

## CHAPTER THE SIXTH ~~ THE NEW HAROUN AL RASCHID

1

Benham corresponded with Amanda until the summer of 1913. Sometimes the two wrote coldly to one another, sometimes with warm affection, sometimes with great bitterness. When he met White in Johannesburg during the strike period of 1913, he was on his way to see her in London and to settle their relationship upon a new and more definite footing. It was her suggestion that they should meet.

About her he felt an enormous, inexorable, dissatisfaction. He could not persuade himself that his treatment of her and that his relations to her squared with any of his preconceptions of nobility, and yet at no precise point could he detect where he had definitely taken an ignoble step. Through Amanda he was coming to the full experience of life. Like all of us he had been prepared, he had prepared himself, to take life in a certain way, and life had taken him, as it takes all of us, in an entirely different and unexpected way.... He had been ready for noble deeds and villainies, for achievements and failures, and here as the dominant fact of his personal life was a perplexing riddle. He could not hate and condemn her for ten minutes at a time without a flow of exoneration; he could not think of her tolerantly or lovingly without immediate shame and resentment, and with the utmost will in the world he

could not banish her from his mind.

During the intervening years he had never ceased to have her in his mind; he would not think of her it is true if he could help it, but often he could not help it, and as a negative presence, as a thing denied, she was almost more potent than she had been as a thing accepted. Meanwhile he worked. His nervous irritability increased, but it did not hinder the steady development of his Research.

Long before his final parting from Amanda he had worked out his idea and method for all the more personal problems in life; the problems he put together under his headings of the first three "Limitations." He had resolved to emancipate himself from fear, indulgence, and that instinctive preoccupation with the interests and dignity of self which he chose to term Jealousy, and with the one tremendous exception of Amanda he had to a large extent succeeded. Amanda. Amanda. Amanda. He stuck the more grimly to his Research to drown that beating in his brain.

Emancipation from all these personal things he held now to be a mere prelude to the real work of a man's life, which was to serve this dream of a larger human purpose. The bulk of his work was to discover and define that purpose, that purpose which must be the directing and comprehending form of all the activities of the noble life. One cannot be noble, he had come to perceive, at large; one must be noble to an end. To make human life, collectively and in detail, a thing more comprehensive, more beautiful, more generous and coherent than it is

to-day seemed to him the fundamental intention of all nobility. He believed more and more firmly that the impulses to make and help and subserve great purposes are abundantly present in the world, that they are inhibited by hasty thinking, limited thinking and bad thinking, and that the real ennoblement of human life was not so much a creation as a release. He lumped the preventive and destructive forces that keep men dispersed, unhappy, and ignoble under the heading of Prejudice, and he made this Prejudice his fourth and greatest and most difficult limitation. In one place he had written it, "Prejudice or Divisions." That being subdued in oneself and in the world, then in the measure of its subjugation, the new life of our race, the great age, the noble age, would begin.

So he set himself to examine his own mind and the mind of the world about him for prejudice, for hampering follies, disguised disloyalties and mischievous distrusts, and the great bulk of the papers that White struggled with at Westhaven Street were devoted to various aspects of this search for "Prejudice." It seemed to White to be at once the most magnificent and the most preposterous of enterprises. It was indeed no less than an enquiry into all the preventable sources of human failure and disorder.... And it was all too manifest to White also that the last place in which Benham was capable of detecting a prejudice was at the back of his own head.

Under this Fourth Limitation he put the most remarkable array of influences, race-hatred, national suspicion, the evil side of patriotism, religious and social intolerance, every social consequence

of muddle headedness, every dividing force indeed except the purely personal dissensions between man and man. And he developed a metaphysical interpretation of these troubles. "No doubt," he wrote in one place, "much of the evil between different kinds of men is due to uncultivated feeling, to natural bad feeling, but far more is it due to bad thinking." At times he seemed on the verge of the persuasion that most human trouble is really due to bad metaphysics. It was, one must remark, an extraordinary journey he had made; he had started from chivalry and arrived at metaphysics; every knight he held must be a logician, and ultimate bravery is courage of the mind. One thinks of his coming to this conclusion with knit brows and balancing intentness above whole gulfs of bathos--very much as he had once walked the Leysin Bisse....

"Men do not know how to think," he insisted--getting along the planks; "and they will not realize that they do not know how to think. Nine-tenths of the wars in the world have arisen out of misconceptions.... Misconception is the sin and dishonour of the mind, and muddled thinking as ignoble as dirty conduct.... Infinitely more disastrous."

And again he wrote: "Man, I see, is an over-practical creature, too eager to get into action. There is our deepest trouble. He takes conclusions ready-made, or he makes them in a hurry. Life is so short that he thinks it better to err than wait. He has no patience, no faith in anything but himself. He thinks he is a being when in reality he is only a link in a being, and so he is more anxious to be complete than

right. The last devotion of which he is capable is that devotion of the mind which suffers partial performance, but insists upon exhaustive thought. He scamps his thought and finishes his performance, and before he is dead it is already being abandoned and begun all over again by some one else in the same egotistical haste...."

It is, I suppose, a part of the general humour of life that these words should have been written by a man who walked the plank to fresh ideas with the dizziest difficulty unless he had Prothero to drag him forward, and who acted time after time with an altogether disastrous hastiness.

Yet there was a kind of necessity in this journey of Benham's from the cocked hat and wooden sword of Seagate and his early shame at cowardice and baseness to the spiritual megalomania of his complete Research Magnificent. You can no more resolve to live a life of honour nowadays and abstain from social and political scheming on a world-wide scale, than you can profess religion and refuse to think about God. In the past it was possible to take all sorts of things for granted and be loyal to unexamined things. One could be loyal to unexamined things because they were unchallenged things. But now everything is challenged. By the time of his second visit to Russia, Benham's ideas of conscious and deliberate aristocracy reaching out to an idea of universal responsibility had already grown into the extraordinary fantasy that he was, as it were, an uncrowned king in the world. To be noble is to be aristocratic, that is to say, a ruler. Thence it follows that aristocracy is multiple kingship, and to be an aristocrat is to partake both of the nature of philosopher and king....

Yet it is manifest that the powerful people of this world are by no means necessarily noble, and that most modern kings, poor in quality, petty in spirit, conventional in outlook, controlled and limited, fall far short of kingship. Nevertheless, there IS nobility, there IS kingship, or this earth is a dustbin and mankind but a kind of skin-disease upon a planet. From that it is an easy step to this idea, the idea whose first expression had already so touched the imagination

of Amanda, of a sort of diffused and voluntary kingship scattered throughout mankind. The aristocrats are not at the high table, the kings are not enthroned, those who are enthroned are but pretenders and SIMULACRA, kings of the vulgar; the real king and ruler is every man who sets aside the naive passions and self-interest of the common life for the rule and service of the world.

This is an idea that is now to be found in much contemporary writing. It is one of those ideas that seem to appear simultaneously at many points in the world, and it is impossible to say now how far Benham was an originator of this idea, and how far he simply resonated to its expression by others. It was far more likely that Prothero, getting it heaven knows where, had spluttered it out and forgotten it, leaving it to germinate in the mind of his friend....

This lordly, this kingly dream became more and more essential to Benham as his life went on. When Benham walked the Bisse he was just a youngster resolved to be individually brave; when he prowled in the jungle by night he was there for all mankind. With every year he became more and more definitely to himself a consecrated man as kings are consecrated. Only that he was self-consecrated, and anointed only in his heart. At last he was, so to speak, Haroun al Raschid again, going unsuspected about the world, because the palace of his security would not tell him the secrets of men's disorders. He was no longer a creature of circumstances, he was kingly, unknown, Alfred in the Camp of the Danes. In the great later accumulations of his Research the personal matter, the introspection, the intimate discussion of motive, becomes

less and less. He forgets himself in the exaltation of kingliness. He worries less and less over the particular rightness of his definite acts. In these later papers White found Benham abstracted, self-forgetful, trying to find out with an ever increased self-detachment, with an ever deepening regal solicitude, why there are massacres, wars, tyrannies and persecutions, why we let famine, disease and beasts assail us, and want dwarf and cripple vast multitudes in the midst of possible plenty. And when he found out and as far as he found out, he meant quite simply and earnestly to apply his knowledge....



The intellectualism of Benham intensified to the end. His definition of Prejudice impressed White as being the most bloodless and philosophical formula that ever dominated the mind of a man.

"Prejudice," Benham had written, "is that common incapacity of the human mind to understand that a difference in any respect is not a difference in all respects, reinforced and rendered malignant by an instinctive hostility to what is unlike ourselves. We exaggerate classification and then charge it with mischievous emotion by referring it to ourselves." And under this comprehensive formula he proceeded to study and attack Family Prejudice, National Prejudice, Race Prejudice, War, Class Prejudice, Professional Prejudice, Sex Prejudice, in the most industrious and elaborate manner. Whether one regards one's self or others he held that these prejudices are evil things. "From the point of view of human welfare they break men up into wars and conflicts, make them an easy prey to those who trade upon suspicion and hostility, prevent sane collective co-operations, cripple and embitter life. From the point of view of personal aristocracy they make men vulgar, violent, unjust and futile. All the conscious life of the aristocrat must be a constant struggle against false generalizations; it is as much his duty to free himself from that as from fear, indulgence, and jealousy; it is a larger and more elaborate task, but it is none the less cardinal and essential. Indeed it is more cardinal and essential. The true knight has to be not only no coward, no self-pamperer, no egotist. He has to be a

philosopher. He has to be no hasty or foolish thinker. His judgment no more than his courage is to be taken by surprise.

"To subdue fear, desire and jealousy, is the aristocrat's personal affair, it is his ritual and discipline, like a knight watching his arms; but the destruction of division and prejudice and all their forms and establishments, is his real task, that is the common work of knighthood. It is a task to be done in a thousand ways; one man working by persuasion, another by example, this one overthrowing some crippling restraint upon the freedom of speech and the spread of knowledge, and that preparing himself for a war that will shatter a tyrannous presumption. Most imaginative literature, all scientific investigation, all sound criticism, all good building, all good manufacture, all sound politics, every honesty and every reasoned kindness contribute to this release of men from the heat and confusions of our present world."

It was clear to White that as Benham progressed with this major part of his research, he was more and more possessed by the idea that he was not making his own personal research alone, but, side by side with a vast, masked, hidden and once unsuspected multitude of others; that this great idea of his was under kindred forms the great idea of thousands, that it was breaking as the dawn breaks, simultaneously to great numbers of people, and that the time was not far off when the new aristocracy, the disguised rulers of the world, would begin to realize their common bent and effort. Into these latter papers there creeps more and more frequently a new phraseology, such expressions as the "Invisible King" and the "Spirit of Kingship," so that as Benham became personally more

and more solitary, his thoughts became more and more public and social.

Benham was not content to define and denounce the prejudices of mankind. He set himself to study just exactly how these prejudices worked, to get at the nature and habits and strengths of each kind of prejudice, and to devise means for its treatment, destruction or neutralization. He had no great faith in the power of pure reasonableness; his psychological ideas were modern, and he had grasped the fact that the power of most of the great prejudices that strain humanity lies deeper than the intellectual level. Consequently he sought to bring himself into the closest contact with prejudices in action and prejudices in conflict in order to discover their sub-rational springs.

A large proportion of that larger moiety of the material at Westhaven Street which White from his extensive experience of the public patience decided could not possibly "make a book," consisted of notes and discussions upon the first-hand observations Benham had made in this or that part of the world. He began in Russia during the revolutionary trouble of 1906, he went thence to Odessa, and from place to place in Bessarabia and Kieff, where during a pogrom he had his first really illuminating encounter with race and culture prejudice. His examination of the social and political condition of Russia seems to have left him much more hopeful than was the common feeling of liberal-minded people during the years of depression that followed the revolution of 1906, and it was upon the race question that his attention concentrated.

The Swadeshi outbreak drew him from Russia to India. Here in an entirely

different environment was another discord of race and culture, and he found in his study of it much that illuminated and corrected his impressions of the Russian issue. A whole drawer was devoted to a comparatively finished and very thorough enquiry into human dissensions in lower Bengal. Here there were not only race but culture conflicts, and he could work particularly upon the differences between men of the same race who were Hindus, Christians and Mahometans respectively. He could compare the Bengali Mahometan not only with the Bengali Brahminist, but also with the Mahometan from the north-west. "If one could scrape off all the creed and training, would one find much the same thing at the bottom, or something fundamentally so different that no close homogeneous social life and not even perhaps a life of just compromise is possible between the different races of mankind?"

His answer to that was a confident one. "There are no such natural and unalterable differences in character and quality between any two sorts of men whatever, as would make their peaceful and kindly co-operation in the world impossible," he wrote.

But he was not satisfied with his observations in India. He found the prevalence of caste ideas antipathetic and complicating. He went on after his last parting from Amanda into China, it was the first of several visits to China, and thence he crossed to America. White found a number of American press-cuttings of a vehemently anti-Japanese quality still awaiting digestion in a drawer, and it was clear to him that Benham had given a considerable amount of attention to the development of the "white" and "yellow" race hostility on the Pacific slope; but his

chief interest at that time had been the negro. He went to Washington and thence south; he visited Tuskegee and Atlanta, and then went off at a tangent to Hayti. He was drawn to Hayti by Hesketh Pritchard's vivid book, WHERE BLACK RULES WHITE, and like Hesketh Pritchard he was able to visit that wonderful monument to kingship, the hidden fastness of La Ferriere, the citadel built a century ago by the "Black Napoleon," the Emperor Christophe. He went with a young American demonstrator from Harvard.

It was a memorable excursion. They rode from Cap Haytien for a day's journey along dusty uneven tracks through a steaming plain of luxurious vegetation, that presented the strangest mixture of unbridled jungle with populous country. They passed countless villages of thatched huts alive with curiosity and swarming with naked black children, and yet all the time they seemed to be in a wilderness. They forded rivers, they had at times to force themselves through thickets, once or twice they lost their way, and always ahead of them, purple and sullen, the great mountain peak with La Ferriere upon its crest rose slowly out of the background until it dominated the landscape. Long after dark they blundered upon rather than came to the village at its foot where they were to pass the night. They were interrogated under a flaring torch by peering ragged black soldiers, and passed through a firelit crowd into the presence of the local commandant to dispute volubly about their right to go further. They might have been in some remote corner of Nigeria. Their papers, laboriously got in order, were vitiated by the fact, which only became apparent by degrees, that the commandant could not read. They carried their point with difficulty.

But they carried their point, and, watched and guarded by a hungry half-naked negro in a kepi and the remains of a sky-blue pair of trousers, they explored one of the most exemplary memorials of imperialism that humanity has ever made. The roads and parks and prospects constructed by this vanished Emperor of Hayti, had long

since disappeared, and the three men clambered for hours up ravines and precipitous jungle tracks, occasionally crossing the winding traces of a choked and ruined road that had once been the lordly approach to his fastness. Below they passed an abandoned palace of vast extent, a palace with great terraces and the still traceable outline of gardens, though there were green things pushing between the terrace steps, and trees thrust out of the empty windows. Here from a belvedere of which the skull-like vestige still remained, the negro Emperor Christophe, after fourteen years of absolute rule, had watched for a time the smoke of the burning of his cane-fields in the plain below, and then, learning that his bodyguard had deserted him, had gone in and blown out his brains.

He had christened the place after the best of examples, "Sans Souci."

But the citadel above, which was to have been his last defence, he never used. The defection of his guards made him abandon that. To build it, they say, cost Hayti thirty thousand lives. He had the true Imperial lavishness. So high it was, so lost in a wilderness of trees and bush, looking out over a land relapsed now altogether to a barbarism of patch and hovel, so solitary and chill under the tropical sky--for even the guards who still watched over its suspected treasures feared to live in its ghostly galleries and had made hovels outside its walls--and at the same time so huge and grandiose--there were walls thirty feet thick, galleries with scores of rust-eaten cannon, circular dining-halls, king's apartments and queen's apartments, towering battlements and great arched doorways--that it seemed to Benham to embody the power and passing of that miracle of human history, tyranny, the helpless bowing

of multitudes before one man and the transitoriness of such glories, more completely than anything he had ever seen or imagined in the world before. Beneath the battlements--they are choked above with jungle grass and tamarinds and many flowery weeds--the precipice fell away a sheer two thousand feet, and below spread a vast rich green plain populous and diversified, bounded at last by the blue sea, like an amethystine wall. Over this precipice Christophe was wont to fling his victims, and below this terrace were bottle-shaped dungeons where men, broken and torn, thrust in at the neck-like hole above, starved and died: it was his headquarters here, here he had his torture chambers and the means for nameless cruelties....

"Not a hundred years ago," said Benham's companion, and told the story of the disgraced favourite, the youth who had offended.

"Leap," said his master, and the poor hypnotized wretch, after one questioning glance at the conceivable alternatives, made his last gesture of servility, and then stood out against the sky, swayed, and with a convulsion of resolve, leapt and shot headlong down through the shimmering air.

Came presently the little faint sound of his fall.

The Emperor satisfied turned away, unmindful of the fact that this projectile he had launched had caught among the bushes below, and presently struggled and found itself still a living man. It could scramble down to the road and, what is more wonderful, hope for mercy.



An hour and it stood before Christophe again, with an arm broken and bloody and a face torn, a battered thing now but with a faint flavour of pride in its bearing. "Your bidding has been done, Sire," it said.

"So," said the Emperor, unappeased. "And you live? Well-- Leap again...."

And then came other stories. The young man told them as he had heard them, stories of ferocious wholesale butcheries, of men standing along the walls of the banqueting chamber to be shot one by one as the feast went on, of exquisite and terrifying cruelties, and his one note of wonder, his refrain was, "HERE! Not a hundred years ago.... It makes one almost believe that somewhere things of this sort are being done now."

They ate their lunch together amidst the weedy flowery ruins. The lizards which had fled their coming crept out again to bask in the sunshine. The soldier-guide and guard scabbled about with his black fingers in the ruinous and rifled tomb of Christophe in a search for some saleable memento....

Benham sat musing in silence. The thought of deliberate cruelty was always an actual physical distress to him. He sat bathed in the dreamy afternoon sunlight and struggled against the pictures that crowded into his mind, pictures of men aghast at death, and of fear-driven men toiling in agony, and of the shame of extorted obedience and of cringing and crawling black figures, and the defiance of righteous hate beaten down under blow and anguish. He saw eyes alight with terror and lips

rolled back in agony, he saw weary hopeless flight before striding proud destruction, he saw the poor trampled mangled dead, and he shivered in his soul....

He hated Christophe and all that made Christophe; he hated pride, and then the idea came to him that it is not pride that makes Christophes but humility.

There is in the medley of man's composition, deeper far than his superficial working delusion that he is a separated self-seeking individual, an instinct for cooperation and obedience. Every natural sane man wants, though he may want it unwittingly, kingly guidance, a definite direction for his own partial life. At the bottom of his heart he feels, even if he does not know it definitely, that his life is partial. He is driven to join himself on. He obeys decision and the appearance of strength as a horse obeys its rider's voice. One thinks of the pride, the uncontrolled frantic will of this black ape of all Emperors, and one forgets the universal docility that made him possible. Usurpation is a crime to which men are tempted by human dirigibility. It is the orderly peoples who create tyrants, and it is not so much restraint above as stiff insubordination below that has to be taught to men. There are kings and tyrannies and imperialisms, simply because of the unkingliness of men.

And as he sat upon the battlements of La Ferriere, Benham cast off from his mind his last tolerance for earthly kings and existing States, and expounded to another human being for the first time this long-cherished

doctrine of his of the Invisible King who is the lord of human destiny, the spirit of nobility, who will one day take the sceptre and rule the earth.... To the young American's naive American response to any simply felt emotion, he seemed with his white earnestness and his glowing eyes a veritable prophet....

"This is the root idea of aristocracy," said Benham.

"I have never heard the underlying spirit of democracy, the real true Thing in democracy, so thoroughly expressed," said the young American.

Benham's notes on race and racial cultures gave White tantalizing glimpses of a number of picturesque experiences. The adventure in Kieff had first roused Benham to the reality of racial quality. He was caught in the wheels of a pogrom.

"Before that time I had been disposed to minimize and deny race. I still think it need not prevent men from the completest social co-operation, but I see now better than I did how difficult it is for any man to purge from his mind the idea that he is not primarily a Jew, a Teuton, or a Kelt, but a man. You can persuade any one in five minutes that he or she belongs to some special and blessed and privileged sort of human being; it takes a lifetime to destroy that persuasion. There are these confounded differences of colour, of eye and brow, of nose or hair, small differences in themselves except that they give a foothold and foundation for tremendous fortifications of prejudice and tradition, in which hostilities and hatreds may gather. When I think of a Jew's nose, a Chinaman's eyes or a negro's colour I am reminded of that fatal little pit which nature has left in the vermiform appendix, a thing no use in itself and of no significance, but a gathering-place for mischief. The extremest case of race-feeling is the Jewish case, and even here, I am convinced, it is the Bible and the Talmud and the exertions of those inevitable professional champions who live upon racial feeling, far more than their common distinction of blood, which holds this people together banded against mankind."

Between the lines of such general propositions as this White read little scraps of intimation that linked with the things Benham let fall in Johannesburg to reconstruct the Kieff adventure.

Benham had been visiting a friend in the country on the further side of the Dnieper. As they drove back along dusty stretches of road amidst fields of corn and sunflower and through bright little villages, they saw against the evening blue under the full moon a smoky red glare rising from amidst the white houses and dark trees of the town. "The pogrom's begun," said Benham's friend, and was surprised when Benham wanted to end a pleasant day by going to see what happens after the beginning of a pogrom.

He was to have several surprises before at last he left Benham in disgust and went home by himself.

For Benham, with that hastiness that so flouted his exalted theories, passed rapidly from an attitude of impartial enquiry to active intervention. The two men left their carriage and plunged into the network of unlovely dark streets in which the Jews and traders harboured.... Benham's first intervention was on behalf of a crouching and yelping bundle of humanity that was being dragged about and kicked at a street corner. The bundle resolved itself into a filthy little old man, and made off with extraordinary rapidity, while Benham remonstrated with the kickers. Benham's tallness, his very Gentile face, his good clothes, and an air of tense authority about him had its effect, and

the kickers shuffled off with remarks that were partly apologies. But Benham's friend revolted. This was no business of theirs.

Benham went on unaccompanied towards the glare of the burning houses.

For a time he watched. Black figures moved between him and the glare, and he tried to find out the exact nature of the conflict by enquiries in clumsy Russian. He was told that the Jews had insulted a religious procession, that a Jew had spat at an ikon, that the shop of a cheating Jew trader had been set on fire, and that the blaze had spread to the adjacent group of houses. He gathered that the Jews were running out of the burning block on the other side "like rats." The crowd was mostly composed of town roughs with a sprinkling of peasants. They were mischievous but undecided. Among them were a number of soldiers, and he was surprised to see a policeman, brightly lit from head to foot, watching the looting of a shop that was still untouched by the flames.

He held back some men who had discovered a couple of women's figures slinking along in the shadow beneath a wall. Behind his remonstrances the Jewesses escaped. His anger against disorder was growing upon him....

Late that night Benham found himself the leading figure amidst a party of Jews who had made a counter attack upon a gang of roughs in a court that had become the refuge of a crowd of fugitives. Some of the young Jewish men had already been making a fight, rather a poor and hopeless fight, from the windows of the house near the entrance of the court, but

it is doubtful if they would have made an effective resistance if it had not been for this tall excited stranger who was suddenly shouting directions to them in sympathetically murdered Russian. It was not that he brought powerful blows or subtle strategy to their assistance, but that he put heart into them and perplexity into his adversaries because he was so manifestly non-partizan. Nobody could ever have mistaken Benham for a Jew. When at last towards dawn a not too zealous governor called out the troops and began to clear the streets of rioters, Benham and a band of Jews were still keeping the gateway of that court behind a hasty but adequate barricade of furniture and handbarrows.

The ghetto could not understand him, nobody could understand him, but it was clear a rare and precious visitor had come to their rescue, and he was implored by a number of elderly, dirty, but very intelligent-looking old men to stay with them and preserve them until their safety was assured.

They could not understand him, but they did their utmost to entertain him and assure him of their gratitude. They seemed to consider him as a representative of the British Government, and foreign intervention on their behalf is one of those unfortunate fixed ideas that no persecuted Jews seem able to abandon.

Benham found himself, refreshed and tended, sitting beside a wood fire in an inner chamber richly flavoured by humanity and listening to a discourse in evil but understandable German. It was a discourse upon the wrongs and the greatness of the Jewish people--and it was delivered by

a compact middle-aged man with a big black beard and long-lashed but animated eyes. Beside him a very old man dozed and nodded approval. A number of other men crowded the apartment, including several who had helped to hold off the rioters from the court. Some could follow the talk and ever again endorsed the speaker in Yiddish or Russian; others listened with tantalized expressions, their brows knit, their lips moving.

It was a discourse Benham had provoked. For now he was at the very heart of the Jewish question, and he could get some light upon the mystery of this great hatred at first hand. He did not want to hear tales of outrages, of such things he knew, but he wanted to understand what was the irritation that caused these things.

So he listened. The Jew dilated at first on the harmlessness and usefulness of the Jews.

"But do you never take a certain advantage?" Benham threw out.

"The Jews are cleverer than the Russians. Must we suffer for that?"

The spokesman went on to the more positive virtues of his race. Benham suddenly had that uncomfortable feeling of the Gentile who finds a bill being made against him. Did the world owe Israel nothing for Philo, Aron ben Asher, Solomon Gabriol, Halevy, Mendelssohn, Heine, Meyerbeer, Rubinstein, Joachim, Zangwill? Does Britain owe nothing to Lord Beaconsfield, Montefiore or the Rothschilds? Can France repudiate her



debt to Fould, Gaudahaux, Oppert, or Germany to Furst, Steinschneider, Herxheimer, Lasker, Auerbach, Traube and Lazarus and Benfey?...

Benham admitted under the pressure of urgent tones and gestures that these names did undoubtedly include the cream of humanity, but was it not true that the Jews did press a little financially upon the inferior peoples whose lands they honoured in their exile?

The man with the black beard took up the challenge bravely.

"They are merciful creditors," he said. "And it is their genius to possess and control. What better stewards could you find for the wealth of nations than the Jews? And for the honours? That always had been the role of the Jews--stewardship. Since the days of Joseph in Egypt..."

Then in a lower voice he went on to speak of the deficiencies of the Gentile population. He wished to be just and generous but the truth was the truth. The Christian Russians loved drink and laziness; they had no sense of property; were it not for unjust laws even now the Jews would possess all the land of South Russia....

Benham listened with a kind of fascination. "But," he said.

It was so. And with a confidence that aroused a protest or so from the onlookers, the Jewish apologist suddenly rose up, opened a safe close beside the fire and produced an armful of documents.

"Look!" he said, "all over South Russia there are these!"

Benham was a little slow to understand, until half a dozen of these papers had been thrust into his hand. Eager fingers pointed, and several voices spoke. These things were illegalities that might some day be legal; there were the records of loans and hidden transactions that might at any time put all the surrounding soil into the hands of the Jew. All South Russia was mortgaged....

"But is it so?" asked Benham, and for a time ceased to listen and stared into the fire.

Then he held up the papers in his hand to secure silence and, feeling his way in unaccustomed German, began to speak and continued to speak in spite of a constant insurgent undertone of interruption from the Jewish spokesman.

All men, Benham said, were brothers. Did they not remember Nathan the Wise?

"I did not claim him," said the spokesman, misunderstanding. "He is a character in fiction."

But all men are brothers, Benham maintained. They had to be merciful to one another and give their gifts freely to one another. Also they had to consider each other's weaknesses. The Jews were probably justified in securing and administering the property of every community into which

they came, they were no doubt right in claiming to be best fitted for that task, but also they had to consider, perhaps more than they did, the feelings and vanities of the host population into which they brought these beneficent activities. What was said of the ignorance, incapacity and vice of the Roumanians and Russians was very generally believed and accepted, but it did not alter the fact that the peasant, for all his incapacity, did like to imagine he owned his own patch and hovel and did have a curious irrational hatred of debt....

The faces about Benham looked perplexed.

"THIS," said Benham, tapping the papers in his hand. "They will not understand the ultimate benefit of it. It will be a source of anger and fresh hostility. It does not follow because your race has supreme financial genius that you must always follow its dictates to the exclusion of other considerations...."

The perplexity increased.

Benham felt he must be more general. He went on to emphasize the brotherhood of man, the right to equal opportunity, equal privilege, freedom to develop their idiosyncrasies as far as possible, unhindered by the idiosyncrasies of others. He could feel the sympathy and understanding of his hearers returning. "You see," said Benham, "you must have generosity. You must forget ancient scores. Do you not see the world must make a fresh beginning?"

He was entirely convinced he had them with him. The heads nodded assent, the bright eyes and lips followed the slow disentanglement of his bad German.

"Free yourselves and the world," he said.

Applause.

"And so," he said breaking unconsciously into English, "let us begin by burning these BEASTLY mortgages!"

And with a noble and dramatic gesture Benham cast his handful on the fire. The assenting faces became masks of horror. A score of hands clutched at those precious papers, and a yell of dismay and anger filled the room. Some one caught at his throat from behind. "Don't kill him!" cried some one. "He fought for us!"

An hour later Benham returned in an extraordinarily dishevelled and battered condition to his hotel. He found his friend in anxious consultation with the hotel proprietor.

"We were afraid that something had happened to you," said his friend.

"I got a little involved," said Benham.

"Hasn't some one clawed your cheek?"

"Very probably," said Benham.

"And torn your coat? And hit you rather heavily upon the neck?"

"It was a complicated misunderstanding," said Benham. "Oh! pardon! I'm rather badly bruised upon that arm you're holding."

Benham told the story to White as a jest against himself.

"I see now of course that they could not possibly understand my point of view," he said....

"I'm not sure if they quite followed my German....

"It's odd, too, that I remember saying, 'Let's burn these mortgages,' and at the time I'm almost sure I didn't know the German for mortgage...."

It was not the only occasion on which other people had failed to grasp the full intention behind Benham's proceedings. His aristocratic impulses were apt to run away with his conceptions of brotherhood, and time after time it was only too manifest to White that Benham's pallid flash of anger had astonished the subjects of his disinterested observations extremely. His explorations in Hayti had been terminated abruptly by an affair with a native policeman that had necessitated the intervention of the British Consul. It was begun with that suddenness that was too often characteristic of Benham, by his hitting the policeman. It was in the main street of Cap Haytien, and the policeman had just clubbed an unfortunate youth over the head with the heavily loaded wooden club which is the normal instrument of Haytien discipline. His blow was a repartee, part of a triangular altercation in which a large, voluble, mahogany-coloured lady whose head was tied up in a blue handkerchief played a conspicuous part, but it seemed to Benham an entirely unjustifiable blow.

He allowed an indignation with negro policemen in general that had been

gathering from the very moment of his arrival at Port-au-Prince to carry him away. He advanced with the kind of shout one would hurl at a dog, and smote the policeman to the earth with the stout stick that the peculiar social atmosphere of Hayti had disposed him to carry. By the local standard his blow was probably a trivial one, but the moral effect of his indignant pallor and a sort of rearing tallness about him on these occasions was always very considerable. Unhappily these characteristics could have no effect on a second negro policeman who was approaching the affray from behind, and he felled Benham by a blow on the shoulder that was meant for the head, and with the assistance of his colleague overpowered him, while the youth and the woman vanished.

The two officials dragged Benham in a state of vehement protest to the lock-up, and only there, in the light of a superior officer's superior knowledge, did they begin to realize the grave fact of his British citizenship.

The memory of the destruction of the Haytien fleet by a German gunboat was still vivid in Port-au-Prince, and to that Benham owed it that in spite of his blank refusal to compensate the man he had knocked over, he was after two days of anger, two days of extreme insanitary experience, and much meditation upon his unphilosophical hastiness, released.

Quite a number of trivial incidents of a kindred sort diversified his enquiries into Indian conditions. They too turned for the most part on his facile exasperation at any defiance of his deep-felt desire for human brotherhood. At last indeed came an affair that refused ultimately

to remain trivial, and tangled him up in a coil that invoked newspaper articles and heated controversies.

The effect of India upon Benham's mind was a peculiar mixture of attraction and irritation. He was attracted by the Hindu spirit of intellectualism and the Hindu repudiation of brutality, and he was infuriated by the spirit of caste that cuts the great world of India into a thousand futile little worlds, all aloof and hostile one to the other. "I came to see India," he wrote, "and there is no India. There is a great number of Indias, and each goes about with its chin in the air, quietly scorning everybody else."

His Indian adventures and his great public controversy on caste began with a tremendous row with an Indian civil servant who had turned an Indian gentleman out of his first-class compartment, and culminated in a disgraceful fracas with a squatting brown holiness at Benares, who had thrown aside his little brass bowlful of dinner because Benham's shadow had fallen upon it.

"You unendurable snob!" said Benham, and then lapsing into the forceful and inadvisable: "By Heaven, you SHALL eat it!..."



Benham's detestation of human divisions and hostilities was so deep in his character as to seem almost instinctive. But he had too a very clear reason for his hostility to all these amazing breaks in human continuity in his sense of the gathering dangers they now involve. They had always, he was convinced, meant conflict, hatred, misery and the destruction of human dignity, but the new conditions of life that have been brought about by modern science were making them far more dangerous than they had ever been before. He believed that the evil and horror of war was becoming more and more tremendous with every decade, and that the free play of national prejudice and that stupid filching ambitiousness that seems to be inseparable from monarchy, were bound to precipitate catastrophe, unless a real international aristocracy could be brought into being to prevent it.

In the drawer full of papers labelled "Politics," White found a paper called "The Metal Beast." It showed that for a time Benham had been greatly obsessed by the thought of the armaments that were in those days piling up in every country in Europe. He had gone to Essen, and at Essen he had met a German who had boasted of Zeppelins and the great guns that were presently to smash the effete British fleet and open the Imperial way to London.

"I could not sleep," he wrote, "on account of this man and his talk and the streak of hatred in his talk. He distressed me not because he seemed

exceptional, but because he seemed ordinary. I realized that he was more human than I was, and that only killing and killing could come out of such humanity. I thought of the great ugly guns I had seen, and of the still greater guns he had talked about, and how gloatingly he thought of the destruction they could do. I felt as I used to feel about that infernal stallion that had killed a man with its teeth and feet, a despairing fear, a sense of monstrosity in life. And this creature who had so disturbed me was only a beastly snuffy little man in an ill-fitting frock-coat, who laid his knife and fork by their tips on the edge of his plate, and picked his teeth with gusto and breathed into my face as he talked to me. The commonest of representative men. I went about that Westphalian country after that, with the conviction that headless, soulless, blood-drinking metal monsters were breeding all about me. I felt that science was producing a poisonous swarm, a nest of black dragons. They were crouching here and away there in France and England, they were crouching like beasts that bide their time, mewed up in forts, kennelled in arsenals, hooded in tarpaulins as hawks are hooded.... And I had never thought very much about them before, and there they were, waiting until some human fool like that frock-coated thing of spite, and fools like him multiplied by a million, saw fit to call them out to action. Just out of hatred and nationalism and faction...."

Then came a queer fancy.

"Great guns, mines, battleships, all that cruelty-apparatus; I see it more and more as the gathering revenge of dead joyless matter for the

happiness of life. It is a conspiracy of the lifeless, an enormous plot of the rebel metals against sensation. That is why in particular half-living people seem to love these things. La Ferriere was a fastness of the kind of tyranny that passes out of human experience, the tyranny of the strong man over men. Essen comes, the new thing, the tyranny of the strong machine....

"Science is either slave or master. These people--I mean the German people and militarist people generally--have no real mastery over the scientific and economic forces on which they seem to ride. The monster of steel and iron carries Kaiser and Germany and all Europe captive. It has persuaded them to mount upon its back and now they must follow the logic of its path. Whither?... Only kingship will ever master that beast of steel which has got loose into the world. Nothing but the sense of unconquerable kingship in us all will ever dare withstand it.... Men must be kingly aristocrats--it isn't MAY be now, it is MUST be--or, these confederated metals, these things of chemistry and metallurgy, these explosives and mechanisms, will trample the blood and life out of our race into mere red-streaked froth and filth...."

Then he turned to the question of this metallic beast's release. Would it ever be given blood?

"Men of my generation have been brought up in this threat of a great war that never comes; for forty years we have had it, so that it is with a note of incredulity that one tells oneself, 'After all this war may happen. But can it happen?'"

He proceeded to speculate upon the probability whether a great war would ever devastate western Europe again, and it was very evident to White that he wanted very much to persuade himself against that idea. It was too disagreeable for him to think it probable. The paper was dated 1910. It was in October, 1914, that White, who was still working upon the laborious uncertain account of Benham's life and thought he has recently published, read what Benham had written. Benham concluded that the common-sense of the world would hold up this danger until reason could get "to the head of things."

"There are already mighty forces in Germany," Benham wrote, "that will struggle very powerfully to avoid a war. And these forces increase. Behind the coarseness and the threatenings, the melodrama and the display of the vulgarer sort there arises a great and noble people.... I have talked with Germans of the better kind.... You cannot have a whole nation of Christophes.... There also the true knighthood discovers itself.... I do not believe this war will overtake us."

"WELL!" said White.

"I must go back to Germany and understand Germany better," the notes went on.

But other things were to hold Benham back from that resolve. Other things were to hold many men back from similar resolves until it was too late for them....

"It is preposterous that these monstrous dangers should lower over Europe, because a certain threatening vanity has crept into the blood of a people, because a few crude ideas go inadequately controlled.... Does no one see what that metallic beast will do if they once let it loose? It will trample cities; it will devour nations...."

White read this on the 9th of October, 1914. One crumpled evening paper at his feet proclaimed in startled headlines: "Rain of Incendiary Shells. Antwerp Ablaze." Another declared untruthfully but impressively: "Six Zeppelins drop Bombs over the Doomed City."

He had bought all the evening papers, and had read and re-read them and turned up maps and worried over strategic problems for which he had no data at all--as every one did at that time--before he was able to go on with Benham's manuscripts.

These pacific reassurances seemed to White's war-troubled mind like finding a flattened and faded flower, a girl's love token, between the pages of some torn and scorched and blood-stained book picked out from a heap of loot after rapine and murder had had their fill....

"How can we ever begin over again?" said White, and sat for a long time staring gloomily into the fire, forgetting forgetting, forgetting too that men who are tired and weary die, and that new men are born to succeed them....

"We have to begin over again," said White at last, and took up Benham's papers where he had laid them down....

One considerable section of Benham's treatment of the Fourth Limitation was devoted to what he called the Prejudices of Social Position. This section alone was manifestly expanding into a large treatise upon the psychology of economic organization....

It was only very slowly that he had come to realize the important part played by economic and class hostilities in the disordering of human affairs. This was a very natural result of his peculiar social circumstances. Most people born to wealth and ease take the established industrial system as the natural method in human affairs; it is only very reluctantly and by real feats of sympathy and disinterestedness that they can be brought to realize that it is natural only in the sense that it has grown up and come about, and necessary only because nobody is strong and clever enough to rearrange it. Their experience of it is a satisfactory experience. On the other hand, the better off one is, the wider is one's outlook and the more alert one is to see the risks and dangers of international dissensions. Travel and talk to foreigners open one's eyes to aggressive possibilities; history and its warnings become conceivable. It is in the nature of things that socialists and labour parties should minimize international obligations and necessities, and equally so that autocracies and aristocracies and plutocracies should be negligent of and impatient about social reform.

But Benham did come to realize this broader conflict between worker and

director, between poor man and possessor, between resentful humanity and enterprise, between unwilling toil and unearned opportunity. It is a far profounder and subtler conflict than any other in human affairs. "I can foresee a time," he wrote, "when the greater national and racial hatreds may all be so weakened as to be no longer a considerable source of human limitation and misery, when the suspicions of complexion and language and social habit are allayed, and when the element of hatred and aggression may be clean washed out of most religious cults, but I do not begin to imagine a time, because I cannot imagine a method, when there will not be great friction between those who employ, those who direct collective action, and those whose part it is to be the rank and file in industrialism. This, I know, is a limitation upon my confidence due very largely to the restricted nature of my knowledge of this sort of organization. Very probably resentment and suspicion in the mass and self-seeking and dishonesty in the fortunate few are not so deeply seated, so necessary as they seem to be, and if men can be cheerfully obedient and modestly directive in war time, there is no reason why ultimately they should not be so in the business of peace. But I do not understand the elements of the methods by which this state of affairs can be brought about.

"If I were to confess this much to an intelligent working man I know that at once he would answer 'Socialism,' but Socialism is no more a solution of this problem than eating is a solution when one is lost in the wilderness and hungry. Of course everybody with any intelligence wants Socialism, everybody, that is to say, wants to see all human efforts directed to the common good and a common end, but brought face



to face with practical problems Socialism betrays a vast insufficiency of practical suggestions. I do not say that Socialism would not work, but I do say that so far Socialists have failed to convince me that they could work it. The substitution of a stupid official for a greedy proprietor may mean a vanished dividend, a limited output and no other human advantage whatever. Socialism is in itself a mere eloquent gesture, inspiring, encouraging, perhaps, but beyond that not very helpful, towards the vast problem of moral and material adjustment before the race. That problem is incurably miscellaneous and intricate, and only by great multitudes of generous workers, one working at this point and one at that, secretly devoted knights of humanity, hidden and dispersed kings, unaware of one another, doubting each his right to count himself among those who do these kingly services, is this elaborate rightening of work and guidance to be done."

So from these most fundamental social difficulties he came back to his panacea. All paths and all enquiries led him back to his conception of aristocracy, conscious, self-disciplined, devoted, self-examining yet secret, making no personal nor class pretences, as the supreme need not only of the individual but the world.

It was the Labour trouble in the Transvaal which had brought the two schoolfellows together again. White had been on his way to Zimbabwe. An emotional disturbance of unusual intensity had driven him to seek consolations in strange scenery and mysterious desolations. It was as if Zimbabwe called to him. Benham had come to South Africa to see into the question of Indian immigration, and he was now on his way to meet Amanda in London. Neither man had given much heed to the gathering social conflict on the Rand until the storm burst about them. There had been a few paragraphs in the papers about a dispute upon a point of labour etiquette, a question of the recognition of Trade Union officials, a thing that impressed them both as technical, and then suddenly a long incubated quarrel flared out in rioting and violence, the burning of houses and furniture, attacks on mines, attempts to dynamite trains. White stayed in Johannesburg because he did not want to be stranded up country by the railway strike that was among the possibilities of the situation. Benham stayed because he was going to London very reluctantly, and he was glad of this justification for a few days' delay. The two men found themselves occupying adjacent tables in the Sherborough Hotel, and White was the first to recognize the other. They came together with a warmth and readiness of intimacy that neither would have displayed in London.

White had not seen Benham since the social days of Amanda at Lancaster Gate, and he was astonished at the change a few years had made in him.

The peculiar contrast of his pallor and his dark hair had become more marked, his skin was deader, his features seemed more prominent and his expression intenser. His eyes were very bright and more sunken under his brows. He had suffered from yellow fever in the West Indies, and these it seemed were the marks left by that illness. And he was much more detached from the people about him; less attentive to the small incidents of life, more occupied with inner things. He greeted White with a confidence that White was one day to remember as pathetic.

"It is good to meet an old friend," Benham said. "I have lost friends. And I do not make fresh ones. I go about too much by myself, and I do not follow the same tracks that other people are following...."

What track was he following? It was now that White first heard of the Research Magnificent. He wanted to know what Benham was doing, and Benham after some partial and unsatisfactory explanation of his interest in insurgent Hindoos, embarked upon larger expositions. "It is, of course, a part of something else," he amplified. He was writing a book, "an enormous sort of book." He laughed with a touch of shyness. It was about "everything," about how to live and how not to live. And "aristocracy, and all sorts of things." White was always curious about other people's books. Benham became earnest and more explicit under encouragement, and to talk about his book was soon to talk about himself. In various ways, intentionally and inadvertently, he told White much. These chance encounters, these intimacies of the train and hotel, will lead men at times to a stark frankness of statement they would never permit themselves with habitual friends.

About the Johannesburg labour trouble they talked very little, considering how insistent it was becoming. But the wide propositions of the Research Magnificent, with its large indifference to immediate occurrences, its vast patience, its tremendous expectations, contrasted very sharply in White's memory with the bitterness, narrowness and resentment of the events about them. For him the thought of that first discussion of this vast inchoate book into which Benham's life was flowering, and which he was ultimately to summarize, trailed with it a fringe of vivid little pictures; pictures of crowds of men hurrying on bicycles and afoot under a lowering twilight sky towards murmuring centres of disorder, of startling flares seen suddenly afar off, of the muffled galloping of troops through the broad dusty street in the night, of groups of men standing and watching down straight broad roads, roads that ended in groups of chimneys and squat buildings of corrugated iron. And once there was a marching body of white men in the foreground and a complicated wire fence, and a clustering mass of Kaffirs watching them over this fence and talking eagerly amongst themselves.

"All this affair here is little more than a hitch in the machinery," said Benham, and went back to his large preoccupation....

But White, who had not seen so much human disorder as Benham, felt that it was more than that. Always he kept the tail of his eye upon that eventful background while Benham talked to him.

When the firearms went off he may for the moment have even given the

background the greater share of his attention....

It was only as White burrowed through his legacy of documents that the full values came to very many things that Benham said during these last conversations. The papers fitted in with his memories of their long talks like text with commentary; so much of Benham's talk had repeated the private writings in which he had first digested his ideas that it was presently almost impossible to disentangle what had been said and understood at Johannesburg from the fuller statement of those patched and corrected manuscripts. The two things merged in White's mind as he read. The written text took upon itself a resonance of Benham's voice; it eked out the hints and broken sentences of his remembered conversation.

But some things that Benham did not talk about at all, left by their mere marked absence an impression on White's mind. And occasionally after Benham had been talking for a long time there would be an occasional aphasia, such as is often apparent in the speech of men who restrain themselves from betraying a preoccupation. He would say nothing about Amanda or about women in general, he was reluctant to speak of Prothero, and another peculiarity was that he referred perhaps half a dozen times or more to the idea that he was a "prig." He seemed to be defending himself against some inner accusation, some unconquerable doubt of the entire adventure of his life. These half hints and hints by omission exercised the quick intuitions of White's mind very keenly, and he drew far closer to an understanding of Benham's reserves than Benham

ever suspected....

At first after his parting from Amanda in London Benham had felt completely justified in his treatment of her. She had betrayed him and he had behaved, he felt, with dignity and self-control. He had no doubt that he had punished her very effectively, and it was only after he had been travelling in China with Prothero for some time and in the light of one or two chance phrases in her letters that he began to have doubts whether he ought to have punished her at all. And one night at Shanghai he had a dream in which she stood before him, dishevelled and tearful, his Amanda, very intensely his Amanda, and said that she was dirty and shameful and spoilt for ever, because he had gone away from her. Afterwards the dream became absurd: she showed him the black leopard's fur as though it was a rug, and it was now moth-eaten and mangey, the leopard skin that had been so bright and wonderful such a little time ago, and he awoke before he could answer her, and for a long time he was full of unspoken answers explaining that in view of her deliberate unfaithfulness the position she took up was absurd. She had spoilt her own fur. But what was more penetrating and distressing in this dream was not so much the case Amanda stated as the atmosphere of unconquerable intimacy between them, as though they still belonged to each other, soul to soul, as though nothing that had happened afterwards could have destroyed their common responsibility and the common interest of their first unstinted union. She was hurt, and of course he was hurt. He began to see that his marriage to Amanda was still infinitely more than a technical bond.

And having perceived that much he presently began to doubt whether she realized anything of the sort. Her letters fluctuated very much in tone, but at times they were as detached and guarded as a schoolgirl writing to a cousin. Then it seemed to Benham an extraordinary fraud on her part that she should presume to come into his dream with an entirely deceptive closeness and confidence. She began to sound him in these latter letters upon the possibility of divorce. This, which he had been quite disposed to concede in London, now struck him as an outrageous suggestion. He wrote to ask her why, and she responded exasperatingly that she thought it was "better." But, again, why better? It is remarkable that although his mind had habituated itself to the idea that Easton was her lover in London, her thought of being divorced, no doubt to marry again, filled him with jealous rage. She asked him to take the blame in the divorce proceedings. There, again, he found himself ungenerous. He did not want to do that. Why should he do that? As a matter of fact he was by no means reconciled to the price he had paid for his Research Magnificent; he regretted his Amanda acutely. He was regretting her with a regret that grew when by all the rules of life it ought to be diminishing.

It was in consequence of that regret and his controversies with Prothero while they travelled together in China that his concern about what he called priggishness arose. It is a concern that one may suppose has a little afflicted every reasonably self-conscious man who has turned from the natural passionate personal life to religion or to public service or any abstract devotion. These things that are at least more extensive than the interests of flesh and blood have a trick of becoming



unsubstantial, they shine gloriously and inspiringly upon the imagination, they capture one and isolate one and then they vanish out of sight. It is far easier to be entirely faithful to friend or lover than it is to be faithful to a cause or to one's country or to a religion. In the glow of one's first service that larger idea may be as closely spontaneous as a handclasp, but in the darkness that comes as the glow dies away there is a fearful sense of unreality. It was in such dark moments that Benham was most persecuted by his memories of Amanda and most distressed by this suspicion that the Research Magnificent was a priggishness, a pretentious logomachy. Prothero could indeed hint as much so skilfully that at times the dream of nobility seemed an insult to the sunshine, to the careless laughter of children, to the good light in wine and all the warm happiness of existence. And then Amanda would peep out of the dusk and whisper, "Of course if you could leave me--! Was I not LIFE? Even now if you cared to come back to me-- For I loved you best and loved you still, old Cheetah, long after you had left me to follow your dreams.... Even now I am drifting further into lies and the last shreds of dignity drop from me; a dirty, lost, and shameful leopard I am now, who was once clean and bright.... You could come back, Cheetah, and you could save me yet. If you would love me...."

In certain moods she could wring his heart by such imagined speeches, the very quality of her voice was in them, a softness that his ear had loved, and not only could she distress him, but when Benham was in this heartache mood, when once she had set him going, then his little mother also would rise against him, touchingly indignant, with her blue eyes bright with tears; and his frowsty father would back towards him and

sit down complaining that he was neglected, and even little Mrs. Skelmersdale would reappear, bravely tearful on her chair looking after him as he slunk away from her through Kensington Gardens; indeed every personal link he had ever had to life could in certain moods pull him back through the door of self-reproach Amanda opened and set him aching and accusing himself of harshness and self-concentration. The very kittens of his childhood revived forgotten moments of long-repenting hardness. For a year before Prothero was killed there were these heartaches. That tragedy gave them their crowning justification. All these people said in this form or that, "You owed a debt to us, you evaded it, you betrayed us, you owed us life out of yourself, love and services, and you have gone off from us all with this life that was ours, to live by yourself in dreams about the rule of the world, and with empty phantoms of power and destiny. All this was intellectualization. You sacrificed us to the thin things of the mind. There is no rule of the world at all, or none that a man like you may lay hold upon. The rule of the world is a fortuitous result of incalculably multitudinous forces. But all of us you could have made happier. You could have spared us distresses. Prothero died because of you. Presently it will be the turn of your father, your mother--Amanda perhaps...."

He made no written note of his heartaches, but he made several memoranda about priggishness that White read and came near to understanding. In spite of the tugging at his heart-strings, Benham was making up his mind to be a prig. He weighed the cold uningratiating virtues of priggishness against his smouldering passion for Amanda, and against his obstinate

sympathy for Prothero's grossness and his mother's personal pride, and he made his choice. But it was a reluctant choice.

One fragment began in the air. "Of course I had made myself responsible for her life. But it was, you see, such a confoundedly energetic life, as vigorous and as slippery as an eel.... Only by giving all my strength to her could I have held Amanda.... So what was the good of trying to hold Amanda?...

"All one's people have this sort of claim upon one. Claims made by their pride and their self-respect, and their weaknesses and dependences. You've no right to hurt them, to kick about and demand freedom when it means snapping and tearing the silly suffering tendrils they have wrapped about you. The true aristocrat I think will have enough grasp, enough steadiness, to be kind and right to every human being and still do the work that ought to be his essential life. I see that now.

It's one of the things this last year or so of loneliness has made me realize; that in so far as I have set out to live the aristocratic life I have failed. Instead I've discovered it--and found myself out. I'm an overstrung man. I go harshly and continuously for one idea. I live as I ride. I blunder through my fences, I take off too soon. I've no natural ease of mind or conduct or body. I am straining to keep hold of a thing too big for me and do a thing beyond my ability. Only after Prothero's death was it possible for me to realize the prig I have always been, first as regards him and then as regards Amanda and my mother and every one. A necessary unavoidable priggishness...." I do not see how certain things can be done without prigs, people, that is to say, so

concentrated and specialized in interest as to be a trifle inhuman, so resolved as to be rather rhetorical and forced.... All things must begin with clumsiness, there is no assurance about pioneers....

"Some one has to talk about aristocracy, some one has to explain aristocracy.... But the very essence of aristocracy, as I conceive it, is that it does not explain nor talk about itself....

"After all it doesn't matter what I am.... It's just a private vexation that I haven't got where I meant to get. That does not affect the truth I have to tell....

"If one has to speak the truth with the voice of a prig, still one must speak the truth. I have worked out some very considerable things in my research, and the time has come when I must set them out clearly and plainly. That is my job anyhow. My journey to London to release Amanda will be just the end of my adolescence and the beginning of my real life. It will release me from my last entanglement with the fellow creatures I have always failed to make happy.... It's a detail in the work.... And I shall go on.

"But I shall feel very like a man who goes back for a surgical operation.

"It's very like that. A surgical operation, and when it is over perhaps I shall think no more about it.

"And beyond these things there are great masses of work to be done. So far I have but cleared up for myself a project and outline of living. I must begin upon these masses now, I must do what I can upon the details, and, presently, I shall see more clearly where other men are working to the same ends...."

Benham's expedition to China with Prothero was essentially a wrestle between his high resolve to work out his conception of the noble life to the utmost limit and his curiously invincible affection and sympathy for the earthliness of that inglorious little don. Although Benham insisted upon the dominance of life by noble imaginations and relentless reasonableness, he would never altogether abandon the materialism of life. Prothero had once said to him, "You are the advocate of the brain and I of the belly. Only, only we respect each other." And at another time, "You fear emotions and distrust sensations. I invite them. You do not drink gin because you think it would make you weep. But if I could not weep in any other way I would drink gin." And it was under the influence of Prothero that Benham turned from the haughty intellectualism, the systematized superiorities and refinements, the caste marks and defensive dignities of India to China, that great teeming stinking tank of humorous yellow humanity.

Benham had gone to Prothero again after a bout of elevated idealism. It was only very slowly that he reconciled his mind to the idea of an entirely solitary pursuit of his aristocratic dream. For some time as he went about the world he was trying to bring himself into relationship with the advanced thinkers, the liberal-minded people who seemed to promise at least a mental and moral co-operation. Yet it is difficult to see what co-operation was possible unless it was some sort of agreement that presently they should all shout together. And it was after a

certain pursuit of Rabindranath Tagore, whom he met in Hampstead, that a horror of perfect manners and perfect finish came upon him, and he fled from that starry calm to the rich uncleanness of the most undignified fellow of Trinity. And as an advocate and exponent of the richness of the lower levels of life, as the declared antagonist of caste and of the uttermost refinements of pride, Prothero went with Benham by way of Siberia to the Chinese scene.

Their controversy was perceptible at every dinner-table in their choice of food and drink. Benham was always wary and Prothero always appreciative. It peeped out in the distribution of their time, in the direction of their glances. Whenever women walked about, Prothero gave way to a sort of ethnological excitement. "That girl--a wonderful racial type." But in Moscow he was sentimental. He insisted on going again to the Cosmopolis Bazaar, and when he had ascertained that Anna Alexievna had vanished and left no trace he prowled the streets until the small hours.

In the eastward train he talked intermittently of her. "I should have defied Cambridge," he said.

But at every stopping station he got out upon the platform ethnologically alert....

Theoretically Benham was disgusted with Prothero. Really he was not disgusted at all. There was something about Prothero like a sparrow, like a starling, like a Scotch terrier.... These, too, are morally

objectionable creatures that do not disgust....

Prothero discoursed much upon the essential goodness of Russians. He said they were a people of genius, that they showed it in their faults and failures just as much as in their virtues and achievements. He extolled the "germinating disorder" of Moscow far above the "implacable discipline" of Berlin. Only a people of inferior imagination, a base materialist people, could so maintain its attention upon precision and cleanliness. Benham was roused to defence against this paradox. "But all exaltation neglects," said Prothero. "No religion has ever boasted that its saints were spick and span." This controversy raged between them in the streets of Irkutsk. It was still burning while they picked their way through the indescribable filth of Peking.

"You say that all this is a fine disdain for material things," said Benham. "But look out there!"

Apart to their argument a couple of sturdy young women came shuffling along, cleaving the crowd in the narrow street by virtue of a single word and two brace of pails of human ordure.

"That is not a fine disdain for material things," said Benham. "That is merely individualism and unsystematic living."

"A mere phase of frankness. Only frankness is left to them now. The Manchus crippled them, spoilt their roads and broke their waterways. European intervention paralyses every attempt they make to establish



order on their own lines. In the Ming days China did not reek.... And, anyhow, Benham, it's better than the silly waste of London...."

And in a little while Prothero discovered that China had tried Benham and found him wanting, centuries and dynasties ago.

What was this new-fangled aristocratic man, he asked, but the ideal of Confucius, the superior person, "the son of the King"? There you had the very essence of Benham, the idea of self-examination, self-preparation under a vague Theocracy. ("Vaguer," said Benham, "for the Confucian Heaven could punish and reward.") Even the elaborate sham modesty of the two dreams was the same. Benham interrupted and protested with heat. And this Confucian idea of the son of the King, Prothero insisted, had been the cause of China's paralysis. "My idea of nobility is not traditional but expectant," said Benham. "After all, Confucianism has held together a great pacific state far longer than any other polity has ever lasted. I'll accept your Confucianism. I've not the slightest objection to finding China nearer salvation than any other land. Do but turn it round so that it looks to the future and not to the past, and it will be the best social and political culture in the world. That, indeed, is what is happening. Mix Chinese culture with American enterprise and you will have made a new lead for mankind."

From that Benham drove on to discoveries. "When a man thinks of the past he concentrates on self; when he thinks of the future he radiates from self. Call me a neo-Confucian; with the cone opening forward away from me, instead of focussing on me...."

"You make me think of an extinguisher," said Prothero.

"You know I am thinking of a focus," said Benham. "But all your thought now has become caricature.... You have stopped thinking. You are fighting after making up your mind...."

Prothero was a little disconcerted by Benham's prompt endorsement of his Chinese identification. He had hoped it would be exasperating. He tried to barb his offence. He amplified the indictment. All cultures must be judged by their reaction and fatigue products, and Confucianism had produced formalism, priggishness, humbug.... No doubt its ideals had had their successes; they had unified China, stamped the idea of universal peace and good manners upon the greatest mass of population in the world, paved the way for much beautiful art and literature and living.

"But in the end, all your stern orderliness, Benham," said Prothero, "only leads to me. The human spirit rebels against this everlasting armour on the soul. After Han came T'ang. Have you never read Ling Po? There's scraps of him in English in that little book you have--what is it?--the LUTE OF JADE? He was the inevitable Epicurean; the Omar Khayyam after the Prophet. Life must relax at last...."

"No!" cried Benham. "If it is traditional, I admit, yes; but if it is creative, no...."

Under the stimulation of their undying controversy Benham was driven to closer enquiries into Chinese thought. He tried particularly to get to

mental grips with English-speaking Chinese. "We still know nothing of China," said Prothero. "Most of the stuff we have been told about this country is mere middle-class tourists' twaddle. We send merchants from Brixton and missionaries from Glasgow, and what doesn't remind them of these delectable standards seems either funny to them or wicked. I admit the thing is slightly pot-bound, so to speak, in the ancient characters and the ancient traditions, but for all that, they KNOW, they HAVE, what all the rest of the world has still to find and get. When they begin to speak and write in a modern way and handle modern things and break into the soil they have scarcely touched, the rest of the world will find just how much it is behind.... Oh! not soldiering; the Chinese are not such fools as that, but LIFE...."

Benham was won to a half belief in these assertions.

He came to realize more and more clearly that while India dreams or wrestles weakly in its sleep, while Europe is still hopelessly and foolishly given over to militant monarchies, racial vanities, delirious religious feuds and an altogether imbecile fumbling with loaded guns, China, even more than America, develops steadily into a massive possibility of ordered and aristocratic liberalism....

The two men followed their associated and disconnected paths. Through Benham's chance speeches and notes, White caught glimpses, as one might catch glimpses through a moving trellis, of that bilateral adventure. He saw Benham in conversation with liberal-minded mandarins, grave-faced, bald-browed persons with disciplined movements, who sat with their hands

thrust into their sleeves talking excellent English; while Prothero pursued enquiries of an intenser, more recondite sort with gentlemen of a more confidential type. And, presently, Prothero began to discover and discuss the merits of opium.

For if one is to disavow all pride and priggishness, if one is to find the solution of life's problem in the rational enjoyment of one's sensations, why should one not use opium? It is art materialized. It gives tremendous experiences with a minimum of exertion, and if presently its gifts diminish one need but increase the quantity. Moreover, it quickens the garrulous mind, and steadies the happiness of love. Across the varied adventures of Benham's journey in China fell the shadow first of a suspicion and then of a certainty....

The perfected and ancient vices of China wrapped about Prothero like some tainted but scented robe, and all too late Benham sought to drag him away. And then in a passion of disgust turned from him.

"To this," cried Benham, "one comes! Save for pride and fierceness!"

"Better this than cruelty," said Prothero talking quickly and clearly because of the evil thing in his veins. "You think that you are the only explorer of life, Benham, but while you toil up the mountains I board the house-boat and float down the stream. For you the stars, for me the music and the lanterns. You are the son of a mountaineering don, and I am a Chinese philosopher of the riper school. You force yourself beyond fear of pain, and I force myself beyond fear of consequences. What

are we either of us but children groping under the black cloak of our Maker?--who will not blind us with his light. Did he not give us also these lusts, the keen knife and the sweetness, these sensations that are like pineapple smeared with saltpetre, like salted olives from heaven, like being flayed with delight.... And did he not give us dreams fantastic beyond any lust whatever? What is the good of talking? Speak to your own kind. I have gone, Benham. I am lost already. There is no resisting any more, since I have drugged away resistance. Why then should I come back? I know now the symphonies of the exalted nerves; I can judge; and I say better lie and hear them to the end than come back again to my old life, to my little tin-whistle solo, my--effort! My EFFORT!... I ruin my body. I know. But what of that?... I shall soon be thin and filthy. What of the grape-skin when one has had the pulp?"

"But," said Benham, "the cleanness of life!"

"While I perish," said Prothero still more wickedly, "I say good things...."

White had a vision of a great city with narrow crowded streets, hung with lank banners and gay with vertical vermilion labels, and of a pleasant large low house that stood in a garden on a hillside, a garden set with artificial stones and with beasts and men and lanterns of white porcelain, a garden which overlooked this city. Here it was that Benham stayed and talked with his host, a man robed in marvellous silks and subtle of speech even in the European languages he used, and meanwhile Prothero, it seemed, had gone down into the wickedness of the town below. It was a very great town indeed, spreading for miles along the banks of a huge river, a river that divided itself indolently into three shining branches so as to make islands of the central portion of the place. And on this river swarmed for ever a vast flotilla of ships and boats, boats in which people lived, boats in which they sought pleasure, moored places of assembly, high-pooped junks, steamboats, passenger sampans, cargo craft, such a water town in streets and lanes, endless miles of it, as no other part of the world save China can display. In the daylight it was gay with countless sunlit colours embroidered upon a fabric of yellow and brown, at night it glittered with a hundred thousand lights that swayed and quivered and were reflected quiveringly upon the black flowing waters.

And while Benham sat and talked in the garden above came a messenger who was for some reason very vividly realized by White's imagination. He was a tall man with lack-lustre eyes and sunken cheeks that made his cheek

bones very prominent, and gave his thin-lipped mouth something of the geniality of a skull, and the arm he thrust out of his yellow robe to hand Prothero's message to Benham was lean as a pole. So he stood out in White's imagination, against the warm afternoon sky and the brown roofs and blue haze of the great town below, and was with one exception the distinctest thing in the story. The message he bore was scribbled by Prothero himself in a nerveless scrawl: "Send a hundred dollars by this man. I am in a frightful fix."

Now Benham's host had been twitting him with the European patronage of opium, and something in this message stirred his facile indignation. Twice before he had had similar demands. And on the whole they had seemed to him to be unreasonable demands. He was astonished that while he was sitting and talking of the great world-republic of the future and the secret self-directed aristocracy that would make it possible, his own friend, his chosen companion, should thus, by this inglorious request and this ungainly messenger, disavow him. He felt a wave of intense irritation.

"No," he said, "I will not."

And he was too angry to express himself in any language understandable by his messenger.

His host intervened and explained after a few questions that the occasion was serious. Prothero, it seemed, had been gambling.

"No," said Benham. "He is shameless. Let him do what he can."

The messenger was still reluctant to go.

And scarcely had he gone before misgivings seized Benham.

"Where IS your friend?" asked the mandarin.

"I don't know," said Benham.

"But they will keep him! They may do all sorts of things when they find he is lying to them."

"Lying to them?"

"About your help."

"Stop that man," cried Benham suddenly realizing his mistake. But when the servants went to stop the messenger their intentions were misunderstood, and the man dashed through the open gate of the garden and made off down the winding road.

"Stop him!" cried Benham, and started in pursuit, suddenly afraid for Prothero.

The Chinese are a people of great curiosity, and a small pebble sometimes starts an avalanche....



White pieced together his conception of the circles of disturbance that spread out from Benham's pursuit of Prothero's flying messenger.

For weeks and months the great town had been uneasy in all its ways because of the insurgent spirits from the south and the disorder from the north, because of endless rumours and incessant intrigue. The stupid manoeuvres of one European "power" against another, the tactlessness of missionaries, the growing Chinese disposition to meet violence and force with violence and force, had fermented and brewed the possibility of an outbreak. The sudden resolve of Benham to get at once to Prothero was like the firing of a mine. This tall, pale-faced, incomprehensible stranger charging through the narrow streets that led to the pleasure-boats in the south river seemed to many a blue-clad citizen like the White Peril embodied. Behind him came the attendants of the rich man up the hill; but they surely were traitors to help this stranger.

Before Benham could at all realize what was happening he found his way to the river-boat on which he supposed Prothero to be detained, barred by a vigorous street fight. Explanations were impossible; he joined in the fight.

For three days that fight developed round the mystery of Prothero's disappearance.

It was a complicated struggle into which the local foreign traders

on the river-front and a detachment of modern drilled troops from the up-river barracks were presently drawn. It was a struggle that was never clearly explained, and at the end of it they found Prothero's body flung out upon a waste place near a little temple on the river bank, stabbed while he was asleep....

And from the broken fragments of description that Benham let fall, White had an impression of him hunting for all those three days through the strange places of a Chinese city, along narrow passages, over queer Venetian-like bridges, through the vast spaces of empty warehouses, in the incense-scented darkness of temple yards, along planks that passed to the dark hulls of secret barges, in quick-flying boats that slipped noiselessly among the larger craft, and sometimes he hunted alone, sometimes in company, sometimes black figures struggled in the darkness against dim-lit backgrounds and sometimes a swarm of shining yellow faces screamed and shouted through the torn paper windows.... And then at the end of this confused effect of struggle, this Chinese kinematograph film, one last picture jerked into place and stopped and stood still, a white wall in the sunshine come upon suddenly round a corner, a dirty flagged passage and a stiff crumpled body that had for the first time an inexpressive face....

Benham sat at a table in the smoking-room of the Sherborough Hotel at Johannesburg and told of these things. White watched him from an armchair. And as he listened he noted again the intensification of Benham's face, the darkness under his brows, the pallor of his skin, the touch of red in his eyes. For there was still that red gleam in Benham's eyes; it shone when he looked out of a darkness into a light. And he sat forward with his arms folded under him, or moved his long lean hand about over the things on the table.

"You see," he said, "this is a sort of horror in my mind. Things like this stick in my mind. I am always seeing Prothero now, and it will take years to get this scar off my memory again. Once before--about a horse, I had the same kind of distress. And it makes me tender, sore-minded about everything. It will go, of course, in the long run, and it's just like any other ache that lays hold of one. One can't cure it. One has to get along with it...."

"I know, White, I ought to have sent that money, but how was I to know then that it was so imperative to send that money?..."

"At the time it seemed just pandering to his vices...."

"I was angry. I shall never subdue that kind of hastiness altogether. It takes me by surprise. Before the messenger was out of sight I had

repented....

"I failed him. I have gone about in the world dreaming of tremendous things and failing most people. My wife too...."

He stopped talking for a little time and folded his arms tight and stared hard in front of himself, his lips compressed.

"You see, White," he said, with a kind of setting of the teeth, "this is the sort of thing one has to stand. Life is imperfect. Nothing can be done perfectly. And on the whole--" He spoke still more slowly, "I would go through again with the very same things that have hurt my people. If I had to live over again. I would try to do the things without hurting the people, but I would do the things anyhow. Because I'm raw with remorse, it does not follow that on the whole I am not doing right. Right doing isn't balm. If I could have contrived not to hurt these people as I have done, it would have been better, just as it would be better to win a battle without any killed or wounded. I was clumsy with them and they suffered, I suffer for their suffering, but still I have to stick to the way I have taken. One's blunders are accidents. If one thing is clearer than another it is that the world isn't accident-proof...."

"But I wish I had sent those dollars to Prothero.... God! White, but I lie awake at night thinking of that messenger as he turned away.... Trying to stop him...."

"I didn't send those dollars. So fifty or sixty people were killed and many wounded.... There for all practical purposes the thing ends. Perhaps it will serve to give me a little charity for some other fool's haste and blundering....

"I couldn't help it, White. I couldn't help it....

"The main thing, the impersonal thing, goes on. One thinks, one learns, one adds one's contribution of experience and understanding. The spirit of the race goes on to light and comprehension. In spite of accidents. In spite of individual blundering.

"It would be absurd anyhow to suppose that nobility is so easy as to come slick and true on every occasion....

"If one gives oneself to any long aim one must reckon with minor disasters. This Research I undertook grows and grows. I believe in it more and more. The more it asks from me the more I give to it. When I was a youngster I thought the thing I wanted was just round the corner. I fancied I would find out the noble life in a year or two, just what it was, just where it took one, and for the rest of my life I would live it. Finely. But I am just one of a multitude of men, each one going a little wrong, each one achieving a little right. And the noble life is a long, long way ahead.... We are working out a new way of living for mankind, a new rule, a new conscience. It's no small job for all of us. There must be lifetimes of building up and lifetimes of pulling down and trying again. Hope and disappointments and much need for philosophy....

I see myself now for the little workman I am upon this tremendous undertaking. And all my life hereafter goes to serve it...."

He turned his sombre eyes upon his friend. He spoke with a grim enthusiasm. "I'm a prig. I'm a fanatic, White. But I have something clear, something better worth going on with than any adventure of personal relationship could possibly be...."

And suddenly he began to tell White as plainly as he could of the faith that had grown up in his mind. He spoke with a touch of defiance, with the tense force of a man who shrinks but overcomes his shame. "I will tell you what I believe."

He told of his early dread of fear and baseness, and of the slow development, expansion and complication of his idea of self-respect until he saw that there is no honour nor pride for a man until he refers his life to ends and purposes beyond himself. An aristocrat must be loyal. So it has ever been, but a modern aristocrat must also be lucid; there it is that one has at once the demand for kingship and the repudiation of all existing states and kings. In this manner he had come to his idea of a great world republic that must replace the little warring kingdoms of the present, to the conception of an unseen kingship ruling the whole globe, to his King Invisible, who is the Lord of Truth and all sane loyalty. "There," he said, "is the link of our order, the new knighthood, the new aristocracy, that must at last rule the earth. There is our Prince. He is in me, he is in you; he is latent in all mankind. I have worked this out and tried it and lived it, and I know

that outwardly and inwardly this is the way a man must live, or else be a poor thing and a base one. On great occasions and small occasions I have failed myself a thousand times, but no failure lasts if your faith lasts. What I have learnt, what I have thought out and made sure, I want now to tell the world. Somehow I will tell it, as a book I suppose, though I do not know if I shall ever be able to make a book. But I have away there in London or with me here all the masses of notes I have made in my search for the life that is worth while living.... We who are self-appointed aristocrats, who are not ashamed of kingship, must speak to one another....

"We can have no organization because organizations corrupt....

"No recognition....

"But we can speak plainly...."

(As he talked his voice was for a space drowned by the jingle and voices of mounted police riding past the hotel.)

"But on one side your aristocracy means revolution," said White. "It becomes a political conspiracy."

"Manifestly. An open conspiracy. It denies the king upon the stamps and the flag upon the wall. It is the continual proclamation of the Republic of Mankind."

The earlier phases of violence in the Rand outbreak in 1913 were manifest rather in the outskirts of Johannesburg than at the centre. "Pulling out" was going on first at this mine and then that, there were riots in Benoni, attacks on strike breakers and the smashing up of a number of houses. It was not until July the 4th that, with the suppression of a public meeting in the market-place, Johannesburg itself became the storm centre.

Benham and White were present at this marketplace affair, a confused crowded occasion, in which a little leaven of active men stirred through a large uncertain multitude of decently dressed onlookers. The whole big square was astir, a swaying crowd of men. A ramshackle platform improvised upon a trolley struggled through the swarming straw hats to a street corner, and there was some speaking. At first it seemed as though military men were using this platform, and then it was manifestly in possession of an excited knot of labour leaders with red rosettes. The military men had said their say and got down. They came close by Benham, pushing their way across the square. "We've warned them," said one. A red flag, like some misunderstood remark at a tea-party, was fitfully visible and incomprehensible behind the platform. Somebody was either pitched or fell off the platform. One could hear nothing from the speakers except a minute bleating....



Then there were shouts that the police were charging. A number of mounted men trotted into the square. The crowd began a series of short rushes that opened lanes for the passage of the mounted police as they rode to and fro. These men trotted through the crowd, scattering knots of people. They carried pick-handles, but they did not seem to be hitting with them. It became clear that they aimed at the capture of the trolley. There was only a feeble struggle for the trolley; it was captured and hauled through the scattered spectators in the square to the protection of a small impassive body of regular cavalry at the opposite corner. Then quite a number of people seemed to be getting excited and fighting. They appeared to be vaguely fighting the foot-police, and the police seemed to be vaguely pushing through them and dispersing them. The roof of a little one-story shop became prominent as a centre of vigorous stone-throwing.

It was no sort of battle. Merely the normal inconsecutiveness of human affairs had become exaggerated and pugnacious. A meeting was being prevented, and the police engaged in the operation were being pelted or obstructed. Mostly people were just looking on.

"It amounts to nothing," said Benham. "Even if they held a meeting, what could happen? Why does the Government try to stop it?"

The drifting and charging and a little booing went on for some time. Every now and then some one clambered to a point of vantage, began a speech and was pulled down by policemen. And at last across the

confusion came an idea, like a wind across a pond.

The strikers were to go to the Power Station.

That had the effect of a distinct move in the game. The Power Station was the centre of Johannesburg's light and energy. There if anywhere it would be possible to express one's disapproval of the administration, one's desire to embarrass and confute it. One could stop all sorts of things from the Power Station. At any rate it was a repartee to the suppression of the meeting. Everybody seemed gladdened by a definite project.

Benham and White went with the crowd.

At the intersection of two streets they were held up for a time; the scattered drift of people became congested. Gliding slowly across the mass came an electric tram, an entirely unbattered tram with even its glass undamaged, and then another and another. Strikers, with the happy expression of men who have found something expressive to do, were escorting the trams off the street. They were being meticulously careful with them. Never was there less mob violence in a riot. They walked by the captured cars almost deferentially, like rough men honoured by a real lady's company. And when White and Benham reached the Power House the marvel grew. The rioters were already in possession and going freely over the whole place, and they had injured nothing. They had stopped the engines, but they had not even disabled them. Here too manifestly a majority of the people were, like White and Benham, merely lookers-on.

"But this is the most civilized rioting," said Benham. "It isn't rioting; it's drifting. Just as things drifted in Moscow. Because nobody has the rudder...."

"What maddens me," he said, "is the democracy of the whole thing. White! I HATE this modern democracy. Democracy and inequality! Was there ever an absurder combination? What is the good of a social order in which the men at the top are commoner, meaner stuff than the men underneath, the same stuff, just spoilt, spoilt by prosperity and opportunity and the conceit that comes with advantage? This trouble wants so little, just a touch of aristocracy, just a little cultivated magnanimity, just an inkling of responsibility, and the place might rise instantly out of all this squalor and evil temper.... What does all this struggle here amount to? On one side unintelligent greed, unintelligent resentment on the other; suspicion everywhere...."

"And you know, White, at bottom THEY ALL WANT TO BE DECENT!"

"If only they had light enough in their brains to show them how. It's such a plain job they have here too, a new city, the simplest industries, freedom from war, everything to make a good life for men, prosperity, glorious sunshine, a kind of happiness in the air. And mismanagement, fear, indulgence, jealousy, prejudice, stupidity, poison it all. A squabble about working on a Saturday afternoon, a squabble embittered by this universal shadow of miner's phthisis that the masters were too incapable and too mean to prevent."

"Oh, God!" cried Benham, "when will men be princes and take hold of life? When will the kingship in us wake up and come to its own?... Look at this place! Look at this place!... The easy, accessible happiness! The manifest prosperity. The newness and the sunshine. And the silly bitterness, the rage, the mischief and miseries!..."

And then: "It's not our quarrel...."

"It's amazing how every human quarrel draws one in to take sides. Life is one long struggle against the incidental. I can feel my anger gathering against the Government here in spite of my reason. I want to go and expostulate. I have a ridiculous idea that I ought to go off to Lord Gladstone or Botha and expostulate.... What good would it do? They move in the magic circles of their own limitations, an official, a politician--how would they put it?--'with many things to consider....'

"It's my weakness to be drawn into quarrels. It's a thing I have to guard against...."

"What does it all amount to? It is like a fight between navvies in a tunnel to settle the position of the Pole star. It doesn't concern us.... Oh! it doesn't indeed concern us. It's a scuffle in the darkness, and our business, the business of all brains, the only permanent good work is to light up the world.... There will be mischief and hatred here and suppression and then forgetfulness, and then things will go on again, a little better or a little worse...."

"I'm tired of this place, White, and of all such places. I'm tired of the shouting and running, the beating and shooting. I'm sick of all the confusions of life's experience, which tells only of one need amidst an endless multitude of distresses. I've seen my fill of wars and disputes and struggles. I see now how a man may grow weary at last of life and its disorders, its unreal exacting disorders, its blunders and its remorse. No! I want to begin upon the realities I have made for myself. For they are the realities. I want to go now to some quiet corner where I can polish what I have learnt, sort out my accumulations, be undisturbed by these transitory symptomatic things....

"What was that boy saying? They are burning the STAR office.... Well, let them...."

And as if to emphasize his detachment, his aversion, from the things that hurried through the night about them, from the red flare in the sky and the distant shouts and revolver shots and scuffling flights down side streets, he began to talk again of aristocracy and the making of greatness and a new great spirit in men. All the rest of his life, he said, must be given to that. He would say his thing plainly and honestly and afterwards other men would say it clearly and beautifully; here it would touch a man and there it would touch a man; the Invisible King in us all would find himself and know himself a little in this and a little in that, and at last a day would come, when fair things and fine things would rule the world and such squalor as this about them would be as impossible any more for men as a Stone Age Corroboree....

Late or soon?

Benham sought for some loose large measure of time.

"Before those constellations above us have changed their shapes....

"Does it matter if we work at something that will take a hundred years or ten thousand years? It will never come in our lives, White. Not soon enough for that. But after that everything will be soon--when one comes to death then everything is at one's fingertips--I can feel that greater world I shall never see as one feels the dawn coming through the last darkness...."

16

The attack on the Rand Club began while Benham and White were at lunch in the dining-room at the Sherborough on the day following the burning of the STAR office. The Sherborough dining-room was on the first floor, and the Venetian window beside their table opened on to a verandah above a piazza. As they talked they became aware of an excitement in the street below, shouting and running and then a sound of wheels and the tramp of a body of soldiers marching quickly. White stood up and looked. "They're seizing the stuff in the gunshops," he said, sitting down

again. "It's amazing they haven't done it before."

They went on eating and discussing the work of a medical mission at Mukden that had won Benham's admiration....

A revolver cracked in the street and there was a sound of glass smashing. Then more revolver shots. "That's at the big club at the corner, I think," said Benham and went out upon the verandah.

Up and down the street mischief was afoot. Outside the Rand Club in the cross street a considerable mass of people had accumulated, and was being hustled by a handful of khaki-clad soldiers. Down the street people were looking in the direction of the market-place and then suddenly a rush of figures flooded round the corner, first a froth of scattered individuals and then a mass, a column, marching with an appearance of order and waving a flag. It was a poorly disciplined body, it fringed out into a swarm of sympathizers and spectators upon the side walk, and at the head of it two men disputed. They seemed to be differing about the direction of the whole crowd. Suddenly one smote the other with his fist, a blow that hurled him sideways, and then turned with a triumphant gesture to the following ranks, waving his arms in the air. He was a tall lean man, hatless and collarless, greyhaired and wild-eyed. On he came, gesticulating gauntly, past the hotel.

And then up the street something happened. Benham's attention was turned round to it by a checking, by a kind of catch in the breath, on the part of the advancing procession under the verandah.

The roadway beyond the club had suddenly become clear. Across it a dozen soldiers had appeared and dismounted methodically and lined out, with their carbines in readiness. The mounted men at the club corner had vanished, and the people there had swayed about towards this new threat. Quite abruptly the miscellaneous noises of the crowd ceased. Understanding seized upon every one.

These soldiers were going to fire....

The brown uniformed figures moved like automata; the rifle shots rang out almost in one report....

There was a rush in the crowd towards doorways and side streets, an enquiring pause, the darting back of a number of individuals into the roadway and then a derisive shouting. Nobody had been hit. The soldiers had fired in the air.

"But this is a stupid game," said Benham. "Why did they fire at all?"

The tall man who had led the mob had run out into the middle of the road. His commando was a little disposed to assume a marginal position, and it had to be reassured. He was near enough for Benham to see his face. For a time it looked anxious and thoughtful. Then he seemed to jump to his decision. He unbuttoned and opened his coat wide as if defying the soldiers. "Shoot," he bawled, "Shoot, if you dare!"



A little uniform movement of the soldiers answered him. The small figure of the officer away there was inaudible. The coat of the man below flapped like the wings of a crowing cock before a breast of dirty shirt, the hoarse voice cracked with excitement, "Shoot, if you dare. Shoot, if you dare! See!"

Came the metallic bang of the carbines again, and in the instant the leader collapsed in the road, a sprawl of clothes, hit by half a dozen bullets. It was an extraordinary effect. As though the figure had been deflated. It was incredible that a moment before this thing had been a man, an individual, a hesitating complicated purpose.

"Good God!" cried Benham, "but--this is horrible!"

The heap of garments lay still. The red hand that stretched out towards the soldiers never twitched.

The spectacular silence broke into a confusion of sounds, women shrieked, men cursed, some fled, some sought a corner from which they might still see, others pressed forward. "Go for the swine!" bawled a voice, a third volley rattled over the heads of the people, and in the road below a man with a rifle halted, took aim, and answered the soldiers' fire. "Look out!" cried White who was watching the soldiers, and ducked. "This isn't in the air!"

Came a straggling volley again, like a man running a metal hammer very rapidly along iron corrugations, and this time people were dropping all

over the road. One white-faced man not a score of yards away fell with a curse and a sob, struggled up, staggered for some yards with blood running abundantly from his neck, and fell and never stirred again. Another went down upon his back clumsily in the roadway and lay wringing his hands faster and faster until suddenly with a movement like a sigh they dropped inert by his side. A straw-hatted youth in a flannel suit ran and stopped and ran again. He seemed to be holding something red and strange to his face with both hands; above them his eyes were round and anxious. Blood came out between his fingers. He went right past the hotel and stumbled and suddenly sprawled headlong at the opposite corner. The majority of the crowd had already vanished into doorways and side streets. But there was still shouting and there was still a remnant of amazed and angry men in the roadway--and one or two angry women. They were not fighting. Indeed they were unarmed, but if they had had weapons now they would certainly have used them.

"But this is preposterous!" cried Benham. "Preposterous. Those soldiers are never going to shoot again! This must stop."

He stood hesitating for a moment and then turned about and dashed for the staircase. "Good Heaven!" cried White. "What are you going to do?"

Benham was going to stop that conflict very much as a man might go to stop a clock that is striking unwarrantably and amazingly. He was going to stop it because it annoyed his sense of human dignity.

White hesitated for a moment and then followed, crying "Benham!"

But there was no arresting this last outbreak of Benham's all too impatient kingship. He pushed aside a ducking German waiter who was peeping through the glass doors, and rushed out of the hotel. With a gesture of authority he ran forward into the middle of the street, holding up his hand, in which he still held his dinner napkin clenched like a bomb. White believes firmly that Benham thought he would be able to dominate everything. He shouted out something about "Foolery!"

Haroun al Raschid was flinging aside all this sublime indifference to current things....

But the carbines spoke again.

Benham seemed to run unexpectedly against something invisible. He spun right round and fell down into a sitting position. He sat looking surprised.

After one moment of blank funk White drew out his pocket handkerchief, held it arm high by way of a white flag, and ran out from the piazza of the hotel.

"Are you hit?" cried White dropping to his knees and making himself as compact as possible. "Benham!"

Benham, after a moment of perplexed thought answered in a strange voice, a whisper into which a whistling note had been mixed.

"It was stupid of me to come out here. Not my quarrel. Faults on both sides. And now I can't get up. I will sit here a moment and pull myself together. Perhaps I'm--I must be shot. But it seemed to come--inside me.... If I should be hurt. Am I hurt?... Will you see to that book of mine, White? It's odd. A kind of faintness.... What?"

"I will see after your book," said White and glanced at his hand because it felt wet, and was astonished to discover it bright red. He forgot about himself then, and the fresh flight of bullets down the street.

The immediate effect of this blood was that he said something more about the book, a promise, a definite promise. He could never recall his exact words, but their intention was binding. He conveyed his absolute acquiescence with Benham's wishes whatever they were. His life for that moment was unreservedly at his friend's disposal....

White never knew if his promise was heard. Benham had stopped speaking quite abruptly with that "What?"

He stared in front of him with a doubtful expression, like a man who is going to be sick, and then, in an instant, every muscle seemed to give way, he shuddered, his head flopped, and White held a dead man in his arms.

THE END