

CHAPTER XII

Now that I had learned the trick the way was easy. And I knew the way was bound to become easier the more I travelled it. Once establish a line of least resistance, every succeeding journey along it will find still less resistance. And so, as you shall see, my journeys from San Quentin life into other lives were achieved almost automatically as time went by.

After Warden Atherton and his crew had left me it was a matter of minutes to will the resuscitated portion of my body back into the little death. Death in life it was, but it was only the little death, similar to the temporary death produced by an anaesthetic.

And so, from all that was sordid and vile, from brutal solitary and jacket hell, from acquainted flies and sweats of darkness and the knuckle-talk of the living dead, I was away at a bound into time and space.

Came the duration of darkness, and the slow-growing awareness of other things and of another self. First of all, in this awareness, was dust. It was in my nostrils, dry and acrid. It was on my lips. It coated my face, my hands, and especially was it noticeable on the finger-tips when touched by the ball of my thumb.

Next I was aware of ceaseless movement. All that was about me lurched

and oscillated. There was jolt and jar, and I heard what I knew as a matter of course to be the grind of wheels on axles and the grate and clash of iron tyres against rock and sand. And there came to me the jaded voices of men, in curse and snarl of slow-plodding, jaded animals.

I opened my eyes, that were inflamed with dust, and immediately fresh dust bit into them. On the coarse blankets on which I lay the dust was half an inch thick. Above me, through sifting dust, I saw an arched roof of lurching, swaying canvas, and myriads of dust motes descended heavily in the shafts of sunshine that entered through holes in the canvas.

I was a child, a boy of eight or nine, and I was weary, as was the woman, dusty-visaged and haggard, who sat up beside me and soothed a crying babe in her arms. She was my mother; that I knew as a matter of course, just as I knew, when I glanced along the canvas tunnel of the wagon-top, that the shoulders of the man on the driver's seat were the shoulders of my father.

When I started to crawl along the packed gear with which the wagon was laden my mother said in a tired and querulous voice, "Can't you ever be still a minute, Jesse?"

That was my name, Jesse. I did not know my surname, though I heard my mother call my father John. I have a dim recollection of hearing, at one time or another, the other men address my father as Captain. I knew that he was the leader of this company, and that his orders were obeyed by

all.

I crawled out through the opening in the canvas and sat down beside my father on the seat. The air was stifling with the dust that rose from the wagons and the many hoofs of the animals. So thick was the dust that it was like mist or fog in the air, and the low sun shone through it dimly and with a bloody light.

Not alone was the light of this setting sun ominous, but everything about me seemed ominous--the landscape, my father's face, the fret of the babe in my mother's arms that she could not still, the six horses my father drove that had continually to be urged and that were without any sign of colour, so heavily had the dust settled on them.

The landscape was an aching, eye-hurting desolation. Low hills stretched endlessly away on every hand. Here and there only on their slopes were occasional scrub growths of heat-parched brush. For the most part the surface of the hills was naked-dry and composed of sand and rock. Our way followed the sand-bottoms between the hills. And the sand-bottoms were bare, save for spots of scrub, with here and there short tufts of dry and withered grass. Water there was none, nor sign of water, except for washed gullies that told of ancient and torrential rains.

My father was the only one who had horses to his wagon. The wagons went in single file, and as the train wound and curved I saw that the other wagons were drawn by oxen. Three or four yoke of oxen strained and

pulled weakly at each wagon, and beside them, in the deep sand, walked men with ox-goads, who prodded the unwilling beasts along. On a curve I counted the wagons ahead and behind. I knew that there were forty of them, including our own; for often I had counted them before. And as I counted them now, as a child will to while away tedium, they were all there, forty of them, all canvas-topped, big and massive, crudely fashioned, pitching and lurching, grinding and jarring over sand and sagebrush and rock.

To right and left of us, scattered along the train, rode a dozen or fifteen men and youths on horses. Across their pommels were long-barrelled rifles. Whenever any of them drew near to our wagon I could see that their faces, under the dust, were drawn and anxious like my father's. And my father, like them, had a long-barrelled rifle close to hand as he drove.

Also, to one side, limped a score or more of foot-sore, yoke-galled, skeleton oxen, that ever paused to nip at the occasional tufts of withered grass, and that ever were prodded on by the tired-faced youths who herded them. Sometimes one or another of these oxen would pause and low, and such lowing seemed as ominous as all else about me.

Far, far away I have a memory of having lived, a smaller lad, by the tree-lined banks of a stream. And as the wagon jolts along, and I sway on the seat with my father, I continually return and dwell upon that pleasant water flowing between the trees. I have a sense that for an interminable

period I have lived in a wagon and travelled on, ever on, with this present company.

But strongest of all upon me is what is strong upon all the company, namely, a sense of drifting to doom. Our way was like a funeral march. Never did a laugh arise. Never did I hear a happy tone of voice. Neither peace nor ease marched with us. The faces of the men and youths who outrode the train were grim, set, hopeless. And as we toiled through the lurid dust of sunset often I scanned my father's face in vain quest of some message of cheer. I will not say that my father's face, in all its dusty haggardness, was hopeless. It was dogged, and oh! so grim and anxious, most anxious.

A thrill seemed to run along the train. My father's head went up. So did mine. And our horses raised their weary heads, scented the air with long-drawn snorts, and for the nonce pulled willingly. The horses of the outriders quickened their pace. And as for the herd of scarecrow oxen, it broke into a forthright gallop. It was almost ludicrous. The poor brutes were so clumsy in their weakness and haste. They were galloping skeletons draped in mangy hide, and they out-distanced the boys who herded them. But this was only for a time. Then they fell back to a walk, a quick, eager, shambling, sore-footed walk; and they no longer were lured aside by the dry bunch-grass.

"What is it?" my mother asked from within the wagon.

"Water," was my father's reply. "It must be Nephi."

And my mother: "Thank God! And perhaps they will sell us food."

And into Nephi, through blood-red dust, with grind and grate and jolt and jar, our great wagons rolled. A dozen scattered dwellings or shanties composed the place. The landscape was much the same as that through which we had passed. There were no trees, only scrub growths and sandy bareness. But here were signs of tilled fields, with here and there a fence. Also there was water. Down the stream ran no current. The bed, however, was damp, with now and again a water-hole into which the loose oxen and the saddle-horses stamped and plunged their muzzles to the eyes. Here, too, grew an occasional small willow.

"That must be Bill Black's mill they told us about," my father said, pointing out a building to my mother, whose anxiousness had drawn her to peer out over our shoulders.

An old man, with buckskin shirt and long, matted, sunburnt hair, rode back to our wagon and talked with father. The signal was given, and the head wagons of the train began to deploy in a circle. The ground favoured the evolution, and, from long practice, it was accomplished without a hitch, so that when the forty wagons were finally halted they formed a circle. All was bustle and orderly confusion. Many women, all tired-faced and dusty like my mother, emerged from the wagons. Also poured forth a very horde of children. There must have been at least

fifty children, and it seemed I knew them all of long time; and there were at least two score of women. These went about the preparations for cooking supper.

While some of the men chopped sage-brush and we children carried it to the fires that were kindling, other men unyoked the oxen and let them stampede for water. Next the men, in big squads, moved the wagons snugly into place. The tongue of each wagon was on the inside of the circle, and, front and rear, each wagon was in solid contact with the next wagon before and behind. The great brakes were locked fast; but, not content with this, the wheels of all the wagons were connected with chains. This was nothing new to us children. It was the trouble sign of a camp in hostile country. One wagon only was left out of the circle, so as to form a gate to the corral. Later on, as we knew, ere the camp slept, the animals would be driven inside, and the gate-wagon would be chained like the others in place. In the meanwhile, and for hours, the animals would be herded by men and boys to what scant grass they could find.

While the camp-making went on my father, with several others of the men, including the old man with the long, sunburnt hair, went away on foot in the direction of the mill. I remember that all of us, men, women, and even the children, paused to watch them depart; and it seemed their errand was of grave import.

While they were away other men, strangers, inhabitants of desert Nephi, came into camp and stalked about. They were white men, like us, but they

were hard-faced, stern-faced, sombre, and they seemed angry with all our company. Bad feeling was in the air, and they said things calculated to rouse the tempers of our men. But the warning went out from the women, and was passed on everywhere to our men and youths, that there must be no words.

One of the strangers came to our fire, where my mother was alone, cooking. I had just come up with an armful of sage-brush, and I stopped to listen and to stare at the intruder, whom I hated, because it was in the air to hate, because I knew that every last person in our company hated these strangers who were white-skinned like us and because of whom we had been compelled to make our camp in a circle.

This stranger at our fire had blue eyes, hard and cold and piercing. His hair was sandy. His face was shaven to the chin, and from under the chin, covering the neck and extending to the ears, sprouted a sandy fringe of whiskers well-streaked with gray. Mother did not greet him, nor did he greet her. He stood and glowered at her for some time, he cleared his throat and said with a sneer:

"Wisht you was back in Missouri right now I bet."

I saw mother tighten her lips in self-control ere she answered:

"We are from Arkansas."

"I guess you got good reasons to deny where you come from," he next said, "you that drove the Lord's people from Missouri."

Mother made no reply.

". . . Seein'," he went on, after the pause accorded her, "as you're now comin' a-whinin' an' a-beggin' bread at our hands that you persecuted."

Whereupon, and instantly, child that I was, I knew anger, the old, red, intolerant wrath, ever unrestrainable and unsubduable.

"You lie!" I piped up. "We ain't Missourians. We ain't whinin'. An' we ain't beggars. We got the money to buy."

"Shut up, Jesse!" my mother cried, landing the back of her hand stingingly on my mouth. And then, to the stranger, "Go away and let the boy alone."

"I'll shoot you full of lead, you damned Mormon!" I screamed and sobbed at him, too quick for my mother this time, and dancing away around the fire from the back-sweep of her hand.

As for the man himself, my conduct had not disturbed him in the slightest. I was prepared for I knew not what violent visitation from this terrible stranger, and I watched him warily while he considered me with the utmost gravity.

At last he spoke, and he spoke solemnly, with solemn shaking of the head, as if delivering a judgment.

"Like fathers like sons," he said. "The young generation is as bad as the elder. The whole breed is unregenerate and damned. There is no saving it, the young or the old. There is no atonement. Not even the blood of Christ can wipe out its iniquities."

"Damned Mormon!" was all I could sob at him. "Damned Mormon! Damned Mormon! Damned Mormon!"

And I continued to damn him and to dance around the fire before my mother's avenging hand, until he strode away.

When my father, and the men who had accompanied him, returned, camp-work ceased, while all crowded anxiously about him. He shook his head.

"They will not sell?" some woman demanded.

Again he shook his head.

A man spoke up, a blue-eyed, blond-whiskered giant of thirty, who abruptly pressed his way into the centre of the crowd.

"They say they have flour and provisions for three years, Captain," he

said. "They have always sold to the immigration before. And now they won't sell. And it ain't our quarrel. Their quarrel's with the government, an' they're takin' it out on us. It ain't right, Captain. It ain't right, I say, us with our women an' children, an' California months away, winter comin' on, an' nothin' but desert in between. We ain't got the grub to face the desert."

He broke off for a moment to address the whole crowd.

"Why, you-all don't know what desert is. This around here ain't desert. I tell you it's paradise, and heavenly pasture, an' flowin' with milk an' honey alongside what we're goin' to face."

"I tell you, Captain, we got to get flour first. If they won't sell it, then we must just up an' take it."

Many of the men and women began crying out in approval, but my father hushed them by holding up his hand.

"I agree with everything you say, Hamilton," he began.

But the cries now drowned his voice, and he again held up his hand.

"Except one thing you forgot to take into account, Hamilton--a thing that you and all of us must take into account. Brigham Young has declared martial law, and Brigham Young has an army. We could wipe out Nephi in

the shake of a lamb's tail and take all the provisions we can carry. But we wouldn't carry them very far. Brigham's Saints would be down upon us and we would be wiped out in another shake of a lamb's tail. You know it. I know it. We all know it."

His words carried conviction to listeners already convinced. What he had told them was old news. They had merely forgotten it in a flurry of excitement and desperate need.

"Nobody will fight quicker for what is right than I will," father continued. "But it just happens we can't afford to fight now. If ever a ruction starts we haven't a chance. And we've all got our women and children to recollect. We've got to be peaceable at any price, and put up with whatever dirt is heaped on us."

"But what will we do with the desert coming?" cried a woman who nursed a babe at her breast.

"There's several settlements before we come to the desert," father answered. "Fillmore's sixty miles south. Then comes Corn Creek. And Beaver's another fifty miles. Next is Parowan. Then it's twenty miles to Cedar City. The farther we get away from Salt Lake the more likely they'll sell us provisions."

"And if they won't?" the same woman persisted.

"Then we're quit of them," said my father. "Cedar City is the last settlement. We'll have to go on, that's all, and thank our stars we are quit of them. Two days' journey beyond is good pasture, and water. They call it Mountain Meadows. Nobody lives there, and that's the place we'll rest our cattle and feed them up before we tackle the desert. Maybe we can shoot some meat. And if the worst comes to the worst, we'll keep going as long as we can, then abandon the wagons, pack what we can on our animals, and make the last stages on foot. We can eat our cattle as we go along. It would be better to arrive in California without a rag to our backs than to leave our bones here; and leave them we will if we start a ruction."

With final reiterated warnings against violence of speech or act, the impromptu meeting broke up. I was slow in falling asleep that night. My rage against the Mormon had left my brain in such a tingle that I was still awake when my father crawled into the wagon after a last round of the night-watch. They thought I slept, but I heard mother ask him if he thought that the Mormons would let us depart peacefully from their land. His face was turned aside from her as he busied himself with pulling off a boot, while he answered her with hearty confidence that he was sure the Mormons would let us go if none of our own company started trouble.

But I saw his face at that moment in the light of a small tallow dip, and in it was none of the confidence that was in his voice. So it was that I fell asleep, oppressed by the dire fate that seemed to overhang us, and pondering upon Brigham Young who bulked in my child imagination as a

fearful, malignant being, a very devil with horns and tail and all.

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And I awoke to the old pain of the jacket in solitary. About me were the customary four: Warden Atherton, Captain Jamie, Doctor Jackson, and Al Hutchins. I cracked my face with my willed smile, and struggled not to lose control under the exquisite torment of returning circulation. I drank the water they held to me, waved aside the proffered bread, and refused to speak. I closed my eyes and strove to win back to the chain-locked wagon-circle at Nephi. But so long as my visitors stood about me and talked I could not escape.

One snatch of conversation I could not tear myself away from hearing.

"Just as yesterday," Doctor Jackson said. "No change one way or the other."

"Then he can go on standing it?" Warden Atherton queried.

"Without a quiver. The next twenty-four hours as easy as the last. He's a wooz, I tell you, a perfect wooz. If I didn't know it was impossible, I'd say he was doped."

"I know his dope," said the Warden. "It's that cursed will of his. I'd bet, if he made up his mind, that he could walk barefoot across red-hot

stones, like those Kanaka priests from the South Seas."

Now perhaps it was the word "priests" that I carried away with me through the darkness of another flight in time. Perhaps it was the cue. More probably it was a mere coincidence. At any rate I awoke, lying upon a rough rocky floor, and found myself on my back, my arms crossed in such fashion that each elbow rested in the palm of the opposite hand. As I lay there, eyes closed, half awake, I rubbed my elbows with my palms and found that I was rubbing prodigious calluses. There was no surprise in this. I accepted the calluses as of long time and a matter of course.

I opened my eyes. My shelter was a small cave, no more than three feet in height and a dozen in length. It was very hot in the cave.

Perspiration noded the entire surface of my body. Now and again several nodules coalesced and formed tiny rivulets. I wore no clothing save a filthy rag about the middle. My skin was burned to a mahogany brown. I was very thin, and I contemplated my thinness with a strange sort of pride, as if it were an achievement to be so thin. Especially was I enamoured of my painfully prominent ribs. The very sight of the hollows between them gave me a sense of solemn elation, or, rather, to use a better word, of sanctification.

My knees were callused like my elbows. I was very dirty. My beard, evidently once blond, but now a dirt-stained and streaky brown, swept my midriff in a tangled mass. My long hair, similarly stained and tangled, was all about my shoulders, while wisps of it continually strayed in the

way of my vision so that sometimes I was compelled to brush it aside with my hands. For the most part, however, I contented myself with peering through it like a wild animal from a thicket.

Just at the tunnel-like mouth of my dim cave the day reared itself in a wall of blinding sunshine. After a time I crawled to the entrance, and, for the sake of greater discomfort, lay down in the burning sunshine on a narrow ledge of rock. It positively baked me, that terrible sun, and the more it hurt me the more I delighted in it, or in myself rather, in that I was thus the master of my flesh and superior to its claims and remonstrances. When I found under me a particularly sharp, but not too sharp, rock-projection, I ground my body upon the point of it, rowelled my flesh in a very ecstasy of mastery and of purification.

It was a stagnant day of heat. Not a breath of air moved over the river valley on which I sometimes gazed. Hundreds of feet beneath me the wide river ran sluggishly. The farther shore was flat and sandy and stretched away to the horizon. Above the water were scattered clumps of palm-trees.

On my side, eaten into a curve by the river, were lofty, crumbling cliffs. Farther along the curve, in plain view from my eyrie, carved out of the living rock, were four colossal figures. It was the stature of a man to their ankle joints. The four colossi sat, with hands resting on knees, with arms crumbled quite away, and gazed out upon the river. At least three of them so gazed. Of the fourth all that remained were the

lower limbs to the knees and the huge hands resting on the knees. At the feet of this one, ridiculously small, crouched a sphinx; yet this sphinx was taller than I.

I looked upon these carven images with contempt, and spat as I looked. I knew not what they were, whether forgotten gods or unremembered kings. But to me they were representative of the vanity of earth-men and earth-aspirations.

And over all this curve of river and sweep of water and wide sands beyond arched a sky of aching brass unflecked by the tiniest cloud.

The hours passed while I roasted in the sun. Often, for quite decent intervals, I forgot my heat and pain in dreams and visions and in memories. All this I knew--crumbling colossi and river and sand and sun and brazen sky--was to pass away in the twinkling of an eye. At any moment the trumps of the archangels might sound, the stars fall out of the sky, the heavens roll up as a scroll, and the Lord God of all come with his hosts for the final judgment.

Ah, I knew it so profoundly that I was ready for such sublime event. That was why I was here in rags and filth and wretchedness. I was meek and lowly, and I despised the frail needs and passions of the flesh. And I thought with contempt, and with a certain satisfaction, of the far cities of the plain I had known, all unheeding, in their pomp and lust, of the last day so near at hand. Well, they would see soon enough, but too late

for them. And I should see. But I was ready. And to their cries and lamentations would I arise, reborn and glorious, and take my well-earned and rightful place in the City of God.

At times, between dreams and visions in which I was verily and before my time in the City of God, I conned over in my mind old discussions and controversies. Yes, Novatus was right in his contention that penitent apostates should never again be received into the churches. Also, there was no doubt that Sabellianism was conceived of the devil. So was Constantine, the arch-fiend, the devil's right hand.

Continually I returned to contemplation of the nature of the unity of God, and went over and over the contentions of Noetus, the Syrian. Better, however, did I like the contentions of my beloved teacher, Arius. Truly, if human reason could determine anything at all, there must have been a time, in the very nature of sonship, when the Son did not exist. In the nature of sonship there must have been a time when the Son commenced to exist. A father must be older than his son. To hold otherwise were a blasphemy and a belittlement of God.

And I remembered back to my young days when I had sat at the feet of Arius, who had been a presbyter of the city of Alexandria, and who had been robbed of the bishopric by the blasphemous and heretical Alexander. Alexander the Sabellianite, that is what he was, and his feet had fast hold of hell.

Yes, I had been to the Council of Nicea, and seen it avoid the issue. And I remembered when the Emperor Constantine had banished Arius for his uprightness. And I remembered when Constantine repented for reasons of state and policy and commanded Alexander--the other Alexander, thrice cursed, Bishop of Constantinople--to receive Arius into communion on the morrow. And that very night did not Arius die in the street? They said it was a violent sickness visited upon him in answer to Alexander's prayer to God. But I said, and so said all we Arians, that the violent sickness was due to a poison, and that the poison was due to Alexander himself, Bishop of Constantinople and devil's poisoner.

And here I ground my body back and forth on the sharp stones, and muttered aloud, drunk with conviction:

"Let the Jews and Pagans mock. Let them triumph, for their time is short. And for them there will be no time after time."

I talked to myself aloud a great deal on that rocky shelf overlooking the river. I was feverish, and on occasion I drank sparingly of water from a stinking goatskin. This goatskin I kept hanging in the sun that the stench of the skin might increase and that there might be no refreshment of coolness in the water. Food there was, lying in the dirt on my cave-floor--a few roots and a chunk of mouldy barley-cake; and hungry I was, although I did not eat.

All I did that blessed, livelong day was to sweat and swelter in the sun,

mortify my lean flesh upon the rock, gaze out of the desolation,
resurrect old memories, dream dreams, and mutter my convictions aloud.

And when the sun set, in the swift twilight I took a last look at the
world so soon to pass. About the feet of the colossi I could make out
the creeping forms of beasts that laired in the once proud works of men.
And to the snarls of the beasts I crawled into my hole, and, muttering
and dozing, visioning fevered fancies and praying that the last day come
quickly, I ebbed down into the darkness of sleep.

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Consciousness came back to me in solitary, with the quartet of torturers
about me.

"Blasphemous and heretical Warden of San Quentin whose feet have fast
hold of hell," I gibed, after I had drunk deep of the water they held to
my lips. "Let the jailers and the trusties triumph. Their time is
short, and for them there is no time after time."

"He's out of his head," Warden Atherton affirmed.

"He's putting it over on you," was Doctor Jackson's surer judgment.

"But he refuses food," Captain Jamie protested.

"Huh, he could fast forty days and not hurt himself," the doctor answered.

"And I have," I said, "and forty nights as well. Do me the favour to tighten the jacket and then get out of here."

The head trusty tried to insert his forefinger inside the lacing.

"You couldn't get a quarter of an inch of slack with block and tackle," he assured them.

"Have you any complaint to make, Standing?" the Warden asked.

"Yes," was my reply. "On two counts."

"What are they?"

"First," I said, "the jacket is abominably loose. Hutchins is an ass. He could get a foot of slack if he wanted."

"What is the other count?" Warden Atherton asked.

"That you are conceived of the devil, Warden."

Captain Jamie and Doctor Jackson tittered, and the Warden, with a snort, led the way out of my cell.

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Left alone, I strove to go into the dark and gain back to the wagon circle at Nephi. I was interested to know the outcome of that doomed drifting of our forty great wagons across a desolate and hostile land, and I was not at all interested in what came of the mangy hermit with his rock-roweled ribs and stinking water-skin. And I gained back, neither to Nephi nor the Nile, but to--

But here I must pause in the narrative, my reader, in order to explain a few things and make the whole matter easier to your comprehension. This is necessary, because my time is short in which to complete my jacket-memoirs. In a little while, in a very little while, they are going to take me out and hang me. Did I have the full time of a thousand lifetimes, I could not complete the last details of my jacket experiences. Wherefore I must briefen the narrative.

First of all, Bergson is right. Life cannot be explained in intellectual terms. As Confucius said long ago: "When we are so ignorant of life, can we know death?" And ignorant of life we truly are when we cannot explain it in terms of the understanding. We know life only phenomenally, as a savage may know a dynamo; but we know nothing of life noumenonally, nothing of the nature of the intrinsic stuff of life.

Secondly, Marinetti is wrong when he claims that matter is the only

mystery and the only reality. I say and as you, my reader, realize, I speak with authority--I say that matter is the only illusion. Comte called the world, which is tantamount to matter, the great fetich, and I agree with Comte.

It is life that is the reality and the mystery. Life is vastly different from mere chemic matter fluxing in high modes of notion. Life persists. Life is the thread of fire that persists through all the modes of matter. I know. I am life. I have lived ten thousand generations. I have lived millions of years. I have possessed many bodies. I, the possessor of these many bodies, have persisted. I am life. I am the unquenched spark ever flashing and astonishing the face of time, ever working my will and wreaking my passion on the cloddy aggregates of matter, called bodies, which I have transiently inhabited.

For look you. This finger of mine, so quick with sensation, so subtle to feel, so delicate in its multifarious dexterities, so firm and strong to crook and bend or stiffen by means of cunning leverages--this finger is not I. Cut it off. I live. The body is mutilated. I am not mutilated. The spirit that is I is whole.

Very well. Cut off all my fingers. I am I. The spirit is entire. Cut off both hands. Cut off both arms at the shoulder-sockets. Cut off both legs at the hip-sockets. And I, the unconquerable and indestructible I, survive. Am I any the less for these mutilations, for these subtractions of the flesh? Certainly not. Clip my hair. Shave from me with sharp

razors my lips, my nose, my ears--ay, and tear out the eyes of me by the roots; and there, mewed in that featureless skull that is attached to a hacked and mangled torso, there in that cell of the chemic flesh, will still be I, unmutilated, undiminished.

Oh, the heart still beats. Very well. Cut out the heart, or, better, fling the flesh-remnant into a machine of a thousand blades and make mincemeat of it--and I, I, don't you understand, all the spirit and the mystery and the vital fire and life of me, am off and away. I have not perished. Only the body has perished, and the body is not I.

I believe Colonel de Rochas was correct when he asserted that under the compulsion of his will he sent the girl Josephine, while she was in hypnotic trance, back through the eighteen years she had lived, back through the silence and the dark ere she had been born, back to the light of a previous living when she was a bedridden old man, the ex-artilleryman, Jean-Claude Bourdon. And I believe that Colonel de Rochas did truly hypnotize this resurrected shade of the old man and, by compulsion of will, send him back through the seventy years of his life, back into the dark and through the dark into the light of day when he had been the wicked old woman, Philomene Carteron.

Already, have I not shown you, my reader, that in previous times, inhabiting various cloddy aggregates of matter, I have been Count Guillaume de Sainte-Maure, a mangy and nameless hermit of Egypt, and the boy Jesse, whose father was captain of forty wagons in the great westward

emigration. And, also, am I not now, as I write these lines, Darrell Standing, under sentence of death in Folsom Prison and one time professor of agronomy in the College of Agriculture of the University of California?

Matter is the great illusion. That is, matter manifests itself in form, and form is apparitional. Where, now, are the crumbling rock-cliffs of old Egypt where once I laired me like a wild beast while I dreamed of the City of God? Where, now, is the body of Guillaume de Sainte-Maure that was thrust through on the moonlit grass so long ago by the flame-headed Guy de Villehardouin? Where, now, are the forty great wagons in the circle at Nephi, and all the men and women and children and lean cattle that sheltered inside that circle? All such things no longer are, for they were forms, manifestations of fluxing matter ere they melted into the flux again. They have passed and are not.

And now my argument becomes plain. The spirit is the reality that endures. I am spirit, and I endure. I, Darrell Standing, the tenant of many fleshly tenements, shall write a few more lines of these memoirs and then pass on my way. The form of me that is my body will fall apart when it has been sufficiently hanged by the neck, and of it naught will remain in all the world of matter. In the world of spirit the memory of it will remain. Matter has no memory, because its forms are evanescent, and what is engraved on its forms perishes with the forms.

One word more ere I return to my narrative. In all my journeys through

the dark into other lives that have been mine I have never been able to guide any journey to a particular destination. Thus many new experiences of old lives were mine before ever I chanced to return to the boy Jesse at Nephi. Possibly, all told, I have lived over Jesse's experiences a score of times, sometimes taking up his career when he was quite small in the Arkansas settlements, and at least a dozen times carrying on past the point where I left him at Nephi. It were a waste of time to detail the whole of it; and so, without prejudice to the verity of my account, I shall skip much that is vague and tortuous and repetitional, and give the facts as I have assembled them out of the various times, in whole and part, as I relived them.