

## CHAPTER THE FOURTH

### AT MAIDENHEAD

#### Section 1

The little Charmeuse was towed to hospital and the two psychiatrists took up their quarters at the Radiant Hotel with its pleasant lawns and graceful landing stage at the bend towards the bridge. Sir Richmond, after some trying work at the telephone, got into touch with his own proper car. A man would bring the car down in two days' time at latest, and afterwards the detested coupe could go back to London. The day was still young, and after lunch and coffee upon a sunny lawn a boat seemed indicated. Sir Richmond astonished the doctor by going to his room, reappearing dressed in tennis flannels and looking very well in them. It occurred to the doctor as a thing hitherto unnoted that Sir Richmond was not indifferent to his personal appearance. The doctor had no flannels, but he had brought a brown holland umbrella lined with green that he had acquired long ago in Algiers, and this served to give him something of the riverside quality.

The day was full of sunshine and the river had a Maytime animation. Pink geraniums, vivid green lawns, gay awnings, bright glass, white paint and shining metal set the tone of Maidenhead life. At lunch there had been five or six small tables with quietly affectionate couples who talked in undertones, a tableful of bright-coloured Jews who talked in overtones,

and a family party from the Midlands, badly smitten with shyness, who did not talk at all. "A resort, of honeymoon couples," said the doctor, and then rather knowingly: "Temporary honeymoons, I fancy, in one or two of the cases."

"Decidedly temporary," said Sir Richmond, considering the company--"in most of the cases anyhow. The two in the corner might be married. You never know nowadays."

He became reflective....

After lunch and coffee he rowed the doctor up the river towards Cliveden.

"The last time I was here," he said, returning to the subject, "I was here on a temporary honeymoon."

The doctor tried to look as though he had not thought that could be possible.

"I know my Maidenhead fairly well," said Sir Richmond. "Aquatic activities, such as rowing, punting, messing about with a boat-hook, tying up, buzzing about in motor launches, fouling other people's boats, are merely the stage business of the drama. The ruling interests of this place are love--largely illicit--and persistent drinking.... Don't you think the bridge charming from here?"

"I shouldn't have thought--drinking," said Dr. Martineau, after he had done justice to the bridge over his shoulder.

"Yes, the place has a floating population of quiet industrious soakers. The incurable river man and the river girl end at that."

Dr. Martineau encouraged Sir Richmond by an appreciative silence.

"If we are to explore the secret places of the heart," Sir Richmond went on, "we shall have to give some attention to this Maidenhead side of life. It is very material to my case. I have,--as I have said--BEEN HERE. This place has beauty and charm; these piled-up woods behind which my Lords Astor and Desborough keep their state, this shining mirror of the water, brown and green and sky blue, this fringe of reeds and scented rushes and forget-me-not and lilies, and these perpetually posing white swans: they make a picture. A little artificial it is true; one feels the presence of a Conservancy Board, planting the rushes and industriously nicking the swans; but none the less delightful. And this setting has appealed to a number of people as an invitation, as, in a way, a promise. They come here, responsive to that promise of beauty and happiness. They conceive of themselves here, rowing swiftly and gracefully, punting beautifully, brandishing boat-hooks with ease and charm. They look to meet, under pleasant or romantic circumstances, other possessors and worshippers of grace and beauty here. There will be glowing evenings, warm moonlight, distant voices singing....There is

your desire, doctor, the desire you say is the driving force of life. But reality mocks it. Boats bump and lead to coarse ungracious quarrels; rowing can be curiously fatiguing; punting involves dreadful indignities. The romance here tarnishes very quickly. Romantic encounters fail to occur; in our impatience we resort to--accosting. Chilly mists arise from the water and the magic of distant singing is provided, even excessively, by boatloads of cads--with collecting dishes. When the weather keeps warm there presently arises an extraordinary multitude of gnats, and when it does not there is a need for stimulants. That is why the dreamers who come here first for a light delicious brush with love, come down at last to the Thameside barmaid with her array of spirits and cordials as the quintessence of all desire."

"I say," said the doctor. "You tear the place to pieces."

"The desires of the place," said Sir Richmond.

"I'm using the place as a symbol."

He held his sculls awash, rippling in the water.

"The real force of life, the rage of life, isn't here," he said. "It's down underneath, sulking and smouldering. Every now and then it strains and cracks the surface. This stretch of the Thames, this pleasure stretch, has in fact a curiously quarrelsome atmosphere. People scold

and insult one another for the most trivial things, for passing too close, for taking the wrong side, for tying up or floating loose. Most of these notice boards on the bank show a thoroughly nasty spirit. People on the banks jeer at anyone in the boats. You hear people quarrelling in boats, in the hotels, as they walk along the towing path. There is remarkably little happy laughter here. The RAGE, you see, is hostile to this place, the RAGE breaks through.... The people who drift from one pub to another, drinking, the people who fuddle in the riverside hotels, are the last fugitives of pleasure, trying to forget the rage...."

"Isn't it that there is some greater desire at the back of the human mind?" the doctor suggested. "Which refuses to be content with pleasure as an end?"

"What greater desire?" asked Sir Richmond, disconcertingly.

"Oh!..." The doctor cast about.

"There is no such greater desire," said Sir Richmond. "You cannot name it. It is just blind drive. I admit its discontent with pleasure as an end--but has it any end of its own? At the most you can say that the rage in life is seeking its desire and hasn't found it."

"Let us help in the search," said the doctor, with an afternoon smile under his green umbrella. "Go on."

## Section 2

"Since our first talk in Harley Street," said Sir Richmond, "I have been trying myself over in my mind. (We can drift down this backwater.)"

"Big these trees are," said the doctor with infinite approval.

"I am astonished to discover what a bundle of discordant motives I am. I do not seem to deserve to be called a personality. I cannot discover even a general direction. Much more am I like a taxi-cab in which all sorts of aims and desires have travelled to their destination and got out. Are we all like that?"

"A bundle held together by a name and address and a certain thread of memory?" said the doctor and considered. "More than that. More than that. We have leading ideas, associations, possessions, liabilities."

"We build ourselves a prison of circumstances that keeps us from complete dispersal."

"Exactly," said the doctor. "And there is also something, a consistency, that we call character."

"It changes."

"Consistently with itself."

"I have been trying to recall my sexual history," said Sir Richmond, going off at a tangent. "My sentimental education. I wonder if it differs very widely from yours or most men's."

"Some men are more eventful in these matters than others," said the doctor,--it sounded--wistfully.

"They have the same jumble of motives and traditions, I suspect, whether they are eventful or not. The brakes may be strong or weak but the drive is the same. I can't remember much of the beginnings of curiosity and knowledge in these matters. Can you?"

"Not much," said the doctor. "No."

"Your psychoanalysts tell a story of fears, suppressions, monstrous imaginations, symbolic replacements. I don't remember much of that sort of thing in my own case. It may have faded out of my mind. There were probably some uneasy curiosities, a grotesque dream or so perhaps; I can't recall anything of that sort distinctly now. I had a very lively interest in women, even when I was still quite a little boy, and a certain--what shall I call it?--imaginative slavishness--not towards actual women but towards something magnificently feminine. My first love--"

Sir Richmond smiled at some secret memory. "My first love was Britannia as depicted by Tenniel in the cartoons in PUNCH. I must have been a very little chap at the time of the Britannia affair. I just clung to her in my imagination and did devoted things for her. Then I recall, a little later, a secret abject adoration for the white goddesses of the Crystal Palace. Not for any particular one of them that I can remember,--for all of them. But I don't remember anything very monstrous or incestuous in my childish imaginations,--such things as Freud, I understand, lays stress upon. If there was an Oedipus complex or anything of that sort in my case it has been very completely washed out again. Perhaps a child which is brought up in a proper nursery of its own and sees a lot of pictures of the nude human body, and so on, gets its mind shifted off any possible concentration upon the domestic aspect of sex. I got to definite knowledge pretty early. By the time I was eleven or twelve."

"Normally?"

"What is normally? Decently, anyhow. Here again I may be forgetting much secret and shameful curiosity. I got my ideas into definite form out of a little straightforward physiological teaching and some dissecting of rats and mice. My schoolmaster was a capable sane man in advance of his times and my people believed in him. I think much of this distorted perverse stuff that grows up in people's minds about sex and develops into evil vices and still more evil habits, is due to the mystery we make about these things."



"Not entirely," said the doctor.

"Largely. What child under a modern upbringing ever goes through the stuffy horrors described in James Joyce's PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN."

"I've not read it."

"A picture of the Catholic atmosphere; a young soul shut up in darkness and ignorance to accumulate filth. In the name of purity and decency and under threats of hell fire."

"Horrible!"

"Quite. A study of intolerable tensions, the tensions that make young people write unclean words in secret places."

"Yes, we certainly ventilate and sanitize in those matters nowadays. Where nothing is concealed, nothing can explode."

"On the whole I came up to adolescence pretty straight and clean," said Sir Richmond. "What stands out in my memory now is this idea, of a sort of woman goddess who was very lovely and kind and powerful and wonderful. That ruled my secret imaginations as a boy, but it was very much in my mind as I grew up."

"The mother complex," said Dr. Martineau as a passing botanist might recognize and name a flower.

Sir Richmond stared at him for a moment.

"It had not the slightest connexion with my mother or any mother or any particular woman at all. Far better to call it the goddess complex."

"The connexion is not perhaps immediately visible," said the doctor.

"There was no connexion," said Sir Richmond. "The women of my adolescent dreams were stripped and strong and lovely. They were great creatures. They came, it was clearly traceable, from pictures sculpture--and from a definite response in myself to their beauty. My mother had nothing whatever to do with that. The women and girls about me were fussy bunches of clothes that I am sure I never even linked with that dream world of love and worship."

"Were you co-educated?"

"No. But I had a couple of sisters, one older, one younger than myself, and there were plenty of girls in my circle. I thought some of them pretty--but that was a different affair. I know that I didn't connect them with the idea of the loved and worshipped goddesses at all, because I remember when I first saw the goddess in a real human being and how amazed I was at the discovery.... I was a boy of twelve or thirteen. My

people took me one summer to Dymchurch in Romney Marsh; in those days before the automobile had made the Marsh accessible to the Hythe and Folkestone crowds, it was a little old forgotten silent wind-bitten village crouching under the lee of the great sea wall. At low water there were miles of sand as smooth and shining as the skin of a savage brown woman. Shining and with a texture--the very same. And one day as I was mucking about by myself on the beach, boy fashion,--there were some ribs of a wrecked boat buried in the sand near a groin and I was busy with them--a girl ran out from a tent high up on the beach and across the sands to the water. She was dressed in a tight bathing dress and not in the clumsy skirts and frills that it was the custom to inflict on women in those days. Her hair was tied up in a blue handkerchief. She ran swiftly and gracefully, intent upon the white line of foam ahead. I can still remember how the sunlight touched her round neck and cheek as she went past me. She was the loveliest, most shapely thing I have ever seen--to this day. She lifted up her arms and thrust through the dazzling white and green breakers and plunged into the water and swam; she swam straight out for a long way as it seemed to me, and presently came in and passed me again on her way back to her tent, light and swift and sure. The very prints of her feet on the sand were beautiful. Suddenly I realized that there could be living people in the world as lovely as any goddess.... She wasn't in the least out of breath.

"That was my first human love. And I love that girl still. I doubt sometimes whether I have ever loved anyone else. I kept the thing very secret. I wonder now why I have kept the thing so secret. Until now I

have never told a soul about it. I resorted to all sorts of tortuous devices and excuses to get a chance of seeing her again without betraying what it was I was after."

Dr. Martineau retained a simple fondness for a story.

"And did you meet her again?"

"Never. Of course I may have seen her as a dressed-up person and not recognized her. A day or so later I was stabbed to the heart by the discovery that the tent she came out of had been taken away."

"She had gone?"

"For ever."

Sir Richmond smiled brightly at the doctor's disappointment.

Section 3

"I was never wholehearted and simple about sexual things," Sir Richmond resumed presently. "Never. I do not think any man is. We are too much plastered-up things, too much the creatures of a tortuous and complicated evolution."

Dr. Martineau, under his green umbrella, nodded his conceded agreement.

"This--what shall I call it?--this Dream of Women, grew up in my mind as I grew up--as something independent of and much more important than the reality of Women. It came only very slowly into relation with that. That girl on the Dymchurch beach was one of the first links, but she ceased very speedily to be real--she joined the women of dreamland at last altogether. She became a sort of legendary incarnation. I thought of these dream women not only as something beautiful but as something exceedingly kind and helpful. The girls and women I met belonged to a different creation...."

Sir Richmond stopped abruptly and rowed a few long strokes.

Dr. Martineau sought information.

"I suppose," he said, "there was a sensuous element in these dreamings?"

"Certainly. A very strong one. It didn't dominate but it was a very powerful undertow."

"Was there any tendency in all this imaginative stuff to concentrate? To group itself about a single figure, the sort of thing that Victorians would have called an ideal?"

"Not a bit of it," said Sir Richmond with conviction. "There was always a tremendous lot of variety in my mind. In fact the thing I liked least

in the real world was the way it was obsessed by the idea of pairing off with one particular set and final person. I liked to dream of a blonde goddess in her own Venusberg one day, and the next I would be off over the mountains with an armed Brunhild."

"You had little thought of children?"

"As a young man?"

"Yes."

"None at all. I cannot recall a single philoprogenitive moment. These dream women were all conceived of, and I was conceived of, as being concerned in some tremendous enterprise--something quite beyond domesticity. It kept us related--gave us dignity.... Certainly it wasn't babies."

"All this is very interesting, very interesting, from the scientific point of view. A PRIORI it is not what one might have expected. Reasoning from the idea that all instincts and natural imaginations are adapted to a biological end and seeing that sex is essentially a method of procreation, one might reasonably expect a convergence, if not a complete concentration, upon the idea of offspring. It is almost as if there were other ends to be served. It is clear that Nature has not worked this impulse out to any sight of its end. Has not perhaps troubled to do so. The instinct of the male for the female isn't

primarily for offspring--not even in the most intelligent and farseeing types. The desire just points to glowing satisfactions and illusions. Quite equally I think the desire of the female for the male ignores its end. Nature has set about this business in a CHEAP sort of way. She is like some pushful advertising tradesman. She isn't frank with us; she just humbugs us into what she wants with us. All very well in the early Stone Age--when the poor dear things never realized that their mutual endearments meant all the troubles and responsibilities of parentage. But NOW--!"

He shook his head sideways and twirled the green umbrella like an animated halo around his large broad-minded face.

Sir Richmond considered. "Desire has never been the chief incentive of my relations with women. Never. So far as I can analyze the thing, it has been a craving for a particular sort of life giving companionship."

"That I take it is Nature's device to keep the lovers together in the interest of the more or less unpremeditated offspring."

"A poor device, if that is its end. It doesn't keep parents together; more often it tears them apart. The wife or the mistress, so soon as she is encumbered with children, becomes all too manifestly not the companion goddess...."

Sir Richmond brooded over his sculls and thought.

"Throughout my life I have been an exceedingly busy man. I have done a lot of scientific work and some of it has been very good work. And very laborious work. I've travelled much. I've organized great business developments. You might think that my time has been fairly well filled without much philandering. And all the time, all the time, I've been--about women--like a thirsty beast looking for water.... Always. Always. All through my life."

Dr. Martineau waited through another silence.

"I was very grave about it at first. I married young. I married very simply and purely. I was not one of those young men who sow a large crop of wild oats. I was a fairly decent youth. It suddenly appeared to me that a certain smiling and dainty girl could make herself into all the goddesses of my dreams. I had but to win her and this miracle would occur. Of course I forget now the exact things I thought and felt then, but surely I had some such persuasion. Or why should I have married her? My wife was seven years younger than myself,--a girl of twenty. She was charming. She is charming. She is a wonderfully intelligent and understanding woman. She has made a home for me--a delightful home. I am one of those men who have no instinct for home making. I owe my home and all the comfort and dignity of my life to her ability. I have no excuse for any misbehaviour--so far as she is concerned. None at all. By all the rules I should have been completely happy. But instead of my marriage satisfying me, it presently released a storm of long-controlled



desires and imprisoned cravings. A voice within me became more and more urgent. 'This will not do. This is not love. Where are your goddesses? This is not love.'... And I was unfaithful to my wife within four years of my marriage. It was a sudden overpowering impulse. But I suppose the ground had been preparing for a long time. I forget now all the emotions of that adventure. I suppose at the time it seemed beautiful and wonderful.... I do not excuse myself. Still less do I condemn myself. I put the facts before you. So it was."

"There were no children by your marriage?"

"Your line of thought, doctor, is too philoprogenitive. We have had three. My daughter was married two years ago. She is in America. One little boy died when he was three. The other is in India, taking up the Mardipore power scheme again now that he is out of the army.... No, it is simply that I was hopelessly disappointed with everything that a good woman and a decent marriage had to give me. Pure disappointment and vexation. The anti-climax to an immense expectation built up throughout an imaginative boyhood and youth and early manhood. I was shocked and ashamed at my own disappointment. I thought it mean and base. Nevertheless this orderly household into which I had placed my life, these almost methodical connubialities...."

He broke off in mid-sentence.

Dr. Martineau shook his head disapprovingly.

"No," he said, "it wasn't fair to your wife."

"It was shockingly unfair. I have always realized that. I've done what I could to make things up to her.... Heaven knows what counter disappointments she has concealed.... But it is no good arguing about rights and wrongs now. This is not an apology for my life. I am telling you what happened.

"Not for me to judge," said Dr. Martineau. "Go on."

"By marrying I had got nothing that my soul craved for, I had satisfied none but the most transitory desires and I had incurred a tremendous obligation. That obligation didn't restrain me from making desperate lunges at something vaguely beautiful that I felt was necessary to me; but it did cramp and limit these lunges. So my story flops down into the comedy of the lying, cramped intrigues of a respectable, married man...I was still driven by my dream of some extravagantly beautiful inspiration called love and I sought it like an area sneak. Gods! What a story it is when one brings it all together! I couldn't believe that the glow and sweetness I dreamt of were not in the world--somewhere. Hidden away from me. I seemed to catch glimpses of the dear lost thing, now in the corners of a smiling mouth, now in dark eyes beneath a black smoke of hair, now in a slim form seen against the sky. Often I cared nothing for the woman I made love to. I cared for the thing she seemed to be hiding from me...."

Sir Richmond's voice altered.

"I don't see what possible good it can do to talk over these things." He began to row and rowed perhaps a score of strokes. Then he stopped and the boat drove on with a whisper of water at the bow and over the outstretched oar blades.

"What a muddle and mockery the whole thing is!" he cried. "What a fumbling old fool old Mother Nature has been! She drives us into indignity and dishonour: and she doesn't even get the children which are her only excuse for her mischief. See what a fantastic thing I am when you take the machine to pieces! I have been a busy and responsible man throughout my life. I have handled complicated public and industrial affairs not unsuccessfully and discharged quite big obligations fully and faithfully. And all the time, hidden away from the public eye, my life has been laced by the thread of these--what can one call them?--love adventures. How many? you ask. I don't know. Never have I been a whole-hearted lover; never have I been able to leave love alone.... Never has love left me alone.

"And as I am made," said Sir Richmond with sudden insistence, "AS I AM MADE--I do not believe that I could go on without these affairs. I know that you will be disposed to dispute that."

Dr. Martineau made a reassuring noise.

"These affairs are at once unsatisfying and vitally necessary. It is only latterly that I have begun to perceive this. Women MAKE life for me. Whatever they touch or see or desire becomes worth while and otherwise it is not worth while. Whatever is lovely in my world, whatever is delightful, has been so conveyed to me by some woman. Without the vision they give me, I should be a hard dry industry in the world, a worker ant, a soulless rage, making much, valuing nothing."

He paused.

"You are, I think, abnormal," considered the doctor.

"Not abnormal. Excessive, if you like. Without women I am a wasting fever of distressful toil. Without them there is no kindness in existence, no rest, no sort of satisfaction. The world is a battlefield, trenches, barbed wire, rain, mud, logical necessity and utter desolation--with nothing whatever worth fighting for. Whatever justifies effort, whatever restores energy is hidden in women...."

"An excess of sex," said Dr. Martineau. "This is a phase...."

"It is how I am made," said Sir Richmond.

A brief silence fell upon that. Dr. Martineau persisted. "It isn't how you are made. We are getting to something in all this. It is, I insist,

a mood of how you are made. A distinctive and indicative mood."

Sir Richmond went on, almost as if he soliloquized.

"I would go through it all again.... There are times when the love of women seems the only real thing in the world to me. And always it remains the most real thing. I do not know how far I may be a normal man or how far I may not be, so to speak, abnormally male, but to me life has very little personal significance and no value or power until it has a woman as intermediary. Before life can talk to me and say anything that matters a woman must be present as a medium. I don't mean that it has no significance mentally and logically; I mean that irrationally and emotionally it has no significance. Works of art, for example, bore me, literature bores me, scenery bores me, even the beauty of a woman bores me, unless I find in it some association with a woman's feeling. It isn't that I can't tell for myself that a picture is fine or a mountain valley lovely, but that it doesn't matter a rap to me whether it is or whether it isn't until there is a feminine response, a sexual motif, if you like to call it that, coming in. Whatever there is of loveliness or pride in life doesn't LIVE for me until somehow a woman comes in and breathes upon it the breath of life. I cannot even rest until a woman makes holiday for me. Only one thing can I do without women and that is work, joylessly but effectively, and latterly for some reason that it is up to you to discover, doctor, even the power of work has gone from me."

Section 4

"This afternoon brings back to me very vividly my previous visit here. It was perhaps a dozen or fifteen years ago. We rowed down this same backwater. I can see my companion's hand--she had very pretty hands with rosy palms--trailing in the water, and her shadowed face smiling quietly under her sunshade, with little faint streaks of sunlight, reflected from the ripples, dancing and quivering across it. She was one of those people who seem always to be happy and to radiate happiness.

"By ordinary standards," said Sir Richmond, "she was a thoroughly bad lot. She had about as much morality, in the narrower sense of the word, as a monkey. And yet she stands out in my mind as one of the most honest women I have ever met. She was certainly one of the kindest. Part of that effect of honesty may have been due to her open brow, her candid blue eyes, the smiling frankness of her manner.... But--no! She was really honest.

"We drifted here as we are doing now. She pulled at the sweet rushes and crushed them in her hand. She adds a remembered brightness to this afternoon.

"Honest. Friendly. Of all the women I have known, this woman who was here with me came nearest to being my friend. You know, what we call virtue in a woman is a tremendous handicap to any real friendliness with a man. Until she gets to an age when virtue and fidelity are no longer urgent practical concerns, a good woman, by the very definition of

feminine goodness, isn't truly herself. Over a vast extent of her being she is RESERVED. She suppresses a vast amount of her being, holds back, denies, hides. On the other hand, there is a frankness and honesty in openly bad women arising out of the admitted fact that they are bad, that they hide no treasure from you, they have no peculiarly precious and delicious secrets to keep, and no poverty to conceal. Intellectually they seem to be more manly and vigorous because they are, as people say, unsexed. Many old women, thoroughly respectable old women, have the same quality. Because they have gone out of the personal sex business. Haven't you found that?"

"I have never," said the doctor, "known what you call an openly bad woman,--at least, at all intimately...."

Sir Richmond looked with quick curiosity at his companion. "You have avoided them!"

"They don't attract me."

"They repel you?"

"For me," said the doctor, "for any friendliness, a woman must be modest.... My habits of thought are old-fashioned, I suppose, but the mere suggestion about a woman that there were no barriers, no reservation, that in any fashion she might more than meet me half way..."

His facial expression completed his sentence.

"Now I wonder," whispered Sir Richmond, and hesitated for a moment before he carried the great research into the explorer's country.

"You are afraid of women?" he said, with a smile to mitigate the impertinence.

"I respect them."

"An element of fear."

"Well, I am afraid of them then. Put it that way if you like. Anyhow I do not let myself go with them. I have never let myself go."

"You lose something. You lose a reality of insight."

There was a thoughtful interval.

"Having found so excellent a friend," said the doctor, "why did you ever part from her?"

Sir Richmond seemed indisposed to answer, but Dr. Martineau's face remained slantingly interrogative. He had found the effective counterattack and he meant to press it. "I was jealous of her," Sir Richmond admitted. "I couldn't stand that side of it."



## Section 5

After a meditative silence the doctor became briskly professional again.

"You care for your wife," he said. "You care very much for your wife. She is, as you say, your great obligation and you are a man to respect obligations. I grasp that. Then you tell me of these women who have come and gone.... About them too you are perfectly frank... There remains someone else." Sir Richmond stared at his physician.

"Well," he said and laughed. "I didn't pretend to have made my autobiography anything more than a sketch."

"No, but there is a special person, the current person."

"I haven't dilated on my present situation, I admit."

"From some little things that have dropped from you, I should say there is a child."

"That," said Sir Richmond after a brief pause, "is a good guess."

"Not older than three."

"Two years and a half."

"You and this lady who is, I guess, young, are separated. At any rate, you can't go to her. That leaves you at loose ends, because for some time, for two or three years at least, you have ceased to be--how shall I put it?--an emotional wanderer."

"I begin to respect your psychoanalysis."

"Hence your overwhelming sense of the necessity of feminine companionship for weary men. I guess she is a very jolly companion to be with, amusing, restful--interesting."

"H'm," said Sir Richmond. "I think that is a fair description. When she cares, that is. When she is in good form."

"Which she isn't at present," hazarded the doctor. He exploded a mine of long-pent exasperation.

"She is the clumsiest hand at keeping well that I have ever known. Health is a woman's primary duty. But she is incapable of the most elementary precautions. She is maddeningly receptive to every infection. At the present moment, when I am ill, when I am in urgent need of help and happiness, she has let that wretched child get measles and she herself won't let me go near her because she has got something disfiguring, something nobody else could ever have or think of having, called CARBUNCLE. Carbuncle!"

"It is very painful," said Dr. Martineau. "No doubt it is," said Sir Richmond.

"No doubt it is." His voice grew bitter. He spoke with deliberation. "A perfectly aimless, useless illness,--and as painful as it CAN be."

He spoke as if he slammed a door viciously. And indeed he had slammed a door. The doctor realized that for the present there was no more self-dissection to be got from Sir Richmond.

For some time Sir Richmond had been keeping the boat close up to the foaming weir to the left of the lock by an occasional stroke. Now with a general air of departure he swung the boat round and began to row down stream towards the bridge and the Radiant Hotel.

"Time we had tea," he said.

## Section 6

After tea Dr. Martineau left Sir Richmond in a chair upon the lawn, brooding darkly--apparently over the crime of the carbuncle. The doctor went to his room, ostensibly to write a couple of letters and put on a dinner jacket, but really to make a few notes of the afternoon's conversation and meditate over his impressions while they were fresh.

His room proffered a comfortable armchair and into this he sank...

A number of very discrepant things were busy in his mind. He had experienced a disconcerting personal attack. There was a whirl of active resentment in the confusion.

"Apologetics of a rake," he tried presently.

"A common type, stripped of his intellectual dressing. Every third manufacturer from the midlands or the north has some such undertow of 'affairs.' A physiological uneasiness, an imaginative laxity, the temptations of the trip to London--weakness masquerading as a psychological necessity. The Lady of the Carbuncle seems to have got rather a hold upon him. She has kept him in order for three or four years."

The doctor scrutinized his own remarks with a judicious expression.

"I am not being fair. He ruffled me. Even if it is true, as I said, that every third manufacturer from the midlands is in much the same case as he is, that does not dismiss the case. It makes it a more important one, much more important: it makes it a type case with the exceptional quality of being self-expressive. Almost too selfexpressive.

"Sir Richmond does, after all, make out a sort of case for himself..."

"A valid case?"

The doctor sat deep in his chair, frowning judicially with the fingers of one hand apposed to the fingers of the other. "He makes me bristle because all his life and ideas challenge my way of living. But if I eliminate the personal element?"

He pulled a sheet of note-paper towards him and began to jot down notes with a silver-cased pencil. Soon he discontinued writing and sat tapping his pencil-case on the table. "The amazing selfishness of his attitude! I do not think that once--not once--has he judged any woman except as a contributor to his energy and peace of mind.... Except in the case of his wife....

"For her his habit of respect was formed before his ideas developed....

"That I think explains HER....

"What was his phrase about the unfortunate young woman with the carbuncle?... 'Totally Useless and unnecessary illness,' was it?...

"Now has a man any right by any standards to use women as this man has used them?

"By any standards?"

The doctor frowned and nodded his head slowly with the corners of his

mouth drawn in.

For some years now an intellectual reverie had been playing an increasing part in the good doctor's life. He was writing this book of his, writing it very deliberately and laboriously, THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A NEW AGE, but much more was he dreaming and thinking about this book. Its publication was to mark an epoch in human thought and human affairs generally, and create a considerable flutter of astonishment in the doctor's own little world. It was to bring home to people some various aspects of one very startling proposition: that human society had arrived at a phase when the complete restatement of its fundamental ideas had become urgently necessary, a phase when the slow, inadequate, partial adjustments to two centuries of changing conditions had to give place to a rapid reconstruction of new fundamental ideas. And it was a fact of great value in the drama of these secret dreams that the directive force towards this fundamentally reconstructed world should be the pen of an unassuming Harley Street physician, hitherto not suspected of any great excesses of enterprise.

The written portions of this book were already in a highly polished state. They combined a limitless freedom of proposal with a smooth urbanity of manner, a tacit denial that the thoughts of one intelligent being could possibly be shocking to another. Upon this the doctor was very insistent. Conduct, he held, could never be sufficiently discreet, thought could never be sufficiently free. As a citizen, one had to treat a law or an institution as a thing as rigidly right as a natural law.

That the social well-being demands. But as a scientific man, in one's stated thoughts and in public discussion, the case was altogether different. There was no offence in any possible hypothesis or in the contemplation of any possibility. Just as when one played a game one was bound to play in unquestioning obedience to the laws and spirit of the game, but if one was not playing that game then there was no reason why one should not contemplate the completest reversal of all its methods and the alteration and abandonment of every rule. Correctness of conduct, the doctor held, was an imperative concomitant of all really free thinking. Revolutionary speculation is one of those things that must be divorced absolutely from revolutionary conduct. It was to the neglect of these obvious principles, as the doctor considered them, that the general muddle in contemporary marital affairs was very largely due. We left divorce-law revision to exposed adulterers and marriage reform to hot adolescents and craving spinsters driven by the furies within them to assertions that established nothing and to practical demonstrations that only left everybody thoroughly uncomfortable. Far better to leave all these matters to calm, patient men in easy chairs, weighing typical cases impartially, ready to condone, indisposed to envy.

In return for which restraint on the part of the eager and adventurous, the calm patient man was prepared in his thoughts to fly high and go far. Without giving any guarantee, of course, that he might not ultimately return to the comfortable point of inaction from which he started.

In Sir Richmond, Dr. Martineau found the most interesting and encouraging confirmation of the fundamental idea of THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A NEW AGE, the immediate need of new criteria of conduct altogether. Here was a man whose life was evidently ruled by standards that were at once very high and very generous. He was overworking himself to the pitch of extreme distress and apparently he was doing this for ends that were essentially unselfish. Manifestly there were many things that an ordinary industrial or political magnate would do that Sir Richmond would not dream of doing, and a number of things that such a man would not feel called upon to do that he would regard as imperative duties. And mixed up with so much fine intention and fine conduct was this disreputable streak of intrigue and this extraordinary claim that such misconduct was necessary to continued vigour of action.

"To energy of thought it is not necessary," said Dr. Martineau, and considered for a time. "Yet--certainly--I am not a man of action. I admit it. I make few decisions."

The chapters of THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A NEW AGE dealing with women were still undrafted, but they had already greatly exercised the doctor's mind. He found now that the case of Sir Richmond had stirred his imagination. He sat with his hands apposed, his head on one side, and an expression of great intellectual contentment on his face while these emancipated ideas gave a sort of gala performance in his mind.



The good doctor did not dislike women, he had always guarded himself very carefully against misogyny, but he was very strongly disposed to regard them as much less necessary in the existing scheme of things than was generally assumed. Women, he conceded, had laid the foundations of social life. Through their contrivances and sacrifices and patience the fierce and lonely patriarchal family-herd of a male and his women and off spring had grown into the clan and tribe; the woven tissue of related families that constitute the human comity had been woven by the subtle, persistent protection of sons and daughters by their mothers against the intolerant, jealous, possessive Old Man. But that was a thing, of the remote past. Little was left of those ancient struggles now but a few infantile dreams and nightmares. The greater human community, human society, was made for good. And being made, it had taken over the ancient tasks of the woman, one by one, until now in its modern forms it cherished more sedulously than she did, it educated, it housed and comforted, it clothed and served and nursed, leaving the wife privileged, honoured, protected, for the sake of tasks she no longer did and of a burthen she no longer bore. "Progress has TRIVIALIZED women," said the doctor, and made a note of the word for later consideration.

"And woman has trivialized civilization," the doctor tried.

"She has retained her effect of being central, she still makes the social atmosphere, she raises men's instinctive hopes of help and direction. Except," the doctor stipulated, "for a few highly developed modern types, most men found the sense of achieving her a necessary

condition for sustained exertion. And there is no direction in her any more.

"She spends," said the doctor, "she just spends. She spends excitingly and competitively for her own pride and glory, she drives all the energy of men over the weirs of gain...."

"What are we to do with the creature?" whispered the doctor.

Apart from the procreative necessity, was woman an unavoidable evil? The doctor's untrammelled thoughts began to climb high, spin, nose dive and loop the loop. Nowadays we took a proper care of the young, we had no need for high birth rates, quite a small proportion of women with a gift in that direction could supply all the offspring that the world wanted. Given the power of determining sex that science was slowly winning today, and why should we have so many women about? A drastic elimination of the creatures would be quite practicable. A fantastic world to a vulgar imagination, no doubt, but to a calmly reasonable mind by no means fantastic. But this was where the case of Sir Richmond became so interesting. Was it really true that the companionship of women was necessary to these energetic creative types? Was it the fact that the drive of life towards action, as distinguished from contemplation, arose out of sex and needed to be refreshed by the reiteration of that motive? It was a plausible proposition: it marched with all the doctor's ideas of natural selection and of the conditions of a survival that have made us what we are. It was in tune with the Freudian analyses.

"SEX NOT ONLY A RENEWAL OF LIFE IN THE SPECIES," noted the doctor's silver pencil; "SEX MAY BE ALSO A RENEWAL OF ENERGY IN THE INDIVIDUAL."

After some musing he crossed out "sex" and wrote above it "sexual love."

"That is practically what he claims," Dr. Martineau said. "In which case we want the completest revision of all our standards of sexual obligation. We want a new system of restrictions and imperatives altogether."

It was a fixed idea of the doctor's that women were quite incapable of producing ideas in the same way that men do, but he believed that with suitable encouragement they could be induced to respond quite generously to such ideas. Suppose therefore we really educated the imaginations of women; suppose we turned their indubitable capacity for service towards social and political creativeness, not in order to make them the rivals of men in these fields, but their moral and actual helpers. "A man of this sort wants a mistress-mother," said the doctor. "He wants a sort of woman who cares more for him and his work and honour than she does for child or home or clothes or personal pride."

"But are there such women? Can there be such a woman?"

"His work needs to be very fine to deserve her help. But admitting its

fineness?...

"The alternative seems to be to teach the sexes to get along without each other."

"A neutralized world. A separated world. How we should jostle in the streets! But the early Christians have tried it already. The thing is impossible."

"Very well, then, we have to make women more responsible again. In a new capacity. We have to educate them far more seriously as sources of energy--as guardians and helpers of men. And we have to suppress them far more rigorously as tempters and dissipaters. Instead of mothering babies they have to mother the race...."

A vision of women made responsible floated before his eyes.

"Is that man working better since you got hold of him? If not, why not?"

"Or again,--Jane Smith was charged with neglecting her lover to the common danger.... The inspector said the man was in a pitiful state, morally quite uncombed and infested with vulgar, showy ideas...."

The doctor laughed, telescoped his pencil and stood up.

Section 7

It became evident after dinner that Sir Richmond also had been thinking over the afternoon's conversation.

He and Dr. Martineau sat in wide-armed cane chairs on the lawn with a wickerwork table bearing coffee cups and little glasses between them. A few other diners chatted and whispered about similar tables but not too close to our talkers to disturb them; the dining room behind them had cleared its tables and depressed its illumination. The moon, in its first quarter, hung above the sunset, sank after twilight, shone brighter and brighter among the western trees, and presently had gone, leaving the sky to an increasing multitude of stars. The Maidenhead river wearing its dusky blue draperies and its jewels of light had recovered all the magic Sir Richmond had stripped from it in the afternoon. The grave arches of the bridge, made complete circles by the reflexion of the water, sustained, as if by some unifying and justifying reason, the erratic flat flashes and streaks and glares of traffic that fretted to and fro overhead. A voice sang intermittently and a banjo tinkled, but remotely enough to be indistinct and agreeable.

"After all," Sir Richmond began abruptly, "the search for some sort of sexual modus vivendi is only a means to an end. One does not want to live for sex but only through sex. The main thing in my life has always been my work. This afternoon, under the Maidenhead influence, I talked too much of sex. I babbled. Of things one doesn't usually..."

"It was very illuminating," said the doctor.

"No doubt. But a temporary phase. It is the defective bearing talks....  
Just now--I happen to be irritated."

The darkness concealed a faint smile on the doctor's face.

"The work is the thing," said Sir Richmond. "So long as one can keep  
one's grip on it."

"What," said the doctor after a pause, leaning back and sending wreaths  
of smoke up towards the star-dusted zenith, "what is your idea of your  
work? I mean, how do you see it in relation to yourself--and things  
generally?"

"Put in the most general terms?"

"Put in the most general terms."

"I wonder if I can put it in general terms for you at all. It is hard to  
put something one is always thinking about in general terms or to think  
of it as a whole.... Now.... Fuel?..."

"I suppose it was my father's business interests that pushed me towards  
specialization in fuel. He wanted me to have a thoroughly scientific  
training in days when a scientific training was less easy to get for a

boy than it is today. And much more inspiring when you got it. My mind was framed, so to speak, in geology and astronomical physics. I grew up to think on that scale. Just as a man who has been trained in history and law grows to think on the scale of the Roman empire. I don't know what your pocket map of the universe is, the map, I mean, by which you judge all sorts of other general ideas. To me this planet is a little ball of oxides and nickel steel; life a sort of tarnish on its surface. And we, the minutest particles in that tarnish. Who can nevertheless, in some unaccountable way, take in the idea of this universe as one whole, who begin to dream of taking control of it."

"That is not a bad statement of the scientific point of view. I suppose I have much the same general idea of the world. On rather more psychological lines."

"We think, I suppose, said Sir Richmond, of life as something that is only just beginning to be aware of what it is--and what it might be."

"Exactly," said the doctor. "Good."

He went on eagerly. "That is precisely how I see it. You and I are just particles in the tarnish, as you call it, who are becoming dimly awake to what we are, to what we have in common. Only a very few of us have got as far even as this. These others here, for example...."

He indicated the rest of Maidenhead by a movement.

"Desire, mutual flattery, egotistical dreams, greedy solitudes fill them up. They haven't begun to get out of themselves."

"We, I suppose, have," doubted Sir Richmond.

"We have."

The doctor had no doubt. He lay back in his chair, with his hands behind his head and his smoke ascending vertically to heaven. With the greatest contentment he began quoting himself. "This getting out of one's individuality--this conscious getting out of one's individuality--is one of the most important and interesting aspects of the psychology of the new age that is now dawning. As compared with any previous age. Unconsciously, of course, every true artist, every philosopher, every scientific investigator, so far as his art or thought went, has always got out of himself,--has forgotten his personal interests and become Man thinking for the whole race. And intimations of the same thing have been at the heart of most religions. But now people are beginning to get this detachment without any distinctively religious feeling or any distinctive aesthetic or intellectual impulse, as if it were a plain matter of fact. Plain matter of fact, that we are only incidentally ourselves. That really each one of us is also the whole species, is really indeed all life."

"A part of it."



"An integral part-as sight is part of a man... with no absolute separation from all the rest--no more than a separation of the imagination. The whole so far as his distinctive quality goes. I do not know how this takes shape in your mind, Sir Richmond, but to me this idea of actually being life itself upon the world, a special phase of it dependent upon and connected with all other phases, and of being one of a small but growing number of people who apprehend that, and want to live in the spirit of that, is quite central. It is my fundamental idea. We,--this small but growing minority--constitute that part of life which knows and wills and tries to rule its destiny. This new realization, the new psychology arising out of it is a fact of supreme importance in the history of life. It is like the appearance of self-consciousness in some creature that has not hitherto had self-consciousness. And so far as we are concerned, we are the true kingship of the world. Necessarily. We who know, are the true king....I wonder how this appeals to you. It is stuff I have thought out very slowly and carefully and written and approved. It is the very core of my life.... And yet when one comes to say these things to someone else, face to face.... It is much more difficult to say than to write."

Sir Richmond noted how the doctor's chair creaked as he rolled to and fro with the uneasiness of these intimate utterances.

"I agree," said Sir Richmond presently. "One DOES think in this fashion. Something in this fashion. What one calls one's work does belong to

something much bigger than ourselves.

"Something much bigger," he expanded.

"Which something we become," the doctor urged, "in so far as our work takes hold of us."

Sir Richmond made no answer to this for a little while. "Of course we trail a certain egotism into our work," he said.

"Could we do otherwise? But it has ceased to be purely egotism. It is no longer, 'I am I' but 'I am part.'... One wants to be an honourable part."

"You think of man upon his planet," the doctor pursued. "I think of life rather as a mind that tries itself over in millions and millions of trials. But it works out to the same thing."

"I think in terms of fuel," said Sir Richmond.

He was still debating the doctor's generalization. "I suppose it would be true to say that I think of myself as mankind on his planet, with very considerable possibilities and with only a limited amount of fuel at his disposal to achieve them. Yes.... I agree that I think in that way.... I have not thought much before of the way in which I think about things--but I agree that it is in that way. Whatever enterprises mankind

attempts are limited by the sum total of that store of fuel upon the planet. That is very much in my mind. Besides that he has nothing but his annual allowance of energy from the sun."

"I thought that presently we were to get unlimited energy from atoms," said the doctor.

"I don't believe in that as a thing immediately practicable. No doubt getting a supply of energy from atoms is a theoretical possibility, just as flying was in the time of Daedalus; probably there were actual attempts at some sort of glider in ancient Crete. But before we get to the actual utilization of atomic energy there will be ten thousand difficult corners to turn; we may have to wait three or four thousand years for it. We cannot count on it. We haven't it in hand. There may be some impasse. All we have surely is coal and oil,--there is no surplus of wood now--only an annual growth. And water-power is income also, doled out day by day. We cannot anticipate it. Coal and oil are our only capital. They are all we have for great important efforts. They are a gift to mankind to use to some supreme end or to waste in trivialities. Coal is the key to metallurgy and oil to transit. When they are done we shall either have built up such a fabric of apparatus, knowledge and social organization that we shall be able to manage without them--or we shall have travelled a long way down the slopes of waste towards extinction.... To-day, in getting, in distribution, in use we waste enormously....As we sit here all the world is wasting fuel fantastically."

"Just as mentally--educationally we waste," the doctor interjected.

"And my job is to stop what I can of that waste, to do what I can to organize, first of all sane fuel getting and then sane fuel using. And that second proposition carries us far. Into the whole use we are making of life.

"First things first," said Sir Richmond. If we set about getting fuel sanely, if we do it as the deliberate, co-operative act of the whole species, then it follows that we shall look very closely into the use that is being made of it. When all the fuel getting is brought into one view as a common interest, then it follows that all the fuel burning will be brought into one view. At present we are getting fuel in a kind of scramble with no general aim. We waste and lose almost as much as we get. And of what we get, the waste is idiotic.

"I won't trouble you," said Sir Richmond, "with any long discourse on the ways of getting fuel in this country. But land as you know is owned in patches and stretches that were determined in the first place chiefly by agricultural necessities. When it was divided up among its present owners nobody was thinking about the minerals beneath. But the lawyers settled long ago that the landowner owned his land right down to the centre of the earth. So we have the superficial landlord as coal owner trying to work his coal according to the superficial divisions, quite irrespective of the lie of the coal underneath. Each man goes for the

coal under his own land in his own fashion. You get three shafts where one would suffice and none of them in the best possible place. You get the coal coming out of this point when it would be far more convenient to bring it out at that--miles away. You get boundary walls of coal between the estates, abandoned, left in the ground for ever. And each coal owner sells his coal in his own pettifogging manner... But you know of these things. You know too how we trail the coal all over the country, spoiling it as we trail it, until at last we get it into the silly coal scuttles beside the silly, wasteful, airpoisoning, fog-creating fireplace.

"And this stuff," said Sir Richmond, bringing his hand down so smartly on the table that the startled coffee cups cried out upon the tray; "was given to men to give them power over metals, to get knowledge with, to get more power with."

"The oil story, I suppose, is as bad."

"The oil story is worse...."

"There is a sort of cant," said Sir Richmond in a fierce parenthesis, "that the supplies of oil are inexhaustible--that you can muddle about with oil anyhow.... Optimism of knaves and imbeciles.... They don't want to be pulled up by any sane considerations...."

For some moments he kept silence--as if in unspeakable commination.

"Here I am with some clearness of vision--my only gift; not very clever, with a natural bad temper, and a strong sexual bias, doing what I can to get a broader handling of the fuel question--as a common interest for all mankind. And I find myself up against a lot of men, subtle men, sharp men, obstinate men, prejudiced men, able to get round me, able to get over me, able to blockade me.... Clever men--yes, and all of them ultimately damned--oh! utterly damned--fools. Coal owners who think only of themselves, solicitors who think backwards, politicians who think like a game of cat's-cradle, not a gleam of generosity not a gleam."

"What particularly are you working for?" asked the doctor.

"I want to get the whole business of the world's fuel discussed and reported upon as one affair so that some day it may be handled as one affair in the general interest."

"The world, did you say? You meant the empire?"

"No, the world. It is all one system now. You can't work it in bits. I want to call in foreign representatives from the beginning."

"Advisory--consultative?"

"No. With powers. These things interlock now internationally both through labour and finance. The sooner we scrap this nonsense about an

autonomous British Empire complete in itself, contra mundum, the better for us. A world control is fifty years overdue. Hence these disorders."

"Still--it's rather a difficult proposition, as things are."

"Oh, Lord! don't I know it's difficult!" cried Sir Richmond in the tone of one who swears. "Don't I know that perhaps it's impossible! But it's the only way to do it. Therefore, I say, let's try to get it done. And everybody says, difficult, difficult, and nobody lifts a finger to try. And the only real difficulty is that everybody for one reason or another says that it's difficult. It's against human nature. Granted! Every decent thing is. It's socialism. Who cares? Along this line of comprehensive scientific control the world has to go or it will retrogress, it will muddle and rot...."

"I agree," said Dr. Martineau.

"So I want a report to admit that distinctly. I want it to go further than that. I want to get the beginnings, the germ, of a world administration. I want to set up a permanent world commission of scientific men and economists--with powers, just as considerable powers as I can give them--they'll be feeble powers at the best--but still some sort of SAY in the whole fuel supply of the world. A say--that may grow at last to a control. A right to collect reports and receive accounts for example, to begin with. And then the right to make recommendations.... You see?... No, the international part is not the

most difficult part of it. But my beastly owners and their beastly lawyers won't relinquish a scrap of what they call their freedom of action. And my labour men, because I'm a fairly big coal owner myself, sit and watch and suspect me, too stupid to grasp what I am driving at and too incompetent to get out a scheme of their own. They want a world control on scientific lines even less than the owners. They try to think that fuel production can carry an unlimited wages bill and the owners try to think that it can pay unlimited profits, and when I say; 'This business is something more than a scramble for profits and wages; it's a service and a common interest,' they stare at me--" Sir Richmond was at a loss for an image. "Like a committee in a thieves' kitchen when someone has casually mentioned the law."

"But will you ever get your Permanent Commission?"

"It can be done. If I can stick it out."

"But with the whole Committee against you!"

"The curious thing is that the whole Committee isn't against me. Every individual is...."

Sir Richmond found it difficult to express. "The psychology of my Committee ought to interest you.... It is probably a fair sample of the way all sorts of things are going nowadays. It's curious.... There is not a man on that Committee who is quite comfortable within himself



about the particular individual end he is there to serve. It's there I get them. They pursue their own ends bitterly and obstinately I admit, but they are bitter and obstinate because they pursue them against an internal opposition--which is on my side. They are terrified to think, if once they stopped fighting me, how far they might not have to go with me."

"A suppressed world conscience in fact. This marches very closely with my own ideas."

"A world conscience? World conscience? I don't know. But I do know that there is this drive in nearly every member of the Committee, some drive anyhow, towards the decent thing. It is the same drive that drives me. But I am the most driven. It has turned me round. It hasn't turned them. I go East and they go West. And they don't want to be turned round. Tremendously, they don't."

"Creative undertow," said Dr. Martineau, making notes, as it were. "An increasing force in modern life. In the psychology of a new age strengthened by education--it may play a directive part."

"They fight every little point. But, you see, because of this creative undertow--if you like to call it that--we do get along. I am leader or whipper-in, it is hard to say which, of a bolting flock....I believe they will report for a permanent world commission; I believe I have got them up to that; but they will want to make it a bureau of this League

of Nations, and I have the profoundest distrust of this League of Nations. It may turn out to be a sort of side-tracking arrangement for all sorts of important world issues. And they will find they have to report for some sort of control. But there again they will shy. They will report for it and then they will do their utmost to whittle it down again. They will refuse it the most reasonable powers. They will alter the composition of the Committee so as to make it innocuous."

"How?"

"Get rid of the independent scientific men, load it up so far as Britain is concerned with muck of the colonial politician type and tame labour representatives, balance with shady new adventurer millionaires, get in still shadier stuff from abroad, let these gentry appoint their own tame experts after their own hearts,--experts who will make merely advisory reports, which will not be published...."

"They want in fact to keep the old system going under the cloak of YOUR Committee, reduced to a cloak and nothing more?"

"That is what it amounts to. They want to have the air of doing right--indeed they do want to have the FEEL of doing right--and still leave things just exactly what they were before. And as I suffer under the misfortune of seeing the thing rather more clearly, I have to shepherd the conscience of the whole Committee.... But there is a conscience there. If I can hold out myself, I can hold the Committee."

He turned appealingly to the doctor. "Why should I have to be the conscience of that damned Committee? Why should I do this exhausting inhuman job?... In their hearts these others know.... Only they won't know.... Why should it fall on me?"

"You have to go through with it," said Dr. Martineau.

"I have to go through with it, but it's a hell of utterly inglorious squabbling. They bait me. They have been fighting the same fight within themselves that they fight with me. They know exactly where I am, that I too am doing my job against internal friction. The one thing before all others that they want to do is to bring me down off my moral high horse. And I loathe the high horse. I am in a position of special moral superiority to men who are on the whole as good men as I am or better. That shows all the time. You see the sort of man I am. I've a broad streak of personal vanity. I fag easily. I'm short-tempered. I've other things, as you perceive. When I fag I become obtuse, I repeat and bore, I get viciously ill-tempered, I suffer from an intolerable sense of ill usage. Then that ass, Wagstaffe, who ought to be working with me steadily, sees his chance to be pleasantly witty. He gets a laugh round the table at my expense. Young Dent, the more intelligent of the labour men, reads me a lecture in committee manners. Old Cassidy sees HIS opening and jabs some ridiculous petty accusation at me and gets me spluttering self-defence like a fool. All my stock goes down, and as my stock goes down the chances of a good report dwindle. Young Dent grieves

to see me injuring my own case. Too damned a fool to see what will happen to the report! You see if only they can convince themselves I am just a prig and an egotist and an impractical bore, they escape from a great deal more than my poor propositions. They escape from the doubt in themselves. By dismissing me they dismiss their own consciences. And then they can scamper off and be sensible little piggy-wigs and not bother any more about what is to happen to mankind in the long run.... Do you begin to realize the sort of fight, upside down in a dustbin, that that Committee is for me?"

"You have to go through with it," Dr. Martineau repeated.

"I have. If I can. But I warn you I have been near breaking point. And if I tumble off the high horse, if I can't keep going regularly there to ride the moral high horse, that Committee will slump into utter scoundrelism. It will turn out a long, inconsistent, botched, unreadable report that will back up all sorts of humbugging bargains and sham settlements. It will contain some half-baked scheme to pacify the miners at the expense of the general welfare. It won't even succeed in doing that. But in the general confusion old Cassidy will get away with a series of hauls that may run into millions. Which will last his time--damn him! And that is where we are.... Oh! I know! I know!.... I must do this job. I don't need any telling that my life will be nothing and mean nothing unless I bring this thing through....

"But the thanklessness of playing this lone hand!"

The doctor watched his friend's resentful black silhouette against the lights on the steely river, and said nothing for awhile.

"Why did I ever undertake to play it?" Sir Richmond appealed. "Why has it been put upon me? Seeing what a poor thing I am, why am I not a poor thing altogether?"

## Section 8

"I think I understand that loneliness of yours, said the doctor after an interval.

"I am INTOLERABLE to myself."

"And I think it explains why it is that you turn to women as you do. You want help; you want reassurance. And you feel they can give it."

"I wonder if it has been quite like that," Sir Richmond reflected.

By an effort Dr. Martineau refrained from mentioning the mother complex.

"You want help and reassurance as a child does," he said. "Women and women alone seem capable of giving that, of telling you that you are surely right, that notwithstanding your blunders you are right; that even when you are wrong it doesn't so much matter, you are still in spirit right. They can show their belief in you as no man can. With all

their being they can do that."

"Yes, I suppose they could."

"They can. You have said already that women are necessary to make things real for you."

"Not my work," said Sir Richmond. "I admit that it might be like that, but it isn't like that. It has not worked out like that. The two drives go on side by side in me. They have no logical connexion. All I can say is that for me, with my bifid temperament, one makes a rest from the other, and is so far refreshment and a renewal of energy. But I do not find women coming into my work in any effectual way."

The doctor reflected further. "I suppose," he began and stopped short.

He heard Sir Richmond move in his chair, creaking an interrogation.

"You have never," said the doctor, "turned to the idea of God?"

Sir Richmond grunted and made no other answer for the better part of a minute.

As Dr. Martineau waited for his companion to speak, a falling star streaked the deep blue above them.

"I can't believe in a God," said Sir Richmond.

"Something after the fashion of a God," said the doctor insidiously.

"No," said Sir Richmond. "Nothing that reassures."

"But this loneliness, this craving for companionship...."

"We have all been through that," said Sir Richmond. "We have all in our time lain very still in the darkness with our souls crying out for the fellowship of God, demanding some sign, some personal response. The faintest feeling of assurance would have satisfied us."

"And there has never been a response?"

"Have YOU ever had a response?"

"Once I seemed to have a feeling of exaltation and security."

"Well?"

"Perhaps I only persuaded myself that I had. I had been reading William James on religious experiences and I was thinking very much of Conversion. I tried to experience Conversion...."

"Yes?"

"It faded."

"It always fades," said Sir Richmond with anger in his voice. "I wonder how many people there are nowadays who have passed through this last experience of ineffectual invocation, this appeal to the fading shadow of a vanished God. In the night. In utter loneliness. Answer me! Speak to me! Does he answer? In the silence you hear the little blood vessels whisper in your ears. You see a faint glow of colour on the darkness...."

Dr. Martineau sat without a word.

"I can believe that over all things Righteousness rules. I can believe that. But Righteousness is not friendliness nor mercy nor comfort nor any such dear and intimate things. This cuddling up to Righteousness! It is a dream, a delusion and a phase. I've tried all that long ago. I've given it up long ago. I've grown out of it. Men do--after forty. Our souls were made in the squatting-place of the submen of ancient times. They are made out of primitive needs and they die before our bodies as those needs are satisfied. Only young people have souls, complete. The need for a personal God, feared but reassuring, is a youth's need. I no longer fear the Old Man nor want to propitiate the Old Man nor believe he matters any more. I'm a bit of an Old Man myself I discover. Yes. But the other thing still remains."

"The Great Mother of the Gods," said Dr. Martineau--still clinging to



his theories.

"The need of the woman," said Sir Richmond. "I want mating because it is my nature to mate. I want fellowship because I am a social animal and I want it from another social animal. Not from any God--any inconceivable God. Who fades and disappears. No...."

"Perhaps that other need will fade presently. I do not know. Perhaps it lasts as long as life does. How can I tell?"

He was silent for a little while. Then his voice sounded in the night, as if he spoke to himself. "But as for the God of All Things consoling and helping! Imagine it! That up there--having fellowship with me! I would as soon think of cooling my throat with the Milky Way or shaking hands with those stars."