mind in a ridiculous game to a queer foreigner, with the freedom of a novice in the confessional, I should have declared it impossible. But there it was. He sat before me with his gaunt face

and bottomless pits of eyes, very grave and gentle, and without being asked I told him what I had been doing.

"That is a beginning," he said, "only a beginning. But your mind is too active as yet to *perceive*. You are still in the bonds of ratiocination. Your past knowledge is only the jumping-off stage from which your mind must leap. Suffer yourself to be more quiescent, my friend. Do not torture your memory. It is a deep well from which the reason can only draw little buckets of water."

I told him that I had been making notes, and he approved. "But do not shape them as you would shape a logical argument. Let them be raw material out of which a picture builds itself. Your business is perception, not conception, and perception comes in flashes." And then he quoted what Napoleon had once said, how after long pondering he had his vision of a battle plan in a blinding flash of white light.

He said a great deal more which I do not remember very clearly. But one thing I have firm in my recollection—the compelling personality of the man. There must have been some strange hypnotic force about him, for as he spoke I experienced suddenly a new confidence and an odd excitement. He seemed to wake unexpected powers in me, and I felt my mind to be less a machine clamped to a solid concrete base, than an aeroplane which might rise and soar into space. Another queer thing —I felt slightly giddy as I left him. Unques-

tionably he was going to make good his promise and supplement our efforts, for an influence radiated from him, more masterful than any I have ever known in a fellow-mortal. It was only after we had parted that the reaction came and I felt a faint sense of antagonism, almost of fear.

In my last effort before dinner I struggled to follow his advice. I tried to picture next day's *Times*. The judgment from its importance would occupy a column at least; I saw that column and its heading, and it seemed to me to be split up into three paragraphs. I saw some of the phrases out of my notes, and one or two new ones. There was one especially, quite in Boland's manner, which seemed to be repeated more than once—something like this: "It is a legal commonplace that a contract of insurance is one *uberrimae fidei,* which is vitiated by any non-disclosure, however innocent, of material facts." I scribbled this down, and found, when I re-read it, that I had written *uberrimi,* and deplored my declining scholarship.

At dinner our group were as glum as owls. I did not know how the Professor had handled the others, but I assumed that his methods had been the same as with me, and certainly he had produced an effect. We all seemed to have something on our minds, and came in for a good deal of chaff, the more as we refrained from so many dishes. Reggie Daker escaped, for he was a convalescent, but Evelyn had a good deal to say about Goodeve's abstinence.

Goodeve was supposed to be entering for a tennis contest which the young people had got up, while George Lamington started the legend that I was reducing my weight for the next Bar point-to-point. Happily this interest in our diet diverted their attention from our manners, which must have been strange. All seven of us were stricken with aphasia, and for myself I felt that I was looking on at a movie-show.

The Professor gathered us together in my sitting-room a little before midnight. As I looked at the others I had an impression of a kindergarten. Compared with him we all seemed ridiculously young, crude and ignorant. Mayot's alert intelligence was only the callow vivacity of a child; Tavanger's heavy face was merely lumpish; even Goodeve looked the bright schoolboy. As for Sally and Reggie and Charles Ottery, something had happened to them which drained the personality from their faces, and made them seem slight and wispish. Moe himself brooded over us like a vital Buddha. I had an uneasy sense of looking at a man who lived most of his time in another world than ours.

He did not instruct us; he talked, and his talk was like a fierce cordial. Looking back at what I can remember of it, it does not seem to make any kind of sense, but it had an overwhelming effect on his hearers. It was as if he was drawing aside curtain after curtain, and, though we could not see into the land beyond the curtains, we were convinced of its existence.

As I have said, I could not make sense of my recollection of it, but while I was listening it seemed to be quite simple and intelligible. . . .

He spoke of the instinct which gave perceptions, and of its immense power as compared to our petty reason which turned percepts into concepts. He spoke of what he called the "eye of the mind," and said the very phrase pointed to some intuition in the ordinary being of a gift which civilisation had atrophied. . . . Then Reggie Daker became important. The Professor elicited from the coy Reggie that in his childhood he had been in the habit of seeing abstract things in a concrete form. For Reggie the different days of the week had each a special shape, and each of the Ten Commandments a special colour. Monday was a square and Saturday an oval, and Sunday a circle with a segment bitten out; the Third Commandment was dark blue, and the Tenth a pale green with spots. Reggie had thought of Sin as a substance like black salt, and the Soul as something in the shape of a kidney bean. . . .

It all sounds the wildest nonsense, but the Professor made out of Reggie's confidences a wonderful thing. His images might seem ridiculous, but they showed perception struggling to regain its rightful place. He had some theory of the relation between the concrete vision and the abstract thought, which he linked somehow or other to his doctrine of Time. In the retrospect I cannot remember his argument, but he

convinced me absolutely. . . . He had a lot to say about the old astrologers and magic-makers who worked with physical charms and geometrical figures, and he was clear that they had had a knowledge of mysteries on which the door had long been locked. Also he talked about certain savage beliefs in ancient Greece and in modern Africa—which he said were profundity and not foolishness. . . . He spoke, too, about the world of dreams, and how its fantasy had often a deeper reality than waking life. "We are children on the seashore," he said, "watching the jetsam of the waves, and every fragment of jetsam is a clue to a land beyond the waters which is our true home."

Not for a moment did any of us think him mad. We sat like beggars, hungrily picking up crumbs from a feast. Of one thing I was presently convinced. Moe had cast a stronger spell over the others than over myself. I found my mind trying feebly to question some of his sayings, to link them with the ordinary world of thought; but it was plain that the rest accepted everything as inspired and infallible gospel.

I dare say I was tired, for I slept more soundly than I had done for weeks. I was called at seven, and set myself, according to instructions, to a long-range forecast—what would be likely to happen on June 10th a year ahead. It sounds a futile job, and so I found it. My head soon grew dizzy with speculations, some of them quite outside the legal sphere which I had marked out as my own. But I

found one curious thing. I had lost the hopelessness which had accompanied my contemplations of the previous day. I *believed* now that I could make something of the task. Also I found my imagination far more lively. I convinced myself that in a year's time there would be a new Lord Chancellor and a new Lord of Appeal. I beheld them sitting in the Lords, but the figure on the Woolsack was so blurred that I could not recognise it. But I saw the new Lord clearly, and his face was the face of young Molsom, who had only taken silk two years ago. Molsom's appointment was incredible, but, as often as the picture of the scarlet benches of the Upper House came before me, there was Molsom, with his dapper little figure and his big nose and his arms folded after his habit. I realised that I was beginning to use the "mind's eye," to see things, and not merely to think them.

The Times was brought to my bedside at eight, and I opened it eagerly. There was the judgment in my case, delivered, as I had expected, by Boland. It ran not to a whole column, but to less than three-quarters; but I had been right on one point—it was broken up into three paragraphs. The substance of the judgment was much as I had foreseen, but I had not been lucky in guessing the wording, and Boland had referred to only two of the cases I had marked down for him. . . .

But there was one amazing thing. He had used the sentence about *uberrimae fidei*—very much in the form I had anticipated. More—

far more. *The Times* had that rare thing, a misprint: it had *uberrimi,* the very blunder I had made myself in my anticipatory jottings.

This made me feel solemn. My other correct anticipations might be set down to deductions from past knowledge. But here was an indubitable instance of anticipatory perception.

From that hour I date my complete conversion. I was as docile now as Sally, and I stopped trying to reason. For I understood that, behind all the regime and the exercises, there was the tremendous fact of Professor Moe himself. If we were to look into the future it must be largely through his eyes. By the sheer power of intellect he had won a gift, and by some superabundant force of personality he was able to communicate in part that gift to others.

I am not going to attempt to write in detail the story of the next two days, because external detail matters little; the true history was being made in the heads of the seven of us. I went obediently through the prescribed ritual. I pored over *The Times* as if my salvation depended upon it. I laboured to foresee the next day's issue, and I let my mind race into the next year. I felt my imagination becoming more fecund and more vivid, and my confidence growing hourly. And always I felt behind me some mighty impetus driving me on and holding me up. I was in the charge of a Moses,

like the puzzled Israelites stumbling in the desert.

I spent the intervals with a rod beside the Arm, and there I first became conscious of certain physical symptoms. An almost morbid nervous alertness was accompanied by a good deal of bodily lassitude. This could not be due merely to the diet and lack of exercise, for I had often been sedentary for a week on end and lived chiefly on bread and cheese. Rather it seemed that I was using my nervous energy so lavishly in one direction that I had little left for the ordinary purposes of life. . . . Another thing. My sight is very good, especially for long distances, and in dry-fly fishing I never need to use a glass to spot a fish. Well, in the little fishing I did that day, I found my eyes as good as ever, but I noted one remarkable defect. I saw the trout perfectly clearly, but I could not put a fly neatly over him. There was nothing wrong with my casting; the trouble was in my eye, which had somehow lost its liaison with the rest of my body. The fly fell on the water as lightly as thistledown, but it was many inches away from the fish's nose.

That day the Professor made us fix our minds principally on the lay-out of June 10th next year. He wanted to have that date orientated for us with relation to other recurrent events—the Derby, Ascot, the third reading of the Budget, the conference of Empire Journalists and so forth. Also he provided us with sheets of blank paper, the size of *The Times*,

which were to be, so to speak, the screen on which the magic lantern of our prevision cast its picture. He was very careful, almost fussy, about this business. The sheets had nothing printed on them, but they had to be exactly right in size, and he rejected the first lot that Sally provided.

But I cannot say that I paid much attention to these or any other details. I was in a mood of utter obedience, simply doing what I was told to do to the best of my power. I was in the grip of a power which I had no desire to question, and which by some strong magic was breaking down walls for me and giving me a new and marvellous freedom. For there was no doubt about it—I could now set my mind at will racing into the future, and placing before me panoramas which might or might not be true, but which had all the concrete sharpness of reality. There were moments when I seemed almost to feel one sphere of presentation give place to another, as the driver of a car changes gear.

Dinner that night—Sally had sent the Professor to bed after tea—was as lively as the meal of the previous evening had been dull—lively, that is, for the rest of the party, not for us seven. For we seven suddenly developed a remarkable capacity for making sport for the populace, by a kind of mental light-heartedness, similar to my clumsiness with the trout. Our minds seemed to have jolted out of focus. There is a species of *bêtise,* which I believe at Cambridge is named after some don, and which

consists in missing completely the point of a metaphor or a joke, in setting the heavy heel of literalness on some trivial flower of fancy. It is a fault to which the Scots are supposed to be prone, and it is the staple of most of the tales against that nation. The classic instance is Charles Lamb's story of how he was once present at a dinner given in honour of Burns, at which a nephew of the poet was to be present. As the company waited on the arrival of the guest, Lamb remarked that he wished the uncle were coming instead of the nephew: upon which several solemn Scotsmen arose to inform him that that was impossible, because Burns was dead.

That night we seven became unconscious Caledonians. Reggie Daker began it, by asking a ridiculous question about a story of Evelyn's. At first Evelyn looked wrathful, suspecting irony, and then, realising Reggie's guilelessness, he turned the laugh against that innocent. The extraordinary thing was that we all did it. Sally was the worst, and Charles Ottery a good second. Even Mayot fell into the trick—Mayot, who had a reputation for a quick and caustic wit. George Lamington was talking politics. "A Bengali Cabinet in England," George began, and was interrupted by Mayot with, "But, hang it, man, there's no Bengali Cabinet in England!" The fact that I noted our behaviour would seem to prove that I was not so deeply under the spell as the others.

We made sport, as I have said, for the com-

pany, and some of them enjoyed the pleasant sense of superiority which comes when people who have a reputation for brains make fools of themselves. Yet the mirth struck me as a little uneasy. There was a sense somewhere that all was not well, that odd things were going on beneath the surface. Pamela Brune, I remember, let her eyes rest on Charles Ottery as she left the room, and in those eyes I read bewilderment, almost pain.

Next morning we began the drug. There were in all three doses—the first with morning tea, the second at three in the afternoon, and the third after dinner. For myself I felt no particular effects, but I can testify that that day, the last day of our preparation, my mood changed.

For the first time I found some dregs of fear in my mind. My confidence in Moe was in no way abated, but I began to feel that we were moving on the edge of things, not mysterious only but terrible. My first cause for uneasiness was the Professor himself. When I met him that morning I was staggered by his looks. His colour was like white wax, and the gauntness of his face was such that it seemed that not only flesh had gone but muscle and blood, so that there remained only dead skin stretched tight over dead bone. His eyes were alive and no longer placid pools, but it was a sick life, and coughing shook him as an autumn wind shakes the rafters of a ruined barn. He professed to be well enough, but I realised that his experi-

ment was draining his scanty strength. The virtue was going out of him into us, and I wondered if before the appointed time the dynamo might not fail us.

My other anxiety was Goodeve. He had begun by being the most sceptical of the lot of us, but I noticed that at each conference with Moe he grew more silent, his face more strained, and his eyes more unquiet. There was now something positively furtive in them, as if he were in dread of some menace springing out at him from ambush. He hung upon the Professor's words with dog-like devotion, very odd in a personality so substantial and well defined. By tacit consent none of us ever spoke of the experiment, as if we felt that any communication among ourselves might weaken the strong effluence from our leader's mind, so I could not put out any feelers. But the sight of Goodeve at luncheon increased my lurking fear that we were getting very near the edge of some indefinable danger.

I felt very drowsy all day, and dozed in a garden chair between the exercises. I usually dream a good deal of nights, but now I slept like a log—which may have been due to nervous fatigue, or more likely to the switching of the dream-world over into the waking hours. The strangest thing about the whole experience was that I never felt one moment of boredom. I was doing something infinitely monotonous, and yet my powers bent themselves to it as readily as if every moment were a new excitement. That, too, rather frightened me. If this

stimulus was so potent for a flat nature like mine, what must be its power over more mercurial souls?

I must record what happened at tea. Nearly all the guests were there, and a cheerful party of young people had come over from a neighbouring house. Now Sally had a much-loved terrier, a Dandie Dinmont called Andrew, who had been on a visit to the vet and had only returned that afternoon. Andrew appeared when tea was beginning, and was received by his mistress with every kind of endearment. But Andrew would not go near her; he fled, knocking over a table, and took refuge between Evelyn's legs, and nothing would draw him from his sanctuary. He used to be a friend of mine, but he met my advances with a snap and the most dismal howling. There he stood, pressed against Evelyn's shins, his teeth bared, his big head lowered and bristling. He seemed to have no objection to the others, only to Sally and me. Then Mayot came in with Tavanger, and again Andrew wailed to the skies. Charles Ottery and Reggie received the same greeting; Goodeve, too, who sat down next to Evelyn and thereby drove Andrew yelping to a corner. After that he recovered a little and accepted a bit of bread and butter from Pamela Brune, by whose side he had ensconced himself. I was deeply interested in the whole performance, for it was not humanity that Andrew disliked, but that section of it which was engaged in the experiment. I was pondering on this marvel, when there came a howl like nothing on earth,

and I saw Andrew streaking out of the drawing-room, slithering over rugs and barging into stools, with Evelyn after him. I also saw that Moe had just entered by another door, looking like a death-in-life.

The Professor sat himself by me, and drank his tea thirstily. The tiny cup seemed almost too great a weight for the mighty hand to raise. He turned to me with the ghost of a smile.

"That dog pays tribute to our success," he said. "The animal has instinct and the man reason, and on those terms they live together. Let a man attain instinct and the animal will flee from him. I have noted it before."

Some neighbours came to dinner, so we made a big party, and the silent conclave passed unnoticed, though Sally's partner must have wondered what had become of her famous sparkle, for she was the palest and mutest of spectres. I felt myself an observer set at a distance not only from the ordinary members of the party but from our coterie—which proves that I must have been less under Moe's spell than my companions. For example, I could not only watch with complete detachment the behaviour of the cheerful young people, and listen to George Lamington's talk of his new Lancia, but I could observe from without Sally's absent-mindedness and stammered apologies, and Goodeve's look of unhappy expectation, and Charles Ottery's air of one struggling with something on the edge of memory, and Tavanger's dry lips—the man drank pints of water. One thing I noticed.

They clearly hated those outside our group. Sally would shrug her shoulders as if unbearably tried, and Mayot looked murderously now and then at Evelyn, and Charles Ottery, who sat next to Pamela Brune, regarded her with hard eyes. I was conscious of something of the same sort myself, for most of my fellows had come to look to me like chattering manikins. They bored me, but I did not feel for them the overwhelming distaste which was only too apparent in the other members of the group. Their attitude was the opposite of Miranda's cry—

"O brave world
That has such people in't."

I doubt if they thought the world brave, and for certain they had no illusion about its inhabitants.

It was a very hot night, and I went out beyond the terrace to sniff the fragrance of Sally's rock garden. As I sat dangling my legs over the parapet I felt a hand on my arm, and turned to find Pamela Brune.

"Come for a walk, Uncle Ned," she said. "I want to talk to you."

She slipped her arm through mine, and we went down the long alley between yews at the end of the Dutch garden. I felt her arm tremble, and when she spoke it was in a voice which she strove to make composed.

"What has happened to you all?" she asked. "I thought this Whitsuntide was going to be

such fun, and it began well—and now everybody is behaving so oddly. Sally hasn't smiled for two days, and Reggie is more half-witted than ever, and you look most of the time as if you were dropping off to sleep."

"I am pretty tired," I replied.

"Oh yes, I know," she said impatiently. "There are excuses for you—and for Sally perhaps, for she has been overdoing it badly. . . . But there is a perfect epidemic of bad manners abroad. To-night at dinner I could have boxed Charles Ottery's ears. He was horribly rude."

"You haven't been very kind to him," I said lamely.

She withdrew her hand.

"What do you mean? I have always been civil . . . and he has been very very unkind to me . . . I hate him. I'll never speak to him again."

Pamela fled from me down the shadowed alley like a nymph surprised by Pan, and I knew that she fled that I might not see her tears.

Later that night we had our last conference with Moe, for next morning at seven in my sitting-room we were to meet for the final adventure. It was a short conference, and all he seemed to do was to tighten the cords with which he had bound us. I felt his influence more sharply than ever, but I was not in such perfect thraldom as the others, for with a little fragment of my mind I could still observe and think objectively. . . .

I observed the death-mask of the Professor. That is the only word by which to describe his face. Every drop of blood seemed to have fled from it, and in his deep pits of eyes there was no glimmer of life. It was a mask of death, but it was also a mask of peace. In that I think lay its compelling power. There was no shadow of unrest or strife or doubt in it. It had been purged of human weakness as it had been drained of blood. I remembered " grey-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone."

I thought—what did I think? I kept trying as a desperate duty to make my mind function a little on its own account. I cast it back over the doings of the past days, but I could not find a focus. . . . I was aware that somehow I had acquired new and strange gifts. I had become an adept at prospecting the immediate future, for, though I made many blunders, I had had an amazing percentage of successes. But the Professor did not set much store apparently by this particular *expertise,* and my main task had been long-range forecasts a year ahead. These, of course, could not be verified, but I had managed to create a segment of a future world as shot with colour and as diversified with incident as the world of sense around me. . . .

About that there were some puzzles which I could not solve. In guessing the contents of the next day's *Times* I had a mass of concrete experience to build on, but I had not that experience to help me in constructing what might happen across the space of a year, with all a

year's unaccountable chances. . . . Then I reflected that the power of short-range forecasts had come in only a small degree from the exercise of my reason upon past experience. That was but a dim light: it was the dæmonic power of the Professor's mind which had given me these illuminations. Could the strong wings of that spirit carry seven humdrum folk over the barriers of sense and habit into a new far world of presentation?

That was my last thought before I fell asleep, and I remember that I felt a sudden horror. We were feeding like parasites upon something on which lay the shadow of dissolution.

VI

I was up and dressed long before seven. The drug or the diet or the exercises or all combined made me sleepy during the day, but singularly alert at first waking. Alert in body, that is—the feeling that I could run a mile in record time, the desire for something to task my bodily strength. But my brain these last mornings had not been alert. It had seemed a passive stage over which a pageant moved, a pageant of which I had not the direction. . . . But this morning the pageant had stopped, the stage was empty, or rather it was brooded over by a vast vague disquiet.

It was a perfect midsummer morning, with that faint haze in the distance which means a hot noon. The park under my window lay

drenched and silvered with dew. The hawthorns seemed to be bowed over the grasses under their weight of blossom. The birds were chattering in the ivy, and two larks were singing. Just under me, beyond the ha-ha, a foal was standing on tottering legs beside its mother, lifting its delicate nozzle to sniff the air. The Arm, where the sun caught it, was a silver crescent, and there was a little slow drift of amethyst smoke from the head keeper's cottage in a clump of firs. The scene was embodied, deep, primordial peace, and though, as I have said, my ordinary perception had become a little dulled, the glory of the June morning smote me like a blow.

It wakened a thousand memories, and memories of late had been rare things with me. . . . I thought of other such dawns, when I had tiptoed through wet meadows to be at the morning rise—water lilies and buckbean and arrowhead and the big trout feeding; dawn in the Alps, when, perched on some rock pinnacle below the last ridge of my peak, I had eaten breakfast and watched the world heave itself out of dusk into burning colour; a hundred hours when I had thanked God that I was alive. . . . A sudden longing woke in me, as if these things were slipping away. These joys were all inside the curtain of sense and present perception, and now I was feeling for the gap in the curtain, and losing them. What mattered the world beyond the gap? Why should we reach after that which God had hidden? . . .

Fear, distaste, regret chased each other through my mind. Something had weakened this morning. Had the *mystica catena* snapped? . . . And then I heard a movement in my sitting-room, and turned away from the window. My mind might be in revolt, but my will was docile.

. . . . .

We sat in a semicircle round the Professor. It was a small room with linen-fold panelling, a carved chimney-piece, and one picture—a French hunting scene. The morning sun was looking into it, so the blinds were half-lowered. We sat in a twilight, except in one corner, where the floor showed a broad shaft of light. I was next to Sally at the left-hand edge of the circle. That is all I remember about the scene, except that each of us had a copy of *The Times*—not the blank paper we had had before, but that morning's *Times*, the issue for the 10th of June in that year of grace.

I must have slipped partly out of the spell, for I could use my eyes and get some message from them. I dare say I could have understood one of *The Times* leaders. But I realised that the others were different. They could not have made sense of one word. To them it was blank white paper, an empty slate on which something was about to be written. They had the air of dull but obedient pupils with their eyes chained to their master.

The Professor wore a dressing-gown, and sat in the writing-table chair—deathly white, but

stirred into intense life. He sat upright, with his hands on his knees, and his eyes, even in the gloom, seemed to be probing and kneading our souls. . . . I felt the spell, and consciously struggled against it. His voice helped my resistance. It was weak and cracked, without the fierce vitality of his face.

"For three minutes you will turn your eyes inward—into the darkness of the mind which I have taught you to make. Then—I will give the sign——you will look at the paper. There you will see words written, but only for one second. Bend all your powers to remember them."

But my thoughts were not in the darkness of the mind. I looked at the paper and saw that I could read the date and the beginning of an advertisement. I had broken loose; I was a rebel, and was glad of it. And then I looked at Moe, and saw there something which sent a chill to my heart.

The man was dying—dying visibly. With my eyes I saw the body shrink and the jaw loosen as the vital energy ebbed. Now I knew how we might bridge the gap of Time. His personality had lifted us out of our world, and, by a supreme effort of brain and will, his departing soul might carry us into a new one—for an instant only, before that soul passed into a timeless eternity.

I could see all this, because I had shaken myself free from his spell, yet I felt the surge of his spirit like a wind in my face. I heard the word "Now," croaked with what must have

been his last breath. I saw his huge form crumple and slip slowly to the floor. But the eyes of the others did not see this; they were on *The Times* pages.

All but Sally. The strain had become more than she could bear. With a small cry she tilted against my shoulder, and for the few seconds before the others returned to ordinary consciousness and realised that Moe was dead, she lay swooning in my arms.

. . . . .

In that fateful moment, while the soul of a genius was quitting the body, five men, staring at what had become the simulacrum of a *Times* not to be printed for twelve months, read certain things.

Mayot had a vision of the leader page, and read two sentences of comment on a speech by the Prime Minister. In one sentence the Prime Minister was named, and the name was not that of him who then held the office.

Tavanger, on the first City page, had a glimpse of a note on the formation of a great combine, by the Anatilla Corporation, of the michelite-producing interests of the world.

Reggie Daker, on the Court page, saw an account of the departure of an archæological expedition to Yucatan, and his name appeared as one of the members.

Goodeve and Charles Ottery—the one on the page opposite the leaders and the other on the first page of the paper—read the announcement of their own deaths.