"Well, what do you think of coursing?"

"I would rather not say," I replied.

"Then I will," said the Hare, with conviction. "I think it horrible."

"Yes, but, Hare, you do not remember the pleasure this sport gives to the men and the dogs; you look at it from an entirely selfish point of view."

"And so would you, Mahatma, if you had felt Jack's hot breath on your back and Jill's teeth in your tail."

THE HUNTING

The Hare sat silent for a time, while I employed myself in watching certain shadows stream past us on the Great White Road. Among them was that of a politician whom I had much admired upon the earth. In this land of Truth I was grieved to observe certain characteristics about him which I had never before suspected. It seemed to me, alas! that in his mundane career he had not been so entirely influenced by a single-hearted desire for the welfare of our country as he had proclaimed and I had believed. I gathered even that his own interests had sometimes inspired his policy.

He went by, leaving, so far as I was concerned, a somewhat painful impression from which I sought relief in the company of the open-souled Hare.

"Well," I said, "I suppose that you died of exhaustion after your coursing experience, and came on here."

"Died of exhaustion, Mahatma, not a bit of it! In three days I was as well as ever, only much more cunning than I had been before. In the night I fed in the fields upon whatever I could get, but in the daytime I always lay up in woods. This I did because I found out the shooting was over, and I knew that greyhounds, which run by sight, would never come into woods."

The weeks went by and the days began to lengthen. Pretty yellow flowers that I had not seen before appeared in the woods, and I ate plenty of them; they have a nice flavour. Then I met another hare and loved her, because she reminded me of my sister. We used to play about together and were very happy. "I wonder what she will do now that I am gone."

"Console herself with somebody else," I suggested sarcastically.

"No, she won't do that, Mahatma, because the hounds 'chopped' her just outside the Round Plantation. I mean they caught and ate her. You think that I am contradicting myself, but I am not. I mean I wonder what she

will do without me in whatever world she has reached, for I don't see her here." Well, I went to the little Round Plantation because I found that Giles seldom came there and I thought it would be safer, but as it proved I made a great mistake. One day there appeared the Red-faced Man and Tom and the girl, Ella, and a lot of other people mounted on horses, some of them dressed in green coats with ridiculous-looking caps on their heads.

Also with them were I don't know how many spotted dogs whose tails curled over their backs, not like greyhounds whose tails curl between their legs. Outside of the Plantation those dogs caught and ate my future wife, as I have said. It was her own fault, for I had warned her not to go there, but she was a very self-willed character. As it was she never even gave them a run, for they were all round her in a minute. Then they made a kind of cartwheel; their heads were in the centre of this cartwheel and their tails pointed out. In its exact middle was my future wife.

When the wheel broke up there was nothing of her left except her scut, which lay upon the ground.

I had seen so many of such things that I was not so much shocked as you might suppose. After all a fine hare like myself could always get another wife, and as I have told you she was very self-willed.

So I lay still, thinking that those men and dogs would go away.

But what do you think Mahatma? Just as they were going the boy Tom called out--

"I say, Dad, I think we might as well knock through the Round Plantation. Giles tells me that the old speckle-backed buck lies up here."

"Does he?" said Grampus. "Well, if so, that's the hare I want to see, for I know he'd give us a good run. Here, Jerry" (Jerry was the huntsman), "just put the hounds into that place."

So Jerry put the hounds in, making dreadful noises to encourage them, and of course I came out, as I did not wish to share the fate of my future wife.

"That's him!" screeched Tom. "Look at the grey marks on his back."

"Yes, that's he right enough," shouted the Red-faced Man. "Lay them on, Jerry, lay them on; we're in for a rattling run now, I'll warrant."

So they were laid on and I went away as hard as my legs would carry me. Very soon I found that I had left all those curly-tailed dogs a long way behind.

"Ah!" I said to myself proudly, "these beasts are not greyhounds; they

are like Giles's retriever and the sheep dog. They'll never see me again." So I looped along saving my breath and heading for a wood which was quite five miles off that I had once visited from the Marsh on the sea-shore where I lay sick, for I was sure they would never follow me there.

You can imagine, then, Mahatma, how surprised I was when I drew near that wood to hear a hideous noise of dogs all barking together behind me, and on looking back, to see those spotted brutes, with their tongues hanging out, coming along quite close to each other and not more than a quarter of a mile away.

Moreover they were coming after me. I was sure of that, for the first of them kept setting its nose to the ground just where I had run, and then lifting up its head to bay. Yes, they were coming on my scent. They could smell me as Giles's curly dog smells the wounded partridges. My heart sank at the thought, but presently I remembered that the wood was quite close, and that there I should certainly give them the slip.

So I went on quite cheerfully, not even running as fast as I could. But fortune was against me, as everything has always been, for I never found a friend. I ran along the side of a hedgerow which went quite up to the wood, not knowing that at the end of it three men were engaged in cutting down an oak tree. You see, Mahatma, they had caught sight of the hunt and stopped from their work, so that I did not hear the sound of their axes upon the tree. Nor, as my head was so near the ground, did I

see them until I was right on to them, at which moment also they saw me.

"Here she is!" yelled one of them. "Keep her out of covert or they'll lose her," and he threw out his arms and began to jump about, as did the other two.

I pulled up short within three or four yards of them. Behind were the dogs and the people galloping upon horses and in front were the three men. What was I to do? Now I had stopped exactly in a gateway, for a lane ran alongside the wood. After a moment's pause I bolted through the gateway, thinking that I would get into the wood beyond. But one of the men, who of course wanted to see me killed, was too quick for me and there headed me again.

Then I lost my senses. Instead of running on past him and leaping into the wood, I swung right round and rushed back, still clinging to the hedgerow. Indeed as I went down one side of it the hounds and the hunters came up on the other, so that there were only a few sticks between us, though fortunately the wind was blowing from them to me. Fearing lest they should see me I jumped into the ditch and ran for quite two hundred yards through the mud and water that was gathered there. Then I had to come out of it again as it ended but here was a fall in the ground, so still I was not seen.

Meanwhile the hunt had reached the three men and I heard them all talking together. The end of it was that the men explained which way I

had gone, and once more the hounds were laid on to me. In a minute they got to where I had entered the ditch, and there grew confused because my footmarks did not smell in the water. For quite a long time they looked about till at length, taking a wide cast, the hounds found my smell again at the end of the ditch.

During this check I was making the best of my way back towards my own home; indeed had it not been for it I should have been caught and torn to pieces much sooner than I was. Thus it happened that I had covered quite three miles before once more I heard those hounds baying behind me. This was just as I got on to the moorland, at that edge of it which is about another three miles from the great house called the Hall, which stands on the top of a cliff that slopes down to the beach and the sea.

I had thought of making for the other wood, that in which I had saved myself from the greyhounds when the beast Jack broke its neck against the tree, but it was too far off, and the ground was so open that I did not dare to try.

So I went straight on, heading towards the cliff. Another mile and they viewed me, for I heard Tom yell with delight as he stood up in his stirrups on the black cob he was riding and waved his cap. Jerry the huntsman also stood up in his stirrups and waved his cap, and the last awful hunt began.

I ran--oh! how I ran. Once when they were nearly on me I managed to

check them for a minute in a hollow by getting among some sheep. But they soon found me again, and came after me at full tear not more than a hundred yards behind. In front of me I saw something that looked like walls and bounded towards them with my last strength. My heart was bursting, my eyes and mouth seemed to be full of blood, but the terror of being torn to pieces still gave me power to rush on almost as quickly as though I had just been put off my form. For as I have told you, Mahatma, I am, or rather was, a very strong and swift hare.

I reached the walls; there was an open doorway in them through which I fled, to find myself in a big garden. Two gardeners saw me and shouted loudly. I flew on through some other doors, through a yard, and into a passage where I met a woman carrying a pail, who shrieked and fell on to her back. I jumped over her and got into a big room, where was a long table covered with white on which were all sorts of things that I suppose men eat. Out of that room I went into yet another, where a fat woman with a hooked nose was seated holding something white in front of her. I bolted under the thing on which she was seated and lay there. She saw me come and began to shriek also, and presently a most terrible noise arose outside.

All the spotted dogs were in the house, baying and barking, and everybody was yelling. Then for a minute the dogs stopped their clamour, and I heard a great clatter of things breaking and of teeth crunching and of the Red-faced Man shouting--

"Those cursed brutes are eating the hunt lunch. Get them out, Jerry, you idiot! Get them out! Great heavens! what's the matter with her Ladyship? Is any one murdering her?"

I suppose that they couldn't get them out, or at least when they did they all came into the other room where I was under the seat on which the fat woman was now standing.

"What is it, mother?" I heard Tom say.

"An animal!" she screamed. "An animal under the sofa!"

"All right," he said, "that's only the hare. Here, hounds, out with her, hounds!"

The dogs rushed about, some of them with great lumps of food still in their mouths. But they were confused, and all went into the wrong places. Everything began to fall with dreadful crashes, the fat woman shrieked piercingly, and her shriek was--

"China! Oh! my china-a. John, you wretch! Help! Help! Help!"

To which the Red-faced Man roared in answer--

"Don't be an infernal fool, Eliza-a. I say, don't be such an infernal fool."

Also there were lots of other noises that I cannot remember, except one which a dog made.

This silly dog had thrust its head up the hole over a fire such as the stops make outside the coverts when men are going to shoot, either to hide something or to look for me there. When it came down again because the Red-faced Man kicked it, the dog put its paws into the fire and pulled it all out over the floor. Also it howled very beautifully. Just then another hound, that one which generally led the pack, began to sniff about near me and finally poked its nose under the stuff which hid me.

It jumped back and bayed, whereon I jumped out the other side. Tom made a rush at me and knocked the fat woman off the thing she was standing on, so that she fell among the dogs, which covered her up and began to sniff her all over. Flying from Tom I found myself in front of something filmy, beyond which I saw grass. It looked suspicious, but as nothing in the world could be so bad as Tom, no, not even his dogs, I jumped at it.

There was a crash and a sharp point cut my nose, but I was out upon the grass. Then there were twenty other crashes, and all the hounds were out too, for Tom had cheered them on. I ran to the edge of the lawn and saw a steep slope leading to the sands and the sea. Now I knew what the sea was, for after Tom had shot me in the back I lived by it for a long while, and once swam across a little creek to get to my form, from which

it cut me off.

While I ran down that slope fast as my aching legs would carry me, I made up my mind that I would swim out into the sea and drown there, since it is better to drown than to be torn to pieces. "But why are you laughing, friend Mahatma."

"I am not laughing," I said. "In this state, without a body, I have nothing to laugh with. Still you are right, for you see that I should be laughing if I could. Your story of the stout lady and the dogs and the china is very amusing."

"Perhaps, friend, but it did not amuse me. Nothing is amusing when one is going to be eaten alive."

"Of course it isn't," I answered. "Please forgive me and go on."

"Well, I tumbled down that cliff, followed by some of the dogs and Tom and the girl Ella and the huntsman Jerry on foot, and dragged myself across the sands till I came to the lip of the sea."

Just here there was a boat and by it stood Giles the keeper. He had come there to get out of the way of the hunting, which he hated as much as he did the coursing. The sight of him settled me--into the sea I went. The dogs wanted to follow me, but Jerry called and whipped them off.

"I won't have them caught in the current and drowned," he said. "Let the flea-bitten old devil go, she's brought trouble enough already."

"Help me shove off the boat, Giles," shouted Tom. "She shan't beat us; we must have her for the hounds. Come on, Ella."

"Best leave her alone, Master Tom," said Giles. "I think she's an unlucky one, that I do."

Still the end of it was that he helped to float the little boat and got into it with Tom and Ella.

Just after they had pushed off I saw a man running down the steps on the cliff waving his arms while he called out something. But of him they took no heed. I do not think they noticed him. As for me, I swam on.

I could not go very fast because I was so dreadfully tired; also I did not like swimming, and the cold waves broke over my head, making the cut in my nose smart and filling my eyes with something that stung them. I could not see far either, nor did I know where I was going. I knew nothing except I was about to die, and that soon everything would be at an end; men, dogs--everything, yes, even Tom. I wanted things to come to an end. I had suffered so dreadfully, life was so horrible, I was so very tired. I felt that it was better to die and have done.

So I swam on a long way and began to forget things; indeed I thought

that I was playing in the big turnip field with my mother and sister. But just as I was sinking exhausted a hand shot down into the water and caught me by the ears, although from below the fingers looked as though they were bending away from me. I saw it coming and tried to sink more quickly, but could not.

"I've got her," said the voice of Tom gleefully. "My! isn't she a beauty? Over nine pounds if she is an ounce. Only just in time, though," he went on, "for, look! she's drowning; her head wobbles as though she were sea-sick. Buck up, pussie, buck up! You mustn't cheat the hounds at last, you know. It wouldn't be sportsmanlike, and they hate dead hares."

Then he held me by my hind legs to drain the water out of me, and afterwards began to blow down my nose, I did not know why.

"Don't do that, Tom," said Ella sharply. "It's nasty."

"Must keep the life in her somehow," answered Tom, and went on blowing.

"Master Tom," interrupted Giles, who was rowing the boat. "I ain't particular, but I wish you'd leave that there hare alone. Somehow I thinks there's bad news in its eye. Who knows? P'raps the little devil feels. Any way, it's a rum one, its swimming out to sea. I never see'd a hunted hare do that afore."

"Bosh!" said Tom, and continued his blowing.

We reached the shore and Tom jumped out of the boat, holding me by the ears. The hounds were all on the beach, most of them lying down, for they were very tired, but the men were standing in a knot at a distance talking earnestly, Tom ran to the hounds, crying out--

"Here she is, my beauties, here she is!" whereon they got up and began to bay. Then he held me above them.

"Master Tom," I heard Jerry's voice say, "for God's sake let that hare go and listen, Master Tom," and the girl Ella, who of a sudden had begun to sob, tried to pull him back.

But he was mad to see me bitten to death and eaten, and until he had done so would attend to no one. He only shouted, "One--two--three! Now, hounds! _Worry, worry, worry!_"

Then he threw me into the air above the red throats and gnashing teeth which leapt up towards me.

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The Hare paused, but added, "Did you tell me, friend Mahatma, that you had never been torn to pieces by hounds, 'broken up,' I believe they call it?"

"Yes, I did," I answered, "and what is more I shall be obliged if you will not dwell upon the subject."

THE COMING OF THE RED-FACED MAN

"As you like," said the Hare. "Certainly it was very dreadful. It seemed to last a long time. But I don't mind it so much now, for I feel that it can never happen to me again. At least I hope it can't, for I don't know what I have done to deserve such a fate, any more than I know why it should have happened to me once."

"Something you did in a previous existence, perhaps," I answered. "You see then you may have hunted other creatures so cruelly that at last your turn came to suffer what you had made them suffer. I often think that because of what we have done before we men are also really being hunted by something we cannot see."

"Ah!" exclaimed the Hare, "I never thought of that. I hope it is true, for it makes things seem juster and less wicked. But I say, friend Mahatma, what am I doing here now, where you tell me poor creatures with four feet never, or hardly ever come?"

"I don't know, Hare. I am not wise, to whom it is only granted to visit the Road occasionally to search for some one."

"I understand, Mahatma, but still you must know a great deal or you would not be allowed in such a place before your time, or at any rate you must be able to guess a great deal. So tell me, why do you think that I am here?"

"I can't say, Hare, I can't indeed. Perhaps after the Gates are open and your Guardian has given you to drink of the Cup, you will go to sleep and wake up again as something else."

"To drink of the cup, Mahatma? I don't drink; at least I didn't, though I can't tell what may happen here. But what do you mean about waking up as something else? Please be more plain. As what else?"

"Oh! who can know? Possibly as you are on the human Road you might even become a man some day, though I should not advise you to build on such a hope as that."

"What do you say, Mahatma? A man! One of those two-legged beasts that hunt hares; a thing like Giles and Tom--yes, Tom? Oh! not that--not that! I'd almost rather go through everything again than become a cruel, torturing man."

As it spoke thus the Hare grew so disturbed that it nearly vanished; literally it seemed to melt away till I could only perceive its outline. With a kind of shock I comprehended all the horror that it must feel at

such a prospect as I had suggested to it, and really this grasping of the truth hurt my human pride. It had never come home to me before that the circumstances of their lives--and deaths--must cause some creatures to see us in strange lights.

"Oh! I have no doubt I was mistaken," I said hurriedly, "and that your wishes on the point will be respected. I told you that I know nothing."

At these words the Hare became quite visible again.

It sat up and very reflectively began to rub its still shadowy nose with a shadowy paw. I think that it remembered the sting of the salt water in the cut made by the glass of the window through which it had sprung.

Believing that its remarkable story was done, and that presently it would altogether melt away and vanish out of my knowledge, I looked about me. First I looked above the towering Gates to see whether the Lights had yet begun to change. Then as they had not I looked down the Great White Road, following it for miles and miles, until even to my spirit sight it lost itself in the Nowhere.

Presently coming up this Road towards us I saw a man dressed in a green coat, riding-breeches and boots and a peaked cap, who held in his hand a hunting-whip. He was a fine-looking person of middle age, with a pleasant, open countenance, bright blue eyes, and very red cheeks, on which he wore light-coloured whiskers. In short a jovial-looking

individual, with whom things had evidently always gone well, one to whom sorrow and disappointment and mental struggle were utter strangers. He, at least, had never known what it is to "endure hardness" in all his life.

Studying his nature as one can do on the Road, I perceived also that in him there was no guile. He was a good-minded, God-fearing man according to his simple lights, who had done many kindnesses and contributed liberally towards the wants of the poor, though as he had been very rich, it had cost him little thus to gratify the natural promptings of his heart.

Moreover he was what Jorsen calls a "young soul," quite young indeed, by which I mean that he had not often walked the Road in previous states of life, as for instance that Eastern woman had done who accosted me before the arrival of the Hare. So to speak his crude nature had scarcely outgrown the primitive human condition in which necessity as well as taste make it customary and pleasant to men to kill; that condition through which almost every boy passes on his way to manhood, I suppose by the working of some secret law of reminiscence.

It was this thought that first led me to connect the new-comer with the Red-faced Man of the Hare's story. It may seem strange that I should have been so dense, but the truth is that it never occurred to me, any more than it had done to the Hare, that such a person would be at all likely to tread the Road for many years to come. I had gathered that he

was comparatively young, and although I had argued otherwise with the Hare, had concluded therefore that he would continue to live his happy earth life until old age brought him to a natural end. Hence my obtuseness.

The man was drifting towards me thoughtfully, evidently much bewildered by his new surroundings but not in the least afraid. Indeed there none are afraid; when they glide from their death-beds to the Road they leave fear behind them with the other terrors of our mortal lot.

Presently he became conscious of the presence of the Hare, and thoughts passed through his mind which of course I could read.

"My word!" he said to himself, "things are better than I hoped. There's a hare, and where there are hares there must be hunting and shooting. Oh! if only I had a gun, or the ghost of a gun!"

Then an idea struck him. He lifted his hunting-crop and hurled it at the Hare.

As it was only the shadow of a crop of course it could hurt nothing. Still it went through the shadow of the Hare and caused it to twist round like lightning.

"That was a good shot anyway," he reflected, with a satisfied smile.

By now the Hare had seen him.

"_The Red-faced Man!_" it exclaimed, "Grampus himself!" and it turned to flee away.

"Don't be frightened," I cried, "he can't hurt you; nothing can hurt you here."

The Hare halted and sat up. "No," it said, "I forgot. But you saw, he tried to. Now, Mahatma, you will understand what a bloodthirsty brute he is. Even after I am dead he has tried to kill me again."

"Well, and why not?" interrupted the Man. "What are hares for except to be killed?"

"There, Mahatma, you hear him. Look at me, Man, who am I?"

So he looked at the Hare and the Hare looked at him. Presently his face grew puzzled.

"By Jingo!" he said slowly, "you are uncommonly like--you _are_ that accursed witch of a hare which cost me my life. There are the white marks on your back, and there is the grey splotch on your ear. Oh! if only I had a gun--a real gun!"

"You would shoot me, wouldn't you, or try to?" said the Hare. "Well, you

haven't and you can't. You say I cost you your life. What do you mean? It was my life that was sacrificed, not yours."

"Indeed," answered the Man, "I thought you got away. Never saw any more of you after you jumped through the French window. Never had time. The last thing I remember is her Ladyship screaming like a mad cockatoo, yes, and abusing me as though I were a pickpocket, with the drawing-room all on fire. Then something happened, and down I went among the broken china and hit my head against the leg of a table. Next came a kind of whirling blackness and I woke up here."

"A fit or a stroke," I suggested.

"Both, I think, sir. The fit first--I have had 'em before, and the stroke afterwards--against the leg of the table. Anyway they finished me between them, thanks to that little beast."

Then it was that I saw a very strange thing, a hare in a rage. It seemed to go mad, of course I mean spiritually mad. Its eyes flashed fire; it opened its mouth and shut it after the fashion of a suffocating fish. At last it spoke in its own way--I cannot stop to explain in further detail the exact manner of speech or rather of its equivalent upon the Road.

"Man, Man," it exclaimed, "you say that I finished you. But what did you do to me? You shot me. Look at the marks upon my back. You coursed me with your running dogs. You hunted me with your hounds. You dragged me

out of the sea into which I swam to escape you by death, and threw me living to the pack," and the Hare stopped exhausted by its own fury.

"Well," replied the Man coolly, "and suppose I, or my people, did, what of it? Why shouldn't I? You were a beast, I was a man with dominion over you. You can read all about that in the Book of Genesis."

"I never heard of the Book of Genesis," said the Hare, "but what does dominion mean? Does this Book of Genesis say that it means the right to torment that which is weaker than the tormentor?"

"All you animals were made for us to eat," commented the Man, avoiding an answer to the direct question.

"Very good," answered the Hare, "let us suppose that we _were_ given you to eat. Was it in order to eat me that you came out against me with guns, then with dogs that run by sight, and then with dogs that run by smell?"

"If you were to be killed and eaten, why should you not be killed in one of these ways, Hare?"

"Why should I be killed in those ways, Man, when others more merciful were to your hand? Indeed, why should I be killed at all? Moreover, if you wished to satisfy your hunger with my body, why at the last was I thrown to the dogs to devour?"

"I don't quite know, Hare. Never looked at the matter in that light before. But--ah! I've got you now," he added triumphantly. "If it hadn't been for me you never would have lived. You see _I_ gave you the gift of life. Therefore, instead of grumbling, you should be very much obliged to me. Don't you understand? I preserved hares, so that without me you would never have been a hare. Isn't that right, Mr.-- Mr.--I am sorry I have forgotten your name," he added, turning towards me.

"Mahatma," I said.

"Oh! yes, I remember it now--Mr.--ah--Mr. Hatter."

"There is something in the argument," I replied cautiously, "but let us hear our friend's answer."

"Answer--my answer! Well, here it is. What are you, Man, who dare to say that you give life or withhold it? You a Lord of life, _you!_ I tell you that I know little, yet I am sure that you or those like you have no more power to create life than the world we have left has to bid the stars to shine. If the life must come, it will come, and if it cannot fulfil itself as a hare, then it will appear as something else. If you say that you create life, I, the poor beast which you tortured, tell you that you are a presumptuous liar."

"You dare to lecture me," said the Man, "me, the heir of all the ages,

as the poet called me. Why, you nasty little animal, do you know that I have killed hundreds like you, and," he added, with a sudden afflatus of pride, "thousands of other creatures, such as pheasants, to say nothing of deer and larger game? That has been my principal occupation since I was a boy. I may say that I have lived for sport; got very little else to show for my life, so to speak."

"Oh!" said the Hare, "have you? Well, if I were you, I shouldn't boast about it just now. You see, we are still outside of those Gates. Who knows but that you will find every one of the living things you have amused yourself by slaughtering waiting for you within them, each praying for justice to its Maker and your own?"

"My word!" said the Man, "what a horrible notion; it's like a bad dream."

He reflected a little, then added, "Well, if they do, I've got my answer. I killed them for food; man must live. Millions of pheasants are sold to be eaten every year at a much smaller price than they cost to breed. What do you say to that, Mr. Hatter? Finishes him, I think."

"I'm not arguing," I replied. "Ask the Hare."

"Yes, ask me, Man, and although you are repeating yourself, I'll answer with another question, knowing that here you must tell the truth. Did you really rear us all for food? Was it for this that you kept your

keepers, your running dogs and your hunting dogs, that you might kill poor defenceless beasts and birds to fill men's stomachs? If this was so, I have nothing more to say. Indeed, if our deaths or sufferings at their hands really help men in any way, I have nothing more to say. I admit that you are higher and stronger than we are, and have a right to use us for your own advantage, or even to destroy us altogether if we harm you."

The Man pondered, then replied sullenly--

"You know very well that it was not so. I did not rear up pheasants and hares merely to eat them or that others might eat them. Something forces me to tell you that it was in order that I might enjoy myself by showing my skill in shooting them, or to have the pleasure and exercise of hunting them to death. Still," he added defiantly, "I who am a Christian man maintain that my religion perfectly justified me in doing all these things, and that no blame attaches to me on this account."

"Very good," said the Hare, "now we have a clear issue. Friend Mahatma, when those Gates open presently what happens beyond them?"

"I don't know," I answered, "I have never been there; at least not that I can remember."

"Still, friend Mahatma, is it not said that yonder lives some Power which judges righteously and declares what is true and what is false?"

"I have heard so, Hare."

"Very well, Man, I lay my cause before that Power--do you the same. If I am wrong I will go back to earth to be tortured by you and yours again. If, however, I am right, you shall abide the judgment of the Power, and I ask that It will make of you--a hunted hare!"

Now when he heard these awful words--for they were awful--no less, the Red-faced Man grew much disturbed. He hummed and he hawed, and shifted his feet about. At last he said--

"You must admit that while you lived you had a first-class time under my protection. Lots of turnips to eat and so forth."

"A first-class time!" the Hare answered with withering scorn. "What sort of a time would you have had if some one had shot you all over the back and you must creep away to die of pain and starvation? How would you have enjoyed it if, from day to day, you had been forced to live in terror of cunning monsters, who at any hour might appear to hurt you in some new fashion? Do you suppose that animals cannot feel fear, and is continual fear the kind of friend that gives them a 'first-class time'?"

To this last argument the Man seemed able to find no answer.

"Mr. Hare," he said humbly, "we are all fallible. Although I never

thought to find myself in the position of having to do so, I will admit that I may possibly have been mistaken in my views and treatment of you and your kind, and indeed of other creatures. If so, I apologise for any, ah--temporary inconvenience I may have caused you. I can do no more."

"Come, Hare," I interposed, "that's handsome; perhaps you might let bygones be bygones."

"Apologise!" exclaimed the Hare. "After all I have suffered I do not think it is enough. At the very least, Mahatma, he should say that he is heartily ashamed and sorry."

"Well, well," said the Man, "it's no use making two bites of a cherry. I am sorry, truly sorry for all the pain and terror I have brought on you. If that won't do let's go up and settle the matter, and if I've been wrong I'll try to bear the consequences like a gentleman. Only, Mr. Hare, I hope that you will not wish to put your case more strongly against me than you need."

"Not I, Man. I know now that you only erred because the truth had not been revealed to you--because you did not understand. All that I will ask, if I can, is that you may be allowed to tell this truth to other men."

"Well, I am glad to say I can't do that, Hare."

"Don't be so sure," I broke in; "it's just the kind of thing which might be decreed--a generation or two hence when the world is fit to listen to you."

But he took no heed, or did not comprehend me, and went on--

"It is an impossibility, and if I did they would think me a lunatic or a snivelling, sentimental humbug. I believe that lots of my old friends would scarcely speak to me again. Why, putting aside the pleasures of sport, if the views you preach were to be accepted, what would become of keepers and beaters and huntsmen and dog-breeders, and of thousands of others who directly or indirectly get their living out of hunting and shooting? Where would game rents be also?"

"I don't know, I am sure," replied the Hare wearily. "I suppose that they would earn their living in some other way, as they must in countries where there is no sport, and that you would have to make up for shooting rents by growing more upon the land. You know that after all we hares and the other game eat a great deal which might be saved if there were not so many of us. But I am not wise, and I have never looked at the question from that point of view. It may seem selfish, but I have to consider myself and the creatures whose cause I plead, for something inside me is telling me now--yes, now--that all of them are speaking through my mouth. It says that is why I am allowed to be here and to talk with you both; for their sakes rather than for my own."

"If you have more to say you had better say it quickly," I interrupted, addressing the Red-faced Man. "I see that the Lights are beginning to change, which means that soon the Road will be closed and the Gates opened."

"I can't remember anything," he answered. "Yes, there is one matter," he added nervously. "I see, Mr. Hare, that you are thinking of my boy Tom, not very kindly I am afraid. As you have been so good as to forgive me I hope that you won't be hard on Tom. He is not at all a bad sort of a lad if a little thoughtless, like many other young people."

"I don't like Tom," said the Hare, with decision. "Tom shot me when you told him not to shoot. Tom shut me up in a filthy place with a yellow rabbit which he forgot to feed, so that it wanted to eat me. Tom tried to cut me off from the wood so that the running dogs might catch me, although you shouted to him that it was not sportsmanlike. Tom dragged me out of the sea and blew down my nostrils to keep me alive. Tom threw me to the hounds, although Giles remonstrated with him and even the huntsman begged him to let me go. I tell you that I don't like Tom."

"Still, Mr. Hare," pleaded the Red-faced Man, "I hope that if it should be in your power when we get through those Gates, that you will be merciful to Tom. I can't think of much to say for him in this hurry, but there, he is my only son and the truth is that I love him. You know he may live--to be different--if you don't bring some misfortune on him."

"Who am I to bring misfortune or to withhold it?" asked the Hare, softening visibly. "Well, I know what love means, for my mother loved me and I loved her in my way. I tell you that when I saw her dead, turned from a beautiful living thing into a stained lump of flesh and fur, I felt dreadful. I understand now that you love Tom as my mother loved me, and, Man, for the sake of your love--not for his sake, mind--I promise you that I won't say anything against Tom if I can help it, or do anything either."

"You're a real good fellow!" exclaimed the Red-faced Man, with evident relief. "Give me your hand. Oh! I forgot, you can't. Hullo! what's up now? Everything seems to be altering."

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As he spoke, to my eyes the Lights began to change in earnest. All the sky (I call it sky for clearness) above the mighty Gates became as it were alive with burning tongues of every colour that an artist can conceive. By degrees these fiery tongues or swords shaped themselves into a vast circle which drove back the walls of darkness, and through this circle, guided, guarded by the spirits of dead suns, with odours and with chantings, descended that crowned City of the Mansions before whose glory imagination breaks and even Vision veils her eyes.

It descended, its banners wavering in the winds of prayer; it hung above

the Gates, the flowers of all splendours, Heaven's very rose, hung like an opal on the boundless breast of night, and there it stayed.

The Voice in the North called to the Voice in the South; the Voice in the East called to the Voice in the West, and up the Great White Road sped the Angel of the Road, making report as he came that all his multitude were gathered in and for that while the Road was barred.

He passed and in a flash the Gates were burned away. The ashes of them fell upon the heads of those waiting at the Gates, whitening their faces and drying their tears before the Change. They fell upon the Man and the Hare beside me, veiling them as it were and making them silent, but on me they did not fall. Then, from between the Wardens of the Gates, flowed forth the Helpers and the Guardians (save those who already were without comforting the children) seeking their beloved and bearing the Cups of slumber and new birth; then pealed the question--

"Who hath suffered most? Let that one first taste of peace."

Now all the dim hosts surged forward since each outworn soul believed that it had suffered most and was in the bitterest need of peace. But the Helpers and the Guardians gently pressed them back, and again there pealed, no question but a command.

This was the command:--

"Draw near, thou Hare."

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Jorsen asked me what happened after this justification of the Hare, which, if I heard aright, appeared to suggest that by the decree of some judge unknown, the woes of such creatures are not unnoted and despised, or left unsolaced. Of course I had to answer him that I could not tell.

Perhaps nothing happened at all. Perhaps all the wonders I seemed to see, even the Road by which souls travel from There to Here and from Here to There, and the Gates that were burned away, and the City of the Mansions that descended, were but signs and symbols of mysteries which as yet we cannot grasp or understand.

Whatever may be the truth as to this matter of my visions, I need hardly add, however, that no one can be more anxious than I am myself to learn in what way the Red-faced Man, speaking on behalf of our dominant race, and the Hare, speaking as an appointed advocate of the subject animal creation, finished their argument in the light of fuller knowledge.
Much also do I wonder which of them was proved to be right, a difficult matter whereon I feel quite incompetent to express any views.

But you see at that moment I woke up. The edge of the Road on which I was standing seemed to give way beneath me, and I fell into space as one does in a nightmare. It is a very unpleasant sensation.

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I remember noticing afterwards that I could not have been long asleep. When I began to dream I had only just blown out the candle, and when I awoke again there was still a smouldering spark upon its wick.

But, as I have said, in that spirit-land wither I had journeyed is to be found neither time nor space nor any other familiar thing.