CHAPTER THE FIFTH

THE LAST DAYS OF MARCUS KARENIN

Section 1

The second operation upon Marcus Karenin was performed at the new station for surgical work at Paran, high in the Himalayas above the Sutlej Gorge, where it comes down out of Thibet.

It is a place of such wildness and beauty as no other scenery in the world affords. The granite terrace which runs round the four sides of the low block of laboratories looks out in every direction upon mountains. Far below in the hidden depths of a shadowy blue cleft, the river pours down in its tumultuous passage to the swarming plains of India. No sound of its roaring haste comes up to those serenities. Beyond that blue gulf, in which whole forests of giant deodars seem no more than small patches of moss, rise vast precipices of many-coloured rock, fretted above, lined by snowfalls, and jagged into pinnacles. These are the northward wall of a towering wilderness of ice and snow which clambers southward higher and wilder and vaster to the culminating summits of our globe, to Dhaulagiri and Everest. Here are cliffs of which no other land can show the like, and deep chasms in which Mt. Blanc might be plunged and hidden. Here are icefields as big as inland seas on which the tumbled boulders lie so thickly that strange little flowers can bloom among them under the untempered sunshine. To the

northward, and blocking out any vision of the uplands of Thibet, rises that citadel of porcelain, that gothic pile, the Lio Porgyul, walls, towers, and peaks, a clear twelve thousand feet of veined and splintered rock above the river. And beyond it and eastward and westward rise peaks behind peaks, against the dark blue Himalayan sky. Far away below to the south the clouds of the Indian rains pile up abruptly and are stayed by an invisible hand.

Hither it was that with a dreamlike swiftness Karenin flew high over the irrigations of Rajputana and the towers and cupolas of the ultimate Delhi; and the little group of buildings, albeit the southward wall dropped nearly five hundred feet, seemed to him as he soared down to it like a toy lost among these mountain wildernesses. No road came up to this place; it was reached only by flight.

His pilot descended to the great courtyard, and Karenin assisted by his secretary clambered down through the wing fabric and made his way to the officials who came out to receive him.

In this place, beyond infections and noise and any distractions, surgery had made for itself a house of research and a healing fastness. The building itself would have seemed very wonderful to eyes accustomed to the flimsy architecture of an age when power was precious. It was made of granite, already a little roughened on the outside by frost, but polished within and of a tremendous solidity. And in a honeycomb of subtly lit apartments, were the spotless research benches, the operating

tables, the instruments of brass, and fine glass and platinum and gold. Men and women came from all parts of the world for study or experimental research. They wore a common uniform of white and ate at long tables together, but the patients lived in an upper part of the buildings, and were cared for by nurses and skilled attendants....

The first man to greet Karenin was Ciana, the scientific director of the institution. Beside him was Rachel Borken, the chief organiser. 'You are tired?' she asked, and old Karenin shook his head.

'Cramped,' he said. 'I have wanted to visit such a place as this.'

He spoke as if he had no other business with them.

There was a little pause.

'How many scientific people have you got here now?' he asked.

'Just three hundred and ninety-two,' said Rachel Borken.

'And the patients and attendants and so on?'

'Two thousand and thirty.'

'I shall be a patient,' said Karenin. 'I shall have to be a patient. But I should like to see things first. Presently I will be a patient.'

'You will come to my rooms?' suggested Ciana.

'And then I must talk to this doctor of yours,' said Karenin. 'But I would like to see a bit of this place and talk to some of your people before it comes to that.'

He winced and moved forward.

'I have left most of my work in order,' he said.

'You have been working hard up to now?' asked Rachel Borken.

'Yes. And now I have nothing more to do--and it seems strange.... And it's a bother, this illness and having to come down to oneself. This doorway and the row of windows is well done; the gray granite and just the line of gold, and then those mountains beyond through that arch. It's very well done....'

Section 2

Karenin lay on the bed with a soft white rug about him, and Fowler, who was to be his surgeon sat on the edge of the bed and talked to him. An assistant was seated quietly in the shadow behind the bed. The examination had been made, and Karenin knew what was before him. He was tired but serene.

'So I shall die,' he said, 'unless you operate?'

Fowler assented. 'And then,' said Karenin, smiling, 'probably I shall die.'

'Not certainly.'

'Even if I do not die; shall I be able to work?'

'There is just a chance....'

'So firstly I shall probably die, and if I do not, then perhaps I shall be a useless invalid?'

'I think if you live, you may be able to go on--as you do now.'

'Well, then, I suppose I must take the risk of it. Yet couldn't you, Fowler, couldn't you drug me and patch me instead of all this--vivisection? A few days of drugged and active life--and then the end?'

Fowler thought. 'We are not sure enough yet to do things like that,' he said.

'But a day is coming when you will be certain.'

Fowler nodded.

'You make me feel as though I was the last of deformity--Deformity is uncertainty--inaccuracy. My body works doubtfully, it is not even sure that it will die or live. I suppose the time is not far off when such bodies as mine will no longer be born into the world.'

'You see,' said Fowler, after a little pause, 'it is necessary that spirits such as yours should be born into the world.'

'I suppose,' said Karenin, 'that my spirit has had its use. But if you think that is because my body is as it is I think you are mistaken. There is no peculiar virtue in defect. I have always chafed against--all this. If I could have moved more freely and lived a larger life in health I could have done more. But some day perhaps you will be able to put a body that is wrong altogether right again. Your science is only beginning. It's a subtler thing than physics and chemistry, and it takes longer to produce its miracles. And meanwhile a few more of us must die in patience.'

'Fine work is being done and much of it,' said Fowler. 'I can say as much because I have nothing to do with it. I can understand a lesson, appreciate the discoveries of abler men and use my hands, but those others, Pigou, Masterton, Lie, and the others, they are clearing the ground fast for the knowledge to come. Have you had time to follow their

work?'

Karenin shook his head. 'But I can imagine the scope of it,' he said.

'We have so many men working now,' said Fowler. 'I suppose at present there must be at least a thousand thinking hard, observing, experimenting, for one who did so in nineteen hundred.'

'Not counting those who keep the records?'

'Not counting those. Of course, the present indexing of research is in itself a very big work, and it is only now that we are getting it properly done. But already we are feeling the benefit of that. Since it ceased to be a paid employment and became a devotion we have had only those people who obeyed the call of an aptitude at work upon these things. Here--I must show you it to-day, because it will interest you--we have our copy of the encyclopaedic index--every week sheets are taken out and replaced by fresh sheets with new results that are brought to us by the aeroplanes of the Research Department. It is an index of knowledge that grows continually, an index that becomes continually truer. There was never anything like it before.'

'When I came into the education committee,' said Karenin, 'that index of human knowledge seemed an impossible thing. Research had produced a chaotic mountain of results, in a hundred languages and a thousand different types of publication. . . .' He smiled at his memories. 'How

we groaned at the job!'

'Already the ordering of that chaos is nearly done. You shall see.'

'I have been so busy with my own work----Yes, I shall be glad to see.'

The patient regarded the surgeon for a time with interested eyes.

'You work here always?' he asked abruptly.

'No,' said Fowler.

'But mostly you work here?'

'I have worked about seven years out of the past ten. At times I go away--down there. One has to. At least I have to. There is a sort of grayness comes over all this, one feels hungry for life, real, personal passionate life, love-making, eating and drinking for the fun of the thing, jostling crowds, having adventures, laughter--above all laughter----'

'Yes,' said Karenin understandingly.

'And then one day, suddenly one thinks of these high mountains again....'

'That is how I would have lived, if it had not been for my--defects,' said Karenin. 'Nobody knows but those who have borne it the exasperation of abnormality. It will be good when you have nobody alive whose body cannot live the wholesome everyday life, whose spirit cannot come up into these high places as it wills.'

'We shall manage that soon,' said Fowler.

'For endless generations man has struggled upward against the indignities of his body--and the indignities of his soul. Pains, incapacities, vile fears, black moods, despairs. How well I've known them. They've taken more time than all your holidays. It is true, is it not, that every man is something of a cripple and something of a beast? I've dipped a little deeper than most; that's all. It's only now when he has fully learnt the truth of that, that he can take hold of himself to be neither beast nor cripple. Now that he overcomes his servitude to his body, he can for the first time think of living the full life of his body.... Before another generation dies you'll have the thing in hand. You'll do as you please with the old Adam and all the vestiges from the brutes and reptiles that lurk in his body and spirit. Isn't that so?'

'You put it boldly,' said Fowler.

Karenin laughed cheerfully at his caution.... 'When,' asked Karenin suddenly, 'when will you operate?'

'The day after to-morrow,' said Fowler. 'For a day I want you to drink and eat as I shall prescribe. And you may think and talk as you please.'

'I should like to see this place.'

'You shall go through it this afternoon. I will have two men carry you in a litter. And to-morrow you shall lie out upon the terrace. Our mountains here are the most beautiful in the world....'

Section 3

The next morning Karenin got up early and watched the sun rise over the mountains, and breakfasted lightly, and then young Gardener, his secretary, came to consult him upon the spending of his day. Would he care to see people? Or was this gnawing pain within him too much to permit him to do that?

'I'd like to talk,' said Karenin. 'There must be all sorts of lively-minded people here. Let them come and gossip with me. It will distract me--and I can't tell you how interesting it makes everything that is going on to have seen the dawn of one's own last day.'

'Your last day!'

'Fowler will kill me.'

'But he thinks not.'

'Fowler will kill me. If he does not he will not leave very much of me. So that this is my last day anyhow, the days afterwards if they come at all to me, will be refuse. I know....'

Gardener was about to speak when Karenin went on again.

'I hope he kills me, Gardener. Don't be--old-fashioned. The thing I am most afraid of is that last rag of life. I may just go on--a scarred salvage of suffering stuff. And then--all the things I have hidden and kept down or discounted or set right afterwards will get the better of me. I shall be peevish. I may lose my grip upon my own egotism. It's never been a very firm grip. No, no, Gardener, don't say that! You know better, you've had glimpses of it. Suppose I came through on the other side of this affair, belittled, vain, and spiteful, using the prestige I have got among men by my good work in the past just to serve some small invalid purpose....'

He was silent for a time, watching the mists among the distant precipices change to clouds of light, and drift and dissolve before the searching rays of the sunrise.

'Yes,' he said at last, 'I am afraid of these anaesthetics and these fag ends of life. It's life we are all afraid of. Death!--nobody minds just death. Fowler is clever--but some day surgery will know its duty better

and not be so anxious just to save something . . . provided only that it quivers. I've tried to hold my end up properly and do my work. After Fowler has done with me I am certain I shall be unfit for work--and what else is there for me? . . . I know I shall not be fit for work....

'I do not see why life should be judged by its last trailing thread of vitality.... I know it for the splendid thing it is--I who have been a diseased creature from the beginning. I know it well enough not to confuse it with its husks. Remember that, Gardener, if presently my heart fails me and I despair, and if I go through a little phase of pain and ingratitude and dark forgetfulness before the end.... Don't believe what I may say at the last.... If the fabric is good enough the selvage doesn't matter. It can't matter. So long as you are alive you are just the moment, perhaps, but when you are dead then you are all your life from the first moment to the last....'

Section 4

Presently, in accordance with his wish, people came to talk to him, and he could forget himself again. Rachel Borken sat for a long time with him and talked chiefly of women in the world, and with her was a girl named Edith Haydon who was already very well known as a cytologist. And several of the younger men who were working in the place and a patient named Kahn, a poet, and Edwards, a designer of plays and shows, spent some time with him. The talk wandered from point to point and came back upon itself, and became now earnest and now trivial as the chance

suggestions determined. But soon afterwards Gardener wrote down notes of things he remembered, and it is possible to put together again the outlook of Karenin upon the world and how he thought and felt about many of the principal things in life.

'Our age,' he said, 'has been so far an age of scene-shifting. We have been preparing a stage, clearing away the setting of a drama that was played out and growing tiresome.... If I could but sit out the first few scenes of the new spectacle....

'How encumbered the world had become! It was ailing as I am ailing with a growth of unmeaning things. It was entangled, feverish, confused. It was in sore need of release, and I suppose that nothing less than the violence of those bombs could have released it and made it a healthy world again. I suppose they were necessary. Just as everything turns to evil in a fevered body so everything seemed turning to evil in those last years of the old time. Everywhere there were obsolete organisations seizing upon all the new fine things that science was giving to the world, nationalities, all sorts of political bodies, the churches and sects, proprietorship, seizing upon those treat powers and limitless possibilities and turning them to evil uses. And they would not suffer open speech, they would not permit of education, they would let no one be educated to the needs of the new time.... You who are younger cannot imagine the mixture of desperate hope and protesting despair in which we who could believe in the possibilities of science lived in those years before atomic energy came....

'It was not only that the mass of people would not attend, would not understand, but that those who did understand lacked the power of real belief. They said the things, they saw the things, and the things meant nothing to them....

'I have been reading some old papers lately. It is wonderful how our fathers bore themselves towards science. They hated it. They feared it. They permitted a few scientific men to exist and work--a pitiful handful.... "Don't find out anything about us," they said to them; "don't inflict vision upon us, spare our little ways of life from the fearful shaft of understanding. But do tricks for us, little limited tricks. Give us cheap lighting. And cure us of certain disagreeable things, cure us of cancer, cure us of consumption, cure our colds and relieve us after repletion...." We have changed all that, Gardener. Science is no longer our servant. We know it for something greater than our little individual selves. It is the awakening mind of the race, and in a little while----In a little while----I wish indeed I could watch for that little while, now that the curtain has risen....

'While I lie here they are clearing up what is left of the bombs in London,' he said. 'Then they are going to repair the ruins and make it all as like as possible to its former condition before the bombs fell. Perhaps they will dig out the old house in St John's Wood to which my father went after his expulsion from Russia.... That London of my memories seems to me like a place in another world. For you younger

people it must seem like a place that could never have existed.'

'Is there much left standing?' asked Edith Haydon.

'Square miles that are scarcely shaken in the south and north-west, they say; and most of the bridges and large areas of dock. Westminster, which held most of the government offices, suffered badly from the small bomb that destroyed the Parliament, there are very few traces of the old thoroughfare of Whitehall or the Government region thereabout, but there are plentiful drawings to scale of its buildings, and the great hole in the east of London scarcely matters. That was a poor district and very like the north and the south. . . . It will be possible to reconstruct most of it. . . . It is wanted. Already it becomes difficult to recall the old time--even for us who saw it.'

'It seems very distant to me,' said the girl.

'It was an unwholesome world,' reflected Karenin. 'I seem to remember everybody about my childhood as if they were ill. They were ill. They were sick with confusion. Everybody was anxious about money and everybody was doing uncongenial things. They ate a queer mixture of foods, either too much or too little, and at odd hours. One sees how ill they were by their advertisements. All this new region of London they are opening up now is plastered with advertisements of pills. Everybody must have been taking pills. In one of the hotel rooms in the Strand they have found the luggage of a lady covered up by falling rubble and

unburnt, and she was equipped with nine different sorts of pill and tabloid. The pill-carrying age followed the weapon-carrying age. They are equally strange to us. People's skins must have been in a vile state. Very few people were properly washed; they carried the filth of months on their clothes. All the clothes they wore were old clothes; our way of pulping our clothes again after a week or so of wear would have seemed fantastic to them. Their clothing hardly bears thinking about. And the congestion of them! Everybody was jostling against everybody in those awful towns. In an uproar. People were run over and crushed by the hundred; every year in London the cars and omnibuses alone killed or disabled twenty thousand people, in Paris it was worse; people used to fall dead for want of air in the crowded ways. The irritation of London, internal and external, must have been maddening. It was a maddened world. It is like thinking of a sick child. One has the same effect of feverish urgencies and acute irrational disappointments.

'All history,' he said, 'is a record of a childhood....

'And yet not exactly a childhood. There is something clean and keen about even a sick child--and something touching. But so much of the old times makes one angry. So much they did seems grossly stupid, obstinately, outrageously stupid, which is the very opposite to being fresh and young.

'I was reading only the other day about Bismarck, that hero of nineteenth-century politics, that sequel to Napoleon, that god of blood

and iron. And he was just a beery, obstinate, dull man. Indeed, that is what he was, the commonest, coarsest man, who ever became great. I looked at his portraits, a heavy, almost froggish face, with projecting eyes and a thick moustache to hide a poor mouth. He aimed at nothing but Germany, Germany emphasised, indurated, enlarged; Germany and his class in Germany; beyond that he had no ideas, he was inaccessible to ideas; his mind never rose for a recorded instant above a bumpkin's elaborate cunning. And he was the most influential man in the world, in the whole world, no man ever left so deep a mark on it, because everywhere there were gross men to resonate to the heavy notes he emitted. He trampled on ten thousand lovely things, and a kind of malice in these louts made it pleasant to them to see him trample. No--he was no child; the dull, national aggressiveness he stood for, no childishness. Childhood is promise. He was survival.

'All Europe offered its children to him, it sacrificed education, art, happiness and all its hopes of future welfare to follow the clatter of his sabre. The monstrous worship of that old fool's "blood and iron" passed all round the earth. Until the atomic bombs burnt our way to freedom again. . . .'

'One thinks of him now as one thinks of the megatherium,' said one of the young men.

'From first to last mankind made three million big guns and a hundred thousand complicated great ships for no other purpose but war.'

'Were there no sane men in those days,' asked the young man, 'to stand against that idolatry?'

'In a state of despair,' said Edith Haydon.

'He is so far off--and there are men alive still who were alive when Bismarck died!' . . . said the young man....

Section 5

'And yet it may be I am unjust to Bismarck,' said Karenin, following his own thoughts. 'You see, men belong to their own age; we stand upon a common stock of thought and we fancy we stand upon the ground. I met a pleasant man the other day, a Maori, whose great-grandfather was a cannibal. It chanced he had a daguerreotype of the old sinner, and the two were marvellously alike. One felt that a little juggling with time and either might have been the other. People are cruel and stupid in a stupid age who might be gentle and splendid in a gracious one. The world also has its moods. Think of the mental food of Bismarck's childhood; the humiliations of Napoleon's victories, the crowded, crowning victory of the Battle of the Nations.... Everybody in those days, wise or foolish, believed that the division of the world under a multitude of governments was inevitable, and that it was going on for thousands of years more. It WAS inevitable until it was impossible. Any one who had denied that inevitability publicly would have been counted--oh! a SILLY

fellow. Old Bismarck was only just a little--forcible, on the lines of the accepted ideas. That is all. He thought that since there had to be national governments he would make one that was strong at home and invincible abroad. Because he had fed with a kind of rough appetite upon what we can see now were very stupid ideas, that does not make him a stupid man. We've had advantages; we've had unity and collectivism blasted into our brains. Where should we be now but for the grace of science? I should have been an embittered, spiteful, downtrodden member of the Russian Intelligenza, a conspirator, a prisoner, or an assassin. You, my dear, would have been breaking dingy windows as a suffragette.'

'NEVER,' said Edith stoutly....

For a time the talk broke into humorous personalities, and the young people gibed at each other across the smiling old administrator, and then presently one of the young scientific men gave things a new turn. He spoke like one who was full to the brim.

'You know, sir, I've a fancy--it is hard to prove such things--that civilisation was very near disaster when the atomic bombs came banging into it, that if there had been no Holsten and no induced radio-activity, the world would have--smashed--much as it did. Only instead of its being a smash that opened a way to better things, it might have been a smash without a recovery. It is part of my business to understand economics, and from that point of view the century before Holsten was just a hundred years' crescendo of waste. Only the extreme

individualism of that period, only its utter want of any collective understanding or purpose can explain that waste. Mankind used up material--insanely. They had got through three-quarters of all the coal in the planet, they had used up most of the oil, they had swept away their forests, and they were running short of tin and copper. Their wheat areas were getting weary and populous, and many of the big towns had so lowered the water level of their available hills that they suffered a drought every summer. The whole system was rushing towards bankruptcy. And they were spending every year vaster and vaster amounts of power and energy upon military preparations, and continually expanding the debt of industry to capital. The system was already staggering when Holsten began his researches. So far as the world in general went there was no sense of danger and no desire for inquiry. They had no belief that science could save them, nor any idea that there was a need to be saved. They could not, they would not, see the gulf beneath their feet. It was pure good luck for mankind at large that any research at all was in progress. And as I say, sir, if that line of escape hadn't opened, before now there might have been a crash, revolution, panic, social disintegration, famine, and--it is conceivable--complete disorder. . . . The rails might have rusted on the disused railways by now, the telephone poles have rotted and fallen, the big liners dropped into sheet-iron in the ports; the burnt, deserted cities become the ruinous hiding-places of gangs of robbers. We might have been brigands in a shattered and attenuated world. Ah, you may smile, but that had happened before in human history. The world is still studded with the ruins of broken-down civilisations. Barbaric bands

made their fastness upon the Acropolis, and the tomb of Hadrian became a fortress that warred across the ruins of Rome against the Colosseum.... Had all that possibility of reaction ended so certainly in 1940? Is it all so very far away even now?'

'It seems far enough away now,' said Edith Haydon.

'But forty years ago?'

'No,' said Karenin with his eyes upon the mountains, 'I think you underrate the available intelligence in those early decades of the twentieth century. Officially, I know, politically, that intelligence didn't tell--but it was there. And I question your hypothesis. I doubt if that discovery could have been delayed. There is a kind of inevitable logic now in the progress of research. For a hundred years and more thought and science have been going their own way regardless of the common events of life. You see--they have got loose. If there had been no Holsten there would have been some similar man. If atomic energy had not come in one year it would have come in another. In decadent Rome the march of science had scarcely begun.... Nineveh, Babylon, Athens, Syracuse, Alexandria, these were the first rough experiments in association that made a security, a breathing-space, in which inquiry was born. Man had to experiment before he found out the way to begin. But already two hundred years ago he had fairly begun.... The politics and dignities and wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were only the last phoenix blaze of the former civilisation flaring up about

the beginnings of the new. Which we serve.... 'Man lives in the dawn for ever,' said Karenin. 'Life is beginning and nothing else but beginning. It begins everlastingly. Each step seems vaster than the last, and does but gather us together for the nest. This Modern State of ours, which would have been a Utopian marvel a hundred years ago, is already the commonplace of life. But as I sit here and dream of the possibilities in the mind of man that now gather to a head beneath the shelter of its peace, these great mountains here seem but little things....'

Section 6

About eleven Karenin had his midday meal, and afterwards he slept among his artificial furs and pillows for two hours. Then he awoke and some tea was brought to him, and he attended to a small difficulty in connection with the Moravian schools in the Labrador country and in Greenland that Gardener knew would interest him. He remained alone for a little while after that, and then the two women came to him again. Afterwards Edwards and Kahn joined the group, and the talk fell upon love and the place of women in the renascent world. The cloudbanks of India lay under a quivering haze, and the blaze of the sun fell full upon the eastward precipices. Ever and again as they talked, some vast splinter of rock would crack and come away from these, or a wild rush of snow and ice and stone, pour down in thunder, hang like a wet thread into the gulfs below, and cease....

Section 7

For a time Karenin said very little, and Kahn, the popular poet, talked of passionate love. He said that passionate, personal love had been the abiding desire of humanity since ever humanity had begun, and now only was it becoming a possible experience. It had been a dream that generation after generation had pursued, that always men had lost on the verge of attainment. To most of those who had sought it obstinately it had brought tragedy. Now, lifted above sordid distresses, men and women might hope for realised and triumphant love. This age was the Dawn of Love....

Karenin remained downcast and thoughtful while Kahn said these things. Against that continued silence Kahn's voice presently seemed to beat and fail. He had begun by addressing Karenin, but presently he was including Edith Haydon and Rachel Borken in his appeal. Rachel listened silently; Edith watched Karenin and very deliberately avoided Kahn's eyes.

'I know,' said Karenin at last, 'that many people are saying this sort of thing. I know that there is a vast release of love-making in the world. This great wave of decoration and elaboration that has gone about the world, this Efflorescence, has of course laid hold of that. I know that when you say that the world is set free, you interpret that to mean that the world is set free for love-making. Down there,--under the clouds, the lovers foregather. I know your songs, Kahn, your half-mystical songs, in which you represent this old hard world dissolving into a luminous haze of love--sexual love.... I don't think

you are right or true in that. You are a young, imaginative man, and you see life--ardently--with the eyes of youth. But the power that has brought man into these high places under this blue-veiled blackness of the sky and which beckons us on towards the immense and awful future of our race, is riper and deeper and greater than any such emotions....

'All through my life--it has been a necessary part of my work--I have had to think of this release of sexual love and the riddles that perfect freedom and almost limitless power will put to the soul of our race. I can see now, all over the world, a beautiful ecstasy of waste; "Let us sing and rejoice and be lovely and wonderful." . . . The orgy is only beginning, Kahn.... It was inevitable--but it is not the end of mankind....

'Think what we are. It is but a yesterday in the endlessness of time that life was a dreaming thing, dreaming so deeply that it forgot itself as it dreamt, its lives, its individual instincts, its moments, were born and wondered and played and desired and hungered and grew weary and died. Incalculable successions of vision, visions of sunlit jungle, river wilderness, wild forest, eager desire, beating hearts, soaring wings and creeping terror flamed hotly and then were as though they had never been. Life was an uneasiness across which lights played and vanished. And then we came, man came, and opened eyes that were a question and hands that were a demand and began a mind and memory that dies not when men die, but lives and increases for ever, an over-mind, a dominating will, a question and an aspiration that reaches to the

stars.... Hunger and fear and this that you make so much of, this sex, are but the elementals of life out of which we have arisen. All these elementals, I grant you, have to be provided for, dealt with, satisfied, but all these things have to be left behind.'

'But Love,' said Kahn.

'I speak of sexual love and the love of intimate persons. And that is what you mean, Kahn.'

Karenin shook his head. 'You cannot stay at the roots and climb the tree,' he said....

'No,' he said after a pause, 'this sexual excitement, this love story, is just a part of growing up and we grow out of it. So far literature and art and sentiment and all our emotional forms have been almost altogether adolescent, plays and stories, delights and hopes, they have all turned on that marvellous discovery of the love interest, but life lengthens out now and the mind of adult humanity detaches itself. Poets who used to die at thirty live now to eighty-five. You, too, Kahn! There are endless years yet for you--and all full of learning.... We carry an excessive burden of sex and sexual tradition still, and we have to free ourselves from it. We do free ourselves from it. We have learnt in a thousand different ways to hold back death, and this sex, which in the old barbaric days was just sufficient to balance our dying, is now like a hammer that has lost its anvil, it plunges through human life. You

poets, you young people want to turn it to delight. Turn it to delight. That may be one way out. In a little while, if you have any brains worth thinking about, you will be satisfied, and then you will come up here to the greater things. The old religions and their new offsets want still, I see, to suppress all these things. Let them suppress. If they can suppress. In their own people. Either road will bring you here at last to the eternal search for knowledge and the great adventure of power.'

'But incidentally,' said Rachel Borken; 'incidentally you have half of humanity, you have womankind, very much specialised for--for this love and reproduction that is so much less needed than it was.'

'Both sexes are specialised for love and reproduction,' said Karenin.

'But the women carry the heavier burden.'

'Not in their imaginations,' said Edwards.

'And surely,' said Kahn, 'when you speak of love as a phase--isn't it a necessary phase? Quite apart from reproduction the love of the sexes is necessary. Isn't it love, sexual love, which has released the imagination? Without that stir, without that impulse to go out from ourselves, to be reckless of ourselves and wonderful, would our lives be anything more than the contentment of the stalled ox?'

'The key that opens the door,' said Karenin, 'is not the goal of the

journey.'

'But women!' cried Rachel. 'Here we are! What is our future--as women? Is it only that we have unlocked the doors of the imagination for you men? Let us speak of this question now. It is a thing constantly in my thoughts, Karenin. What do you think of us? You who must have thought so much of these perplexities.'

Karenin seemed to weigh his words. He spoke very deliberately. 'I do not care a rap about your future--as women. I do not care a rap about the future of men--as males. I want to destroy these peculiar futures. I care for your future as intelligences, as parts of and contribution to the universal mind of the race. Humanity is not only naturally over-specialised in these matters, but all its institutions, its customs, everything, exaggerate, intensify this difference. I want to unspecialise women. No new idea. Plato wanted exactly that. I do not want to go on as we go now, emphasising this natural difference; I do not deny it, but I want to reduce it and overcome it.'

'And--we remain women,' said Rachel Borken. 'Need you remain thinking of yourselves as women?'

'It is forced upon us,' said Edith Haydon.

'I do not think a woman becomes less of a woman because she dresses and works like a man,' said Edwards. 'You women here, I mean you scientific

women, wear white clothing like the men, twist up your hair in the simplest fashion, go about your work as though there was only one sex in the world. You are just as much women, even if you are not so feminine, as the fine ladies down below there in the plains who dress for excitement and display, whose only thoughts are of lovers, who exaggerate every difference.... Indeed we love you more.'

'But we go about our work,' said Edith Haydon.

'So does it matter?' asked Rachel.

'If you go about your work and if the men go about their work then for Heaven's sake be as much woman as you wish,' said Karenin. 'When I ask you to unspecialise, I am thinking not of the abolition of sex, but the abolition of the irksome, restricting, obstructive obsession with sex. It may be true that sex made society, that the first society was the sex-cemented family, the first state a confederacy of blood relations, the first laws sexual taboos. Until a few years ago morality meant proper sexual behaviour. Up to within a few years of us the chief interest and motive of an ordinary man was to keep and rule a woman and her children and the chief concern of a woman was to get a man to do that. That was the drama, that was life. And the jealousy of these demands was the master motive in the world. You said, Kahn, a little while ago that sexual love was the key that let one out from the solitude of self, but I tell you that so far it has only done so in order to lock us all up again in a solitude of two.... All that may have

been necessary but it is necessary no longer. All that has changed and changes still very swiftly. Your future, Rachel, AS WOMEN, is a diminishing future.'

'Karenin?' asked Rachel, 'do you mean that women are to become men?'

'Men and women have to become human beings.'

'You would abolish women? But, Karenin, listen! There is more than sex in this. Apart from sex we are different from you. We take up life differently. Forget we are--females, Karenin, and still we are a different sort of human being with a different use. In some things we are amazingly secondary. Here am I in this place because of my trick of management, and Edith is here because of her patient, subtle hands. That does not alter the fact that nearly the whole body of science is man made; that does not alter the fact that men do so predominatingly make history, that you could nearly write a complete history of the world without mentioning a woman's name. And on the other hand we have a gift of devotion, of inspiration, a distinctive power for truly loving beautiful things, a care for life and a peculiar keen close eye for behaviour. You know men are blind beside us in these last matters. You know they are restless--and fitful. We have a steadfastness. We may never draw the broad outlines nor discover the new paths, but in the future isn't there a confirming and sustaining and supplying role for us? As important, perhaps, as yours? Equally important. We hold the world up, Karenin, though you may have raised it.'

'You know very well, Rachel, that I believe as you believe. I am not thinking of the abolition of woman. But I do want to abolish--the heroine, the sexual heroine. I want to abolish the woman whose support is jealousy and whose gift possession. I want to abolish the woman who can be won as a prize or locked up as a delicious treasure. And away down there the heroine flares like a divinity.'

'In America,' said Edwards, 'men are fighting duels over the praises of women and holding tournaments before Queens of Beauty.'

'I saw a beautiful girl in Lahore,' said Kahn, 'she sat under a golden canopy like a goddess, and three fine men, armed and dressed like the ancient paintings, sat on steps below her to show their devotion. And they wanted only her permission to fight for her.'

'That is the men's doing,' said Edith Haydon.

'I SAID,' cried Edwards, 'that man's imagination was more specialised for sex than the whole being of woman. What woman would do a thing like that? Women do but submit to it or take advantage of it.'

'There is no evil between men and women that is not a common evil,' said Karenin. 'It is you poets, Kahn, with your love songs which turn the sweet fellowship of comrades into this woman-centred excitement. But there is something in women, in many women, which responds to these

provocations; they succumb to a peculiarly self-cultivating egotism. They become the subjects of their own artistry. They develop and elaborate themselves as scarcely any man would ever do. They LOOK for golden canopies. And even when they seem to react against that, they may do it still. I have been reading in the old papers of the movements to emancipate women that were going on before the discovery of atomic force. These things which began with a desire to escape from the limitations and servitude of sex, ended in an inflamed assertion of sex, and women more heroines than ever. Helen of Holloway was at last as big a nuisance in her way as Helen of Troy, and so long as you think of yourselves as women'--he held out a finger at Rachel and smiled gently--'instead of thinking of yourselves as intelligent beings, you will be in danger of--Helenism. To think of yourselves as women is to think of yourselves in relation to men. You can't escape that consequence. You have to learn to think of yourselves--for our sakes and your own sakes--in relation to the sun and stars. You have to cease to be our adventure, Rachel, and come with us upon our adventures. ...' He waved his hand towards the dark sky above the mountain crests.

Section 8

'These questions are the next questions to which research will bring us answers,' said Karenin. 'While we sit here and talk idly and inexactly of what is needed and what may be, there are hundreds of keen-witted men and women who are working these things out, dispassionately and certainly, for the love of knowledge. The next sciences to yield

great harvests now will be psychology and neural physiology. These perplexities of the situation between man and woman and the trouble with the obstinacy of egotism, these are temporary troubles, the issue of our own times. Suddenly all these differences that seem so fixed will dissolve, all these incompatibles will run together, and we shall go on to mould our bodies and our bodily feelings and personal reactions as boldly as we begin now to carve mountains and set the seas in their places and change the currents of the wind.'

'It is the next wave,' said Fowler, who had come out upon the terrace and seated himself silently behind Karenin's chair.

'Of course, in the old days,' said Edwards, 'men were tied to their city or their country, tied to the homes they owned or the work they did....'

'I do not see,' said Karenin, 'that there is any final limit to man's power of self-modification.

'There is none,' said Fowler, walking forward and sitting down upon the parapet in front of Karenin so that he could see his face. 'There is no absolute limit to either knowledge or power.... I hope you do not tire yourself talking.'

'I am interested,' said Karenin. 'I suppose in a little while men will cease to be tired. I suppose in a little time you will give us something that will hurry away the fatigue products and restore our jaded tissues

almost at once. This old machine may be made to run without slacking or cessation.'

'That is possible, Karenin. But there is much to learn.'

'And all the hours we give to digestion and half living; don't you think there will be some way of saving these?'

Fowler nodded assent.

'And then sleep again. When man with his blazing lights made an end to night in his towns and houses--it is only a hundred years or so ago that that was done--then it followed he would presently resent his eight hours of uselessness. Shan't we presently take a tabloid or lie in some field of force that will enable us to do with an hour or so of slumber and rise refreshed again?'

'Frobisher and Ameer Ali have done work in that direction.'

'And then the inconveniences of age and those diseases of the system that come with years; steadily you drive them back and you lengthen and lengthen the years that stretch between the passionate tumults of youth and the contractions of senility. Man who used to weaken and die as his teeth decayed now looks forward to a continually lengthening, continually fuller term of years. And all those parts of him that once gathered evil against him, the vestigial structures and odd, treacherous

corners of his body, you know better and better how to deal with. You carve his body about and leave it re-modelled and unscarred. The psychologists are learning how to mould minds, to reduce and remove bad complexes of thought and motive, to relieve pressures and broaden ideas. So that we are becoming more and more capable of transmitting what we have learnt and preserving it for the race. The race, the racial wisdom, science, gather power continually to subdue the individual man to its own end. Is that not so?'

Fowler said that it was, and for a time he was telling Karenin of new work that was in progress in India and Russia. 'And how is it with heredity?' asked Karenin.

Fowler told them of the mass of inquiry accumulated and arranged by the genius of Tchen, who was beginning to define clearly the laws of inheritance and how the sex of children and the complexions and many of the parental qualities could be determined.

'He can actually DO----?'

'It is still, so to speak, a mere laboratory triumph,' said Fowler, 'but to-morrow it will be practicable.'

'You see,' cried Karenin, turning a laughing face to Rachel and Edith, 'while we have been theorising about men and women, here is science getting the power for us to end that old dispute for ever. If woman is

too much for us, we'll reduce her to a minority, and if we do not like any type of men and women, we'll have no more of it. These old bodies, these old animal limitations, all this earthly inheritance of gross inevitabilities falls from the spirit of man like the shrivelled cocoon from an imago. And for my own part, when I hear of these things I feel like that--like a wet, crawling new moth that still fears to spread its wings. Because where do these things take us?'

'Beyond humanity,' said Kahn.

'No,' said Karenin. 'We can still keep our feet upon the earth that made us. But the air no longer imprisons us, this round planet is no longer chained to us like the ball of a galley slave....

'In a little while men who will know how to bear the strange gravitations, the altered pressures, the attenuated, unfamiliar gases and all the fearful strangenesses of space will be venturing out from this earth. This ball will be no longer enough for us; our spirit will reach out.... Cannot you see how that little argosy will go glittering up into the sky, twinkling and glittering smaller and smaller until the blue swallows it up. They may succeed out there; they may perish, but other men will follow them....

'It is as if a great window opened,' said Karenin.

Section 9

As the evening drew on Karenin and those who were about him went up upon the roof of the buildings, so that they might the better watch the sunset and the flushing of the mountains and the coming of the afterglow. They were joined by two of the surgeons from the laboratories below, and presently by a nurse who brought Karenin refreshment in a thin glass cup. It was a cloudless, windless evening under the deep blue sky, and far away to the north glittered two biplanes on the way to the observatories on Everest, two hundred miles distant over the precipices to the east. The little group of people watched them pass over the mountains and vanish into the blue, and then for a time they talked of the work that the observatory was doing. From that they passed to the whole process of research about the world, and so Karenin's thoughts returned again to the mind of the world and the great future that was opening upon man's imagination. He asked the surgeons many questions upon the detailed possibilities of their science, and he was keenly interested and excited by the things they told him. And as they talked the sun touched the mountains, and became very swiftly a blazing and indented hemisphere of liquid flame and sank.

Karenin looked blinking at the last quivering rim of incandescence, and shaded his eyes and became silent.

Presently he gave a little start.

'What?' asked Rachel Borken.

'I had forgotten,' he said.

'What had you forgotten?'

'I had forgotten about the operation to-morrow. I have been so interested as Man to-day that I have nearly forgotten Marcus Karenin. Marcus Karenin must go under your knife to-morrow, Fowler, and very probably Marcus Karenin will die.' He raised his slightly shrivelled hand. 'It does not matter, Fowler. It scarcely matters even to me. For indeed is it Karenin who has been sitting here and talking; is it not rather a common mind, Fowler, that has played about between us? You and I and all of us have added thought to thought, but the thread is neither you nor me. What is true we all have; when the individual has altogether brought himself to the test and winnowing of expression, then the individual is done. I feel as though I had already been emptied out of that little vessel, that Marcus Karenin, which in my youth held me so tightly and completely. Your beauty, dear Edith, and your broad brow, dear Rachel, and you, Fowler, with your firm and skilful hands, are now almost as much to me as this hand that beats the arm of my chair. And as little me. And the spirit that desires to know, the spirit that resolves to do, that spirit that lives and has talked in us to-day, lived in Athens, lived in Florence, lives on, I know, for ever....

'And you, old Sun, with your sword of flame searing these poor eyes of Marcus for the last time of all, beware of me! You think I die--and

indeed I am only taking off one more coat to get at you. I have threatened you for ten thousand years, and soon I warn you I shall be coming. When I am altogether stripped and my disguises thrown away. Very soon now, old Sun, I shall launch myself at you, and I shall reach you and I shall put my foot on your spotted face and tug you about by your fiery locks. One step I shall take to the moon, and then I shall leap at you. I've talked to you before, old Sun, I've talked to you a million times, and now I am beginning to remember. Yes--long ago, long ago, before I had stripped off a few thousand generations, dust now and forgotten, I was a hairy savage and I pointed my hand at you and--clearly I remember it!--I saw you in a net. Have you forgotten that, old Sun? . . .

'Old Sun, I gather myself together out of the pools of the individual that have held me dispersed so long. I gather my billion thoughts into science and my million wills into a common purpose. Well may you slink down behind the mountains from me, well may you cower....'

Section 10

Karenin desired that he might dream alone for a little while before he returned to the cell in which he was to sleep. He was given relief for a pain that began to trouble him and wrapped warmly about with furs, for a great coldness was creeping over all things, and so they left him, and he sat for a long time watching the afterglow give place to the darkness of night.

It seemed to those who had to watch over him unobtrusively lest he should be in want of any attention, that he mused very deeply.

The white and purple peaks against the golden sky sank down into cold, blue remoteness, glowed out again and faded again, and the burning cressets of the Indian stars, that even the moonrise cannot altogether quench, began their vigil. The moon rose behind the towering screen of dark precipices to the east, and long before it emerged above these, its slanting beams had filled the deep gorges below with luminous mist and turned the towers and pinnacles of Lio Porgyul to a magic dreamcastle of radiance and wonder....

Came a great uprush of ghostly light above the black rim of rocks, and then like a bubble that is blown and detaches itself the moon floated off clear into the unfathomable dark sky....

And then Karenin stood up. He walked a few paces along the terrace and remained for a time gazing up at that great silver disc, that silvery shield that must needs be man's first conquest in outer space....

Presently he turned about and stood with his hands folded behind him, looking at the northward stars. . . .

At length he went to his own cell. He lay down there and slept peacefully till the morning. And early in the morning they came to him

and the anaesthetic was given him and the operation performed.

It was altogether successful, but Karenin was weak and he had to lie very still; and about seven days later a blood clot detached itself from the healing scar and travelled to his heart, and he died in an instant in the night.