

The Human Age

Book 2 Monstre Gai

Book 3 Malign Fiesta



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The Human Age

THE HUMAN AGE

Book One · THE CHILDERMASS

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Book Two · MONSTRE GAI

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Book Four · THE TRIAL OF MAN

WYNDHAM LEWIS

The Human Age

BOOK TWO
MONSTRE GAI

BOOK THREE
MALIGN FIESTA

Illustrations by Michael Ayrton



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BOOK TWO

Monstre Gai

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I THIS IS NOT HEAVEN

(I)

THE WATERMAN was now only a shadow. At last he had gone behind the moonlight. He had passed through a veil of transparent steel. Out of the smoky grey of the waters he rose, lying outlined through the shining wall of the moon. This deaf one-dimensional nouentity it would not be possible to recall.

They were lonely specks; the blank-gated prodigious city was isolated by its riverine moat, and they had cast themselves away, and were committed to effect an entrance or to die. It was darkening rapidly. This was welcomed by Pullman: let the night come quickly and swallow them up and blot them out. These stairs, which must be twenty feet wide, were of the whitest marble; there was not enough shadow for a mouse to take cover upon this starlit expanse where he and Satters stuck up like a couple of misplaced scarecrows upon a field of virgin corn.

From the camp this had not looked so starkly exposed a place as it was. The fag-master, the master-spirit, had not foreseen that they would be two unhidable figures: it was difficult to discern any details from the other side of the water, but his plan was they should wait, in such concealing shadows as could be found, the arrival of the Bailiff and his cortège, slipping in at the end of the procession. But the Bailiff was behind time.

The coming of night would do very little good, it became obvious, because of the light of the stars. As night fell they became conscious of the dark pit of the light-years exposed in front of them. They were awed and

frightened as they shivered upon the giant stairs, rising to the Gates of the Magnetic City. The stars were larger and colder than on earth, the sky was a chillier and emptier depth. Pullman was terrified by these enormous glaring worlds and constellations, three times the size they were in the earthly night. In another respect they differed markedly. Instead of an attractive glitter, or, if they were small, a pretty twinkle, here they had this deadly glare. It was bluish, lending to Satters a corpse-like pallor. Pullman thought of his own less robust complexion with consternation. It must look frightful. It could even have a demoralizing effect upon his squire, who might interpret it as the pallor of fear.

There was something even more disturbing than their conspicuousness, and the inhospitable grandeur of the heavens; something which progressively claimed more and more their exclusive attention. The walls, it seemed, emitted a magnetic influence of some sort, which Pullman found it difficult to define, and which, it slowly dawned on them, held possibilities of a superlatively unpleasant kind.

The colossal mushroom-coloured walls, rising out of the water to almost a thousand feet, contained some repulsive agent. It was not heat, indeed there was no heat at all in the slight hostile vibration that was communicated. It was like a new impalpable film, or new atmosphere, into which they had unwittingly penetrated. It held them as it repelled them, like an existential element, neither cold nor warm, but subtly terrifying. The appalling attraction of the black chasm of the sky and this new insidious element, belonging to the gigantic walls, competed for a while for the mastery of their shrinking spines: but the nearer of these two influences in the end alone remained. Everything else faded out in the foreground.

Satters pressed himself up against Pullman, the large

moist hand of the overgrown fag clutching piteously the arm of the elder, the arm of authority. 'Pulley,' he exploded in a ghastly purr, 'I shall *die*, Pulley, if I have to stand here much longer. I'm through, I really am. What is the matter with this place! It's not cold, is it, really? It's something worse than cold. It's horrible. I wish we had never left the camp. I'd give anything to be over there instead of here, the other side of the beastly water, with all the other chaps, in that awful foxhole of ours. Don't you wish you were, Pulley? Pulley! I feel I am a thousand miles away, it *is* a thousand miles away I believe.' He pressed closer, panicking. 'I feel just as if I *were* dead this time. I never felt like this before. Oh I do not wish to go through that gate, Pulley! D'you hear? I say, did you hear what I said?' He began to whimper like a frightened dog. He pressed nearer to Pullman. 'I would throw myself into that water, if it were not . . . if it were not for . . . if it were not for . . .'

'Exactly,' Pullman said, whose feelings were nearer to Satters' than he would have liked to confess. But what was expected of the prefect successfully banished the sensations unbecoming in a senior. He glanced contemptuously at his quailing companion. 'We are probably somewhere between the Pole Star and the Sun,' he observed with detachment, not too easily achieved. 'My spine feels as though it were going to melt. But I don't expect that it will.'

The thought of Pullman melting like a man of wax, and of finding himself thenceforth alone, had so disintegrating an effect upon Satters that he clung desperately to that masterful being at his side. 'I don't know what I shall do if your sp . . . sper . . . sper . . . spine . . .'

Pullman shook him off irritably. 'Put your mind at rest. You will dissolve before I shall.'

Satters' trembling limbs grew steadier, his thoughts began to run in less desperate channels. The sense of

indestructibility which Pullman had managed to communicate had the desired effect.

Pullman braced himself, and did his best to remain erect, a model to the wilting Satters. He set his teeth, he clenched his hands. But the atmospheric strangeness which was undermining him, rapidly made it impossible for him to keep up appearances. It was not long before he lowered himself into a sitting position. Satters, he found, had already succumbed: he lay at full length upon one of the huge stairs.

‘This is awful,’ Satters greeted Pullman dully. ‘I feel like nothing on earth. Do you? I say, where have we got to?’

Pullman said nothing. He sat beside his fag, gazing ahead, his forearms clasped around his knees, his stick at his side. He did not sit for long like this. He too lay down below Satters, feeling colder and colder every minute, but quite unable to get to his feet and stamp about to improve his circulation.

Pullman did not realize he had fallen asleep. His eyes opened, he looked up. To his horrified amazement he found that the Bailiff was gazing down into his face with great geniality.

‘Are you able to rise?’ the magistrate asked.

It was an immense effort to lift himself up to his feet.

‘What is your name?’ inquired the Bailiff gently, holding out a hand to steady him.

‘Pullman,’ said he, passing his hand over his face.

‘It’s very disagreeable out here. You will find it warmer inside,’ the Bailiff smiled. ‘I don’t know for whose benefit they magnetize these walls I’m sure. Perhaps they have me in mind—I often wonder! However, fall in behind my men, Pullman. See if you can persuade that friend of yours to get to his feet. If he is too weak, I will get somebody to carry him in. You will feel much better,

Pullman, as soon as you are inside the Gates.' The Bailiff nodded and smiled as he returned to his litter.

Pullman succeeded in getting Satters into a standing position, and like two drunken men they staggered through the Gates. The Gates met again behind them with an impressive noiselessness. They entered a sort of tunnel, extending for a distance of fifty yards. As they were so unsteady in the darkness they were apt to hurtle against those ahead of them, who retaliated with savage blows. The structure beneath which they were passing shook with the heavy vibrations of the massive elevator being operated overhead.

At last they stepped out into the Magnetic City, or, it would be more true to say, rocked and staggered out. Pullman's first reactions were simultaneously physiological and psychical. There was the rushing of blood down his arteries, and a tremendously violent romantic disillusion. The splendours of the imagination crashed! Where was the unearthly spectacle he had expected to see? They found themselves in no fairy scene, such as rises in the 'afterworld' section of the cloudy crypts of the imagination. They did not find themselves among the radiant structures of solid gold or beneath the ambrosial foliage of glittering trees of the pipe-dream-world paradise. It was not at all like that. It was indeed the reverse; and as though in additional mockery their bodies jumped and exploded as if a djin had got into them. Underfoot was the slovenly dust of a natural city. Behind them, and above them, the cyclopean battlements rose into the sky. The dimensions of what *enclosed* this place at least were unreal, were enormous. But that was the extent of the departure from the norm. Crawling up those dizzily-mounting walls were iron ladders of the kind used in compliance with the safety requirements, for escape in case of fire. Where they stood, on issuing from the tunnel, was a herbless level earth, of parade-ground

type (groups of uniformed men stood near the structure which was built over the tunnel, ascending, in steeply diminishing perspective, to the summit of the battlements). There were other signs of the presence of the military, and there was a military flatness and emptiness. A hundred yards away were the bare sides of modern city blocks, up which zigzagged iron ladders resembling those affixed to the battlements.

Now there was an interval, while the Bailiff's patchwork militia was paraded for the march through the city. The companies were sorting themselves out; ten trumpets and ten drums took up their position at the head of the column. Next to them came the negro band, and after that the hundred-and-fifty-strong company of so-called Gladiators. In the wake of this massive body of men came the Bailiff in his litter, and, after him, about one hundred and fifty haiduks and nubians, as also the executioner and his assistants. These were followed by a miscellaneous body of various composition. Finally, a carefully picked nilotic troop, daintily garmented and heavily armed. As a most inelegant bedraggled appendage came Pullman and Satters.

The military master-at-arms, who was a glorified sergeant-major, moved, fiery-eyed, from section to section of his armament. Reaching the negro band he searched for a blemish in the gleaming instruments, next checked the sparkling silver buttons: he examined the fingernails on the track of dirt, and saw to it that the whiteness of the teeth took full advantage of the blackness of the face. He treated the fierce gladiators as though they had been cut-purses, concealing something in their massive cuffs or hiding spoils in their holsters. Shouting at them all the time, he flung them about, and screamed at any spot he discovered on their tunics, or the webbing employed for small-arms. As to the haiduks, no Turk who had caught one could have kid-gloved him less.

The uses of the various classes of warriors would be plain to anyone who had seen him at work. The Gladiators were the personal bodyguard, never used for policing the appellants nor in executions. The Bailiff's savagery was less apparent when entrusted to savages.

These four or five hundred armed men were exquisitely drilled, and, for the rest, spotless. The parade preened itself in outdated military splendour. Each group had a pennon or standard. The Bailiff's personal standard was the most spectacular.

It was borne before his litter, now held in readiness by two leather-aproned bearers. Practically flat, displayed like a tapestry, it was brilliantly coloured, in pale green and dark cinnamon. There were two main features in the design; on the right was the Mundane Egg—this in dazzling white; a Serpent's head, the neck inflated and shaped like a hood, stood darkly beside it upon the green background; all the design, except for the egg and figures, was in dark cinnamon. Then the body of the serpent was rigid, steeply diagonal, and it carried on its back a diminutive E (EL, one of the ten names of God). In almost imperceptible tracery, upon the silver-white of the Mundane Egg, appeared an orphic inscription. On the opposite side were the letters

IXΘΥΣ

meaning fish; 'The great Fish' was a manner of referring to Jesus Christ. And these letters were enclosed in an oval, pointed at one end, representing a fish, a small circle for the eye standing not far from the pointed extremity. This symbolic consociation duplicated the forms of the ovoid fish and the cosmogonic Egg. Lastly the number 666 was found near the summit of the banner, between the two groups of symbols.

Strolling forward, mainly to stretch his legs, Pullman's attention was attracted by the banner. The Serpent's head

in conjunction with the Egg presented no difficulty, but the significance of 666, though it had a familiar sound, baffled him. He paused a moment, his eyes fixed upon the mysterious number, when he became conscious of someone behind the curtains of the litter. Not without some slight misgiving he realized that the Bailiff was within, the curtains drawn. The magistrate exposed his square-nosed smile, as he thrust a hooked finger of informal summons through the opening of the curtains. Pullman approached, his face unmoved. He said, 'I did not see you, sir!'

'Do you like my pretty banner?' The Bailiff's voice was insinuatingly dulcet.

'Very much, sir. It is a beautiful banner. Could you tell me the significance of the number 666? Or is that impertinently inquisitive?'

'Noo . . . o . . . Oh!' sang the magistrate archly. 'I have a note of that somewhere. Come and see me at my residence. Let me write down your name—how could I have forgotten it!'

'James Pullman.' Pullman's name was written down, and just then an imperious blast was sounded. Pullman bowed and went back to the position allotted him.

'You left me here!' Satters grumbled, with the face of someone with a toothache which stopped him from feeling anything else as much as otherwise he would.

An even louder blast of the trumpet sounded. The parade already faced at right angles, pointing in the direction of its march: so there were no words of command, except what the master-at-arms now bellowed. 'Parade—Parade! 'Shun. Quick . . . March!' Stamping like the Foot-guards do, the parade got in motion.

Trumpets and drums furiously blown and beaten, the Bailiff aloft in his litter, the negro bandsmen poising the mouths of enormous silver instruments above their heads, and behind these tallboys a succession of tubes

of blazing silver, each watched over by a shining ebony face—all the barbaric bombast of the Bailiff's parade headed up a cheerless, twentieth-century side-street, stupefied by the customary torpor of that hour of the day.

The Bailiff with his square nose and his apple for a chin, the trumpeters, all the strutters and swaggerers, passed the carpet-slippers of a seated man, exposed to the evening street, relaxed within a doorway, the white smoke of his pipe curling around the bold white cliffs of his hair; passed a black cat seated upon a window-sill, its eyes fixed in a green trance, the membranes of its ears only recording cat-sounds, and in any case not functioning just then; passed a pressing-and-cleaning outfit, the last pair of trousers of the day going into the steaming press. So the white tobacco-smoke continued to curl against the snowy hair, and the old man's smoky eyes saw nothing, the cat continued immobile and unresponsive as a monument, and the steam issuing from the ultimate pair of trousers put a veil over the window, the other side of which passed the glittering procession.

In spite of the lack of response, the blast and percussion continued to assault this quiet, unimportant street. Pullman and Satters, with a rickety swagger, followed in the wake of the haughtily-mincing, bare-footed rear-guard.

Meanwhile, the bodies of both Satters and Pullman were subject to internal disturbances of some violence. Satters' face was twisted into the mask of a baby afflicted with wind, the distended eyes a big angry question-mark. But he goose-stepped crazily along nevertheless—he seemed to have grown physically competent in spite of his grimace. But Pullman was anything but immune. None of his muscular and glandular prickings, the wrenching of his innards, qualified for agonized reportage on his face; but he had put the amazed question to himself, 'What for Pete's sake is all this?' Then a sensation, originating in the bladder, gave him a clue: for neither

the bladder nor intestines had played any part in his life in the camp. He had not made water since his death on earth. Satters whispered, hoarse and urgent, 'I must find a urinal!'

Like the personnel of a circus parading a mediterranean city, the Bailiff's big drums, thudding like artillery, wheeled into a grandiose boulevard.

'Is this Heaven?' Pullman at last blankly inquired of the air. It reminded him of Barcelona. This, like the Rambla, was a tree-lined avenue with huge pavements, across which cafés thrust hundreds of tables and chairs, to the edge of the gutter. Thousands of people overflowed the café terraces. Pullman's reaction to this scene, so unexpectedly the reverse of what the imagination demanded, was an explosion of hysterical mirth.

'It's not a laughing matter!' protested Satters angrily. 'I can't hold out much longer. I shall just make use of the nearest tree, like a little dog!'

'I was not laughing at *that*, silly,' said Pullman contemptuously.

Several thousand *chapeaux melons* must have been manufactured in a celestial factory, Pullman reasoned; for that number now sat upon as many heads of a massive swarm of café-customers. A mild steady roar came up from this compact collection of nonentities, discharging millions of vocables per minute under their *chapeaux melons*.

As they began to pass the lines of tables nearest the road, faces came into view. They were the faces of nonentities; this humanity was alarmingly sub-normal, all pig-eye or owlsh vacuity. Was this a population of idiots—astonishingly well-dressed; as noticeably so as the contemporary English are seedy or 'utility' clad? Yet this selective mediocrity laughed abnormally, and its voice was high. And then Pullman saw a freckled face, with its mouth open and its eyes fixed upon him. The

man was holding a siphon aloft. He pulled the trigger, and a parabola of soda-water ascended into the air, and fell upon the side of Satters' neck, beneath the ear. It had been at Satters that the siphoneer had been looking. The effervescent liquid rushed down, inside and outside of his shirt collar.

Satters did not regard this as funny, either. His hands tearing at his neck, he stamped up and down, roaring at the siphoneer, 'You stupid cad! I'm half a mind to come and wring your bloody neck! If you don't take that grin off your face I'll knock your teeth down your throat for you! Silly fool!'

But the cortège had moved on, and Pullman took his young friend by the arm and led him towards a vacant table at a respectful distance from that of the man with the siphon. About to sit down, Pullman remembered that they had no money.

A man who was seated at the next table, at this juncture rose and raised his hat, addressing Pullman. 'I witnessed your arrival, I saw the siphon episode,' with a smile. 'My name is Mannock,' the stranger said. 'You have just arrived, I think, from the camp outside the city. May I offer you both a drink, to start with: you must be entirely without money.'

But Satters broke in excitedly: 'I say, I just can't wait any longer!' He was stamping about, with his hands in his trousers pockets. 'I know what is the matter,' exclaimed Mr Mannock. 'Come along with me.'

He led them briskly into the café, up to a door upon which they read the familiar word GENTLEMEN. They followed him in, and found themselves in a sumptuous place of gentlemanly retirement, fortunately empty at the moment. After the more urgent exercises the two newcomers plunged their faces in warm water, next washed their mud-caked hands, and Pullman, with one of the lavatory combs, imparted to his hair the backward

wave which most became him. Outside Mannock waited for them. 'I should have said,' announced Pullman, 'that my young friend's name is Satterthwaite, and I am James Pullman.'

There was a certain high condescension in James Pullman's manner which did not escape Mannock. That gentleman decided that the clue to it was probably to be found in the beard Pullman wore, but refrained from further speculation for the present.

They returned to the table, where Mannock ordered for them a mysterious drink. It was strangely delicious. It was unlike anything they had ever tasted.

'There is no alcohol here,' he told them, 'but I assure you you will not need it. They say that New York is stimulating, don't they. Well, this is often ten times more so. A cup of coffee, for instance, causes you to feel quite unnaturally stimulated.'

When they had sat there for a short while, Mannock informed them that he lived not far away. 'Unless you have a date for dinner with the Bailiff, will you dine with me? You do not have to feel embarrassed here about money, by the way. You are given—it is quite automatic—the wherewithal to live. It is not an equalitarian institution,' he smiled. 'Except for that fact, you ask for what you want and they give it to you. I mean a man who was a crossing sweep on earth will not get so big a bundle of notes as you will, or as I do.'

Pullman accepted with alacrity the invitation to dinner. They shortly left the café and started walking up a street running at right angles to the boulevard, and along the side of the café. Almost at once Pullman turned to Mannock and asked him politely, 'Is this Heaven?'

'No, this is not Heaven,' was Mannock's toneless rejoinder.

'If it is not Heaven what is it?'

Somewhat embarrassed, after hesitating, Mannock





replied. 'The usual question! It is not easy to answer that question, and I suggest we wait a little before tackling it.'

'I have another question to ask,' announced Pullman. 'What is the matter with all the people here? Are all the people in that café imbeciles? And if so, why?'

Mannock laughed obstreperously. 'Yes, yes, they are all nit-wits—their I.Q. level is so low that it may be said not to exist. But they get through life all right, which is mainly because they all, whether young or old (and most of them were young when they started), receive a pension—adequate to keep them at that café all day. Some of them may have been a little intelligent say thirty years ago—though I doubt it—but thirty years at that café . . .'

'I see . . . or rather I don't see, but it doesn't matter.' Pullman showed by his expression that, without being satisfied, he understood that his query had been answered.

'You will soon know all that it is good for you to know,' Mannock cryptically remarked.

They met with several specimens of that mankind whose weapon was soda-water, and whose faces were like the silly saints in the iconography of a Swabian half-wit. All proudly wore hats: for they had belonged to a hatless generation when alive, so impoverished by two cataclysms that even the tweed cap had to be foregone. The first figure, open-mouthed, blandly grinning, as though welcoming any nonsense, ambled past in newly-tailored clothes. Next came two figures, beautifully hatted (a maroon-pink), ties like a Japanese battle in a stylistic print: they chattered to one another about the socks in noughts and crosses of the ingenious Henry. They frowned and grinned, their hollow noses wagging, and always the black hole of the mouth. Lastly came three, who had not the vigour to think about a sock. Their mouths hung open beneath stupidly smiling eyes, their

skins like vellum, their teeth like a mummy's; they encouraged one another to laugh—for if you cannot think you can always laugh—at the stars. They seemed to believe that these were bubbles of light, and that they might at any moment burst. Pullman would have said that they were showing off for the benefit of the strangers, but they seemed too absorbed in themselves to be doing that: their eyes, also, looked aloof and demented. Something that struck one about all these people was that their faces were youthful. They were such as a young man would get if he had been young for a very long time, until the skin had come to look like parchment. Pullman found it difficult to decide whether these people were young or old. But he supposed it was the former. A curious circumstance was that the face of their cicerone, who seemed a man of fifty, was natural and fresh, though possessing no colour.

'Vacuous as London is,' Pullman observed, 'it does not manufacture a citizenry so mentally void as you do.'

Their guide received this with a laugh so harsh and troubled that Satters was visited with an icy touch of gooseflesh, and Pullman glanced sideways inquiringly. Were these skeletons in somebody's cupboard?—Was Mannock responsible for this lunacy? Mannock's voice was as uneasy as his laugh had been, and all he said was, 'We are not all like that.'

The street in which Mannock lived was named Habakkuk, and was distant five or was it six city blocks from the boulevard. It was eminently urbane and inviting: it had been built for people of the social tastes and economic competence of the gentleman who was acting as their shepherd. It still looked suave and respectable; but Pullman was unable to rid himself of an unpleasant sensation, as he reflected that most of those three or four ambling figures dotted up and down Habakkuk were idiotic if not idiots, thought the stars would burst, and had a

necktie reproducing the visual excitements of a samurai battle. It did not make him any happier to notice, in the middle of the road, nestling between the cobbles, a cluster of violets peaceably growing. The almost total absence of traffic was somehow not very cheering. The coming and going of commercial life would have been preferable to this stagnation and isolation.

No. 55 had a *porte-cochère*, like so many of the houses in these trafficless streets. Mannock led the way, turned to the right, and, with an unexpected agility, mounted to the first floor. He turned his key in the lock, calling out to his Greek house-boy as he went into the hall; Pullman felt relieved, for what he now designated the normal was manifest. Evidently their guide was *not* as others were in this city. What a valuable friend this was to have made under the circumstances. . . . He noted, too, that it was a very large and handsome apartment. How did this very superior, sensible Englishman come to be living in such a way, and in such a neighbourhood? This was a normal human being, but hemmed in by what they had seen.

‘I have two guests for dinner, Platon.’ A gritty voice was heard somewhere within, in guttural response. ‘A young Greek looks after me. He was batman to a friend of mine. Odd, is it not!’

Neither Pullman nor Satters said a great deal: they listened, and adjusted themselves, marvelling at what they found. But at last, as they were all seated comfortably in Mannock’s rather impressively large living-room, Pullman observed, ‘Much that is here is very strange, we know; but making allowances for that, life in this city does in fact reproduce life-on-earth as near as damn it, does it not?’

‘That,’ Mannock answered, ‘is the idea, with several very important modifications.’

‘Yes, of course,’ rejoined the attentive Pullman. ‘Of course.’

‘Which,’ Mannock added, ‘really makes all the difference.’

Pullman and Mannock looked at one another, as if hesitating to make the next remark. Then at last the former spoke.

‘Are these differences changes for the better?’

‘That,’ Mannock answered, ‘is a question each man must answer for himself. The central fact is that time does not exist here. Or it exists in a kind of unprogressive way, it halts one at one’s earthly self, at some specific date. I have been here twenty years, for instance. But, if I look at myself in the mirror, I am quite unchanged. I have exactly the same number of grey hairs that I had twenty years ago. This is a little disconcerting. I am just as active as I was twenty years ago.’ He paused. ‘There is a further circumstance it is necessary to stress. When I died . . . on earth . . . I was older than I am now.’

There was a silence. Then Satters spoke in a hushed, automatic voice. ‘On earth, when I died, I was . . . I was . . . well, an old man.’

Pullman laughed, a brief, dry laugh. ‘I seem to recall,’ he said, ‘to speak of myself, that I was about sixty-five years old when I died. I felt, I remember, about the age I appear to be now. It is very queer, is it not?’

Satters shuddered, then burst into tears.

‘No queerer than life,’ said Mannock. ‘But no less queer.’ He and Pullman laughed, but Satters continued sobbing.

They all three sat silent for a while. Pullman was digesting what he had heard. But there were so many other questions which now crowded into his mind that he thought he had better do no more catechizing for the moment.

‘Let me find out about dinner,’ said Mannock rising, and he left the room.

Satters stretched, then said, leaning over towards his

friend, in a confidential voice: 'Pulley, this is a rum go, isn't it? I am so glad we are together . . . I mean that you are here. It is all so strange.' He stopped, massaging his face, as if to make sure of its fleshly reality. He even pulled his heavy loose red lips out a few inches, and released them as if they had been indiarubber. 'What is the rummiest thing about this place is that it is so . . . so . . .'

'So like all other places,' Pullman suggested: 'you are thinking of the *cabinet de toilette*? I mean the washing and urinating place in the café.'

'Yes, Pulley! You feel that too, do you, Pulley?'

'Oh yes. It is much more frightening than if it were . . . if there had been no lavatory in the café, if people did not function as we function. That *Gentlemen's* in the café was so welcome, so tremendously welcome, that one forgot to say to oneself "*Where am I? What is this doing here?*"'

Satters sprang up, saying in a stage whisper, 'I say, do you suppose he has a can here?' He began walking about. Pullman got to his feet, but at that moment Mannock returned. 'My young friend would like . . .' Pullman began.

'Oh yes. Come along, I'll show you,' and Mannock led Satters through a bathroom to a most desirable water-closet.

'Thanks awfully,' Satters gushed.

Mannock went back to his other guest with a smile of understanding. 'The very old, and the very young, suffer from the same disability . . .' he observed.

'Satters was my fag at school,' Pullman told him. 'And it seems that he remains a fag now.'

Mannock nodded. 'That is so,' he said. 'It is his rôle, I fear, to be a schoolboy. If he is still here in a thousand years he will still be a big plump fag, inclined to be incontinent.' They laughed. There were heavy steps

outside. The door opened, and Satters stamped back into the room, smiling bashfully—with a deliberate, rather dirty bashfulness.

‘I was going to say,’ Mannock explained, ‘there is plenty to eat, happily.’

The guests demonstrated gratitude simultaneously. Satters with the obstreperousness of hearty youth, Pullman with restraint.

When they sat down at the dinner-table Mannock said grace, which put a damper on Satters who was ravenous, and had answered the call to dinner making no secret of the fact, and exclaiming, ‘Our first meal for months, what, Pulley?’

The soup was a super minestrone, and a second helping was not declined by Satters. ‘You can obtain plenty of fresh vegetables I see,’ Pullman remarked.

‘All we want. Most people, to begin with, complain that there is no meat.’

‘What, no meat!’ Consternation was soon replaced in Satters’ face by another expression. ‘Oh I see. You are a vegetarian, sir. Are there many vegetarians here?’

‘All are vegetarians, perforce. There is no meat to be had. But unless you are inveterately carnivorous, you will soon forget that.’

The next course was *Mushrooms à la Grecque*, combined with aubergines so elaborately flavoured that even Satters was satisfied.

‘No, there is no meat, no women, no alcohol, no telephones (except public ones in the street), practically no taxi-cabs, and so on,’ Mannock went on. ‘There is a good deal of homosexuality. And, as I have said, the air is like champagne! It might be worse. It might be very much worse.’

Satters appeared to have cheered up, and Pullman wore a less preoccupied look. ‘It sounds like life on the Falkland Islands or in Admiralty Bay, if you added a

mirage of Zurich or Barcelona. I shall not complain,' he observed smiling, 'if I can only get some money.'

'You will be in possession of that tomorrow morning. I will accompany you to the bank.' Mannoek held up a finger. 'The profit motive is another absentee. There are those financial restraints, of an absolute kind. None that disturb *me*. But if I were a financial wizard I should be very miserable in this place. I should ask scornfully, "Is this Heaven?"'

'But it is not Heaven, is it?' Pullman inquired. 'I apologize for returning to that point!'

A strange expression came into Mannoek's face. 'No, as I said before, this is not Heaven. The set-up here is as follows—and this is to simplify very much indeed: if you think of this as a Sultanate, social life centring in the Palace, and around the person of the Sultan, you would be near the mark. The Sultan is called the Padishah. This, the linchpin of everything, is a splendid human being (we may think of him as that), utterly involved with our spatial and temporal system. He shares our mortality, up to a point. He is supernatural, endowed with magical powers of the most enormous kind. The Padishah does not know how long he has been alive.—"Far too long!" he laughs. Anyway several thousand years. He has the aspect of a young man of thirty. We know nothing for certain, but he is generally assumed, though not divine, to belong to the divine order. He discourages very firmly anything venerational. Only God should be venerated, he tells you. I have heard him say that there is not so much veneration in the world that any can be spared from the service of the Deity.'

This account of things greatly surprised Pullman. This supernatural potentate aroused his curiosity. 'What an extraordinary being!' he exclaimed. 'How do you happen to come to know all this?' he added sillily.

'Oh, if you live long enough in a city, down on earth

you know, you find out all about it. It is the same here.'

After dinner they moved back into the living-room.

Satters having been put on his road to the water-closet once more (an event which invariably produced the same atmosphere of grown-up geniality), Pullman said, 'I am all at sea, and, I must confess, profoundly alarmed.'

Mannock smiled with sympathetic condescension, but with a tinge of displeasure, Pullman thought.

'Everything to do with human life, is, was, and always will be a little terrifying,' he observed. 'But I do not think that there is anything here to alarm anybody, more than he had reason to be alarmed by earthly existence.'

'I imagine you have got quite used to finding the streets full of imbeciles. You seem to accept what you cannot alter: I must, I suppose, wait until I know more.'

'Yes,' Mannock agreed.

At this point there was the sound of feet outside, and a deep voice, followed by the entrance of a tall figure, and, Pullman felt, one apt to instil uneasiness in those about it. This newcomer represented one of the combinations of the rugged and the intellectual which makes other men feel that they must be on guard. Thinning hair, a bulging forehead, a voice organ toned, a large intelligent eye, an obvious indifference to details of toilet, plus six foot and evidence of bones which were raw and large: what but discomfort can come of such a combination?

'This is John Rigate,' Pullman was told: and he got ready to be badly bored—noisily, muscularly, aggressively bored. But although as opinionated as a rhinoceros, Rigate did not produce the effect anticipated.

'Pullman has just arrived. We were engaged in discussing Third City. Pullman has confessed to some alarm. We were, as you have seen, in troubled waters.'

Rigate gave a frosty, sceptical laugh.

‘Let me give you the low-down,’ he told Pullman. ‘There is every reason for alarm. You are in a degenerate, chaotic outpost of Heaven. The ostensible ruler, the Padishah, is a supernatural being of great charm, but devoid of the slightest trace of gumption. If some selection were exercised at the camp in passing in the applicants, things might rub along all right. It is very difficult for men to live without working. But the planning of life here is nonsensical from beginning to end. Stupidest of all is *immortality*, or—how can I describe it—the age-business. I can quite see that they do not wish to reproduce here all the mechanism of growing old, of demise, of coffins or cemeteries, and so on. But we none of us stop here terribly long. There is no man in the city who has been here beyond the Tudors. What happens to us after this? Not that anyone much cares. The entire show is one great farce. It is far sillier even than life on earth—for at least that was centred upon the mechanical purpose of perpetuating the species. Someone or something seemed crazily set upon *that* happening. There is no *entêtement* of that kind here. Provided with money by the State, we exist in suspended animation, sexless, vegetarian, and dry, permanently about forty-six. If you can see any sense in it, I can’t.’

‘Do we die?’ asked Pullman succinctly.

‘No,’ Rigate shook his head. ‘No death is admitted in Third City. No man can die here. But this is one of the most extraordinary things about our life here. If a man is crushed by a lorry, or in some other way practically annihilated, he does not die. He is still, however ambiguously, alive. There are few families who have not one or more mortal remains: some human wreck, incapable of occupying any position in social life, or indeed in physical life of any kind. They keep them in some cupboard or drawer; they feed them on a little bread and milk. Some they can converse with, but mostly these creatures are

too lifeless for that. They are the terrible victims of this superstition—leading a bedpan life hidden from men. They often create a stink in some small flat, which is recognized by all visitors.'

Pullman, with amazed eyes, gazed at his host, who buried his face in his hands. Not long after this, Pullman discovered that Mannock had a secret drawer of this kind. Aware of this, Rigate cast a blackmailing eye in the direction of Mannock.

'You make an excellent guide, sir, to this evidently controversial existence,' Pullman said. 'Have you any theory as to how all this has come about? It is too irrational to be deliberate. Was not this city intended to be something else?'

Rigate moved his uncouth body in a spasm of restraint, and did not answer. Mannock replied. 'Rigate thinks,' he said, 'this is an outpost of celestial paradise, in charge of a great angel (The Padishah). A beautiful, ineffectual angel, he would say.'

'I see,' said Pullman.

'It is,' Rigate intervened, 'the decay of an at one time more sensible system; that is all I can suppose. Perhaps this was a place where dubious Christians were tried out, and subsequently either handed over to the Fiend, or promoted to a more select place. As it is, what are those other cities? Is City One a city of the saints? But *this* magnetized metropolis has obviously lost its rationale. We still have an enigmatic night-sky with its bogus moon—though what in the first instance was the purpose of this deceit heaven knows, with its harsh light as different as possible from the earthly moon—we still have all that.'

There was a considerable silence after this. Pullman felt how unnatural it was for men, or for Englishmen, without a pipe or something, to remain silent and relatively immobile. There was something sinister about it.

‘What is your view, Mannock?’ Pullman almost shouted.

‘You won’t get anything out of *him*,’ Rigate laughed, a cold blast. ‘He is in the confidence of the Padishah.’

Pullman looked over towards Mannock, whose face wore an enigmatic smile. It was clear, Pullman reflected, that Mannock tended to encourage the belief that he had access to information denied to ordinary citizens; that he had a pipe-line to the Palace.

‘I was at the Bailiff’s tonight,’ Rigate suddenly announced.

Mannock looked up quickly, not very pleased, it was evident. ‘Again? What on earth for?’ he asked.

‘Oh, you know why. To get a glass or two of whisky. And I have a piece of news, of supernatural origin too. Lucifer is planning an all-out attack upon this effete institution. At the head of all his flies and vermin, and with the help of a huge fifth column within the Gates. There is a lot of brash bragging from Hades, as usual. The old Devil boasts that he will capture the Padishah, and confine him among the fulgurous mountains of Hell, where he will be crawled over by obscene reptiles and be raped by fearful serpent-women.’

There was another rather painful silence, as it seemed to Pullman. In the middle of it there was the sound of porcine snores, ending in an abrupt snort. Satters had fallen asleep shortly after Rigate’s entrance. Mannock had given the snorer a kick, and was obviously getting cross, and he now took Rigate to task.

‘Why do you repeat these threats, Rigate? They spread these rumours as a matter of routine. Flies do not take cities.’

‘That is true, but the Master of Hell has enormous insects the size of this house.’

‘They would be blown away. And,’ barked Mannock, ‘if you don’t think the best-armed police *I* personally

have ever seen is not capable of discouraging our Fifth Column . . . !'

After a pause, Rigate remarked, 'I repeated that rumour because it was especially circumstantial, and the devil who told me believed it to be true.'

Mannock appeared to have forgotten Pullman's presence. His face expressed frustration and annoyance, in equal measure. He was sourly scrutinizing the countenance of this old friend, as if he had to be reconsidered as an intimate.

'In the event of such an attack as you report to be imminent, upon whose side would *you* be?' he asked Rigate harshly.

'Don't be childish,' Rigate barked brightly, 'I am of course a great adherent of Old Nick, and long for him to come and turn this dull dump of a camp into a proper Hell. That stands to reason doesn't it?'

'I just thought I would ask you.'

'But I,' Rigate complained, 'am in no one's confidence. I am given no opportunity of enrolling myself in the defence of the city. No one informs me what is the philosophy of the city, in contrast to the well-known tenets of Satan: they have never been stated. Everything is taken for granted. No, we are consulted about nothing. Our co-operation, our participation is not solicited. We are treated like packages.'

Mannock yawned. 'It is very high-handed of the Padi-shah not to consult you, Rigate. . . .'

Rigate gave an earthquake of a laugh as he rose preparatory to departure. 'Mannock and I do not see eye to eye regarding the supernatural autocrat,' he told Pullman. 'I want too much, I expect. I am a *rentier*. I do not have to work for my living. What more should I want?'

When he had gone, Mannock remarked, 'Rigate persists in treating this place as an Anglo-Saxon common-

wealth. Also, he listens to the propoganda he hears at the Bailiff's.'

'I see.' Pullman did not see, but everyone seemed to suppose here that you ought to know if you didn't. But what had interested Pullman was Rigate's theory that they had somehow found their way, posthumously, into a decayed sub-celestial system, on the eve of destruction by infernal agency. What this *meant* he could not imagine. The more he listened to these people the more puzzled he became. He thought of the scene outside the city gates, when he and Satters were alone with the implacable, starry face of these regions of the universe. Here inside, surrounded by man again, their perspective was unreal, was falsely human. These were unearthly regions, and their position a truly fearful one.

Pullman looked over towards his host and smiled. 'My ex-fag appears to be exhausted. I am sorry he made that frightful noise.'

'Oh that's all right . . .' Mannock seemed a little pre-occupied.

'I think we had better both go to bed, for I feel a little tired myself.' Pullman stretched and got to his feet. Mannock led him into a large room in which there were two comfortable beds. 'Is this all right?' he asked. 'I have not two single rooms, I am sorry to say.' But Pullman begged him not to think of anything of that sort—that this was far more than adequate and they were very lucky to have chanced upon so hospitable a person as himself.

(II)

THE ACTUAL HOUR of Pullman's disappearance was ten minutes after they had left the breakfast table. And it was a few minutes later that his host made an extraordinary discovery. He had gone to one of the living-room windows to open it, when, looking out into the street, he saw Pullman, and an attractive-looking dark young man was approaching him raising his hat. Pullman stopped, and he and the young man stood there talking some minutes. They walked away together. Frowning, Mannock watched them turning the corner, deep in conversation, and move rapidly out of sight. Mr Mannock was not a man who talked to himself, but to frown or to smile when alone he considered allowable; this was not an infringement of the law that only the presence of another human being made it permissible to speak, to gesticulate, to laugh, or to cry. But he was really very angry. This man had evidently been deceiving him, though exactly what was going on, and how Pullman's presence at this address had come to be known in this way, he could not guess. He went back and sat down, beginning a review of recent events, of his encounter yesterday, at the café, with these two obvious newcomers. The longer he pondered on these circumstances, the more mystified he became. And then Satters came into the room, carefully shutting the door, a furtive smirk on his face—Mannock knew where *he* had been.

'Satterthwaite, do you know anything about Pullman's movements?' These words appeared to Satters threatening, as well as impertinent.

'No. Do you?' Satters' face was that of a lower fifth protester and determined resister to rotten caddish authoritarian highhandedness. Seeing the face of this glowering

baby, Mannock got up and left the room. He would wait till Pullman's return. It was with him this matter must be sifted.

Pullman was away about twenty or twenty-five minutes. Mannock heard his name called, and with nausea, and that agitation which preludes to action usually produced, he went towards the living-room, attempting to compose his face. Pullman was so calm that it made the other's heart throb. 'So you are back?' he almost panted. Pullman smiled indulgently—the politest of his responses to Satters, when that young gentleman was tiresome. He assumed that his touchy host had resented his 'slipping away'.

'I must apologize,' he said easily, 'for stealing away for a few minutes. The fact is, I felt an "urge", as they say in journalistic fiction, to have a lightning tour of the district and check my impressions of the inhabitants.'

'I see,' Mannock responded, 'all by yourself, when your impressions would be unimpaired by a companion's comment.'

'That was the idea,' Pullman agreed.

'Why in that case did you require to have with you on your lightning tour a youthful friend—in a light-brown coloured suit. . . .'

Not a very noisy, but a sharp and arresting laugh cut Mannock short.

'Well, well, well, is *that* it now! You had some slight excuse for hurt feelings at my surreptitious sortie, but you had none, my dear Mannock, as regards the young man—in the light-brown suit! That was an impromptu element of my lightning tour. I have not the least idea who that young gentleman is. Here is his name, a Mister Sentoryen, and his address.' Pullman took out of his pocket a card and handed it to Mannock. 'This is what he gave me when we parted. . . . I have not the remotest idea who this young fellow is. Perhaps you can enlighten me.'

Mannock said nothing, he was examining the card. As he did so he was recalling what he had seen out of the window, which tended to confirm Pullman's story. The young man's behaviour was certainly that of a stranger, the lifting of the hat for instance. And then, if Pullman had had an assignation which he had wished not to divulge, he would hardly have arranged a meeting in full view of the windows of the room in which they were sitting. There was something else as well.

'How did this young man address you?' he inquired, in a far less steely tone.

'He addressed me as Mr James Pullman, he appeared to know all about me.' Pullman showed no resentment at being cross-examined. He gazed mildly at the other. The older man felt rather like a schoolboy who had been discovered in the act of making a fool of himself, and was being watched sedately by his offensively bland master. He set out to retrieve this position; he would take up the attitude of one who was able to lift the veil, provided the other would come clean.

'Pullman,' he said impressively, with a soupçon of authority. 'Have you been on very friendly terms with the Bailiff?'

Under examination, the prefect looked amused. 'I have only been in contact with him once, for precisely one minute.'

Mannock threw himself back in his chair, with the manner of a learned counsel who finds a witness a bit of a handful: but he continued to nurse the card which he had been given a short while before.

'This, the Phaniel Hotel,' and he was still impressive, 'is the address of a sort of private hotel—very luxurious—of which the Bailiff is the patron.' Mannock stood up rather suddenly, handing back the visiting card to Pullman. 'I cannot help you. If there is nothing you are holding back . . . there is no explanation I can give.'

‘I have nothing up my sleeve,’ said Pullman evenly, ‘and I am not very dishonest.’

‘My dear fellow, please do not misunderstand me. There has been nothing scurrilous about my questions. You might have some excellent reasons for withholding this or that from me . . . No one discovers *everything*.’

Pullman put the card away in his pocket. Then he stroked his beard and looked absentminded.

‘You have not told me what you saw.’ Mannock smiled ingratiatingly.

‘Well, I peered into St Katherine, into Saul,’ Pullman paused to summon back to his memory the next street name; ‘into Simeon, *and* into St Joseph. The last street before you get to the Boulevard is called Maccabees and then I saw where everybody round about buys their food. The street was full. Rather a different humanity from those we saw yesterday.’

‘Oh yes, in the Maccabees you would see the servants, who do the marketing. Those who do the hard work of the city are not eccentrics. They were working people in their life on earth. The *other* people . . .’

‘The demented “Youth” . . . ?’

‘Y-y-yes . . . if you like, are one-time bank clerks or drapers’ assistants, or waiters or club servants, or booking clerks . . .’

‘Exactly.’ Pullman mused. ‘I saw them too . . . hundreds of them.’

‘Well?’ Mannock queried. ‘Have you modified your first impressions?’

‘Oh no. But I see more how the city is populated. These are the hysterical child-chorus of the Bailiff’s Tribunal. It is pathetic.’

‘Perhaps fifty per cent of the city is the desiccated remains of youth-propaganda of forty years ago. When you were there the Bailiff’s Tribunal had its full-blown youth-chorus?’

'Oh yes,' Mannock agreed.

'Well, if you banish altogether the mature, reduce everything to the childish, and keep it on ice for . . . for a . . . for a century, or even for two, three, or four decades . . . it does produce something whose mindlessness verges on the mad.'

'But why,' Mannock was excited, 'why preserve—why *can* this . . . this exclusive immaturity!'

Pullman laughed. 'Ah, you are one of the indignant sort,' he said. 'I am content to observe, though what men do makes me a little sick at times.'

'You are an amoralist, I am afraid,' Mannock told him.

'Excuse me, sir.' A short silence was broken by Satters.

'What do you want, Satters? Anything wrong?' Pullman fixed a surprised eye upon his junior.

'I don't see, Pulley, why, when you aren't here, he should . . .'

'Satters! Please behave yourself.'

Satters glared, but was silent.

'I think this is the moment for me to visit that bank you spoke of,' Pullman said. 'If, Mannock, you are free . . .'

'Certainly, my dear chap, I was thinking the same thing. Let us repair to the Central Bank. It is getting quite late.'

And so the serious business of the day began, and in not much more than twenty minutes they were all three standing in the crowded hall of the Central Bank. There were no tiresome intricacies here. The customary atmosphere of a bank was absent: although it was called a bank, it was, quite obviously, something else, though it was a little difficult to define what it was, since it had no analogy in earthly life.

The interior walls were of glass, and all the floors were of iron pierced into a grill-work pattern throughout. At the end of every glass-built corridor sat an armed police

officer. But this uniformed man, with a large holster attached to his belt, was the only sign of deference that was shown, in this social system, to the substance, money, no longer with any of the attributes of dynamite.

In a small glass room Pullman conversed with a small baldish individual, sitting in front of him on the other side of a small shiny desk. With perfect suavity and remarkable intelligence, this official politely elicited the kind of place Pullman had occupied in earthly society. At the end of a quarter of an hour, during which the answers to the official interrogation had been rapidly noted in a large book, and then added up, as it were, the competent little bureaucrat opened a drawer, and drew out packet after packet of bank-notes. From each of these packets he extracted a certain number. Then he passed over to Pullman a pile of notes.

‘These are all in the Roman currency. These are the Roman Aureus, which stand in the same position as the English pound. These are half Aurei. These are the Roman Denarius; that was the principal silver coin. Its value was three to a florin—about ninepence ha’penny. And here are a number of tickets,’ he handed Pullman a square of tickets, resembling railway tickets—perhaps a thousand.

‘A big bundle is it not? We think here in terms of dollars. These,’ pointing to one of the packets of notes, ‘are the equivalent of a dollar. You will receive a sum of four hundred dollars a month,’ the official said smilingly. ‘If you feel that is not enough, will you come and see me? I do not think, Mr Pullman, that you will find this inadequate.’

‘What work do I have to do in order to earn this money?’

‘Nothing,’ said the official (No. 1051), again smilingly.

‘Nothing?’ Pullman said blankly with a rising inflection, not really soliciting an answer.

‘Nothing whatever,’ the official told him, ‘unless you wish to engage in business, or in any pursuit requiring capital, in which case you would no doubt wish to pay me a visit. We provide, in a quite limited way, financial help in such cases.’

‘Ah,’ thoughtfully, and rather dubiously, Pullman ejaculated, as though the other had just furnished him with information the *bona fides* of which he was not prepared to accept. ‘Supposing I wished to write a book? I mean, to write a book not for profit; a serious book, but one which would involve a small expense. What do I do then?’

‘You come and see me, and explain to me your requirements,’ the official politely smiled.

‘Thank you,’ with great dignity, without smiling, Pullman answered, bowed, turned on his heel, and left the room.

As he walked slowly along the passage Pullman gave himself up to the following caustic reflections—what Rigate had said very much in his mind—‘A very strange set-up indeed! Money is provided gratis, it is like water, it is a necessity piped along to you, to be drawn off a tap, free of charge. Not even a water-rate. At the camp we were frankly metaphysical; we spoke and acted as men, but we knew that we were only that, as it were, by courtesy. Upon entering the city you become “real”—your camp status is confirmed, as it were *solidified*—You are provided with a plausible physiological equipment, you are given guts (all this conferred upon you mysteriously, out of the air); you begin defecating and urinating—physically you are a full-scale man once more. But what *sort* of a man are you? You are given enough money to keep going, to supply yourself with a roof, with a lodging, and with food. But it is all artificial; at bottom just as metaphysical as it was outside in the camp. I do not like it any more than Rigate does.’

He caught the eye of the armed guard, sitting at the end of the corridor.

‘Do you like it?’ he asked the armed guard. But that man did not like being addressed by the clients of the bank; he frowned slightly, and did not answer him.

Downstairs Mannock was waiting, and Pullman rejoined him. ‘Got the dough?’ the former demanded with what Pullman regarded as a disagreeable bonhomie. For this had not been for him an agreeable operation, in which he had secured some ‘dough’, the stuff that all men want. It had been rather as if he had been provided with a glass of water—not of a beautiful, fresh, spring water, but a kind of ersatz liquid, the taste of which was not really at all pleasant. And the jolly-old-dough which the jolly-old-bank gives you attitude of Mannock jarred on him somewhat, and, as had been the case with the official upstairs, Pullman did not respond to his new friend’s smile with another smile. He made it clear to him, by the solemnity of his expression, that he did not look upon this as a *joke*, whatever else it might be.

Satters did not seem to regard it as a joke either. Far from looking as if a great big glorious uncle had given him a prodigious tip, he was flushed and was scowling. He was an excessively ruffled school-boy. He had had words with the official in the little glass box of an office where the cross-examination regarding his status had not passed off quite so pleasantly as it had in the case of Pullman. He had objected, at the outset, to the nature of the questions. For instance, to the question ‘What, roughly, was your annual gross income?’ he answered, flushing and stammering, that his people had allowed him, every term, at Charterhouse, at least a fiver . . . ‘They were very decent, I will say that, though they didn’t understand how much a fellow really needs.’

‘No, sir,’ corrected the official, ‘I did not mean what you received as pocket-money when you were at Charter-

house. I meant how much, when you were grown up, was your gross income, as . . . let me see, Mr Satterthwaite, were you in business, or had you a profession?"

Satters remained huddled in a furious sulk. There was a long pause during which the official watched him, and he continued to boil and to sulk.

'Mr Satterthwaite,' at last the official spoke. 'I asked you what your job was when you were alive. . . . Were you an accountant, a master-mariner, a tea-planter, a banker? . . .'

Satters did not move. He absolutely refused to visualize himself at any time later than his sixteenth year.

'Mr Satterthwaite, we are not making much progress, are we? I am still waiting to hear what was your job when you were alive.'

'My job,' erupted the sulky mass. 'My job . . . I was a stockjobber. Is that what you want? I was a jobber—that was my job.'

'Thank you, Mr Satterthwaite. In an average year, how much did you make—approximately?'

Satters looked at him with hatred. A look of cunning stole into his eye. 'What did I make? Ten thousand a year.'

'Ten thousand pounds a year, Mr Satterthwaite? That was a large income, was it not?'

'What is the use of my answering your questions if you don't believe what I say?' Satters leaned over pugnaciously towards him.

'I said, Mr Satterthwaite, that ten thousand pounds a year was a large income. I did not express any incredulity, I only remarked that it was a large sum. You lived very comfortably? What sort of car did you have, what make?'

'What has that got to do with it!' Satters blustered. 'I had a Rolls-Royce.'

'A Rolls-Royce? Nice cars, are they not? Very nice cars.'

There are no nicer cars. They cost rather a lot, is that not so?’

Satters had begun puffing himself out. The more he thought about his past, the grander it seemed. ‘Oh, I don’t know. Yes, I suppose so.’

‘Mr Satterthwaite, how many servants did you have? You had, of course, a cook, a butler . . .? How many of them were there?’

Satters had stuck his elbow upon the table, propping his furrowed brow with a forefinger near the top of it, and a thumb supporting his cheek-bone. It was the attitude of Shakespeare’s statues. ‘How many servants did I have? Let me see. They varied in numbers. Sometimes I had . . . oh, ten.’

‘Ten?’

‘Ten or twelve. But I had as few as five or six. They are a great deal of trouble, servants. I got very tired of them sometimes. Once, I remember, I turned them all out. Then, of course, I had none. No servants.’

The official sat back and looked at him blandly. ‘No servants? Well, Mr Satterthwaite, let me ask you one last question. Were you ever a bankrupt?’

Satters looked at him steadily. ‘What for?’

‘That is not the point,’ the official said. ‘All I want to know is whether you were a bankrupt or not.’

‘Often,’ Satters growled.

The official drew out the bundles of notes, and extracted a few of each, added a large bundle of tickets, and put the paper currency back again, locking the drawer. He informed Satters of the nature and description of the notes, and handed them to him. ‘Here, Mr Satterthwaite, is your monthly allowance. In one month you will return, and I will furnish you with the same amount again. Do not spend the money recklessly; I suggest you take great care of it. This is a city in which money runs away very quickly. Good day, Mr Satterthwaite.’

Satters had got to his feet uncertainly, thrusting the notes into his trousers pocket. He stood looking at the official. He knew that there was something between the official and himself which should not have been there; a certainty gathered force inside him that he was being treated very unfairly, very disgracefully. He felt that one day he and this official would say some very hard words to each other. However, there was nothing to be done at present. He nodded his head, and said in a very beastly way, 'Thank you . . . er . . . *thank you.*'

With this he left the room; and when he had arrived downstairs, he walked silently up to Mannock, pulled the notes out of his pocket, and said, 'This is my share.'

When Mannock had examined the notes he handed them back. 'It is not much, is it? You will have to be very careful with your money.'

Satter's face had become congested with blood of a dark red colour, and Mannock could see that for two pins this excitable youth would rush upstairs and cause a tremendous disturbance. 'I hope you did not misunderstand me, Satterthwaite. It is quite a fair amount of money that you have there. I did not mean that you have anything to complain about.'

'No?' He glared at Mannock, all his suppressed indignation turning in the direction of that deceitful friend. 'No? I see. You need not say any more, Mr Mannock.'

It should be said that the bank was absolutely crawling with that type of citizen which had aroused Pullman's curiosity. Here it was actually possible to watch them attempting to wheedle more money out of a cashier, or wildly recounting their exploits to companions awaiting them in the hall, or, on the other hand, furiously denouncing both the institution and all the tiny money-bugs which it employed. Often fights occurred between the clients and the personnel of the bank. There was one never to be forgotten occasion when a dissatisfied client

had seized several bundles of the aureus notes and got as far as the hall before he was overtaken by the Bank-police. To see them all here in the place where the funds originated to maintain them in idleness and idiocy was an almost frightening spectacle of subsidized futility. Was there ever so irresponsible a dole!

As they were descending into an underground station, Mannock a little ahead, Satters, lowering his voice so as to exclude that gentleman, heatedly addressed Pullman. 'That bastard up there as good as said I was a liar. He has given me hardly any money. He asked me what my job was. On earth, you know.'

'What was it?' Pullman inquired.

'I said I was a jobber.'

'Oh, a jobber. Were you a jobber?'

'Of course I was a jobber. But he seemed to think I was lying. He asked me how many servants I had, and a lot of boloney like that. This is all he gave me.' Satters pulled the notes out of his trousers pocket, and showed them to Pullman, who saw that they were quite few in number.

'I suppose that he thought that a boy of sixteen—and you will always be a boy of sixteen in this place—I suppose he thought that that was all you would need.'

Satters spluttered excitedly. 'The dirty swine! Boy of sixteen! I suppose making me a boy of sixteen was a dirty crack, I suppose that's what it was. The dirty swine!'

Pullman looked irritated, and replied, as they hurried after Mannock: 'The idea is, of course, that, as you possess the mentality of a boy of sixteen, that is what you must be. You have to accept that.'

'Oh, I do, do I? Oh, I see . . . you dirty rotter! I have to be for all the rest of time a boy of sixteen, do I? And have the money that a boy of sixteen would have . . . Eh? Well, let me tell you this, Mister Pullman. . .'

'If you speak to me in that way, I shall not answer you.'

We need not live together, either, if you cannot behave yourself.' Pullman was very cross indeed, and hastened his step until he was at Mannock's side. 'Our young friend is being very rude and troublesome,' he told Mannock. But just then they reached the ticket-office, and the quarrel did not develop. Satters grew quieter, and when he was next by the side of Pullman, he exclaimed, 'I say Pulley, I am most awfully sorry I called you a rotter. I did not mean that you were a rotter, Pulley. I just said that because I was terribly cross with what that beastly official had done.'

'All right. Don't call me any names in future when people annoy you. Call *them* names if you like. Not *me*.'

(III)

IT WAS ONLY a ten-minute Metro journey to the station of Tenth Piazza. When they reached the street level once more, it was to find themselves a few yards from an enormous oblong space almost a mile long, and probably a quarter of a mile across. Heavy, regularly-placed paving stones emphasized its size and emptiness; it was quite without ornament, and down its sides ran a spacious, arched arcade. Within the arcade were shops, cafés, the entrances to public buildings, theatres, billiard saloons, bowling-greens, and so forth. It was thick with people moving slowly up and down. Since such a vast number of people in this city had nothing to do, and all the time in the world on their hands, this place served as what was perhaps the most popular shopping centre, and a multitudinous promenade; with exchanges of bouquets, of lipsticks and of witticisms. Every square inch of these arcades was covered—though for some reason not many people used the Piazza itself; a strident hum burst out on the right, grew faint in the middle, and grew vigorous, and then frantic again on the left. The architecture was large and bare, mostly of a light stucco, café-au-lait in colour, but with the milk predominating. The effect was South German, and in summer the austerity of the unbroken paved vista was something all its own, an indescribable, accentless void.

Mannock took them across the paved emptiness, diagonally, for a considerable distance (if the Yahoos were timorous about great spaces, he was not); then they entered the arcade. Satters said that he felt tired, complaining that the stone pavement hurt his feet. Mannock promised that shortly he would have a rest, and a bite of something to eat. But immediately they plunged into

the crowd. It was the first contact that Satters had had with this strange humanity, and at last even *he* noticed that there was something extraordinarily unusual about them.

‘Pulley, I say, these people give me goose-flesh. I feel I am walking among dead people, Pulley, all of them cracking jokes.’

‘So you are,’ Pullman told him. ‘Can you smell them?’

‘Yes, Pulley, it is like rotten vegetation isn’t it? Oh yes, and there is a scent.’

‘It is heliotrope mostly. I saw one then,’ Pullman whispered, ‘who was actually a fish, I believe. And there are masses of toads.’

‘Ugh, ugh, Pulley! How sad they look, don’t they. When they make a crack their faces break up into a hundred tiny little wrinkles.’

There was a croak in their ear, ‘You two stop whispering. We don’t allow that. All cards on the table.’

Pullman half-turned round, and said, ‘My friend is so young that is why we whisper. We won’t any more.’

‘I don’t mind,’ shrugged the mask—and it was so terribly like a mask that Pullman felt that that was what in fact it might be. This one had a monocle, and he fluttered his hands. ‘I am a newcomer myself.’

‘I don’t think you are, buddy,’ Pullman blew at him through his beard.

‘I think you’re a horrid old man.’ There was a nasty look in the eye of the mask. ‘Go away . . . and have a good wash. You are filthy both of you. You stink.’

Pullman drew Satters away, towards one of the shops, and pushed Mannock before him.

A voice was distinctly audible, from the section that was being held up by this shopward avalanche. ‘That dirty old man’ (by this Pullman was intended) ‘pushed against my new waistcoat. It is ruined I fear.’ Another one answered, ‘There is a disgustingly young one too

with them, Arthur. He put his clodhopper on my toecap. Little beast.'

They were glad when they reached the shops, and it was a considerable distance across a very wide arcade. The first shop was a gentleman's outfitter. A dozen people were glued to the window, gesticulating, hissing, and crying out. These window displays were a revelation, to the newcomers, of the city's civilized resources, or as it sometimes seemed to Pullman, uncivilized resources. Very beautifully suited waxen-faced gentlemen, with expressions of ineffable sweetness, and exuding *bon-ton*, stood in attitudes of impeccable politeness.

They kept close together, Satters leading, as he had now become hysterically absorbed in what the shop windows had to offer: they passed the next six or seven shops in close order, but Pullman outraged at the vulgarity, and Satters pressed against him in front, deeply ecstatic. For Mannock, naturally, there was nothing novel about all this. In shop after shop now were rows of startling pink and green shirts, American neckwear of terrific unrestraint, and dressing-gowns in foulard and velour—of the latter, one in scarlet riveted Satters' attention, but he could only see it fragmentarily for at least twenty people were dancing with rapture in front of it, and very soon the shopman took it away, for such a gem as that did not remain unsold for more than a few minutes. 'Oh, Pulley, did you *see* it!' Satters began to dance as well. It was difficult to get him away from this shop.

'What on earth do they want to manufacture all this stuff for here?' Pullman protested. 'Surely these garish and ridiculous garments are not in keeping with the severity of the Piazza, or, for that matter, with the whole idea of this place? There is something very odd about all this. I do not understand it.'

'Well, these are obviously not very edifying garments,' Mannock agreed. 'But there are all sorts, and, of course,

all ages, in this place; and there are great numbers of young chaps for whom these shops cater. I daresay they should not do so. But nothing is done, officially, to interfere with the tastes of the inhabitants.'

'It is a pity, to my mind, that something is not done to curb their vulgar exuberance,' Pullman answered disdainfully. 'What sense is there in so much *laissez-faire*?'

Mannock remained silent. But a perfect bellow of rapture came from Satters. 'Oh I say, I do like that! I'm damned if I'm not going in to ask the price of that jumper, Pulley. Half a moment, I'm going into this shop.'

A Fair Isle pullover of the most seductive sort was in the centre of the window, and, pushing aside three or four people, Satters dived into the shop before anyone had time to restrain him.

'Oh damn that idiotic brat,' the exasperated Pullman exclaimed. 'Let us walk on . . . I do not in the least mind if we lose him. Come along, Mannock. Let him go gathering jumpers-in-May. I have had enough of him for one morning.'

Mannock laughed, but pulled his angry friend back by the arm. 'We had better wait for him. Be patient. In such a crowd as this we might very easily lose him for ever.'

'I dearly wish we could.'

Before very long Satters reappeared, a broad smile upon his rugged, big-baby countenance, the tassel of the shabby football cap still dangling over his eye, but a lovely new Fair Isle pullover embellishing his footballing torso. Beneath his arm was a brown paper parcel, containing his discarded jacket.

'You look a smart young man,' Mannock told him. But Pullman had turned away, and they resumed their walk. Pullman noticed, as he had done before, that almost everyone they met was smartly dressed. Of course, if you give people, if the State gives them, all the money

they want, they spend most of it on clothes, especially if they cannot spend it on motor-cars, because such things are not for sale, and if they have none of the other usual earthly ways of getting rid of money. He began to understand why the clothes shops were so numerous, and stocked with such enticing garments (an explanation which Mannock had preferred to withhold). But he became conscious, at the same time, of his own shabbiness. He began to glance at the suitings displayed in the shops they were passing, and marked down one or two of those establishments for a visit, in which more sober types of garments were displayed.

There were boisterous cafés, with groups of young men (eternally young, too, Pullman reflected), one of whom threw a kiss to Satters, greatly to that youth's pleased beflustification. 'Did you see what that boy did, Pulley? But he looked rather a decent chap, don't you think?' Such incidents gave Satters furiously to think; he fingered the banknotes in his pockets, those that remained, and promised himself a trip down there tomorrow, and he thought he would have a cup of coffee too, at that amusing place they had just passed.

But there were other kinds of shops as well, all were not clothes shops; and now they came to a second-hand bookshop which did not attract the crowd. It was even possible to see most of its stock displayed in the window. It had an entire shelf of volumes devoted to the Tantra Sutras. Pullman stopped, and began a scrutiny of this unexpected culture; but almost immediately Satters developed foot trouble.

'All right,' said Mannock. 'We will go to that café along there. It is not far. You shall have a doughnut, and some nice cocoa.' Pullman, with a muffled curse, left the books, and went on with the other two. As he was going, he felt a light tap upon his shoulder, and a grinning face at his side shot at him in a hissed whisper, 'There isn't anything

in the window, but they've got some beauties inside. Extremely dirty. Filthy in fact.' He gave this leering face such a pulverizing glare that it vanished.

It was only a few yards beyond this that a very tall figure seemed to get in Pullman's way. The crowd was very thick at that point, and, if anyone stopped, everything was apt to stop too. The large actorish face was looking down at Pullman benevolently. There was fur on the collar, and for some reason the overcoat had the appearance of a dressing-gown. The soft felt hat was a little jauntily tilted, and there was a suggestion, although the get-up was entirely smart, of an earlier age.

'You should take that beard off,' this giant gruffly purred. 'You would really look less old, you know. Albert Edward Prince of Wales wore a beard; but he was a prince. You have to remember that.'

'I never thought of Edward the Peacemaker's beard,' Pullman answered civilly. 'I grew my beard in Paris . . .'

'Ah, Paris, yes. In Rome you do as do the Romans.' The immoderately tall man turned about, and moved along beside Pullman, to whom for some reason he seemed attracted. It turned out that it was a didactic itch from which he suffered. Apparently he felt that Pullman was in need of instruction; that if he did not allow the hair to grow on his face he would be more like a young man—if not actually a young man, yet slightly resembling one. Whereas at present he was slightly resembling an old man. There was something about this which worried the giant and so he had turned around in order to walk a little way with this misguided person.

'This has been called the Heaven of the Young,' he announced, 'and that is what it is. In the reign of Queen Victoria who was life for? Life was for the old. Even the man of forty was *too young*. The summit of life was among the Eternal Snows. At sixty the head is white. That was the privileged age: the theory was that you had

lived enough and experienced enough to be wise. But who wants to be wise, in that manner? I have not myself taken the trouble to find out the things that make one wise. I have never read books, never studied. I have not grown grey in researching, I have lived for what Youth gives. Youth gives me all I want. In life on earth one could not give oneself up to Youth. How could one? Money kept one away from that; one had no chance of giving oneself up to Youth. But here it is different. *Here* money is abolished. Because money is no longer a necessity. We all are given an average of fifteen or twenty pounds a week. *And* we are given eternal Youth—those of us who were young when we got here. There are . . . oh, nearly a million of us and all are as good as princes. I spend my days dreaming, I have no cares, I can buy all I fancy, and I am *young*: I am twenty-one. Merely to be young—to be slender, for one's face to be like a poem, for one's body to smell like fresh-cut flowers, for one to be free because one wants nothing—that is paradise! Who wants to be a rich old man, or a man possessed of *power*? All I want is to be young. To bring my youth to the Tenth Piazza, to be young with other youths on the promenade, for Youth to be shared with other young men, to have one's shoes shone in the lavatories by a red-capped old man—for old age shines shoes, that is the Hell of the withered and moth-eaten. I am in the land of the Young, I am light-hearted. There is only one thing I complain about, that is my ridiculous height. It is *not* an attribute of Youth. But I say to myself it is a revenge of some old and stupid god, because I was given *intelligence* in addition to Youth—so I had to have some blemish!

Pullman listened in complete silence to this exordium. Now he looked up into the blue-eyed, monumentally ecstatic, amused old actor's face, and said, 'How long have you been here, sir?'

The giant kept his head in the clouds, but he turned

his eyes down to gaze at his adopted pupil. 'When did I come here?' he asked this in a dreamy sing-song.

'That is what I asked you, sir.' Pullman fixed his eyes upwards upon the sing-singing giant.

'It does not matter here *when* we arrive, we are given eternal youth.'

'You did not answer my question,' Pullman insisted.

The expression on the countenance of the very tall promenader suffered no alteration, but his eyes rolled downwards to observe Pullman a little wildly. 'Did I not? The time then was one year before the beginning of the Boer War.'

Pullman remained silent: and Mannock said in a subdued voice, 'I wonder if this gentleman has any more to say?'

Pullman looked up at the too-tall man at his side. 'I omitted to ask you your name, sir? If it is not impertinent may I do so now? I should like to know your name, so that I may converse with you again. We have to give a doughnut to this child, whose feet are hurting him. You will understand, sir, that the *very* young suffer from their feet, when they get bored. And they often become very bored. So, before we part, may I again ask you . . .'

'My name? My Christian name—and that is all that matters—is Michael. Michael.'

'Mine is James. Good-day, sir.' Pullman raised his hat, and turned to Mannock. 'Let us now attend to Satterthwaite, Mannock, shall we.'

As a café protruded a few seats into the arcade, and one table was just being vacated, Mannock signalled to the abominably disagreeable looking Satters and they all sat down at the vacant table.

Mannock called the waiter and ordered three doughnuts, and a cup of cocoa for Satters, and two drinks of another kind for the two grown-ups. 'I often see that very tall man,' Mannock told Pullman. 'He is usually alone;

in fact I do not believe that I have ever seen him with anybody. What nonsense he was talking.'

'It was nonsense,' Pullman agreed. 'But he is no more mad than everybody else. He is just very much taller.'

'I suppose so,' said Mannock.

'He is intelligent; but he would not have spoken to you, Mannock, he would not even see you. He detected beneath my beard that I was on the borderlands of Youth. So I was not quite dead, you see. I was still capable of understanding.' Pullman laughed.

Mannock seemed in rather a hurry. He paid the bill and very soon they left the café, Satters stuffing the last doughnut into his mouth.

Led by Mannock, they forced their way through the crowd until they reached the pavement outside the arcade. They were about midway along the Piazza, and Mannock started to cross it, this time at right angles. 'These places are called Piazzas—and really it is rather difficult to know what to call them unless you stretch a point and make use of that term. There are three of them: the Tenth, the Fifth, which is the centre of the city, and the First Piazza, which is on the side where there is a gate in the ramparts from which you can be ferried across to the farmlands. Ahead of us, over there, is Tenth Avenue: and it was in Tenth Avenue that a gentleman fired a siphon at our friend here, and it is in a street five blocks from Tenth Avenue that I live.' He smiled amiably at them, as they marched forward, and Pullman said, 'That is very clear. What is not clear, is why this place is here, and what the devil we are doing in it.'

II STORM

(IV)

THAT AFTERNOON PULLMAN occupied majestically the centre of the settee, and Mannock was in the large arm-chair he favoured, upon the inland side of the mantelpiece. Returned from Tenth Piazza, they had lunched lightly, and afterwards Satters had flung himself like a tired dog upon his bed, greatly to their relief. The mantelpiece clock indicated that it was just after two o'clock; both men sat without speaking, but Mannock was asking himself who this magnate might be, who sat there before him, sought out by the Bailiff, and coming from a world in which he had been Somebody, it would seem.—That rather lofty something about his guest which he had noticed within ten minutes of their first meeting, and which showed no signs of disappearing, what on earth could it be? Erect and silent, Pullman gently stroked his bearded chin. What this aggressive self-confidence might signify, to this Mannock had given very little thought until now. He had not asked Pullman what had been his profession or his trade. Mannock himself had been in business in the East, mainly in China; but he did not feel that this new acquaintance of his had been a businessman. No. Perhaps his calling had been clerical; but there was no clerical collar to indicate such origins; unless he had belonged to one of those sects who dispense with a uniform. A surreptitious glance or two, a modification of the central image and he decided against the beard belonging to a preacher.—That out of the way, he gave himself up to a more general analysis. When you began to study him, Pullman had a noticeably impecunious

look. He had not the clothes of a gentleman. If any reliance were to be placed upon the rig-out in which people made their appearance in the camp, Pullman had not come out of a top-drawer, but of some intermediate one. However shabby he might be, the man of means would be wearing an expensive suit of clothes, or a pair of shoes made for him. One man, he remembered, had turned up at the Camp in a grey topper and formal suit to match, which, though it was rather soiled, he had no doubt been provided with in order to identify him as an Ascot and Royal Garden-Party guest.—No, Pullman's air of authority had nothing in the way of clothes to sustain it. Obviously it was in no way related to finance.

Having reached this point in his analysis, Mannock could get on without the figure of Pullman as a guide. He marshalled in his mind a number of types with a very high opinion of themselves, but for no visible reason. Well, there was always the Actor. Quite an unsuccessful actor often had an inflated sense of his personal prestige. The fellow would come prancing along towards you, his head in the clouds. His wardrobe might in no way bear out his swagger. Without a bob's worth of coppers to rattle about in his pocket, this fellow was the Prince of Denmark. Mannock smiled; but his expression quickly changed. The *beard!*—whoever saw an actor with a beard? The Actor was a clean-shaven man, and there was no way of fitting his guest into the place reserved for men of that calling.

Then Mannock thought of the Schoolmaster. Yes, that was a possibility. The Schoolmaster often displayed a quite bloated self-esteem: and he might quite well wear a not very graceful or impressive beard. Yes. The more Mannock considered it, the more he thought that he might be in the presence of a Schoolmaster: imposingly familiar with the differential calculus, or terribly good at Greek, but not very affluent. Not a Public-School master, this

fellow had not been teaching gentlemen! But there was something quite obvious which Mannock had ignored—something eminently genteel in its associations which he had passed over. It now rose accusingly in his memory. It was quite simply the Fag, evidently of first importance, which had been left out—that English institution of which Satterthwaite was the by no means self-effacing representative. How could he have overlooked the fag?

But the Wykehamist cast a dubious mind's-eye towards the rigger Cap worn by Satters. He knew that there were many schools called Public, but . . . and a fag wherever a prefect whirled a cane. He would be prepared to find a fag in any institution that was Public enough to boast a House.—Yet who ever saw a bearded prefect? What had happened to Pullman after the fag-owning decade? There were Other Places, he was vaguely aware, outside of those two fairylands with which Youth terminates in England—the one watered by the Isis, bulging with learning from Jesus to All Souls; the second built upon the Cam, captured by Science, though civilizing what has mastered it:—but Mannock's vague awareness had no desire for greater precision. Had he made the effort, in the interest of locating his guest's pigeonhole, he might have found a Place not unknown to learning, where a Chair had once been illustriously occupied by his guest, not at all a bad niche for a rather unusual *Gelehrter*, within earshot of the Hallé Orchestra (to give a hint of where this might be). This would not have caused the Schoolmaster Theory to be quite inapplicable; that had really rather appealed to Mannock. He had amusedly been turning this over in his mind when, with an alarming suddenness, Pullman started to speak:

‘On what principle,’ he inquired, ‘are people selected for citizenship in the Camp outside the city?’

‘Oh I don't know.’ Mannock was annoyed at his subject speaking, as an artist would be if a cow he had been

drawing got up and walked away. 'You yourself have been a witness of how they are selected, have you not? The Bailiff is a strange functionary. He *pretends* . . .'

With the utmost suddenness the room became as dark as night. Mannock sprang up.

'Does this often happen?' Pullman, who had not moved from his position in the centre of the settee, inquired. The voice was irritatingly steady.

'Never in my experience.' Mannock sounded peevish.

A blast, rather than a flash of lightning, a hundred times brighter and colder than any day, stamped out everything in blinding black and white upon the human retina. Pullman looked clearer and calmer than ever to the exasperated eye of his host. Pullman, too, had the sensation of being unspeakably distinct, but his calmness was, of course, more apparent than real. The switch-off, back to primeval night, was very violent; abruptly the vivid day ticked out. In the absence of all light the eyes ached.

'David Hume observed that, because the sun had never failed to rise every morning since the beginning of the world, that is not to say it will do so tomorrow morning.' These unhurried vocables of Pullman's seemed to be uttered in defiance of the blackness, and they had the same effect upon Mannock as if he had personally stage-managed the turning off of the Light. If his thoughts could have acquired a voice, it would have been as a growl that they would have been heard. 'What does the fellow think he is doing? Obviously a schoolmaster!'

One stood, the other sat, as if posing for their portraits. Neither liked the quality of the blackness. Pullman felt he could not furnish it with his thoughts, it was impenetrable and alien. Mannock did not recognize it: he was speechless with terror.

But as if the blackness had spoken there was an enormous shock: the house they were in rocked backwards, and

then with equal violence it seemed to right itself. This second movement tossed Mannock down on the floor, in front of the mantelpiece. The house then seemed to shake itself, and several of the window-panes crashed, and there was a crashing and banging outside. The door was dashed open, and Satters appeared, flung himself up against Pullman on the settee, his voice blowing into the latter's face, in a breathless scream, 'Pulley, wha . . . wha . . . wha . . . wha . . . what!'

Pullman, erect as he still was, was in no position to tell Satters *what*. He had no idea himself. Technically, he suffered from shock, as he would if he had been in a car and it had come into collision with a milk-float. His rigidity was a necessary adaption. Only tensed could he meet the appallingly unexpected.

He began by holding protectively Satters' bloated head, and himself derived a certain comfort from these contacts. In the end his fingers got wound round his fag's strong curls. As events developed, he found that he was pulling at a massive lock. In moments of especial stress he nearly pulled out by the roots sections of his young follower's thatch. His hand left the hair, it fastened itself on the nose snorting upon the settee at his side. He noticed his lips framing an apology; his hand released the nose, and Satters, apparently believing, in his shadowy consciousness, that something nightmarish had had hold of his nose, sneezed aggressively.

There were no more shocks; the next development was a world-embracing Hiss. The city and everything in it became a Hiss. If a man is standing on a railway station platform near to a locomotive it is apt to emit a deafening hiss, which causes him to hurry away. Magnified a million times, such a hiss as this resulted with Pullman's fingers sticking in his ears until later they fell down against his sides when his consciousness left him. But actually the Hiss was the last thing he heard. While he

sat there, his senses full of a prodigious Hiss, other sounds filled the air. Corked as his ears were, his hearing mechanism, such of it as was not obsessed by the Hiss, dimly attempted to record the chaos: but the next blast was final, and it gave up all attempt to hear. Something like a star must have been hurled at the metropolis. Or it was stunned by a rushing world. Or it was smothered by a hostile universe. If anything lived in Third City it lived as a congealed and armoured mechanism as Pullman did, his arms dropped like lead on either side of his body. He sat there bolt upright, but was not a valid witness of the hereafter.

Beneath him Mannock lay trembling on the floor, but it was an automatic rattle of his flesh, not one at which his consciousness assisted. He adhered to the floor like a piece of paper, a gasp stifled and stuck, his mouth as round as a pennypiece. Satters' head adhered to Pullman's body at about the level of the hip, like an unsightly wen of doughy texture. He was quite motionless. It was a stricken group.

During everything that happened subsequent to this, a storm of such force was present, violently rushing into every crevice, that there was not a scrap of glass left in the window-frames, and the pictures, which were hurled to the floor, also lost their glazing. The appearance of the room was entirely changed by the destructive blast, the lighter chairs and cabinets were driven into the corners of the room, the carpet rose into the air, and stopped there, except that it rested upon here a chair and there a projecting corner of the settee. Later on Pullman discovered that he had been blown over on top of Satters, whereas Mannock's hair was almost blown out of his head, and in the end was stretched out to its utmost limit: a fragment of glass was embedded in his neck.

Upon this violent wind missiles of different sizes tore their way into the city; a stone, the size of a sphinx,

plunged into the tower of the Central Bank; other large stones visited the citizenry, and splintered glass, like that which had found its way into Mannoek's neck, flew everywhere in and out of the houses: the wind was also responsible for transmitting a blistering heat. At times those of the inhabitants who had been practically mummified, as had the group in Habakkuk, were very fortunate, for those few who had not been rendered unconscious reported that they had been grilled alive. They said that they might have been in front of an open furnace, and they expected at every moment to be shrivelled up.

The background to the superhuman uproar, which started with flashes of lightning which were like blows from hard blades of light, the background to this was an orchestral *tutti* as of massed instruments, each straining to its utmost to make more noise than had ever been made before. To supply the simile with an overseer, one might elect as *chef d'orchestre* Satan in person.

A dark cloud had stood over Piazza One, it emptied itself in the form of a spout of malodorous liquid which came down in the centre of the Piazza, and inundated neighbouring streets. Everyone had closed their windows, and held handkerchiefs to their noses. A doctor said if a second cloud behaved in that way, there would be a diphtheria epidemic. This was happening in the poorer quarters of the city about the time Habakkuk was experiencing the first shocks.

The rain of Flies occurred later. The Flies were quite dead when they reached the city, and carpeted everything with a uniform blue-black. With a sound like the cymballing of thin sheets of metal, locusts followed, in lesser mass, the rain of Flies. Pullman by that time had been blown across Satters' body and only a few people in Third City were less of an automaton than he was.

But the Waterspout and the Deluge of Flies were incidental. Mankind practically asphyxiated, what could

only be a Battle took place, at once anthropomorphic and supernatural. Its major features were the percussion of great voices, words used as missiles the size of houses, and then what the human soldiers would have recognized as the sound of warfare in the twentieth-century sense, so magnified as to be aurally unmanageable. The apparent slamming of monstrous doors would correspond for those attuned to terrestrial battle, with the detonation of shells and bombs. But the doors which seemed to be slamming must have been shutting out areas as large as the city itself. Taking the sounds literally, beside the hollow roar of the doors a thousand feet high were nests of machine-guns, giving a monster rattle, a sky-scraping honeycomb with muzzles for windows. A human listener, in registering such immensities, could not possibly have admitted them to his slender auditory apparatus; he would have somehow translated the gigantic sounds on to a scale more adapted for his sensual possibilities. What would not be familiar to the human soldier would be the three or four mammoth voices on high, crashing out the alphabets of Heaven and of the Pit. The nasal tongues of giant viragos at one time conducted a screaming argument among the clouds, which, if translated, was totally absurd. This terrific contest degenerated into something like a zoological madness. The giant sounds shrank to a hubbub of monkeys, and a psittacine screaming. As abruptly as it had begun this chaotic orgasm ended—like a vast squib it hissed and spluttered, it chattered and squawked to an end, an end at which no one was present, as no one had been fully present at the never-ending encounter. What succeeded it was a silence equally monstrous.

It was in a universal silence that Pullman grew conscious of his surroundings, far more oppressive than any sounds he had ever heard. In every sense his awakening was abnormal. He did not, for instance, become aware of the conditions in which he and the others breathed and

had their beings: that was a later and philosophic realization. What first came was a feeling of a rigid body, as if frozen into an unnatural erectness. It was, as it were, a negative awareness, a cataloguing of things which were *not*. First of all, he could not move. Then he became aware of all the other things which he could not do. And as to the world outside himself, that mainly, to start with, was a list of negations. Everything was upside-down—this was *not* here, or that was *not* there.

When he began to recover his faculties the first sensation was one of such violence that he thought not that he was coming to life, but that he was dying. Nausea weighed him down with a leaden loathing. But that was secondary: his angry liver demanded how its functioning came to be shut down, the urinary system struggled to force two or three pints of liquid, or near-liquid, through the kidneys; most painful of all was the spine. What could it be? Were the meninges involved? If only ice could have been administered. He remembered the treatment he had read about in the case of some spinal ailment. Ice appeared to be essential. He wondered if Mannoek possessed a refrigerator, but, even if he had, Pullman realized he was unable to move, so could not have procured any ice from that source. The reactions were so acute at this point that he fainted. When he came to, the spinal column was easier, but in the urinary region the pains were so severe that he again succumbed. When he regained consciousness for the second time the pains had diminished, he just felt sick and completely exhausted: perfectly still, his eyes shut, and his hands pushed beneath his body to secure a little heat, he fell into a profound sleep. When he awakened, the organic disturbances appeared to have subsided. Absolute stillness obtained as before, not a sound was to be heard anywhere; no one seemed to be left alive in the city.

With an analytical mind such as Pullman's, one of the

first things to occur to him was the time. But before the bodily ordeal began there had literally been no interval allowing for such speculations. Now he fixed his eyes upon the mantelpiece clock. He stared at it for a very long time, when with difficulty he realized it had stopped. His next reflection was that either (*a*) the day was drawing in or (*b*) that henceforth there was going to be less light in the world. It had all been used up! he reflected stupidly. However, what could not be called an increasing *suppleness*, but certainly was a consciousness of a development all over his body of a potential pliability, began to be felt. To look directly at his wrist-watch was of course impossible. Revolving his left arm was painful enough, there was no question of lifting it up. But he found that he was able gently to withdraw his left elbow a couple of inches. Then the wrist-watch was visible. His extravagance had been justified; quietly it ticked on. It was almost five minutes to eight.

He then set about very roughly computing the time occupied by the superhuman disturbance. His guess was that for either two or three hours abnormal conditions had persisted. He checked this later on with many people, and his final conclusion was that what he had allowed at that time was approximately right.

Looking down he was able to see Mannoek. His friend was still outstretched upon the floor, before the mantelpiece; the mouth gaped open, his hair stood erect upon his head. He also noticed, for the first time, the piece of glass embedded in his neck. How white he was—how that changed his identity. He stared at the colourless mask. The question as to whether Mannoek was alive or dead must be left in abeyance until, as he put it, he himself ‘came unstuck’.

Soon it would be too dark to see: was that delirium to be repeated when the night was there? He shuddered. Would they all be annihilated before they had quite

regained their physical competence? Would he die—really be dead this time: and Michael, Sentoryen and a million other ‘Youths’, would they all be wiped out too? He was terrified as he thought of this, yet his fatalism did not desert him. He even allowed his mind to rest upon Michael, that mad giant in his furred overcoat, with his fantastic philosophy. Would he die, or would the Youth-God lift him from his bed and carry him into the Elysian Fields? Someone surely would watch over this *grand halluciné*.—But a cold wind began blowing through the apartment. What was this? Pullman alone in this blasted city . . . everyone else like these two people *dead* . . . alone, with that terrible noise, with this frantic wind? To be alone in such a storm of hatred, a supernatural rage!

His existence was ridiculous—why should he be preserved, in order to be the witness of this horror?—to lie here trembling and gasping, and in the end to be extinguished! He could only guess what was happening in other parts of the city. But he *felt*—and since there were no sounds outside it was perfectly possible—that he was the only man alive. He could not resist the sensation of an unexampled loneliness. Had he heard, all of a sudden, a step outside in the hall, it would not have occurred to him that it was a man’s. His heart would freeze, as he wondered what kind of creature this could be. This idea terrified him so much that he revolved his head a little and fastened his eye intently upon the handle of the door. But there was no movement and at last he forgot about it.

The wind increased to a gale, and the wind was colder than he had ever expected it to be in this city. Had the city not only become derelict, all its inhabitants destroyed, but was it now to be delivered up to the colds of interstellar space? Would those fearful stars, in future, blaze down upon something as cold as themselves? His body

grew colder and colder. He began to recover the use of his limbs, the necessity to secure something to cover himself up in appeared to stimulate him to movement.

First he found he could, very slowly and painfully, move his legs, and move his feet up and down. Next came the arms, already limited movement was possible. But section by section he must learn to move his limbs in all directions. The darkness increased: soon the full night would be there. There were of course no lights in the streets, but there were also no stars. In about half an hour he was able to move freely his arms and legs; sit up for a moment, and then subside again. The body was as yet rigid. It was at this point that the door opened.

He sat absolutely without movement, breathing as lightly as possible. He was still facing the fireplace, and the door was behind him. Stiff and motionless, he held his breath, pretending that, like the others, he was dead. A stealthy step crossed the room, then the approaching foot struck something in the dark.

If this was a man, it was a very silent one. Perhaps looters were at large; most of the city was dead, and looters were taking advantage of this fact. Then there were a few diminutive sounds, a sigh, a sharp scratching—a match was being struck.

There, in the brilliant matchlight, was the scared face of Platon. Pullman had never before had occasion to feel so ashamed of himself; he suddenly croaked out a laugh, Platon jumping and the match going out. Another match was produced, and once more they could see one another.

‘You are alive.’ Platon’s voice was low and husky. ‘Good, I thought I was the only live one—in all the city.’

‘I thought that too,’ Pullman said truthfully.

Platon burst into a feeble guffaw, and the other joined him in a doleful gasp of mirth.

Pullman sat up, in a rickety and unsteady fashion. Next he rolled over on his side and after a number of

unsuccessful attempts managed to stand up. This had occupied four or five minutes; and when he looked down, Platon was kneeling at the side of his master. He had opened Mannock's shirt at the neck, and put his hand sideways upon the latter's chest. He was listening for the sound of the heart. Pullman could see where he was, but not what he was doing.

'His heart beat,' Platon said.

'Good.' Pullman was now doing loosening-up exercises on the sofa. He found it warmed him too. 'Capital!' he said with an attempt at a firmer voice, sitting up and slapping his arms across his chest. Then he said, 'We are all alive.'

'All,' echoed Platon. He slapped his hand upon Satters' chest. 'He alive?' he asked indifferently.

'Yes,' Pullman said, proceeding with his exercises.

Platon sat down beside the unmoving Mannock.

'Hot drink!' thinly blustered Pullman.

'No gas,' was Platon's answer to that.

Pullman, supporting himself on pieces of furniture, reached the electric light switch.

'No electricity,' echoed Platon.

Pullman opened the door, and, the palms of his hands pressed against the walls, he reached a hat-rack. Two overcoats hung there: these he unhooked, and shuffled back with them into the living-room. One of them he handed to Platon. 'Put this over Mr Mannock,' he said. The other he threw around his shoulders. Then he sat down. He must learn to speak again, he told himself. Immediately he began to put words to work, organizing things with the house-boy—who, though he was called a *boy*, must have been around twenty-five. The first step was to get a match struck and to look at his watch. Miraculously it still functioned, and the time it alleged was a few minutes past eleven. He showed it to Platon, who philosophically commented 'Good! Good!' He felt, no

doubt, that eleven was *good* because it might have been worse.

It was best, Pullman laid it down, that Mannoek, and likewise his ex-fag, should be left alone, until such time as the gas came on again, and hot drinks could be obtained. 'Was it possible,' he asked the boy, 'to block up the windows to enable them to sleep?' He felt as they were doing this, and reconstructing their life again, item by item, that at any moment they might be overwhelmed like the inhabitants of Herculaneum—or even much more suddenly than that. However—an encouraging sign—the wind abated somewhat. Questions regarding the future presented themselves first. The shops will have no food tomorrow—indeed, there may be no adequate supplies for some time. Had Mr Mannoek laid in any reserves? If you have stores, how long would they last?

Sounds in the streets reached them. They both tumbled towards the windows, Pullman falling and again rising to his feet. Two loudspeakers were in neighbouring streets, but what was being broadcast it was impossible to say. But a small motor-vehicle with a very loud mechanical voice burst into Habakkuk. It sternly shouted instructions to the citizens.

'TO ALL CITIZENS. STOP INDOORS UNTIL THE CITY SERVICES HAVE REMOVED THE FLIES FROM THE STREETS. THEY WILL NOT BE LONG. CITIZENS! THE GAS AND ELECTRICITY IS BEING ATTENDED TO. PATIENCE CHILDREN. PATIENCE. IT WILL NOT BE LONG NOW!'

'Children!' grittily expostulated Platon.

'FLIES!' was Pullman's response, in something between a bark and a croak.

Standing inside the windows they stood on glass splinters, and upon some blue-black substance. This had blown in when, as a dark hail, the Flies referred to fell in the city, carpeting it with their blue-black bodies, which had been asphyxiated a thousand feet up.

Then Pullman saw that, to what was left of the windows, the insect blue-black was adhering. Closely packed along that part of the window-frame where the glass fitted into it, and where the wood leaves, as it were, a little shelf, were the flattened bodies of the flies. Distributed among the smaller black-bodied flies were large, pallid locusts. It was these that had made a sound like tin.

Pullman returned shakily to the settee, and Platon resumed his position on the floor beside his master. As Pullman sat down, a kind of complaining wheeze was heard from Satters, and from now Satters gave off more and more evidences of returning life. One of these was to give Pullman a heavy kick on the shin. It was about twenty minutes before Satters opened his eyes. They were two big wondering and alarmed baby-eyes; and then speech began: 'Wha . . . wha . . . wha . . . what . . .'

'Shut up.'

'Oh. Per . . . per . . . per . . . I say. Wha . . . wha . . . what . . . Pulley . . . Pulley . . .'

Pullman began to feel extremely sick. He had thought all that was more or less over. That of course was not the case. Irritably he grated at his budding responsibility, at his big baby. 'How do you feel?'

But he did not wait to listen to the explanations of Satters. He went into the kitchen with Platon. 'It will be about a couple of hours I imagine before the electricity and gas fitfully appear. Let us,' Pullman said, 'plaster up the windows of Mr Mannock's bedroom' (for it was extremely cold). 'I suppose nothing is intact, but the curtains may only have been blown down, we could hammer them up. Refix all that: on top of that, spare blankets must be tacked. Tin-tacks.'

A bellow came from the living-room.

'As soon as the windows are fixed, I think we should carry Mr Mannock in there, put him on the bed, and cover him up. It is still disagreeably cold.'

Pullman now went towards the bellow which had become an indignant roar. When he had first got to his feet, soon after Platon's arrival, his limbs felt as if they were made of paper. When he began to move about, they seemed to have no reality in the way of weight. 'Am I,' he wondered, 'becoming metaphysical again.' All his physical reactions led to the formulating of such a question. For, upon entering the city, some supernatural power had endowed Satters and himself with the full metabolism of the human body as known in their life on earth. What had apparently happened during the two terrible hours of inexplicable uproar and attack (and the very atmosphere may have been withdrawn while that was going on) was that these precarious advantages had been lost, and the gut-equipped mannikins had been degutted. The agonies Pullman had suffered were, he supposed, due to their partial re-equipment. But he was far as yet from the normal young man who, with Satters, had first made the acquaintance of Mannock. He was still only a shell, a mere shadow of himself. It was as a shadow that he moved towards the living-room to deal as best he could with another shadow.

But he felt a little uneasy about the shadowy quality of Mr Satterthwaite who, because of his youth, was probably fifty per cent ahead of him in recovery. However, there it was—to his ex-fag he must have appeared as masterfully organizing everything. In a second spasm of anxiety, the question as to whether he would be strong enough to deal with Satters presented itself. He would have to lie down on the job, put up the shutters, throw up the sponge, strike, unless this preposterous baby quietened himself down. To make his mind work properly, he found, was nearly as difficult as it had been to gain control of his physical self: and he was not sure which it was, his mind or his body, which now seized the handle of the door, and flung himself inside into the room, looking

tremendously tough. He addressed Satters aggressively: 'What is all this about? Who told you you could blow off steam like that! Shut up, do you hear! Shut up!'

A howl of despair greeted this. Pullman sat down in the centre of the settee, as usual, his body turned towards Satters.

'Now sir. No nonsense. Your Pulley is not himself. Nobody is his dear old self—*except you*. You are most dreadfully yourself.'

An explosion of self-pitying sobs was the response to this statement of the position. Pullman moved along the settee towards Satters and smacked his face. There was enough force in this blow to shake, it administered a shock both to the fat body and to the rudimentary psychology. The former fag put his hand up to his cheek, and there came a sound like a deep *ooo*! The eye above the *ooo* was full of sullen anger.

'I did that to see if you could move your arms. You can. Are your legs equally movable?' He pinched the nearest of the fat legs, a really vicious compression. Satters jumped ostentatiously. 'You beastly cad! Pulley, you are a beast to pinch me like that!'

Pullman stood up.

'Can you stand up,' he demanded.

He got a grip on Satters—such a grip as you would get on the front of a footballer—and succeeded in pulling him off the sofa. 'Now stand up, you lump of dough! Up! On your feet!'

Pullman felt so abominably sick after these exercises, that he moved away in the direction of the door. Satters, collapsed upon the settee, followed him with a big reproachful eye.

'Come with me to the lavatory! Do you want to urinate? Come with me. Quick!'

He left the room, and hurried to the water-closet. As soon as he reached it he catted: then stood anticipating

other spasms—feeling washed-out and empty, but propping himself against the wall, as he gazed down into the pan. Soon there was a heavy blundering step; next the doorway behind him was filled with a glaring, bedraggled, but obviously incontinent, schoolboy.

‘I say, Pulley . . .!’

Pullman, the colour of a very green apple, backed away from the pan, and roughly changed places with the other. ‘Go on. You are more important than I am.’ He left Satters inside, shutting the door.

That was the end of it as far as Pullman was concerned. He was good for nothing except a bed, he had literally nearly killed himself over the revival of Satters. But Satters had been brought to life and put upon his feet. He had wound up Satters, he was ticking again. Falteringly he made his way to his bedroom, shook the dead flies off his bed, and subsided upon it.

It was three hours later that Platon wakened him. ‘GAS!’ was the word he heard, and at the same time he became conscious of electricity. Subduing extreme fatigue he rose and went to the bathroom. When he had urinated, Platon appeared. The house-boy’s face had a different look, it was somehow bellicose, but, that apart, he was utterly jaded, and to say that he was in need of sleep would have been a criminal understatement. Mannock, he explained, had shifted a good deal, and groaned, but so far he had not opened his eyes.

Pullman went to the kitchen with Platon, where some coffee was being made. As they went, he said shortly, ‘Mr Satterthwaite?’ The houseboy poked a disrespectful finger in the direction of the living-room. Washed and dressed, he went in where Satters was sleeping upon the settee (a sign of quite extraordinary displeasure on Satters’ part to be lying here, preferring the settee to a bed within whispering distance of his master). Pullman gazed down at the snoring fag, but Satters refused to wake up.

‘Coffee!’ shouted Pullman. ‘Eats! In Mannock’s room.’ He left him there, and went back to do for Mannock what he had for Satters. Satters, however, had no intention of being out of it. Soon he could be heard evacuating the living-room: and next there he was, sleepily scowling, rubbing his eyes with the back of his hand, and picking his nose. The Masterful One stood gazing down upon the sick man. Ignoring Satters, he went out of the room; in a few minutes he returned with Platon at his side, who placed a tray of coffee near the bed. Platon had painted with iodine the incision where he had removed the piece of glass from Mannock’s neck; he had also, with great difficulty, forced the hair to lie down. As Pullman watched, the sleeper’s shoulder moved convulsively and the face turned upwards on the pillow.

Pullman again bent over the oldest and by far the most seriously affected of them. ‘Mannock. Mannock!’ he said loudly and emphatically, squeezing his arm and patting it. Within five or ten minutes Mannock was lying with his arms stretched out on either side, and slowly and painfully speaking. ‘Hallo. Has that terrible noise stopped? I should like to know . . .’ He stopped, and struggled to piece together several words, in an orderly way. ‘Is he safe . . . Padishah?’ Pullman told him (without any justification) that the Padishah luckily had been spared. ‘S-Stan-field . . . all right?’

Pullman had not the least idea who Stanfield was, but he answered firmly, with the ring of truth. ‘Stanfield is in excellent shape.’

His mind put at rest as to the well-being of the Padishah and of Stanfield, Mannock settled himself, closed his eyes, and went to sleep. It was as if he had asked, a look of morbid anxiety in his eyes, ‘How is His Majesty the King?’ and having been assured that His Majesty had never been better, had sunk into a restful sleep. But Pullman wakened him again, and pressed him to drink

a cup of coffee. 'It tastes like molten lead!' the patient whispered, pushing away the cup. But Pullman insisted that he should go on drinking the molten lead. This ordeal appeared to have made him a little wakeful. Satters, grimacing, was attempting to drink his coffee. Pullman sat down and proceeded to do the same thing. For all of them this was a mysterious and semi-solid liquid. Satters went to the bathroom to vomit. But, in spite of the horrible experience with the coffee, Pullman seemed temporarily even to return to his normal self.

His voice was stern: 'Is what we have suffered of frequent occurrence here?' he inquired of Mannock.

Mannock began shaking his head with such emphasis as he could muster. 'No, no, no . . . Never before.'

Pullman gave his beard a stroke, and emitted a deep, a very deep and dubious 'Ah!' Then suddenly he asked, 'What does this mean, Mannock?'

Mannock looked frightened. 'I do not know. Really I do not know.'

'If you do not *know*, Mannock, what do you *suppose*?'

Mannock raised his eyebrows a little piteously. 'Nothing at all . . . absolutely . . . I am a spectator . . . like yourself.'

'I am sorry you do not feel strong enough to give a guess,' Pullman observed, almost disagreeably. 'I should have thought that, however rotten you felt, you would have had a dim speculation or two about this awful business.'

The invalid seemed about to cry. But instead, making an effort, he remarked fairly audibly, 'One thing is clear enough . . . Satan is the culprit . . . Beyond that, I have no idea as to what was going on.'

Satters, who had returned, and resumed his seat, lost a few shades of his robust colour. 'Satan,' he repeated in an awed whisper.

'Yes. The Devil,' Pullman barked, 'and you will soon

find yourself in Hell, and some gluttonous demon will be cooking you in a pot. He will regard you as a tender morsel.'

A look of unmitigated terror appeared in Satters' face. 'Pull . . . Pull . . . Pull . . .'

Pullman looked at him.

'Per . . . Pulley! Are you serious? Do you really think . . .?'

Pullman stood up, went over to Mannock and patted him gently, saying, 'Now you must go to sleep again. I am sure we shall all be alive tomorrow, and possibly the next day. The only one I am anxious about is Satters. He is such a great fat tender morsel.'

Obtaining some extra blankets from Platon, Pullman and Satters went to their beds. A wind sprang up again, but of a normal type, a little blusterous and with some rain. The glassless windows made it necessary for them to put their heads under the bedclothes. In spite of these conditions, Pullman was asleep almost as soon as he had lain his head upon the pillow. The last thing he was conscious of was the sound of chattering teeth from the bed of the terrified Satters.

(V)

IT WAS TEN O'CLOCK in the morning when Platon shook him several times. Pullman had never felt so much at his last gasp as at that moment. It was a strange, at once stiff and limp mechanism which washed a face, and drew trousers over two white, oddly-shaped sticks of flesh.

When his great feats had been performed he had been an entirely different man: the masterful fellow who had brought back Satterthwaite from the dead and even got him upon his feet, the lord of the sick-room who had made Mannock open his eyes, who had put his mind at rest regarding the health of the Padishah, and who had then reawakened him and administered hot coffee—*that* was a man of another clay, a legendary Pullman.

Yes, indeed it was an impossibly ramshackle mechanism which forced the eel-like limbs into the tubes of cloth, and forced the feet into two shoes of iron. The legs took him along the passage, and in the passage there was an impulse in the air, it effected a connection. As he slipped through the front-door he asked himself who it was wanted a *Bulletin*? The apartment door closed behind him and the stairs were a little jolt at every step. He understood better, out in the street, how the atmosphere had altered. It was another mixture, it had stuff in it he did not recognize at all. But it was fresher and also thinner. He sniffed it with pleasure, but it was bad for him, it had no body. It might take some days to thicken enough for him to be able to wind up the clock, but it would be best for them to keep quite quiet until that time. Before he had reached the end of Habakkuk his heart seemed about to chime. It began striking slow and heavy blows. He leaned against the wall of a house. As he stood there, two people were rushing along the

other side of the street; one was screaming 'No, no, no . . .' as he ran.

The pursuer (for this figure, in expectation of immediately overtaking the other, had his hands stiffened into a claw-like shape) tripped and fell forward on his face, remaining there without any movement. The other, still screaming, shot round the corner. About twenty yards away two men were approaching, as slow as the other two had been the reverse. They were supporting one another—two of the clownish, sad, youthful faces, but now of a deathly pallor.

The heavy sadness all over this city was understandable enough, in view of some of the details of what Mannock had told them by way of elucidation. Some of these mad-looking creatures had been here for several centuries, in spite of what Rigate might say: they might have walked the streets of London at the same time as Dean Swift: they might have been a valet of Bolingbroke's, or something of that kind. Then, having reached this strange city, they must have begun a mode of life quite different from what now obtained; as fashions changed on earth they would change too, at length becoming haggard doctrinaires of Youth, as they were at present. Did they look back? Hardly that, seeing that in order to remain real they must passionately adhere to the fashion. Having heard people speaking differently round them they would always follow suit. It was now, perhaps, nothing but a dream, the life they led when dressed as contemporaries of Gulliver, when first they picked their way down what was now Tenth Avenue, and what then had a different name and aspect. They must sometimes find themselves using expressions which they could not explain, or thinking in a way long discarded, which they could not understand. As he thought about them, Pullman marvelled at this population, living fanatically in a period which was not theirs. This, he

reflected, is what would happen on earth if there were no death. Men would be whispering to you of how the Vikings first landed; or would tell you how they had seen Charles the Second, very elegant and smiling graciously, arrive back to take his throne.

He felt a little stronger, his heart beat normally again, so he reacted to the support of the wall and continued his way round the corner. He was now in the street which led to the big café. How hideously deserted it was; how all this peculiar world he had escaped into was getting to look like war-scenery, like blasted cities.

There was what must surely be a bomb-site on the other side of the road; and many of the houses appeared to have acquired cracks in their plaster, or have lost their chimneys. Most windows had no glass.

The question of provisions nagged at his mind—very bad about provisions. If no provisions could be obtained would these strange creatures eat one another? He could see them in his mind, in all those lines of rooms, tearing their finery off, and devouring their emaciated companions. Was the one in flight just now the weaker 'youth'—had he a premonition of a cannibal attack, was he going while the going was good? Ha-ha, the clever little clockwork, scuttling to where he couldn't be eaten.

He gave a start; round a corner had come a man talking to himself. He appeared to be alarmed and puzzled. He did not notice Pullman hastening to escape him. But soon Pullman was alone again, obsessed by the *Bulletin*. Without the *Bulletin* all might be lost; he might be lost, for instance. He thought he would make the *Bulletin* his grail, for if he were not bearing the *Bulletin* he was stuck. He could never come up this street again. But his legs were working, though, if they would continue to do so, that was the problem. Would he ever have the energy to reach the café? Could he drive his body along even a step farther—which had done too much, had been too

masterful. Always the master. And now he began to have hallucinations. He thought he was *at* the familiar café: he stood at the side of it and looked into this vast sea of chairs and tables. Perhaps a miserable twenty derelicts were huddled at the side, not very far from him.

But what was this—a figure shot from this little company and sprang through the chairs and tables towards him. Pullman put himself in an attitude of defence, his upper lip rolled back from his teeth, his hands hanging loose and ready at his sides.

The figure came so quickly—and was so small, because he was waiting for a giant, that he could not see him. He heard a voice saying, ‘Ah, Mr Pullman, how are you, you are still alive, anyhow, that is the main thing. Do you recognize me, Mr Pullman? Sentoryen do you recall?’

Pullman put his lip down over his teeth. What was this speaking? A soothing kind of assailant. And then in a haze he began to see the image of a face that was familiar, a smile that he had seen before. Then came the name Sentoryen.

‘Sentoryen,’ he said. ‘Oh yes, of course we met. This is not the best of cafés. I am not quite sensible . . .’

‘Oh?’ Sentoryen was anxious, very anxious, but still smiled.

‘I have no strength. That is in addition to having no sense. You understand? Will you come with me to another café, if I can make it . . . It is only a block away.’

So they went together (slowly, and sometimes tremulously) to the other café, Sentoryen holding him by the arm, and sometimes by the waist.

‘This is less popular, but a far pleasanter place,’ Pullman informed his guide.

Sentoryen was superhuman: he was affected very little by the storm, and yet everybody in the city was as much exposed as anyone else. Contact with him had acted as a tonic: and Pullman found that he walked with very

little difficulty this extra block, conversing an almost normal amount. He would have an escort on the way back to Habakkuk. Sentoryen had his uses.

Pullman found his way to a table, like an actor in a dream. In this quieter place they came upon a man selling the city *Bulletin*. Pullman bought a copy, and Sentoryen looked over his shoulder, laughed with extreme detachment, and lighted a cigarette. The hastily printed message did not set out to be funny, but it appeared so to more people than Sentoryen. It ran as follows:

‘A terrible battle is occurring on the earth. What occurred a short time ago was a reflection of it in our atmosphere, only greatly magnified of course. We hope the Citizens were not too much inconvenienced. All householders will be fully compensated for any loss they have sustained.’

Pullman looked up, and gave off a haggard laugh. ‘Is the *Bulletin* always as funny as that?’ he inquired.

‘Sometimes it is funnier,’ said Sentoryen.

Truckloads of armed police passed on several occasions.

‘This city seems to be well policed,’ Pullman muttered, as if to himself. But Sentoryen promptly agreed, saying, ‘It is the only efficient thing about the régime. They have a really terrifyingly efficient police-force. You notice the trucks they are pulling behind. That is to put the corpses in.’

‘Corpses!’ Pullman glanced quickly around him.

‘Yes, thousands of people died you know. In the poorer districts the corpses have to be removed to that dreadful subterranean warehouse: the other classes conserve in privacy.’

This was a *terrasse*, which was surrounded by a shrubbery planted in boxes, protecting the clients from the street. They had sat down in a corner seat beside the door, and at right angles to them was another table, at which sat a figure, labelled by Pullman a ‘droop’.

Suddenly the 'droop' addressed them. 'I hope we are not going to have any more of yesterday's fearful business. Terrible it was, terrible; I have lived here for forty years, and there has never been anything of that kind. What do you think, sir, of the *Bulletin's* explanation? I am afraid I cannot accept it.'

It made Pullman a little dizzy, he found, to listen to this old gentleman. Well, the 'droop' had a beautiful forty years to look back on in Third City. Beautiful sedate years, and a quite nice income. There was nothing nearer to paradise than that, for *that* person.

'It does not strike me, sir, as a particularly reliable sheet.' Pullman spoke rather thickly.

Their neighbour seemed repelled by Pullman's manner. He had not the energy to supply a superfluous civility. People were speaking excitedly at some of the other tables, and two men were having so violent an altercation that one of them sprang up, gesticulating, and upset his coffee over the other one. This was by accident, but there was a great deal of shouting, and Pullman said, 'Those gentlemen must be congratulated, they have a great deal more energy than I have. They are drug-addicts—yes?'

'They seem certainly to be possessed of an unaccountable amount of vitality,' the smiling Sentoryen delicately inserted his contribution.

But the neighbourhood of passion was making Pullman feel very sick. He hurriedly paid, and, when they were outside, he realized how unreal that little speck of normality was. It was the world of the streets, this terrible deserted series of streets, which was the ultimate thing. As they were returning to Habakkuk, there were a few figures here and there, but all of them at the last gasp it seemed.

'Was not that café an hallucination,' he asked the entirely intact, the sound and smiling young man. And

as he looked at him he shivered slightly. 'And are you not an hallucination yourself?'

With a great deal of *brio*, intended to chase away the oppressive vision, Sentoryen deprecated: 'I hope I am not so improbable as some of the people in that café were!'

They were at the corner of Habakkuk, and bade each other farewell with cordiality. Sentoryen explained that he did not like to knock at the door of the apartment, because he felt that Mr Mannock would not approve. Pullman allowed this remark to go unheeded. He gave Sentoryen a masterful and final handshake, and went indoors. In the precarious apartment once more, he found that, during his brief absence, a very unreal personage had got into it. Mannock had a visitor—Mr Hilary Storr. Their nearest neighbour, this fine gentleman lived in St Catherine, and had dropped around to discover how 'Willie' (Mannock) was, and to suggest a trip (by taxi-cab) to Tenth Piazza. This was a male of around the same age as Pullman himself. 'How do you do?' he said very patronizingly, his eyelid fluttering, and his eye drifting away over his shoulder, and back to Mannock. It was obvious that Mr Hilary Storr's line of country was in a very different country altogether from that of which this bearded bohemian was a citizen.

'It took me a half an hour, but I telephoned to Charles. He appears to be just alive. He was the opposite of loquacious. When I asked him if he was going down to the Cadogan, he said. "No I am going to Hell," and he recommended *me* to go there too!'

This seemed to bring 'Willie' back to life. 'I am in complete agreement with Charles!' he cried, creakily, but with a sparkling eye.

'All right,' lamented Mr Storr, as he got to his feet, with a kind of jauntiness at half cock, 'if anyone tells me to go to Hell, I shall take a cab to the centre of Tenth

Piazza, and sit down there till Satan's next attack. I refuse to die in my bed.'

Pullman passed into the kitchen, he handed the *Bulletin* to the person on whose behalf he had acquired it. The houseboy read, with more facility than he would have anticipated.

'Do they take us for damfools ah! Their *Bulletin*—their *Bull-ly-teen*!'

Back in 'Willie's' bedroom, Pullman said, in so many words. 'Your houseboy wishes to see relatives. Give him three hours leave . . . As you have lost Mr Storr, sleep. I shall sleep too.'

This was glumly okayed by Platon's master. Very quickly Platon left, and without another word Pullman went to bed. The demonic chaos, above which swam his conscious reason, a lucid speck—the dirtiest recesses beneath—put on a drama of such cathartic excess that he soon awoke, shaking, with obsessional images which survived waking, and continued living and developing upon the black backcloth of his mind. He had recourse to a small flask, containing powders wrapped up in papers. He washed two of these down in a glass of water. In a few minutes he was asleep again, out of reach of black unreason.

(VI)

MANNOCK STOOD IN FRONT of the mantelpiece: he stood a little unsteadily. He said presently, in a tired voice, but in a dogged way that made Pullman look up, 'I don't know what you're going to do, but I shall get Platon to ring for a taxi-cab and go down to Tenth Piazza. It might cheer us up, what do you think? Will you both come along? I want to look in at a café or two, and hear what the world says. I would have a brandy-and-soda if I knew where to get it,' he added recklessly.

This was Saturday morning. They had all had breakfast together, and were now sitting in the adjoining room. Since the fetching of the *Bulletin* on Wednesday morning there had been stagnation; for Pullman had been laid up, at times even delirious, whereas Mannock had very slowly indeed reached the point at which he could stand in front of the mantelpiece and propose a move into the world outside.

Pullman laughed, for he could not refrain from a pointless analysis of the actual terms of his host's proposal. 'I do not much wish to hear what the world says,' Pullman looked almost as haggard as his host. 'I expect its views are very much the same as my own. But let us by all means get out into the balmy air of Third City.' He turned to Satters. 'What are you going to do, young man? Why don't you lie down and rest yourself?'

But Satters had no intention of being left behind: and, when the taxi arrived, they all three went down and found that the taxi was in fact a large and comfortable automobile. Pullman and Mannock took up their position inside, and Satters sat with the driver.

It was half-way down Tenth Avenue, where the houses were only two or three storeys high, that they

ran into the crowd, collected to inspect and chatter about the flying dragon which had crashed during the 'Blitz' (as it had come to be known). It was the body of an animal of stupendous girth; its spine was like a large tree which had been blown down by a storm; one end of it invaded the shops on the farther side of Tenth Avenue; the other and somewhat thinner end stuck up over the houses upon which its body lay. Three or four pairs of legs protruded on either side. The back of the beast was not unlike a vast map, printed upon a parchment-coloured oilcloth; it covered three or four houses. Its tail curled over a two-storey house on the side of Tenth Avenue opposite to the body.

The car in which they arrived was ordered to park on the left-hand side, in an empty back street; and a small street, which was a kind of continuation of this, was perhaps the worst sufferer of all from this tragic end of one of Hell's finest dragons. One of the wings of the dragon was stretched like a tent above it. Its head acted as a hideous arch above the entrance to this little back-water, its eyes staring glassily on one side, its jawbone standing on its teeth at the other side. Its skin was of a greenish white, veined like some marble, but deeply stained beneath the eyes, and where the lips drooped around the teeth. The stench was almost unbearable beneath the bony arch of the face, and where the big sail of the wing tented the little street.

They left the taxi, and Pullman noticed, as Satters got out from beside the chauffeur, that he was bathed in sweat. Taking him aside, he asked him what was the matter.

'I don't know what's the matter with me, Pulley, but I'm trembling all over.'

'What are you trembling at? The Dragon? It's dead.'

'I feel sick.'

'Just be sick, if you feel that way,' Pullman told him.

But he placed his arm around his shoulder, and, as it were, took him under his protection.

‘Come. Keep by me, we will walk along together. This stinking beast would only be alarming if it were alive.’

Then, taking Satters by the hand, Pullman and he overtook Mannock, who was walking towards a crowd of people, some of them uniformed officials, others the entire neighbourhood seemingly.

‘This is a committee of some kind,’ Mannock said. ‘They seem to be discussing the situation.’

But their deliberations were held in an atmosphere of such wild disorder that it was surprising that they should consider it possible to continue. The uproar was terrific. This was an Italian quarter, and fully a hundred of the inhabitants of the little street left their card-playing when these uniformed officials arrived, and charged them in a body, shouting at the top of their voices. Not only did they shout, but flourished their fists over the heads of the official party, stamped about all around them in a sort of war-dance, and gesticulated incessantly with all their arms and feet.

Their individual remarks about the personal appearance of each and all of the visiting committee, and the chorus which many of them joined, constituted so multitudinous a libel that it was difficult to see how it could be tolerated under the circumstances. But the nasal provocation would justify anything.

‘This is the fourth time,’ the tenants roared, ‘the fourth time, you do-nothing imbeciles, that you have brought your carcasses round here, to sniff, at a respectful distance, this fine museum-piece—— Do you not understand what you are doing—what you are paid to do, but what you do not do? Do you not realize that we live in the stench of this filthy monster—that morning, noon, and night we have the benefit of the effluvia of this hell-beast! If you do not cart away at once this foul reptile we

will throw petrol on it, and set it on fire, even if we burn this part of the city.

You—if we see *you* again, we will take you by the scruff of your necks and rub your snouts against the beautiful body of this stinking beast.—Go! go! go! go! Order the police to bring their trucks, and to cart away this monster in pieces! We will not have it here any more! Do you understand—Sheep's Brains, overpaid nobodies. Worthless servants of the citizenry. Go—Go—Go!

This and the like continued, in a torrential chorus of scurrility, all day long, or at least as long as these gentlemen remained in the neighbourhood. Mannock and the other two walked beneath the arch of the head, and began to approach the greenish gloom produced by the overshadowing wing. Pullman held Satterthwaite firmly by the arm, but he felt his charge shivering and shaking violently, and then Satters vomited, and, afraid that he might collapse in his arms, Pullman returned with him under the arch, where he vomited again. Mannock caught them up, saying to Pullman, 'Phew! I should not much care to be one of the poor devils living in these houses.' He began to cough and spit, and Pullman, glancing around at him, saw that his face was of a pallor not unlike that of the dragon's skin.

'How do you feel, Mannock? You look rather rotten.'

'I feel as sick as a cat. I heartily agree with the strong expressions used by the people who live here.'

A man moving in the same direction as themselves called out that that was nothing to what had occurred elsewhere in the city. 'The stink cannot be lived with, and thousands of people have been evacuated to another part of the town; and all the Sanitary Service men wear gas-masks. Even so, some have been taken to hospital. There are twenty of these beasts at one spot, and twice the size as well.'

Several members of the party of infuriated tenants turned around and addressed Mannock, overhearing what he and the man were discussing. 'These officials,' said one, 'come here day after day to chat about our dragon. They do nothing. How would you like to have this flying reptile from Hell parked on you indefinitely?'

'Not at all, sir. I should be lying in a hospital bed if I were you. Why don't you go sick?'

'Go sick, go sick! I have two sick little brothers lying inside there, breathing in the stench, oh yes. If this were a proper country, if this were a State . . .!'

The taxi-driver had disappeared; in about ten minutes he returned, saying that the beast must be half full of air to rush about in the sky like that. Mannock assented to the probability of this explanation, adding, 'But when they begin sawing him up and release the imprisoned gases, I personally would rather be somewhere else.'

They drove as far as the upper end of Tenth Piazza; that is to say the end where the underground station was situated. They got out of the taxi. Gazing around them, they stood at the top of the four massive steps, extending for a great distance, which denied the Piazza to traffic, and from which it looked not unlike an enormous sunken bath.

'I should not think that there were more than twenty-five per cent of the usual promenaders,' Mannock observed.

'There are hardly ten or fifteen per cent, I should say,' was Pullman's view.

The shops were open with a few exceptions, and this strange population moved up and down, looking into them and discussing the quality of their wares, as much as possible as if nothing had happened. For this was their life (if one can speak in this way of people, who, to be quite strict about it, were dead). If they were to be destroyed, and that for ever, the next day, or the next

week, why should they behave differently, now, than they always had done, drifting meaninglessly, acting the living without being the living—acting the young without being the young. They looked sadly out of their faces, a little whiter and more pasty-looking than before, a little darker under the eyes, their eyebrows a little more wearily raised; but, without being analytical, with much the same appearance as on Tuesday, when Mannoek and his guests first came to Tenth Piazza.

And what they felt everyone must feel, so Pullman reflected—he, and Satters, and everybody else. They were all half alive in a mysterious void; and so long as their hearts ticked and their brains functioned, *tant bien que mal*, and the breath came and went in their nostrils, they must continue to play this game for what it was worth, prepared for a thunderbolt which would blot them out at any moment.

Mannoek's thoughts were rather different from this: and now he took them, with a somewhat excited trip to his step, into a coffee house or café which was really a club. It was large and comfortably appointed. You entered it, of course, from the Arcade, through swing doors into a vestibule, and then through curtains into the place itself.

Everyone seemed to know everyone else, and one felt that an intruder would be stared at, and be taught not to treat this place as *public*. Mannoek led them to a distant corner where four or five men were engaged in a somewhat violently pessimistic discussion. There was an atmosphere of the Last Days about this company.

'This is James Pullman and his fag, Satterthwaite,' was the way in which Pullman found himself introduced. Everyone laughed. Their conversation was temporarily suspended so as to get used to the newcomers.

'Pullman has only been here since Monday evening. As may be imagined, he does not know what to think of

our curious city!' Mannock added, amid general laughter. 'He has brought his fag down to give him some exercise.'

Satters, who was moment by moment becoming more sure of himself, at this point protested. 'I say, sir, if you don't mind my correcting you, I am not Pulley's fag any longer. He does not have to take me for a walk.'

There was a roar of delight at this.

'He's been to the Central Bank like all the rest of us!' shouted one of them. 'There are no fags where there's a Central Bank.'

When this was all over, they returned to the topic which absorbed everyone in the city, except those who were too permanently proletarian to think about anything but being that and so forth. These five typical members of the younger clubman class turned their minds again to unravel the mystery of the shaking of the city, and of the rain of flies.

A man in the middle thirties, with eyeglass and moustache, burst forth: 'I was passed into this paradise by the Bailiff, as a perfect specimen of the English Officer-class. The next paradise I have to qualify for I shall demand a prospectus before I apply.'

'You are ungrateful,' Mannock told him. 'The Central Bank gives you a hundred dollars more than it does me because of your military status. I am only an old China hand. My background was the Bund, not Bond Street.'

'Still grumbling about your income, Mannock?' a round-faced, round-bellied person remarked. 'Give us your opinion, Mannock, of Tuesday's events. I am afraid that things look pretty black to all of us here. Hugh gives us a maximum of twenty days to arrange for the next world, *if* there is any world after this.'

A large man, with side-whiskers and heavy eyebrows (this was Hugh), turned to Mannock. 'Mind you, twenty days is the utmost limit. Before the middle of next week

all that business which burst out on Tuesday will be renewed. I have this from a trustworthy source.'

'The Bailiff,' Mannock smiled back.

'*Not* the Bailiff. A far more reliable informant. Smile, oh Mannock, but you will see! You have not much time left to write your last Will and Testament. Tuesday was only a trial show.'

Satters was showing signs of imminent disintegration. He whispered to his protector. 'I say, Pulley, did he say twen . . . twenty days . . . or was it years, Pulley?'

'Hush.' Pullman frowned at him. 'What does it matter, you damned fool. You have to die some day.'

'D'd'd'd'die!' Satters lost such poise as had remained, and seized one of Pullman's hands in desperation. Pullman looked at his white face, and expected more vomiting at any moment.

'I am afraid you have knocked out Pullman's fag with your pessimism,' Mannock told the offender. Everyone noisily relaxed in good-natured guffaws, and Satters' confusion was complete.

The man sitting next to Mannock said, lowering his voice: 'It is terrible about poor old Quentin isn't it?'

'Quentin!' Mannock's face was dutifully agonized. 'What has happened . . . ?'

'He died during the Blitz. I thought you might not have heard. There was Bob Slater too; of course he was a bit elderly . . .'

'Elderly! No. Bob Slater was middle-aged, a little senior to me. I have not seen Bob for a number of years now, but he was a very decent fellow. I am terribly sorry. But Quentin! I can understand anyone dying, however. It nearly did for me.'

'Willie, you can answer this one. Has a Bishop precedence over a Baron?'

'Yes, I am afraid he has.' Mannock's father had been Bishop of Coventry, and so he was an authority on matters

of that sort. He had to refrain from showing joy that Bishops should rank higher than Barons.

He looked smilingly round at Pullman, and said informatively, 'My father was a Bishop, and so questions of that sort come my way.'

'Indeed. That is very interesting,' and Pullman had the air of making a mental note.

There was a man rather unfortunately named Charles, and he leaned over to Mannock, speaking in a pretentious way. 'I say, I could not help hearing you say that you had a bad time. So did I—in fact I only turned up here a half an hour ago. And I am told by a man who gets about the city a good deal that literally hundreds of thousands of people died. And *all* of us are sick.'

Hugh, who had heard this, joined in. 'They say there was some poison discharged into the atmosphere. I felt pretty rotten and I am sure it was not entirely because of the bombardment.'

'No. I am positive it wasn't!' shouted Mannock's neighbour. 'The atmosphere has been quite different ever since. As I was coming down here today a man fell dead a few yards ahead of me.'

'How awful!' Mannock looked distressed.

'Much the same thing happened to me,' said Hugh. 'I was sitting in a small café near the street I live in yesterday, and a man collapsed in his chair. The police were sent for and announced that he was dead.'

'He had probably been doing too much,' said another. 'It is the heart you know. I fainted yesterday—at home I mean. I just had to come down here today, but I think even now the less one moves about the better.'

'I came down in a taxi-cab,' said Mannock.

'Very wise,' said the other. 'But how the devil did you get a taxi-cab?'

'My dear sir,' boomed Hugh, 'all you have to do is to go out into the street to that public telephone, tell

them you are ill, and they will fetch you within a few minutes.'

The conversation drifted on, when Hugh returned to his favourite theory, and everyone listened attentively.

'What we all forget when we are discussing this business is the fellow who really has the last word as to the future of Third City, who, if he wants to, can blow it to pieces.' Hugh paused and then snapped out, 'That man is Satan.'

Satters clutched Pullman's hand in such an access of terror that one of his nails left a blood smear at the side of his master's palm. Pullman hissed in his ear. 'What the hell are you sticking those dirty nails in my hands for!'—'Did you her-her-her . . . Pulley, did you her-her . . .?'—'Yes, I heard, why don't you cut your beastly nails!' Pullman was sucking his highly septic wound, quite indifferent to the distinguished company.

Mannock was uncomfortably aware of the unseemly scene being enacted at his side. He said, with a slightly embarrassed laugh, 'I am afraid that Hugh's last statement has so terrified Pullman's fag that we shall have to take him out and let him have a little air, or he will faint.'

The others had been hanging on the words of Hugh, but, like all true Englishmen, welcoming the comic relief, they once more roared their applause at the matchless fag. So Mannock and his two peculiar acquaintances filed out, since it was impossible, where Satters was, to talk in the way Hugh was talking. There was this other point, that Mannock did not very much like to have the Devil brought into a discussion.

Keeping very close to Pullman, Satters got out of the café as quickly as possible, whispering as he did so, 'Pulley, do let's get away from that man!' For he had begun to attribute to Hugh some of the horrifying qualities of Satan. Once in the Arcade, Mannock stood aside from the passers-by, obviously wrestling with some

problem. Pullman stopped too, keeping one eye upon his host's face, meanwhile wrapping a handkerchief around the lower part of his hand. At length Mannock spoke. 'It seems to me, Satterthwaite,' he said coaxingly, 'that you would enjoy strolling round the shops better than coming to the place where we are to pay our next visit. If you walk along here,' and he indicated the Arcade running at right angles to where they were standing, 'you will find yourself at the upper end of the line of shops where we were walking the other day. Where you bought that jumper. You are a strong healthy boy, and a nice walk would do you good. If you would make a tour of the whole of that side of the Piazza, and back, I think you would find plenty to interest you. There is a little café there, exactly in the corner, called the "Golden Fig". See it? We will meet you there in just over half an hour. Don't hurry, Satterthwaite. We will wait for you. I will give you some doughnuts when we arrive.'

Satters looked extremely dejected, and cast appealing glances at Pullman. Mannock drew a piece of paper out of his pocket and hurriedly wrote on it where he lived. Handing it to Satters he said, 'You will not need this, Satterthwaite, but keep it in your pocket. It is my address, and anyone would tell you how to get there. You will not get lost—there is no chance of that. We shall meet at the "Golden Fig". This is just *in case*.'

'Oh, Pulley, I do not like leaving you, Pulley.' There was a deep dog-like entreaty in Satters' voice.

'Nonsense, nonsense. You get under way!' Pullman pointed in the direction of the 'Golden Fig'. 'If you don't hurry up you will not get that beautiful doughnut that Mannock promised you. Be off, now, you silly little coward. Are you an English boy? You don't behave like one, you little cissy.'

They at last succeeded in getting him off their hands: after which Mannock headed for a stately looking

building not very far from the café they had just left. 'This is the Cadogan Club,' he told Pullman. They went up several steps, and found themselves in the imposing entrance of what was apparently a Pall Mall Club. To one of the three uniformed men inside an office near the top of the steps, Mannock said, 'Is Sir Charles up there?' 'Yes, sir, Sir Charles is up there, sir', the man replied. 'With Mr Fortescue, sir.'

They ascended a wide and sumptuously carpeted stairway, which, half-way up, turned round at right angles and took them up another half a dozen stairs. They soon found themselves in a very large room with a number of very large armchairs. In these sat, here and there, twenty or more gentlemen. Near an over-large chimney-piece several massive armchairs were collected together, and several gentlemen sat in them in conversation. It was towards these that Mannock directed his steps, Pullman following. A few minutes afterwards James Pullman found himself installed in an enormous chair, listening to three or four sahibs discussing the recent 'outrage', as they described it. 'What next will he do?' inquired one.

By 'he', Pullman divined, the Fiend was understood. The attitude seemed to be that 'he' had acted with unprecedented impudence. Did this presage some unspeakable action-to-come? Must they regard themselves as being upon the eve of something which was tantamount to . . . well, to the winding-up of a system which had endured for . . . ! Heavy indignation—deep alarm—profound alarm, was certainly the order of the day in the leather-upholstered Cadogan.

'You think, Charles, that "he" will dare . . .? After all, "he" has challenged the Great Architect of the Universe before.'

'Yes, Willie. I do believe that "he" will. After what they now call the "Blitz" I believe him capable of anything. He gave me a very bad shaking.'

‘I am black and blue. He gave me a lot to think about,’ observed a very perfect clubman, whom Pullman intuitively knew to be Mr Fortescue. There was nothing, thought he, that would make these faded old satraps understand what the world was like. They were persuaded that they were the rulers of this city (or as good as); and here they were, discussing the present ‘crisis’ as if they had been members of the Government (or as good as) in a replica of the clubesque sanctuary where they and their ancestors had sat discussing such things for hundreds of years. ‘He’ (the Devil, of course) was, for them, like Louis XIV, or like Bonaparte, or like Hitler, only in ‘his’ case it was a *supernatural* enemy. The danger was very great, certainly. But they felt absolutely secure, in their enormous leather chairs, whatever they might say.

Pullman listened to the kind of conversation which he had just heard at the other club (or café).

Mannock’s at once startled and scandalized face poised itself for a moment, and then he burst out. ‘You don’t mean to say, Charles, that anything has happened to *Fosters* . . .’

‘I am afraid so; he died in the Blitz. You know how we were all put to sleep, weren’t we. Well, *Fosters* never woke up.’

‘How *dreadful*.’ Mannock sat for some minutes looking so genuinely shocked that Pullman wondered how he really felt on these occasions. He must think that out later on.

It was Fortescue this time who spoke. ‘You have heard, Willie, haven’t you, about poor Peter Mainwaring?’

‘Peter Mainwaring?’

‘Yes, it is really quite appalling. He died yesterday. I was with him actually. He was unable to recover from the ordeal of the Blitz (excuse me for saying Blitz)—how is one to refer to that ghastly performance of Satan’s?’

Pullman felt that one more revelation of members of

this circle struck down as a result of the Blitz and Mannoek would have an apoplectic fit; this time he appeared to be speechless, actually he said nothing.

But Sir Charles followed Fortescue with a third demise. 'Of course this is the first time that I have seen you, Willie, since the Thing. I'm damned if I will say "Blitz". Well, I am afraid there is more bad news. Poor Bill . . .'

'Not Bill Sandiman!' Mannoek's anguish burst in, by this time his face was quite haggard.

'Indeed, yes. I am sorry to have to say that Bill died—it was *here*, the day before yesterday. Actually in the chair in which you are sitting.'

This seemed to have a peculiar effect upon Mannoek. It was as if he felt that he was sitting where Bill Sandiman ought to be sitting—or rather, that no one should sit in this chair . . . oh, for at least a month. He was not a Tory, but a sentimental Whig: to hear of the deaths of these three people, and all pillars of Third City Clubland—and what other ones were there about whom he had not yet been informed?—affected him a great deal. Of course they would not die in the earthly sense; but was it not perhaps *worse*? Pullman would not have been at all surprised had Mannoek expired at the same spot where Bill Sandiman's demise had occurred. He held his breath, in fact, for a moment or two. Then he leant over and said something to him. Mannoek rose (glad to be out of the chair, Pullman said to himself), and stood looking down at his friends. 'What you have told me is ghastly. I had no idea that anything of this kind had happened. I have to leave you, I fear. This gentleman's fag is awaiting us at a neighbouring café. He is a very nervous boy, and I am afraid we must go to him at once.'

They redescended the splendid stairway, and at the bottom, as they passed the porter's office, the same man inquired, 'Did you find Sir Charles, sir?'

'Yes, thank you, Harris,' Mannoek replied. And he

asked if it was possible to get a taxi. 'I feel dreadfully tired,' he told the man, who answered, 'I expect you do, sir,' and disappeared, making his way to a public telephone.

When the taxi arrived, Mannock asked to be taken, in the first place, to the 'Golden Fig'. There was Satters, awaiting them with hysterical anxiety. They hustled him away into the taxi, first purchasing a bag full of doughnuts. 'Now you see,' Mannock told him, 'there was no need for alarm, was there?' But Satters did not at all agree that his panic was merely idle and boyish.

As the taxi hurtled along, Mannock apologized to Pullman for such a strange set of friends. 'Such stuffy circles have their uses. I keep in touch with those people because they often get hold of information possessed by nobody else. One of them, Fordington his name is, is particularly good for the official lowdown. Charles is an old darling. I am very fond of him: and the Padishah confides in him a great deal.'

Pullman marvelled, as he was saying this, at the sublime conceit of this Carlton Club type of Briton and how Mannock, in talking to an 'intellectual' like himself, should wish to dissociate himself from his friends. He did not quite understand what Mannock's 'intellectual' claims were.

III DEPUTATION FROM HADES

(VII)

MANNOCK HAD NOT ONLY been shocked by the news he had received at the Cadogan Club and at the kind of 'Café-Club' which had been their first place of call, but he felt very exhausted when they got back to the apartment, and he at once took to his bed. It was not only the mortality among his friends at the time of the Blitz that was depressing, but the account of death from delayed shock, which made it obvious that care should still be taken by people who were no longer young. He had a horror of the drawers or of the cupboard which was greater than any sensation he had ever experienced. Pullman strongly advised him to rest up for a day or two, and to see a doctor before resuming social life. Next day was Sunday, and Pullman was only too glad to rest himself for a little longer. Satters was a problem; but he arranged that that greedy boy should be given so large a lunch that he could be relied on to sleep at least till teatime. When Monday morning came, Satters could be restrained no longer. He vanished immediately after breakfast, and did not put in an appearance again until his compulsory return when a police van brought him back that night. Pullman himself felt rather restless, and very much better as a result of his spell of inactivity on Sunday. He had a conversation with his host on the subject of his temporarily installing himself in some hotel in the neighbourhood.

'You see,' he said, 'the uncertainty here is so great at the moment that I cannot see myself renting a flat or anything like that. In a few weeks it may have been agreed to forget the Blitz, we may all be in blinkers and

“back to normal”. But, for the moment, I can contemplate nothing more permanent than a hotel. Do you know of a good one not far from here?”

Mannock would not hear of this. ‘Of course you must not dream of house-hunting just now. Why not lodge with me for the time being? Allow a few weeks to pass, and then reconsider the matter.’

Mannock had some letters to write.

‘I think,’ said Pullman, ‘I will go to Tenth Piazza and acquire a wardrobe. It is really high time. I noticed what looked like a suitable tailor during our walk. I did not see any shop where I could get myself something to put my stuff in, a suitcase I suppose.’

Mannock explained: the point at which, on that first day, they had decided to come home, after having administered a doughnut to the fag—it was beyond *that* point that he would find two shops, both much the same, where anything from a suitcase to a cabin-trunk could be obtained.

Pullman started off at once. No sooner had he stepped out into the street than, like a djin, Sentoryen stood before him.

‘Good morning, Mr Pullman, I am so glad to see you up and about again. Do you feel all right now?’

‘I must say that you do not seem subject to the lapses from the norm from which we suffer.’

‘No?’ The young man’s face was so richly and healthily toned with a kind of even asiatic bloom that it was impossible to imagine him ill. ‘For the last few days I made so bold as to call on you at your apartment, and the house-boy was very polite and friendly. What he reported was slightly alarming. But when I saw you and your friends getting into the taxi on Saturday, it was obvious that you had recovered. Now can I be of any use today?’

Pullman did not wish to take Sentoryen with him to buy clothes, and another thing was that he had been

looking forward to being by himself. So he declined his offer of assistance, but suggested that they walk as far as the underground station together. On the way they had a pleasant chat, and he was bound to say that Sentoryen was a very sensible kind of djin. But *why* he presented himself in this way, with unbreakable punctuality, he preferred not to investigate for the present. At the Metro, the smiling escort was dismissed.

On the way down to Tenth Piazza he gave himself up to speculative musing. He talked gently to himself upon the following lines, attempting to sort a few things out while he was by himself, and had time to do so. It was a rule with him never to use up time allotted for sleep by cudgelling his brains. He felt that if once one made a habit of *thinking* in bed one would very soon never do any sleeping there. And he greatly prized his ability to sleep.

In any case, he liked thinking things over while he was on the move—or on the wing; while in flight across Europe he had once planned out something which could not have been better planned, though it was himself said it, to be sure. And it was proverbial how the morning bog was an ideal occasion to work out crosswords, or think up the title of a film. What a place he had got into . . . was there any way out of it? That was number one question. Dear me. You would have to be a bit of a genius to get to the bottom of that. But, first of all, had anyone ever got out of it? *Yes*. He thought they *had*. He did not believe that this place was devised to stop in. No. The man, or the god, who was responsible for Third City, did not build it as a permanent residence. It was intended to be *provisional*. It was now practically a permanent place of drooling residence. Hence the delay—or one of the hences. Now, one of the two all-important things to find out was whether a scholarship were still obtainable for a better place—for he doubted whether

anyone got shot down to Hell from here. He did not see how a person could demonstrate his wickedness; on the other hand, was there much scope for advertising one's goodness? Not in the circles he had moved in up till now. —There were other circles. There were the Catholics. More than fifty per cent of the city probably was Catholic. The enormous cathedral (he heard it was) near Fifth Piazza must have some influence. These might be idle thoughts. He had in very early days been brought up by the Jesuits, yes, in Ireland. And his family had been Catholic from the beginning. He was not saying that he ought to remember these compromising facts, oh dear me no. All he could tentatively uphold was that, in a very nasty fix (and God knows it was that and all), there was absolutely nothing in the universe that should be overlooked. He could see himself figuring as a saint—an Irish saint if the dice fell that way. And even such an idiotic chance as that had to be examined. Such an inquiry might lead to something else. It might lead quite in the other direction. What had to be discovered was where the true power was to be found. Whatever his private feelings might be, the point of maximum power had to be located, and those possessed of this maximum were the only safe circles to have any truck with. It was a good thing now that he had met Mannock in the way he had. That had been very enlightening. Anything that Mannock supported was certain to fail.

He was now at the top of the stairs leading to the street, and, as he stepped out on to the pavement, Tenth Piazza lay before him, in all its peculiar attractiveness. The number of people promenading was much the same as two days before: even apart from the numbers, there was no elation, no shopping elation, among the people he passed in the arcades. They were all gathered round the shop windows as before, but in some cases they were

completely silent. He walked across the Piazza to about the point at which Mannock had entered the arcades when first he conducted them there, and strolled along taking note of the various objects and shops which it was his intention to visit. His first purchase, of course, must be the suitcase, and so he continued until he reached the first of the two stores mentioned by Mannock. He saw the trunks and suitcases on display in the window, and, after a glance or two at these, he went inside. It did not take him long to select a fairly large, strong, good-looking suitcase. His next visit was to the outfitter's: so, carrying the suitcase, he returned to the shop he had picked as the best for his purpose. There he bought two suits, one for everyday wear, one for ceremonious occasions. And, since he had continued turning over in his mind the problems of evasion as he had strolled along the main arcades, he said to the shopman, who was measuring him for his first suit, 'Is there any recognized means, sir, of escaping from Third City? I would gladly take a chance . . . risk my neck, I mean, in order to leave this place.'

The man, who had the tape just between Pullman's legs, looked up at him quickly.

'I have not often met a man who wished to leave Third City,' the tailor said . . . 'except to die. But there was a time when I felt that a change was desirable myself. There is, I believe, a little town about thirty miles away, over there beyond the Camp.'

Pullman pricked his ears up at this. 'What is it like? Did you go there? Have you ever met anyone who has lived there?'

The shopman shook his head. 'No, sir. It is not a very nice town, I believe. You are hanged if you show any signs of believing in anything.'

'That would not suit me,' Pullman said. 'I never have been able to get rid of my beliefs.'

The shopman laughed. 'The man who rules the roost there is mad. He thinks he is God.'

'That settles it, I shall not go there.'

'Do you believe in God, sir?'

'I believe it is necessary to have a God, to keep out men like the fellow who rules in that town you speak of.'

The man was standing with the tape in his hand. He looked at Pullman. 'That,' he said, 'is perhaps why the fellow we are speaking about pushed himself forward. Perhaps he thought it was necessary not to have people like himself pushing themselves forward.'

Pullman laughed. Next door was a hatter's, into which he moved. There he bought a hat with a rather wide brim, such as is worn in Paris. He looked at himself in the glass, and noticed his disgustingly dirty tie.

The tie. How was he ever to buy a tie in this city which was not as great an insult to man's intelligence as a surrealist picture. He had gazed in so many tie-shops, and he had not seen a tie that a sane man would wear.

Turning to the hatter, he said, 'Excuse me, sir, you are not as mad as a hatter is generally supposed to be: you have sold me a very sensible hat. Can you tell me where I can buy a sensible tie?'

The hatter laughed. 'Oddly enough, sir, I can answer you what is an incredibly difficult question. If you go along here, as far as a shop called "Piccolo", and say you come from me, the shopman will show you a few ties he keeps in a drawer in a corner of the shop.'

'Thank you very much, sir, for that extremely valuable piece of information.'

Pullman took up his case, and, following the man's instructions, walked down the arcade. He entered the little shop called 'Piccolo', passing, in two windows on either side of the door, a mass of the most scandalous ties he had ever seen, which, indeed, the maddest American would shrink from. He went up to the man in the shop,

and said, in a low voice, that he had come from a certain hatter, who had told him that he might obtain a type of tie there which had never been worn in that city. The man took him silently into a corner of the shop, opened a drawer, and there were a variety of ties of the kind you would only buy in Bond Street. He picked out two, and the man wrapped them up. He had carefully selected two of the more gaudy ones. A handy shoe-shop provided him with shoes, slippers and socks (the indecent bravura of the socks would remain hidden, to some extent, beneath the trousers). Since, with the footwear, the outfit was complete, the next problem was to get all these purchases back to Habakkuk. He turned to the shopman.

‘When the bank gives you your first packet of money,’ he said, ‘does it realize that you will have to spend most of that on setting yourself up with wearing apparel?’

‘No, sir,’ the shopman answered. ‘But if you go there, sir, and ask for another two or three hundred dollars, they will give it to you. They will give you all you want, or almost all. Do not hesitate on this account, to buy three or four more pairs of shoes. If you have not enough money left, we will give you credit. As much as you like.’

‘How can I get a taxi-cab?’

‘That is quite easy, sir. Outside there is the public telephone. I will order you a taxi-cab.’ When he had returned to the shop, the man said again: ‘They do not like us to use taxi-cabs except when it is necessary. Cabs are not allowed to ply for hire. Almost half the people in this city do no work. If taxi-cabs were not severely restricted, and if it were not somewhat a matter of honour not to telephone for a taxi, except in such a case as yours, with the uncomfortably heavy bag requiring transport, there would be an enormous traffic problem, people would drive all day in all directions. Scores of thousands more police would be required; roads would have continually to be repaired; there would be great numbers of

accidents. You notice there are no omnibuses? That is an expression of the same determination to keep the streets clear. The taxi companies do not allow people to use their cabs without some legitimate excuse; if you went to that public telephone and asked them to send you a taxi-cab, they would inquire what you wanted it for. I, for instance, when I telephoned just now, explained your predicament, *and they know me.*'

He looked hard at Pullman, as if to say that he was *someone* in this city, and that Pullman should have been flattered at being shown the ropes by such a man.

The taxi-cab arrived, and, as Pullman left the shop, he raised his new black hat. He said nothing. Silence, he felt, would be more impressive.

An hour later Pullman was sitting down to lunch, so changed a man that Mannoock burst out laughing. However, it was a good-natured laugh, and Pullman said, 'It is too easy. The man who sold me this frightfully elegant pair of shoes said that, if I was refraining from purchasing half a dozen more pairs, there was no need whatever to do that. He would be delighted to give me credit. All I had to do was to go to the bank and ask for another two or three hundred dollars. "This time," he added, "you will be better dressed than you were last time. The man at the bank will be very much impressed. You should have taken the precaution to come here and get yourself tidied up before you paid your first visit."'

Laughing gently at the lighter and happier side of life in Third City, Mannoock agreed with the shop-keeper. 'The shop-keepers,' he pointed out, 'are the self-respecting part of the population, and usually the more intelligent; I know Simpkins very well . . . it was to Simpkins you went, was it not? He is a man of considerable understanding. I may say that we have been in prison together,' he laughed. 'At the time of the troubles you know.'

After lunch, Pullman was invited to come down to

Fifth Piazza. 'About three o'clock,' Mannoek told him, 'there is to be a deputation from Hades. They are sending a little party of diabolical diplomats.'

'Is this quite usual?' asked Pullman.

Mannoek sighed. 'Most unusual,' he protested. 'In fact I should not have said that it was possible for such a deputation to come here at all, certainly not at such short notice. However, there it is. A delegation from the enemy who was responsible for that frightful rumpus last week are to meet the home team in a display of open diplomacy. It is, I think, rather a good sign.'

They travelled by underground, and eventually came to the surface at one end of Fifth Piazza, a very large open space, only smaller than Tenth Piazza. Like the latter it was paved and arcaded. It had the same bare impressiveness; the houses, of not more than three storeys, were coloured a uniform café-au-lait. The crowd was dense; half of it knew why it was important to be there, and this was the Catholic half; the other half had not the vaguest idea what this spectacle might mean. The centre of the Piazza was roped off, and along the inner side was a continuous line of armed police. Pullman noticed several truck-loads of civil guards stationed near the corner of the Piazza (for the underground was happily not far from the area where the meeting was to take place). The excitement of the non-Catholic half was not less intense because of their complete lack of interest in what was at stake. As this was the vocal half, where Pullman and Mannoek were it seemed a solid thronging of idiots. 'What *is* Hell, Bert?' and 'Does the old Devil smoke cigarettes?' Pullman heard one man say to another. 'I've been 'ere a hundred years and never saw a devil, have you, Ernest?' The other said, 'Are you *that* old, Arthur?'

There was a loud explosion. The crowd received this with a gasp, pressing tightly up against the ropes, with a deeply drawn 'Oh!' The infernal contingent advanced

with a dancing step along the Piazza to the appointed meeting-place. That was exactly in front of where Mannock and Pullman were standing; they edged their way to the front, but had their toes trodden on and found themselves in unsavoury proximity with a stunted rabble, determined to see, and resenting the toffishness of Mannock. Straight in front of them, and not distant more than a couple of dozen paces, was the home team: it was beautifully blond and clean, two lines of uniformed men, carefully chosen from the police for their blue eyes and flaxen hair. One was almost white, he was so fair. Standing in front of these picked men was one of the hundred personal companions of the Padishah—angels like himself. He was a very tall and muscular young man, and looked extremely angry. The eyes of the beauty chorus behind him were fixed upon the horrible throng advancing against them, and did not look better pleased than their chief.

As the diabolical contingent drew near, exclamations of horror arose all the way down the line. 'Are they yewman?' asked a spectator standing between Pullman's legs. 'I'm bugged if I know,' the man stationed between Mannock's legs expressed his ignorance. Mannock bristled. 'How shameful! I know I shall be sick in a minute,' came from him. Pullman trembled; he was silent.

To a roar of fear, of disgust, of half-human cries, snorts, and gasps, advanced pirouetting the double line of demons hoofed and horned, frisking and cavorting, ogling and grimacing, and, not by any means least, emitting the most revolting stench. This assailed the noses of all the spectators, however far away, the moment they made their appearance. As they advanced, with every step they stank more, and the smell developed intolerably.

'What a ghastly sight!' Pullman muttered to his companion; 'and oh my god, what a smell! Nothing human stinks like that.'

Their leader was a man. He was large and powerful, extremely dark, his face appearing to be discoloured, and, stepping very quickly, he strode up to his opposite number, until their faces were a foot apart. A very elegant summer suit and brown shoes seemed to constitute him a man born of woman, though his countenance was so charged with evil that if he had walked along a city street in London or New York he would have been arrested at sight. He appeared to spit some words towards the face of the angel, and the other shook from head to foot with rage, but glared without spitting.

The crowd everywhere had recoiled a few feet, but the armed police stood their ground.

The infernal contingent eyed, sideways and slit-faced, the onlookers as they passed them; these monstrous, sideways, half-men were throughout naked—except that you would not call them that, any more than you would use such a word regarding an elephant, or a kangaroo, or an ape. Not that they belonged to an unmixed type; they had the smile of an inexpressibly loathsome man, but they stamped upon a hoof which was purely animal. Purely animal were their powerful, oily and hairy legs. Their arms and hands were disagreeably human; except that the top of the arm, like the breast, was covered in thick hair; the head was a mystery—the face was that of a very large goat, but it had many human attributes.

Most enigmatic of all were the messages which darted from and smouldered in the elongated eyes.

Nearest to the spectators was a hoofed creature, with a human face, goatish and leering. His penis and his tail had the appearance of being a continuous organ, the tail growing out of the body at the rear exactly opposite the place where the penis issued from the body in front, arching downwards as did the tail. The nipples hung from the breasts, like corkscrews, and two short horns sprouted out from the scaly forehead. This man of hoofs

kept sliding his eyes around at the spectators, and suddenly he thrust out a hooked tongue, which protruded almost a foot from his face.

'Oo, did you see what the bastard did?'

'Ere, 'Arry, did you see 'im, boy!' A head shot about looking for Harry.

In the second rank of the infernal animals was one with so goatish a countenance that his curving nose constituted almost all of the profile of his face.

All the twenty, prancing, shuffling, swaying backwards and forwards, chattering, starting, laughing, snarling, grimacing incarnations of evil, were never at rest for a moment. One of them lifted his tail and excreted. Another urinated.

As they drew up behind their leader, in two tumultuous lines, one or two of them protruded their tongues at the line of blonds in front of them. One turned his back and farted. Several of the beauty chorus held handkerchiefs to their noses, which provoked hilarity in the infernal ranks.

Pullman was fascinated by the abnormal brooding and violent expression of the man detailed to command these monsters at his back. He watched him as he stood there, wondering if he would deliver his message verbally or in writing. He did not have to wait long for the answer. Both Mannock and himself could hear every word with perfect distinctness. What, using a byronic formula, one might call, respectively, His Darkness and His Lightness, gazed into each other's eyes with such an infinity of hatred on both sides that Pullman wondered how they could stand so still. The hatred that came from Hell was a steady, withering stream of fire, whereas the angelic rejoinder was disposed to flash indignantly.

The first words came from the darker of the two.

'You know what I am here for, Goody-two-shoes!' he hissed in the other's face.

At these words the large blond countenance erupted. A furious response burst out of it on the instant, the big red lips shooting out the vocables in a disgusting moist expulsion: 'Pot-boy for boiling the damned in tar, what should you come for? Travelling for your dung-shop, is that it?'

He from Hell affected dignity. 'I am a bearer of an order from my chief. You—all of you—are to leave this place immediately. We order you to get out of this place without delay, and go back where you came from. Silly little song-birds of Jesus. This city is of no use to you. What do you do with it? Nothing that anyone can see. You pray all day, and leave it to the Bailiff to manage. We can make better use of it than you, so hand it over, or rather vacate it, the whole hundred of you. If you do not, we shall come here in very great force, and make an end of you.'

'Is that all you have to say? And is it as an advertisement for your perfumes that you bring with you those foul animals?'

The devil's envoy leered back, a long obscene leer. 'No, I brought those to shock your sensibilities. Disgusting, isn't it?'

'You should have come like that yourself, instead of dressing up as you have. It was out of respect for me I suppose. Have you anything else to say?'

'There are many things I could say . . . about your blond beauty chorus for instance . . . I could say a lot about them.'

The big blond face in front of the demonic leader was again convulsed, subject apparently to sudden rages. His voice flew up into the highest register.

'We far prefer to be the opposite of what you like, Beelzebub's bottle-washer . . . you little fetch-and-carrier for that Smell in Hell . . . sucker-up-to-of-Satan.'

'You . . . You choir-boy of that Humbug in Heaven,

you tuneful appendage of that pompous old egomaniac . . . the Almighty Sod—beg pardon, God.’

What these two figures were saying to one another could be heard a long way away, and in any case all over the Piazza it was obvious that a ‘row’ was beginning. Everyone began to rush towards the centre of disturbance, and an avalanche descended upon Mannock and Pullman.

‘I am glad you are here! I shall be able to shelter behind you.’ Shouting into Mannock’s ear, Pullman grimaced.

‘I don’t advise you to. I am not a very solid wall.’ A genuine alarm was visible in Mannock’s face, mingled with a snobbish distaste for ending his days beneath the feet of a proletarian horde. He began to look round indignantly for police protection. ‘Where *are* the Police Officers?’

As their pugnacity developed, to the amazement of everybody these two six-footers grew to be seven-footers, and the seven-footers grew to be eight-footers, and so on. The spectacle of these two carnival figures roaring at one another, standing so high above the surrounding people that nobody now looked anywhere except at these two miraculously growing men, had turned the meeting into something even more stupefying; and Pullman noticed that there was something in the nature of a hush at their end of the Piazza. What was going on in people’s minds? Obviously the advent of that fear which must accompany a miracle.

A roar of such volume came from the Blond Giant as to strike terror in the crowd, many of whom began to edge away. The huge words crashed out in the air like a supernatural demonstration.

‘Demon!’ it began, and had a terrible echo. ‘Demon, I will crush you like a fly! Impudent black bug! I will annihilate you on the spot—Hell-bird, you will regret the day you brought your filthy troop to this city.’

Hell's Envoy struck the other on the face, and the blow was a climax of alarm. There was a smothered 'ooo' among the spectators: the police who lined the square made ready their arms. Quite half the people near Mannock and Pullman had disappeared, and the others stood with white awe-struck faces.

'If they begin fighting—and *growing*,' Pullman whispered to Mannock, 'we shall all be trampled under foot.'

The blond giant returned the blow, and both the escort of demons, and the blond followers of the Padishah's sprouting Envoy, scuttled to the rear to avoid being trodden on. But the giants were now firmly fastened together, rocking about from side to side. Such panted remarks as 'T-t-take your claws away from my throat,' or 'Blast you, I will tear your eyes out,' could be heard, in the midst of enormous breathing and threatening grunts.

Pullman had noticed long before this that both giants had kicked off their shoes, which lay, very minute footwear, not far from where their feet were moving. Their clothes had everywhere burst asunder. But it was at this moment that, with enormous splutters and gasps, they suddenly levitated. With the little garments of a mere six-footer, none of them intact, hanging from them in loops and wisps, two vast nudities rose into the air and disappeared over the roofs. But they made their exit buttocks uppermost. Hell was on top, as they rose out of the Piazza. Hell's messenger protruded against the azure sky an anchovy-coloured balloon. But this was immediately succeeded by an upsurge of pink limbs, of enormous size, climbing up on top of the darker element; and that is how they actually vanished behind the roofs, a picture in pink, wine-brown, and azure, the last things seen being three or four violently agitated feet, pink feet and brown feet, the stiff tumbling spikes of twenty toes signalling the agitation beneath. For those who still

watched, with great excitement, the vanishing of the aerial combatants, there was a sequel in a very few minutes. Seemingly a considerable distance beyond where the agonized feet had vanished, the two figures, grown enormously in size, reappeared, locked together in a mad embrace, and aimed upwards towards the sun, the moon, and the stars. The light figure had now, springing out of its shoulders, prodigious wings, stretched to their utmost length, and dazzling white, whereas the dark figure protruded wings of a smaller size, dark and bristling. Blood dripped from both, and splashed down among the markets near First Piazza, so it was learned later on. But there was a third figure, of the white persuasion—an enormous full-sized angel, rising into the sky beyond the moat.

It was obvious at once that the diabolic intruder had seen this third figure, because an intensive struggle began occurring in the midst of the two original antagonists; the dark one was tearing himself away from the embrace of the white one. Almost at once the severance was effected, and a huge black figure dashed away over the roofs, coming down, it was reported later on, in Tenth Piazza; grown smaller already, he made a crash-landing near the centre of the Piazza, rolling over and over like a parachutist reaching the earth at the end of a drop of considerable depth. Then he was seen to spring into the air, and land upon a balcony above the long arcade. There he crouched, getting smaller and smaller as the people watched him, and then there was a loud report, and he was covered in what was described as a little cloud, like that caused by many forms of explosion. When the smoke cleared away, this combatant, the dark one, had disappeared. Above the Piazza the two white angels had flown circling round above the crouching black figure; when their enemy had evaporated, they turned and flew in a wide circle over the city, and were last seen circling down towards the

enormous barracks, at the moat-side, where the hundred angels had their post. The wounded one was still bleeding as he flew. And that was the last that was seen or heard of this supernatural combat.

Pullman stood back exhaling noisily. 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian,' he said, as if to himself. Mannock was about to reply when he seemed to change his mind. He continued to gaze up into the sky, apparently displeased. The crowd stood uncertainly as if in a dream. Everyone began looking at everyone else, some with a smile. But a new event took the place of the old. There was a fresh roar from the crowd, as two of the animals had sprung upon one of the blonds in front of them, and had dragged him over beneath their hoofs. Then they proceeded to tear him to pieces, rolling him over and over, and both of them scratching his face and neck. The blond was screaming, and, at the sight of the blood, the neighbouring crowd began a violent demonstration. However, several of his fellow-blonds had rushed in to rescue him. This they had partly succeeded in doing, but with the result that the entire body of goatish-men and beautiful young policemen were at each other's throats.

It was the lorryful of troops which was parked immediately above the station-entrance, who saw in detail what was happening first. Pullman was nearly thrown to the ground by an onrush of armed men. Jumping over spectators lying in their path, the troops swarmed through the police-barrier, and at once the sounds of rifle-fire mingled with the screams and groans of the combatants. But quite half of the animals had withdrawn from the struggling mass. They huddled together, showing every sign of alarm and anxiety. They chattered together, casting fearful glances over their shoulders, and moving a little towards the centre of the Piazza. Two police blasts sounded, and on the other side of the

Piazza the police advanced from where they were standing in front of the onlookers. About a dozen, with rifles drawn at the ready, bore down upon the uncertain group of animals, and helped them to make up their minds which way to go, and also determined for them what speed they should adopt for their withdrawal.

Meanwhile the confused battle proceeded where a few more aggressive animals were leading the attack on the blonds; but now the troops were attempting to pick off as many of their infernal visitors as possible. 'Crack-Crack. Crack-Crack' went the rifles, and with a howl of unearthly pain an animal fell to the ground. The blond casualties who had been pulled out of the *mêlée* by the police were in an awful condition. Pullman noticed in one case, that the young man had had his trousers forced open, and his sex had been literally torn from his body. Then, as though obeying a signal, with great abruptness the animals broke off where they were fighting, attempting to disengage themselves. Quite suddenly they appeared very anxious that the battle should terminate. Dragging their casualties after them, they began gliding away, in some cases clutching up the wounded, carrying them in their arms like an enormous baby.

The Civil Guards who had been engaged, though merely as snipers, in the *mêlée*, at once stepped back, allowing the animals to join their main body without molestation. As to the blonds, more bitterly and totally engaged with their demonic opposites, as if by magic relieved of the necessity of fighting they stepped back too, all more or less seriously wounded. Like a number of big schoolboys, they walked or hobbled back to where their lines had been, comparing notes, showing one another bitten fingers, scratched faces, and, in one case, Pullman noticed, a quite severe eye-injury had been sustained. Some looked back towards the casualties, who lay in a neat row, being given first-aid by the police.

Pullman heard one say: 'The filthy bastards nearly did in old Albert.'

The attention of Mannock and Pullman had, up to now, been fully occupied. They looked at one another simultaneously, smiling as they did so.

'What was the meaning of that remark of yours . . .'

'About being a Christian?' Pullman interrupted him.

Mannock nodded his head, saying, 'Yes. I see you remember.'

'Mannock, we have witnessed a miracle! People in this city disappear into the sky, two or three times their normal size . . . and I see live devils in front of me, not many yards away.' And he crossed himself.

'A most confirmed disbeliever would publicly beg our pardon,' Mannock agreed.

'That is what I must do,' Pullman sighed. 'But I must do so to a priest.'

'Do you know where the Catholic Cathedral is to be found? It is just at the farther end of this Piazza.'

'Thank you,' Pullman said.

The hostility of the crowd increased, which seemed to entertain the demons. With girlish giggles, and splutters of laughter, some of the demonic creatures were chattering together, evidently saying the equivalent of 'What a game! What shall we do next?' But the majority were more serious, visibly uneasy. They all were moving about without ceasing, in a kind of St Vitus's dance. At the sound of revolver shots fired over their heads by two officers of the police, several of them sprang up for nearly the height of their bodies. It was in a less orderly group—with shrill noises, and stamping and scuffling, frisking and pirouetting, some of them ogling the crowd as they passed, that they reached the spot where they had first alighted. Then there came a kind of crack, like the sound of an enormous whip, and next moment that part of the Piazza was filled with a dense bituminous

smoke. When it had cleared, the fiends, both casualtyed and intact, were no longer there. Everyone was choking and spitting where they were near enough to be affected by the smoke added to the bodily stench of the animals. The police had begun clearing the square, and driving the remainder of the crowd before them into the side-streets. Pullman and Mannock themselves took the way of the underground, Pullman muttering, 'Yes, let us get home. I have a great deal to think about.'

(VIII)

PULLMAN AND MANNOCK had not said very much to one another on the return journey. Back in the living-room they appeared somewhat taciturn also. Very soon Platon brought tea, and, after they were refreshed, Mannock spoke.

‘I really do not know what is happening here. The man we saw disappear into the sky—I mean the blond one—I have met and talked to a dozen times. He was a very pleasant fellow; not much to say for himself, but as gentle as a lamb. To watch him growing in size until he towered over the Piazza, to hear him roaring out words which a kitchen scullion might envy, and this speech so magnified in volume that it shook the whole of the principal square, and lastly to see him, practically naked, disappearing into the sky, locked in the arms of an enormous demon from Hell, is not the kind of thing I ever expected to see in this city. What would we have said in our former life in London, say, if we saw the Queen growing larger and larger until she was as tall as Buckingham Palace; if we saw her take flight shouting curses at her Chamberlain, or perhaps at the Prime Minister—who also started to become unnaturally large, until his head appeared above the houses in Downing Street. What would our sensations be?’

‘We should be justifiably amazed,’ Pullman declared. ‘But it is a thing which could never happen, because we are mere mortals, the Queen as much as ourselves. Now, here it is a different matter. You must allow me to say that you have made a mistake. These are supernatural personages, our rulers here. You have tended, I feel, to treat them too much as if they were the King and Queen. All the time that you were talking to that Immortal

(whom we have just seen in his proper rôle) you should have expected him to fly out of the window or up into the sky.'

Mannock threw himself back in the chair where he was sitting, his face a battlefield of very disturbed emotions. Looking at Pullman with displeasure, he answered him in the following way.

'Thank you for your lecture. I am most obliged to you for pointing out my shortcomings. But I am a very simple man who takes things and people as he finds them, and is not gifted with second sight.'

Pullman saw at once that he had made a bad mistake, and that with so conventional a man as Mannock a much milder and duller attitude was essential. He had been very much excited by the spectacle in Fifth Piazza. But so had Mannock, as was shown by his own imaginary picture of a gigantic Queen. Yes, but because Mannock had been betrayed into swollen and fantastic imagery, the temptation to talk big in reply should have been resisted.

'Ah well,' and Pullman laughed, as he moved freely about upon the settee. 'I am afraid I have been rather intoxicated by what I have seen. The scent of Hell is an aroma which does not suit me. The way I look at this afternoon's events is quite different from you. I am stupefied by the miraculous. All my life I was a sceptic. And now I see that I was very short-sighted. The miraculous here is the most common or garden of things: for men (whom we are able to meet socially) are literally walking miracles. I should not be in the least astonished if tomorrow Jesus Christ appeared in Third City; I should merely bow my head. If I heard the voice of God, I should not be surprised.'

There was a pause during which Pullman observed all the anger had left Mannock's face, and he was considering what his friend had said to him. His face was

so mobile, and expressed his thoughts in such a stylish way, that it might be described as a very charming factor in the make-up of this very simple man. After a little Mannock began to speak in a voice that was completely changed.

‘You know, Pullman, I am, I am afraid, a very worldly fool. You have opened my eyes to what I should have seen, instead of the quite dull things which I did see. I can’t tell you how grateful I am. I might never have realized this if we had not been together in Fifth Piazza, and if we had not had this conversation afterwards.’

His eyes were misted with tears as he looked over at the bearded figure, who, in a few words, had shown him the vast importance of what had occurred. They both sat in silence for some time, Mannock eagerly conning over the backgrounds of this revelation. Of God, he had always been mystically aware . . . that is, when he was in a beautiful church and the organ was playing some terrific piece; but at other times this awareness shrank to something that he found it impossible to think of except as a cold abstraction: but *now* he had seen with his own eyes the great Mazdean Principles of Light and Dark, of the Good and the Bad, locked in a fearful embrace, disappearing into the sky. And what had he been thinking of a short while after that? He had been thinking of the indecorous behaviour of one of the leading figures in the ruling caste of the city—of something that was *not done*, or was *not said*. He felt very humble, but he also felt very elated.

He rose and stretched, saying, ‘I am not quite up to these revelations. I think I will go and lie down for a little.’

‘I should if I were you,’ Pullman told him. ‘I feel rather shattered myself.’ He stood up. ‘I think I will go and have a wash to start with. I may have forty winks.’

They smiled at one another, and Mannock went to his room, Pullman to the lavabo.

About an hour later, when Mannock re-entered the sitting-room, Pullman was reading. He put down the book and inspected his friend with approval.

‘Mannock, you look a new man, you look ten years younger. You respond to rest wonderfully well, and should have at least an hour of it every day.’

‘A very good idea,’ said Mannock. ‘But there are not many days, as a matter of fact, without my getting about that amount of sleep.’

‘I did not know that. It is as it should be, then.’ Pullman flung himself back, and stuck his hands in his jacket pockets. ‘Ah, what is this?’ He drew out of his right-hand pocket a much decorated envelope. ‘When we came in from Fifth Piazza I found this on the hall-table . . . I don’t know how it got there. It has been in my pocket ever since.’ He tore open the envelope, and pulled out a large card, brilliantly lettered.

‘I was waiting for that,’ said Mannock. ‘The Bailiff invites . . .’

Pullman handed Mannock the card, which he held between thumb and forefinger.

Mannock shrugged, as he gazed at the card. ‘Obviously, he considers you a Bailiff’s Party man. Of course you must go to this Party and see what it’s like. It might be instructive . . . you will see the glamorous throng which collects there. All the rogues in Third City.’

Pullman shook his head. He thrust back into his pocket the card which Mannock had returned. ‘It might be rather embarrassing,’ Pullman said; ‘the Bailiff is, to my mind, an embarrassment.’

‘You had better see for yourself the kind of society by whom this man is surrounded. He is prodigiously rich—he is fabulously powerful. I should have a look, if I were you, Pullman.’

They were silent. But a rat-tat-rat-tat at the front door Pullman instinctively felt was for him. He sprang up and hurried out to answer the double rat-tat. As he opened the door a slight scent reached him, an odour he recognized, then the smiling face of Sentoryen appeared through the half-opened door.

‘You received the card, did you not? The Bailiff’s invitation? You will come, won’t you? I am sure you will enjoy yourself.’

‘Oh, I don’t know . . . ought I to come?’ Pullman spoke as if to himself, but Sentoryen understood.

‘A car is waiting at the door. The Bailiff has sent a car to fetch you.’

‘I suppose,’ Pullman said gruffly, ‘I suppose that settles it. Will you wait for me in the car for a few minutes. I am terribly dirty and untidy. It will only take me a few minutes to make myself ready. You will excuse me if I close the door.’

Pullman hastily went back into the flat. He explained to Mannock that a car had arrived to fetch him, with the usual emissary of the Bailiff. ‘I propose to assume my more formal attire.’ He hurriedly went to his room, washed and brushed, and then changed into his best suit.

Five minutes later he emerged, dressed for parade, sang good-bye to Mannock, and ran down the stairs, developing the party spirit as he went.

IV PARTY AT THE BAILIFF'S

(IX)

WHEN PULLMAN CAME OUT into the street, he was surprised to find himself in the middle of an expectant group. He found he had stepped out into fairyland; the childish mind of Habakkuk was transforming his departure into a fairy scene. Here were a dozen of the standard faces of the ageless Youth of Third City. The nearest faces were smiling politely with raised (or over-raised) eyebrows, with goggling, questioning, astonished blue eyes, and he heard at once a soft voice, in a half whisper, as if for him alone: 'Oh what beauty! Are you not happy? The Bailiff has sent his equipage—and his personal secretary. You are like Cinderella going to the great party at the Palace. My friend and I wish we were going too . . .'

This man followed him up to the door of the car, sniffing at the scent which Sentoryen exuded. His friend was just behind him, with almost exactly the same expression. Pullman sprang inside the automobile, adjusting himself beside the patiently waiting escort. The car gave a tremendous purr and glided away from among the smiling masks of the idiotically juvenile neighbours. Pullman gave a slight jump—he had been pinched immediately beneath the knee.

'A pinch for new clothes!' Sentoryen exclaimed softly. 'Congratulations, Mr Pullman. I should not have recognized you if it had not been for the beard.'

The chauffeur took full advantage of the absence of traffic, and hurled himself so recklessly forward that Pullman felt somewhat relieved when he reached his destination. Two sentries were placed at both of the giant

gates; the car shot into the first gate, and, in a flash, stood before the bronze doors of the Palace, which were thrown wide open, a great number of uniformed men, both military and domestic, crowding within. They alighted, Sentoryen stepping quickly into the hall of the Palace and conducting him to the *vestiaire*, where a dozen men sat in a line to cope with the headgear of the innumerable guests. They now turned to the nearest entrance to the vast gallery where the Party was being held. It was of cathedral-like dimensions, accommodating in the centre a towering jet of water which splashed down into a large square domestic lake. This was artificially cooled, and produced, wherever you stood, a delicious freshness. There were over a thousand guests, all shouting at once, and there must have been far more than a thousand electric lights, of all sizes, heating as well as lighting the vast scene; icy as the water was, it produced coolness but not discomfort.

The over-all decoration was equally cold—there was no colour hotter than metallic black and silver, and all the blacks were cold blacks.

The plants, of which there were a great number, had no flowers: their greens were all of the cactus type, preferring a desertic green, bordering on blue: and geometric designs in white representing glittering flowers, at times mixed with steel and nickel, bore out the master idea of the décor. And it became unmistakable that the impulses of a polar background, rather than the multitudinous and sultry, the garish and burning elements of a tropical scene were aimed at, and icily carried out.

Against this universal, basic determination to be cool at all costs, Pullman was subtly assailed by the hectic scent of the man-goats of Hell, which had accompanied the dusky leader of the diabolic embassy in Fifth Piazza, mixed with a few ponderous perfumes of the negro attendants, and that king of stylish stinks, only produced by the smouldering vegetation of Havana.

‘Corona-Coronas!’ sniffed Pullman, ‘or my name is Susie Grippington.’

‘Will you have a cigar, Mr Pullman?’ Sentoryen inquired. ‘Yes?’

Large negroes in shiny lemon jackets and white trousers were moving about, in all directions. Many of these bore in front of them very large brass trays—glasses containing apparently cocktails crowded upon them. Sentoryen clamoured, ‘Boy. One of you bring cigars—quick.’

Pullman picked a glass off the tray.

‘Cocktails?’ he said.

‘You bet,’ the negro answered.

‘Alcohol?’ asked Pullman.

‘You bet.’

Sentoryen laughed. ‘Alcohol. Tiptop alcohol. Would you like a whisky and splash? White Horse? Black Horse? Club? Any Scotch they can get you?’

Pullman sipped his drink. It was a Manhattan. He put his neck back; in two or three jerks he tossed the liquid down his throat. His eyes watered. He dashed the drops away from his eyes. He was now among the guests. All men, of course. They were moving quickly all around him. He did not like their moving so quickly. He sat down in a quiet little place. The water splashed, the orchestra played. It was however not so quiet as it had seemed at first. Not at all so quiet. He rose into the air . . . two negroes were tossing him about.

‘Drink this. Quick, or we shall be seen!’

It was Sentoryen’s voice. His lip was pulled up, he gulped. Opening his eyes he shuddered, and sat up.

‘I had forgotten,’ said Sentoryen. ‘You haven’t been here long enough. Feel better? That’s good.’ Pullman stood in front of the *vestiaire*. Two attendants brushed his trousers. He was unsteady.

‘Where was I?’ he asked Sentoryen.

‘You went scuttling between the legs of the crowd. You made a bee-line for the fountain. I lost touch with you. Should you have disappeared in the lake—the Bailiff would have killed your Sentoryen. But no, you nestled down against the parapet of the fountain. When I came up with you, you had your eyes closed. You slept, I think.’

‘I had a syncope I suppose,’ Pullman said.

‘Sin Cup? No, there was nothing in the cup.’

When Pullman re-entered the Party, he did so unwillingly. For no reason he began meticulously to study the mass of guests. These men were rather young than old, of an unorthodox character; the hair tended to be long. There was a certain tension about the faces. His general conclusions were much the same as Mannoek’s—regarding his own personal appearance.

‘A dirty crowd, on the whole,’ he observed. Sentoryen smiled, and withheld his assent. He saw several beards. Pullman noticed two small theatre boxes not far away, a half-dozen steps leading up to their hidden doors. Into one of these Sentoryen led him. ‘Let us listen in,’ he said, and fixed a little instrument into his ear, which was attached to an almost invisible pencil-like, flesh-coloured object, which was looped around his forefinger. At once a loud voice sounded in the ear in which the little instrument was fixed.

‘A dragon crashed into my house. The police have sealed it. I am homeless.’

‘That is what I said.’

‘A lot of beards. A dirty habit.’

‘The strings are weak.’

‘Ever since I’ve been here. The same bloody thing.’

Pullman soon learnt to aim this object, rather like a pen-nib, at individual guests.

He heard, ‘I went to the bank. They gave me a thousand dollars.’

‘You see that man in that box, with a red beard. That’s

Pullman. The man who writes all that pretentious nonsense about the Patristic Age . . . Oh yes, and that too. I'd like to give him a good kick in the backside, but I suppose . . .'

Pullman looked sideways at Sentoryen. He moved back on to the black beard, who was talking about him.

'He behaved very badly about Jessie Blackstone . . . yes. He ought to have married her. If I'd been in Henry's place I'd have knocked his bloody head off. No. Pullman's yellow . . . Didn't he run away when Plowden denounced him!'

Pullman turned the pen-nib down earthwards. He pondered hotly. There was a swine of a man libelling him all over Third City. Should he go down and slap him in the mouth? He got to his feet.

'You see that *black beard*?' He pointed, and Sentoryen nodded. 'I want to speak to him.'

As they moved out of the box Sentoryen said peremptorily, 'No violence, Mr Pullman!' Pullman stared at him. Who did Sentoryen suppose he was?

The black beard decorated the face of so small a man, when he reached him, that Pullman contented himself with an insulting laugh. Pullman looked down into his eyes. 'If you chitter-chatter you will find yourself sent back to the Camp.' He held his hand in front of the black beard. 'Weren't you at school with me?'

'Mr Pullman,' began the other, the friend of the black beard.

'Do you want me to knock your teeth down your throat?' inquired Pullman.

'Come with me, Mr Pullman.' Sentoryen's voice was accompanied by a pluck at the sleeve. He found it very easy to drift away with Sentoryen.

'They are a waste of time,' Sentoryen was speaking softly. 'You are still a little weak. Too dreamy. I will put you in touch with one or two Square Men.'

They were still in the crowd, but two men were coming up out of the swarm. They were looking sideways at Pullman. He had a strong impression of something like two playing-cards gliding towards him, in which the blacks were of great intensity, the faces misty. The next thing was a shock—he caught his breath. Both were on top of him. He was moving along between two Squares with whom it was no effort to move along, but it was a hot glow.

‘Most of this is earth-trash, Mr Pullman. We Squares move through a Party gathering like this. We Squares are nothing. We are Filters. We lean up against you and drain you. That funny *square* way of looking at you—that is getting your range, so to speak. We know we look comic. But we sink into the psychic medium you carry about with you, and purify it. There are very few people in this large Party we should care to touch. After the embrace, we offer our clinical services. We discover a great deal in the course of our drainage.’

But Pullman did not avail himself of their services. He gave them a *square* look, and found himself with Sentoryen again.

‘I think, now, Mr Pullman, you will be ready to enjoy the exquisite frigidity of the Bailiff’s design.’ The orchestra was now playing Alban Berg’s lyric suite.

Pullman began to understand that the Bailiff’s idea of a Party was to provide you with the means of escaping from promiscuousness, from the psychological hot-water pipes. You had come, not to be with people—but to enjoy the contact of the lunar influences, and to relish humanity (if at all) in an icebox.

Giving Sentoryen a *square* look, Pullman said, ‘I feel I have a little more hysteria which should be drawn off me. Here is a décor which St Augustine would have welcomed, which the eunuch in Origen would have been in tune with. Is there any further purification I might undergo?’

Sentoryen shook his head.

'Let us,' he said, 'drift towards the Bailiff, as you call him. 'Those two squares you gave yourself up to are two very particular gentlemen. Oh yes. Those queer men who only like other men and dislike women . . .'

'Homosexuals,' Pullman supplied the word.

'Thank you for that nasty word. Well, the Squares refuse to go near them. Oh yes, they are very particular. They do not like the Bailiff any too well.'

'Indeed,' Pullman said. 'They are remarkable fellows. What do they do? They are a sort of masseur. They massage the soul. It is wonderfully nice.'

'It is a terrific sensation. They will not do me.' Sentoryen smiled, coyly, Pullman thought.

As they pushed forward into the crowd, which seemed to be growing in volume and in raucousness, they were in the centre of screaming voices. One said, 'Ricardo died in my arms.' Another voice said, 'No gas. And we had no gas in our district until ten the next morning.' Sentoryen, with a frown, pressed forward. Pullman now heard a familiar crowing voice. Ever since he had first entered the mass of the Party, he had been conscious, through the smoke of the cigarettes, in the distance beyond the towering fountain, of something like a stage. He knew that this was the real centre of the assemblage, and that there the Bailiff was to be found.

'I know the Bailiff wants to see you, Mr Pullman. We are a little late.' Sentoryen urged him forward, against shrieking and stammering men, mostly discussing the Blitz. Then, sooner than he had expected, there was the platform straight ahead; and they seemed to come out in a kind of clearing, where the crowd was thinner; and, though he was still really at some distance, the Bailiff hailed him in a welcoming crow.

'Ah ha, welcome Pullman—welcome to Eternity! I am so glad to catch sight of you at last, my dear fellow. Come

up here, there are the steps, to your left.' He was pointing and dancing forward.

Pullman waved his arm, and moved quickly to the place where the steps were, and rose on them without stumbling.

A number of faces, ingratiating and polite, were looking at him as he approached their host; evidently it was an inner circle who never left the neighbourhood of the Bailiff and who participated in all the phases of his hospitality. It was as if Pullman had been entering a family reunion; a large, subservient group of familiars, all with their 'kind', permanently amused, watchful eyes, in courtly tension.

As to the Bailiff, he was now a very different person from the barbaric, theatrical figure of the Camp. He was dressed in a dinner-jacket, with a soft white shirt, the wide scarlet ribbon of some order appearing above his waistcoat and crossing his stomach, while in his hand he held a large Havana cigar.

It was at once obvious to Pullman that his magistracy at the Camp was an act. It even seemed to him that he not only dressed up as an actor, but would, for his part, use pads and disfiguring accessories. He could not at once check the position of these. But he felt sure that the hump he made such good use of at the Tribunal was exaggerated. Certainly the Bailiff was bowed, but there was no sign of a dorsal distortion. There were other things as well; in short, he was now a more normal person. He remained an unusual figure; his square nose, his Punchesque chin, his rubicund complexion alone, would be identification assets anywhere. Equally distinguishing was his powerful voice, with its unforgettable nasal richness. Nevertheless, Pullman felt that he was in the presence of a less abnormal personality. Without former acquaintance with him one would have said that he was a prominent businessman, with a great deal of social talent; perhaps an ambassador or statesman, in any case a great

(and pungent) personality. There was always the irrepressible malignity of his geniality—when at his most urbane that never quite disappeared.

When Pullman reached him, he had his hand grasped with a great muscular display of friendliness. ‘I am so glad to see you. During these last days I have felt the greatest anxiety about you. Sentoryen here is a highly trusted secretary of mine; at my instructions he lay in wait for you every day, outside your house (I instructed him not, except where absolutely necessary, to call for you at Mr Mannock’s apartment). I would have come there myself if nothing else availed. But I heard from Sentoryen that you were well looked after, and the slight indisposition from which you suffered after what they call the “Blitz” was quickly overcome. That is good, that is good. Has Sentoryen been a good boy?’

‘He has been a very discreet, attentive, and sensible young man. I am most grateful to you for taking so much trouble about my welfare and,’ said Pullman, turning towards Sentoryen, ‘for choosing so charming and intelligent a messenger to guard over me and to guide me.’

After this speech they all laughed, and everyone was in the best of humours. Sentoryen was dismissed, retiring into the crowd again, and the Bailiff took Pullman by the arm, and led him a little aside.

‘I am afraid that you will have received a perfectly diabolic impression of Third City,’ said the Magistrate, ‘but let me assure you that it is not always as bad as that. In fact, it has much to be said for it; it is quite a charming city. I built a good deal of it myself.’

‘Ah,’ was Pullman’s comment. The Bailiff threw him a roguish glance.

‘First and last, you must have formed a low opinion of our paradise. Suspend your judgement. You are not properly housed, you know nothing of the advantages of the city, and there was that frightful brawl the other day. I

am still black and blue myself,' he pointed to his ribs and made a grimace of pain. 'I shall not forget that for a long time. But *you*—within a few hours of your arrival to be subjected to something worse than an earthquake, to have the life blasted out of your body, you must have thought this peculiar paradise was about to disintegrate.'

'I certainly was rather surprised,' Pullman told him sedately. 'It was not quite how I had imagined these celestial regions.'

The Bailiff laughed heartily.

'I should not suppose you had. But let me explain a little, my dear Pullman, for you have every right both to an explanation and an apology. What it is my duty to tell you is fantastic to the last degree.'

The Bailiff stopped abruptly, for a uniformed man was standing in front of him, holding in his hand a salver upon which lay an envelope. He snatched this up and opened it, and read the message in silence. Then, taking the salver from the man, he wrote a few words upon the back of the torn envelope.

'Take this back,' he said to the man, 'and say I shall be here for the next couple of hours.'

The Bailiff wheeled round and faced Pullman again, his eyes a little distracted. He visibly dragged his mind away from something, and began almost violently.

'I was saying,' he said with a half-shout, 'before the modern age, yes, back in the Age of Faith, there was a Heaven and there was a Hell. There was a Heaven of dazzling white, and there was a good coal-black Hell. Now, to arrange, somewhere in space, a convenient site for these institutions was not too easy in those days.' He held up a finger to make certain that Pullman was attending. 'This is the essential point. Hell and Heaven are much too near together geographically, and the same applies to Third City—that is much too near to Hell.' He pointed through the window. 'Hell is just over there.'

Things have progressed as they have down on earth. These opposites are far too near together for modern conditions.' He stopped and tapped Pullman upon the shoulder and lowered his voice. 'Another thing of critical importance. Heaven is no longer immaculate—is it?' The Bailiff gave one of his crowing laughs. 'You don't know it yet! Wait till you do, my boy! Next—and just as important, Hell is not the place it once was in the days of our old friend Dante Alighieri.' Something in Pullman's expression pulled him up. 'You saw perhaps that performance down on Fifth Piazza this afternoon? They were a terrible crew weren't they? But that was a beauty chorus Lucifer keeps for such occasions to frighten the bourgeoisie. It is a little family or two of genuine, old-time devils, who live in the wilds of Hades, just as the elk lives up in the Bush, as far from man as possible. These demons are rounded up when they are required.'

He took breath. 'Well, let us get back to the great changes which have taken place. As we all know, and can see for ourselves, the *Good* and the *Bad* are blurred, are they not, in the modern age? We no longer see things in stark black and white. We know that all men are much the same. An amoralist . . . such is the modern man. And in the same way in these supernatural regions. It is a terrible come-down all round. What was once the Devil (to whom one "sold one's soul" and so forth) well today, he is a very unconvinced *devil*, and our Padishah, as we call him, he is a very unconvinced Angel. I know *both*, so I know what I am talking about!'

The Bailiff had had a growing audience. They were now completely surrounded: there was, first of all, a queue which had collected, while they had been talking, of persons desirous of exchanging a word or two with the host, and, secondly, there was the crowd which had gradually grown at the sound of a typical harangue in progress.

The Bailiff looked out over the crowd, and, spotting

what he was looking for, called softly, 'Dureepah! Dureepah!'

A dark and smiling, distinctly handsome young man stepped out of the crowd. He was dressed in a short black vest, with silver buttons; with Turkish-type trousers, and shoes with tilted tips.

'Now, here you are, here is an inhabitant of what is popularly called Hell. He is, in short, a devil.'

The young man beamed and bowed, and everyone laughed.

'Are you not a devil, Dureepah?'

'A perfect devil,' the young man answered, and there was a shout of laughter.

'This young man arrived this morning from Hell. He is a clerk in the office of Lucifer, who runs an office just as does the Padishah, concocting all sorts of mischief; just as our Eminence is busy in *his* offices—with a thousand clerks, if you please—is busy disseminating virtue!' Then he turned more especially to Pullman. 'The inhabitants of Hell buy their shirts and ties down in First Piazza, or Fifth Piazza. Why not. But *by law* they are not supposed to enter the City. Why? Are we too good, here? Shall we perhaps be defiled!'

At this point the Bailiff raised his voice, saying again in tones which could reach the back of the crowd. 'Shall we be polluted, gentlemen? Shall we issue from the contact stained and sullied?—Gentlemen, it appears to me that it might work the other way round, and some innocent little devil return to Hell, his innocence undermined.'

There was a burst of laughter mingled with applause.

'Well,' and the Bailiff turned again to Pullman. '*That* is what the quarrel is about. You had a taste of that disagreement the other day. Lucifer is a proud man; he is bored with the never-ceasing, and, as he thinks, absurd ostracism. How did that ostracism come about, gentlemen. It is as well to remember that God, we are told,

created Adam. A great feat—Adam was a chap like us, he was a *man*. It seemed, of course, to Lucifer, a very inferior creation of the Almighty God. Lucifer was a splendidly handsome archangel, second only to God in power and rank. In his maudlin ecstasy God commanded Lucifer should abase himself and pay homage to Adam. Is it at all wonderful that Lucifer refused to do anything of the sort? There was a terrific row. Lucifer went off in high dudgeon—saying to God that he no longer wished to be associated with a Creator who had forgotten how to create. Half the hosts of Heaven followed him, millions of angels and archangels. Their idea was to establish themselves in the cloudlands above the earth. It would have been wonderful had they succeeded; but it was found impracticable to build anything solid there. Many of the angels made their way to the earth and cast in their lot with man. But Lucifer went far afield, and hoped to create for himself a paradise out of a rather wild district which had always been despised. That is where he has been ever since. The story about the Hole, about the Pit, is just an old wives' tale. There is a not very sanitary region there, which is very damp and sometimes very hot, which is low-lying and precipitous, and which lends itself to these ridiculous tales about what we call Hell. All that is nonsense of course. Lucifer has always lived in a quite handsome little city, in a very magnificent palace. But he is an artist. He is not a schemer, not a practical man, not power-hungry and vainglorious. Like some people I could mention.'

Suddenly there was a loud voice from among the crowd. It shouted furiously, 'That is a lie. I have been there—I know what it is like. And it is not like that! What he has been saying is a pack of lies. Satan . . . Satan was expelled from Heaven. He . . .'

Armed men had rushed in; one had bludgeoned the interrupter and the others laid him out on the floor.

There had been a great uproar, naturally; some had been violently angry, and one had struck the mouth from which the big, discordant voice was coming. It was just after that the truncheon had descended.

Everyone in the neighbourhood of the Bailiff was speaking at the same time. The Bailiff parted the crowd which blocked the way to the prisoner, who was being placed upon a stretcher. The magistrate, when he reached the end of the stretcher, leaned forward and gazed at the face. Then he moved back abruptly, and an official was awaiting him.

‘Shall we hand him over to the police?’ the official inquired.

‘No. I will interrogate him myself. When you have taken him to the guardroom, chloroform him if necessary and search him from head to foot. Remove all his clothes—shoes, socks, *everything*. Give him something else to wear! Let me know when all this is done.’

He returned now immediately to Pullman, without answering those in the crowd through which he passed, or stopping for a moment to speak to them.

In an undertone, the Bailiff said quickly to Pullman, ‘That man belongs to one of the sects with which this city is infested. He may be a Hyperidean: he may be a Salvationist. I don’t know what he is, but I soon shall. A lot of lies are told to people like that, and they believe them with an incredible fixity. That man has been taught that God expelled Lucifer and a great number of other “rebel” angels—that is the orthodox teaching, and he thinks it must be true. However.’ He did not seem at all excited, and he returned at once to what had been the subject of his discourse when the shouting man put a stop to it. ‘Well, then, Pullman, that is how what we call “Hell” came to be. Lucifer is a perfectly normal man, like anyone in this room. The fact that he is “immortal” makes no difference whatever as regards his character. Now it

seems to me that there should be normal intercourse between, in a world like ours, cities such as Third City and cities such as what we persist in calling "Hell". Why not? If all the people here were ardent believers, things might be different. Or if "Hell" were like it was, a half a millennium ago, there might be some reason to keep these two citizenries apart. But Lucifer and his subjects are tremendously "liberalized", as it is called. They have pictures from Hollywood in their cinemas, and the Devil sometimes smokes a pipe. Yet these gentlemen here (our masters) continue to treat everything in the neighbouring city as if we were contemporaries of Dante, and they were all horned monsters over there.'

The Bailiff's voice had been rising, and he was now on a subject of the most urgent topical interest to everybody. He was no longer looking at Pullman but was addressing the audience around him.

'Now all that was happening the other day was that Lucifer was proposing to come over—socially. You all know what the Padishah thought of that. He bickers away like a fishwife, when he is driven to mount his hobby-horse. Poor old Padishah. Poor old, two-thousand-year-old gentleman!'

The whole of this huge reception-room seemed to be rocking with laughter as the Bailiff finished.

'I wonder how all that strikes you?' exclaimed the Bailiff, turning again to Pullman, in a paternal manner, and lowering his voice as he did so. 'I trust I have not blasted your illusions?'

'No, sir,' Pullman answered. 'No. I am amazed. I was somewhat surprised to find myself in Heaven. But it seems that, after all, I shall end up in Hell!'

To indicate to the crowd at large that he was performing no more for the present, the Bailiff turned his back upon it. In a quiet conversational voice, he asked Pullman whether he was in difficulties about finding an

apartment. 'I should be very glad, Pullman, to help you find a residence. You are temporarily at the apartment of Mr Mannock. That was the address the bank gave me.'

Pullman described his meeting with Mannock at the Universal Café, and said he was for the present lodging there. All the Bailiff said, as regards that, was, 'Mannock! not the most amusing person to have met! He is a dreadful old reactionary, is Mannock. What did he say when you told him you were coming to my Red Party?'

'He said I should go, sir. He is reactionary, but he is not a fool.'

'To be a reactionary is to be a fool.' A negro passed with cigarettes upon a tray. 'Here, have one of these,' Pullman was enjoined, 'a rarity in Third City. There is a bootleg store near Fifth Piazza. You can get alcohol there as well. Give him the address,' he told a secretary, and Pullman was handed a slip of paper with the address.

'Milligan,' Pullman read from the slip of paper. 'An enterprising Irishman; I shall pay him a visit.'

'Mannock, of course, has not the slightest idea who you are? No, of course he has not. If someone told him that you were the greatest writer of your time, Pullman, he would not believe them.' The Bailiff beamed in Pullman's face, the latter with a bored expression stroking his beard. 'Ah, Pullman, you did not know I had your secret! I think I shall see that some friend of mine passes on this information to the stuffy and obtuse Mr Mannock!'

'Please do not,' Pullman said negligently. He then took the Bailiff by the hand. 'I am most obliged to you, sir, for your information . . . and your *bon accueil*.'

'Don't say that, my dear boy. It will be an honour for me to do anything I can to help you. I have my weekends to myself: it would give me the greatest pleasure if you would come round and have a talk. All this herd of people would not be here, we should be by ourselves.'

Saying that he would certainly try and get hold of him some week-end, Pullman returned to the body of the crowd, and as he was just about to be swallowed up by it, the Bailiff called after him, 'At Mannock's you will soon be receiving a visit from a sparrow!'

All those near Pullman laughed. They knew what the sparrow meant, but Pullman was extremely mystified. The next moment he found himself confronted by Rigate. That gentleman winked at him. 'I am sure that you do not understand what the sparrow means. Well, the Padishah sends out all his invitations by sparrows.'

'I see,' Pullman replied. 'I had forgotten that you were fond of the Bailiff's parties.'

'I cannot afford to buy much whisky of my own.' He moved away beside Pullman. 'I could not help overhearing the Bailiff speaking to you just now about Mannock. At the same time I learned of your celebrity. I agree with the Bailiff that Mannock has not the haziest idea as to the quality of the guest he is entertaining. I think I shall tell him . . .'

As he moved along, Pullman again became conscious of that fœtid odour which had nearly caused him to vomit that afternoon.

'Dureepah,' he reflected, 'is not, I think, the only citizen of Hades in this assembly.' And just then the face, slightly of Red-Indian colour, leered in his face as if reading his thoughts. Pullman aggressively juttèd his chin, and, in a certain prim firmness of his mouth, seemed to be reproducing the response of virtue to vice. Yes, I see you, it seemed to say, go your way. But prepare for the wrath to come. There was another leer, slightly different in quality, an ingratiating leer, and a voice which began, 'I say, you had a jolly nice talk with the old Bailey! He's a jolly good old sort . . . I remember meeting you across the water about two weeks ago,' said the sugary voice.

‘The old Bailey gives one a jolly good cocktail, don’t you think?’

As Pullman raised his eyes, just for a moment he had the illusion that he was speaking to one of the diabolical visitors seen in the Piazza earlier that day. There certainly was something which provoked this recollection. The leering, goatish countenance was enough. But the hair was thick and beautifully brushed, and Pullman at once perceived that it was a man who had persisted in talking to him over at the Camp, and whom it had been extremely difficult to shake off. Now he was very neatly dressed—obviously he had been to the bank.

‘You have got here quickly,’ Pullman responded, with the coldest politeness of which he was capable.

‘So did *you!*’ cried the other, with a gleeful goatish grin.

‘Certainly I did not take long. I followed the Bailiff in at the Gates.’

This appeared a tremendously sporting thing to have done to the young fellow, so prodigal of grins. With a congratulatory guffaw (and his mode of address was almost exclusively exclamatory), ‘Oh good for you! Did the old Bailiff see you?’

Even more loftily Pullman answered, ‘Yes. He invited me to follow him in.’

This produced a new explosion of enthusiasm about their host. ‘He is a jolly decent old sort, the old Bailey, isn’t he!’

Pullman wished that he did not have to say ‘the old Bailey’, whenever he referred to the gentleman in question—that he were not so virulent a sucker-up, that he were not so ingratiatingly toothy, that he did not show so much of his gums. He moved almost violently away, holding his head high, his back sternly turned towards this matey and vulgar individual.

Sentoryen had been observing this encounter, greatly

relishing the lofty technique of Pullman. And now he said, lowering his voice a little, 'Not one of your favourites, Mr Pullman.'

Pullman was less discreet, and his voice was pitched rather higher than usual. 'That living grin gets in my hair.'

Sentoryen moved a little closer. 'Mister Pullman, there is no hurry at all, but the car awaits you at the door. It is at your disposal whenever you are ready.'

What forced itself in upon him now was the memory of what he had been through at this mysterious gathering. Sentoryen had been almost a supernatural escort, and he did not know, in retrospect, whether he liked it or not. Fatalistically he followed him into the waiting automobile, and rushed with him through the night, as if they were flying through the air, not understanding but submissive. At Mannock's door he thanked him, as he had formed the habit of doing, and, as he ascended the stairs, he heard the purr and then the roar of the automobile bearing Sentoryen away.

MANNOCK WAS IN THE SITTING-ROOM, apparently waiting. Actually, he had been watching out of the window Pullman's descent from the automobile, Sentoryen at his heels. Now he said, 'Back from your party! Well, was it very grand?'

Pullman took up his usual position upon the settee. 'I saw Rigate,' he said. 'He was taking in his supply of whisky.'

'Rigate is an addict—I mean a Bailiff-addict.'

'I think you exaggerate the insidiousness of our Bailiff,' with calm indifference Pullman said.

There was a pause for Mannoock to digest his displeasure, and to say to himself that Pullman, after all, was like Rigate in many ways. Then he said, 'Your fag has returned.'

Pullman looked up quickly and asked where he was. Mannoock thereupon explained that the police had brought Satters back.

'The police!' Satters' mentor said.

'Yes,' Mannoock explained, 'the police . . . in a police-van, in which they carry criminals.'

He proceeded to recount the violent scene which had ensued; Satters was drunk, he struck one of the two policemen in the face, and the other gave Satters a massacring blow with his truncheon. They were very obliging fellows and carried the juvenile delinquent into the bedroom and laid him on the bed. Before leaving they explained that he had joined one of the large juvenile gangs and was caught breaking into a shop. There were about six of them, but Satters gave more trouble than the other five. 'We do not take these young ruffians into a magistrate's court,' the sergeant said, 'unless they half-murder

somebody. The courts cannot be cluttered up with their rascalities, because there are half a dozen of these large boy-gangs, and they are misbehaving themselves all the time. We just try to find out where they come from originally, and, if we are successful, we take them back there in a van. You have your hands full, Mister. He is a tough boy!’

Pullman was very alarmed and perplexed at this development.

‘How am I going to rid myself of this abominable blackguard of a fag! Is he going to carry my address about in his pocket, and every time he commits a delinquency, is he going to be brought back to me, as if it were a case of lost property? I *must* rid myself of this murderous parasite, this legacy from my schooldays.’

Pullman sprang up and walked quickly towards the door: but Mannock stopped him with a shout. ‘Hi! not so quick. Let sleeping dogs lie. You do not know what he is like. He is very drunk . . . we are no match for him while he is half-mad with liquor. Let him sleep it off, and then you will be able to explain to him what your views are regarding his future.’

Pullman returned from the door, and flung himself in a chair. ‘I must apologize for my frightful fag. I shall separate at once from this ignoble Caliban.’ They sat there for some time in silence. Mannock then reverted to the thing uppermost in his mind.

‘The Bailiff and I,’ he told Pullman, ‘first met in a police-cell, at the time of the trouble about Hyperides.’

‘Oh.’ Pullman was surprised to hear the name of Hyperides in this connection.

‘Yes. I have lived here a long while,’ Mannock insisted. ‘You are finding out very quickly what it took me years to find out. But you have a good deal to learn. Let me give you the low-down on the Bailiff, anyway: I have made a study of him. He is really an obnoxious individual.’

Pulling the shutters down over his eyes, pursing his mouth sedately, Pullman politely listened.

‘To begin with, he is entirely responsible for the degraded type of mannikin which swarms in this city. When you first arrived—I daresay you do not remember—you asked me what was the matter with those people in the Universal Café. What struck you at once was the near-imbecility of those collected there. Has that been borne in upon you since? Do you encounter the humanity frequenting the Universal Café elsewhere in the city—in fact everywhere?’

‘Yes, I certainly do,’ Pullman agreed, gently stroking the back of his head. ‘The majority of those one sees at the cafés, on the street, or in the underground, are of that extraordinary vacuous type; sixty per cent of the inhabitants of this quarter, I should say. Not the police, not the shop-keepers—at least not those I have seen; not your friends in the coffee-house or in the club. But practically everybody else. I find it uncomfortable to be in the company of this moronic majority. They are a very odd product indeed. How did they get like that?’

Mannock looked excited. He seemed very pleased at what his guest had said. ‘Well now,’ he continued. ‘What would you say was the philosophy of this place? And of course it is *contrived*, is it not—it is not natural for it to be like this. Is it an institution for the preservation and glorification of mediocrity? What he preaches, outside there, in the Camp, is that it is the *typical* that is valuable. The Bailiff has kept out of this place anyone of the slightest intelligence or character, anyone out of the ordinary. He has very thoroughly sifted the humanity presented to him at that Tribunal. Then there are these gangs of youths to which your fag has immediately joined himself. That is the Bailiff’s doing. He is a great glorifier of “Youth”, of the immature, even of the childish. If you and Satterthwaite had gone up before him, our young

hooligan lying on the bed in there would have been passed in, you would have been rejected. He does not, of course, say openly: "I will pass in to the city the most perfect specimens of human nothingness I can find." He has a lot of fancy talk about uniqueness. But what actually ensues from the deliveries of his magistracy may very well be examined in the Universal Café. And he deliberately wills it to be like that; that is what he aims at, and that is what he secures.'

'The Bailiff, one would say—don't you think—was justifying the existence of this city. It is almost as if he said "there are very good men, and there are very bad men; Heaven is provided for the former, Hell for the latter; but is it a crime just to be the human average? Let us keep this city for Mr Everyman. Let *him* have a Heaven too. Let us sift those who come here, until we obtain a quintessence of the average." And it would seem that, through this insistence upon an ideal of averageness, he has produced a horrible nullity.'

'That is wonderfully interesting. You really expressed that beautifully,' exclaimed Mannock. 'But, if you don't mind my saying so, that would be entirely to misread the motives of this man. He is not seeking after some perfection, and reaching nullity by mistake. Oh no. He has attained to nothingness on purpose.'

Pullman smiled. 'That may be, of course. Men often arrive at very unpleasant results by pursuing the loftiest aims. But I have not analysed our Bailiff. I was merely throwing out a suggestion.'

'Quite. I understand that.'

'What is perhaps more interesting,' Pullman said quickly, 'is the question of why he is here at all. To whom is he responsible?'

Mannock hesitated, and almost scowled.—This was an issue which was exceedingly distasteful to him, but which he knew was always hovering in the background. 'That,'

he said, 'is a quite separate question—and very irrelevant, in any discussion of the Bailiff's motives. There he is, and one has to consider him apart from any question of how he got there.'

'I hardly think it is so simple as that,' Pullman absent-mindedly shook his head.

A memory bursting up into his face, at the same time as it rushed into his mind, Mannock tore his sleeve up from his wrist, and, intoning 'I must fly!', rose and hurried out of the room, saying as he went, 'I am afraid I shall be keeping Charles waiting.' A few minutes later he put his head in at the door saying, 'Let that young brute sleep off his drink,' and vanished.

Left, as it were, becalmed by this tempestuous exit, Pullman remained where he was, inhaling tobacco smoke, and comparing the Bailiff with 'Charles'. What a friend to have, Sir Charles whatever-his-name-was! A really old baronetcy . . . fifteenth century.—Tut-tut—a museum piece, no more! The Bailiff might be still more historical . . . 'The old Bailey' and himself would certainly find it difficult to agree upon many matters. But they were matters which need never be mentioned by either of them . . . Pullman's mind returned to his present host. What a little Sahib it was! He foresaw the time when it would be looked upon as a betrayal for him to go and have a chat with the Bailiff, in his residence scented with the sweat of Hell! he coughed judiciously and primly. He did not take seriously either the Bailiff or Mannock or Charles: but they balanced one another—although he was afraid that the Bailiff weighed so much more than all the rest of them put together.

V VISIT TO THE PADISHAH

(XI)

‘YOU WERE VERY DRUNK LAST NIGHT, sir, were you not?’ Pullman fixed a dead eye upon Satterthwaite.

‘I am most frightfully sorry, Pulley, those boys gave me ever so much to drink. I was fool enough to drink it. I have never had anything to drink before. I had a most dreadful black-out. I did not know what I was doing for hours and hours and hours. Pulley, I do hope you believe me.’ Satters, with his forefinger, made the gesture of cutting his throat, ‘If what I tell you isn’t true, Pulley, may I drop down dead.’

Pullman yawned, and took a cigarette. ‘You broke into a shop,’ he remarked.

‘Did they say that, the dirty cads! Those boys in the police don’t mind what they say! That is a dirty lie! Oh Pulley. . . .’

‘They brought you here in a van. You hit one of them. The other clubbed you. They described you to Mannock as a pretty tough customer. Congratulations, Satters. Congratulations. You are making your mark already in this city. Soon you will be the leader of a gang . . . They will call you “Gorgeous Satters”. You will rise as high as a young man can in this city. Provided you do not murder somebody, you will be a very eminent young thug.’ Pullman sat up suddenly. ‘Satters, that is all right for you, but you must not go round with my address in your pocket, and be brought back here by the police every time you commit some outrage.’

‘Pulley, it’s a lie, it’s a damned lie, I never did anything at all, I swear on my dying oath, Pulley . . .’

‘Satters! Be quiet! Understand I do not want you back here any more. I will not allow the police to dump you here. I shall write to them and tell them to deposit you somewhere else. When I have a place of my own you may come and see me. *But not here.* Now be off with you.’

There were many more explosions on the part of Satters, there were even tears. But at last Pullman put on his hat and left the building. When he returned an hour or two later, Satters had gone. So, presumably, Satters was disposed of for the time being. Pullman did not want never to see Satters again, but he did not wish to be disturbed every time his ex-fag committed a crime.

Mannock, who had been down at the bank, came in about twelve-thirty and took Pullman out to lunch. As they sat, side by side, in the taxi, Pullman warned him that he was over-doing it. ‘You should take things easy for another week or two. You were in pretty bad shape subsequent to the “Blitz”.’ Mannock gratefully promised to follow this counsel.

The restaurant was in Tenth Piazza; it was very ‘fashionable’, one of the best in the entire city. They sat at a large table with half a dozen of Mannock’s buddies. This was not a repetition of their visit to the café club, if for no other reason because of the presence of Henry Stanfield, Mannock’s friend No. 1. This man was ‘county’ to start with, and he took that origin very seriously. He was also Harrow and Magdalen. These facts entailed the appropriate graces and tricks which Mannock was almost morbidly aware of. What kind of man Stanfield was, shorn of these cultivated gadgets, it was difficult to say, and perhaps irrelevant. He was no doubt a cold, dull, and deeply unintelligent being—all of which was necessary, even, to keep the social varnish intact.

They mourned their dead. There was Dick, and there was Jonathan, who had succumbed to the ‘Blitz’. Of this younger and less pompous circle, Stanfield was almost

the equivalent of Charles; but he rather laughed at Charles. He rather laughed at Mannock's, 'Charles says', which did not stop Mannock from constantly quoting the oracle of the Cadogan. On this occasion he quoted Hugh and his sinister predictions. 'Hugh,' said Stanfield, 'derives some of his most blood-curdling prophetics from sources close to the Bailiff.' There was much laughter over Hugh's secret inspirer. One of them said, 'If I went to the Bailiff's Monday Party—though there is no danger of my doing that, I prefer to buy a bottle of bootleg whisky myself—I should not be amazed to see Hugh, slightly disguised, perhaps.'

'Pullman here was at the Bailiff's party last night,' Mannock informed them. 'Did you see Hugh there?'

Pullman pondered. 'There *was* a man, now I come to think of it, who looked like an inebriated gas inspector, who might have been the man you are inquiring about.' There was again a lot of merriment—for Hugh did not appear to be a very popular figure. Stanfield asserted that, until the Bailiff was put on trial for treason, Third City would continue to be like a Dr Barnardo's Home for pansy bank clerks. One of them asked Pullman what he thought of the Bailiff, to which he answered, 'He is rather like a city boss in the United States, and if you are in such a city you have to be very careful not to displease him—especially if your stay in that city is to be prolonged.' To which the questioner responded, 'I see.'

After lunch they returned to the apartment. Mannock had been saying that they must get out of the city into the farmlands one of these days, and when they entered the living-room he walked towards the window, in the course of giving his guest some elementary instruction in the topography of the city. They were standing there, Mannock tracing routes and directions rather unnecessarily upon the window-pane. His finger mounted higher, until it began to cover the sky with trceries.

Pullman, who made no attempt to follow these directions of Mannock's, was the first to notice that a martial sparrow was performing a passerine goose-step outside the window. Before he had time to speak to Mannock about it, the other caught sight of it, and hurriedly threw up the sash. The bird stood to attention, and Mannock took something from its beak. A harsh and brassy adieu broke from it, it revolved, and the next moment it was in undeviating, and militarily unerring flight.

Meanwhile, Mannock had spread out on the table a small piece of paper which he had taken from the bird's beak. There was a message,

'Please bring your two friends—at the usual time this evening.'

Pullman took up the piece of paper. He frowned a little as he read. Then he replaced it on the table.

'What an amazing fellow. He uses the birds as his messengers.'

Mannock laughed.

'He writes English as if he were English,' Pullman continued.

'English is a lingua-franca here, as it is in New York, for instance.'

The parting words of the Bailiff, 'You will be visited by a sparrow,' suddenly returned to Pullman. 'A childish substitution for a telephone!' he mentally agreed with the Bailiff's implied sneer. But what he did immediately afterwards was to imagine the Bailiff using the birds as messengers. This he recognized at once as utterly impossible. Although St Francis was not his favourite Saint, he preferred a world in which St Francis would feel at home because of the presence of winged creatures, to a Bailiff-world of pragmatic exclusiveness. He knew there would be no wings in a Bailiff-world except left-wings: in the view of the 'good old Bailey', he was sure, the sparrow parasitically infested the air—of no food value, and in-

clined to give elderly persons of the female sex something to live for! The use of sparrows in this way for air-mail purposes gave him an insight into the mind of the celestial personage they were to visit. With his sparrows instead of telephones, he was evidently of a gentle, whimsical disposition. As to his being a match for the infernal overlord, that was something he felt very dubious about.

It took some time to reach the Padishah's palace—over an hour. In a not very large square stood the white block of offices, the entrance guarded by police, rifles slung over their shoulders. Mannock gave a password that sounded like 'Brish brash', which gained them admittance to the court. The entrance hall, as in the case of the Bailiff's residence, was full of armed men. Here a more searching scrutiny occurred. An official had a list of guests. Mannock was asked for his name. The name was found in the list. Then Pullman's name was demanded, and it too was identified. The official addressed to Mannock a few questions such as the number of times he had visited the Padishah. At last they were admitted, passed through a wicket, and descended a wide marble staircase. At the foot of this they effected a passage of two more doors, this time green baize, and descended another staircase, wooden for a change. On pushing a pair of swing-doors they found themselves in an underground court. On the farther side was the subterranean palace of the Padishah, before which sentries paraded up and down. Officials approached, and once more the password was demanded. Then the list of visitors was produced, and their names checked. After that they entered the palace. A horde of attendants and guards swarmed around them. Then, without any further holdup, they entered the chamber in which the Governor was in the habit of receiving people. It was of a puritanic simplicity, not very large. Even the guests, perhaps fifteen in number, seemed muted, their heads inclined as if in prayer. The Padishah

himself, seemingly of thirty-seven or thirty-eight years old, was of as tall and of as athletic an appearance as were all the angels in Third City. His face was of a perfect handsomeness, the mat, even pallor of the skin and large grey eyes giving him a statuesque beauty. Pullman remembered the opinion of Rigate, that this was some great angel, sent to Third City as a pro-consul. He was dressed in a long, closely-fitting white coat, such as is worn in India.

Pullman observed very closely the face of the Padishah; he noticed that it was extremely mobile. His eyebrows were frequently raised, when his forehead was furrowed up. The expressions that seemed to find their way most often into his face were ones of weariness and pain. He had the air of having put aside things weighing heavily on his mind, to spend a short while with some inconsequential visitors. No smile lighted his face, though once or twice his eyes seemed to be softening.—A very severe young man indeed, Pullman told himself: but not weak, and capable of great sternness. To everybody he said a few words and with Mannock stood talking for some minutes. Mannock had got the thing entirely wrong, and persisted in treating him as a great prince rather than a holy man.

Pullman overheard him inquire of a secretary which was 'Mr Pull-man'. The secretary's powers of identification were miraculous, and, after a moment's consultation with him, the Padishah advanced towards Pullman, and said, 'I am glad to meet you, Mr Pullman. Your fame has reached me here, you know.' Pullman adopted a devout attitude, which a one-time seminarist must find instinctive. He answered, with his eyes lowered, 'Thank you, sir. Please do not speak of my fame, there are very different matters which occupy me here.'

Next the Padishah made inquiries as to whether he had found comfortable quarters in the city. He at once replied that, by good chance, he was for the time staying with Mr Mannock. 'I am so glad', said the Padishah, with



an amiable glance towards Mannoek. 'You should get him to show you the beauties of the city.' Then with an expression of despair, throwing his head up, exclaimed, 'You should get him to take you into the farmlands over there. They are fresh and beautiful.'

After a little more talk the Padishah, with a nervous half-smile which was like a sneer, passed on to other duties. Three men, rather like central European peasants, had entered the chamber, and fallen on their knees near the door. At this moment one of them emitted a long-drawn penetrating scream, which seemed to get shriller as it proceeded. One of the Padishah's secretaries hurried over to him. He had seen a vision, it seemed, in which a demon was standing behind the Padishah with a raised arm about to plunge a knife into his back.

The secretary, an impassible, rather Jewish-looking young man, consoled him. He returned to the Padishah, and said something under his breath, at which his master rolled up his eyes with infinite distress, but did not look towards the still kneeling man.

It is hardly necessary to add that the cocktails contained no alcohol, but were merely pleasant drinks, and, when he and Mannoek withdrew, Pullman cast a glance backward at the Padishah, about whom he experienced the intensest curiosity. He attempted to penetrate the veil of this immortal, who passed his days in isolation, since there was no one good enough, or supernatural enough, for him to communicate with. What dreams had he at night? Perhaps he flew, with great wings, through the golden skies of Heaven; or imagined the arrival of an angelic visitor, to whom he might unburden himself.

The emotion which appeared to sweep across him incessantly, and which obviously originated in wells of unfathomable boredom, to be found somewhere at the centre of his being, produced the facial expression which remained, above all else, in Pullman's memory. He was

a very profoundly bored angelic creature, who, Pullman felt, would have died long ago, if the supernatural had not been incapable of death. Yet with what a heartrending expression he made his last remark of the day to Mannock, or heard of the melodramatic apparition which had appeared to the kneeling visitor. Clearly everything to do with Man filled him with an immense fatigue, a passionate lack of interest. He pitied this winged animal of the Heavens, and thought of the cruelty of God who was to blame in every way for His angel's misery.

How did he lie down at night—was he determined to dream of all that he was denied, of what he was intended for but was odiously prevented from doing? Or was he so exhausted that he sought his bed with thankfulness as a place of utter rest, a blankness without attribute, a void of soundless peace into which to glide. The classic profile, the calm beauty remained in spite of everything. He governed this city as a god would govern a stinking swamp, or as a man would govern a cemetery full of ill-favoured spectres.

When Mannock and Pullman were once more outside, in the small cold square, with no people to be seen except a policeman or two, they hurried towards the underground. Pullman was surprised at not being congratulated upon the special favour shown him by the Padishah. As it was, Mannock appeared absorbed, turning over in his mind the very secret information which he persuaded himself the Padishah had communicated to him.

However, Pullman contributed one or two acceptable remarks, such as that in which he observed 'What a lovely head' was that of the Padishah. To this Mannock replied with a curt nod, and the answer 'Yes, isn't it.' It was plain that Mannock considered it rather offensive to refer to the shape of the Governor's head. Objective beauty. It was like meeting a great general for the first time and saying afterwards what a nice pair of ears he had.

VI PULLMAN ON THIRD CITY

(XII)

MANNOCK WAS SLEEPING a little late, and it was Platon who handed—manifestly impressed by the ornate official envelope—a letter from the office of the Bailiff. Inside was the briefest note, unsigned. ‘We hope that you will, at your earliest convenience, visit the Central Bank, where the clerk in Room 301 is anxious to see you.’

Pullman did not mention to his host the receipt of this official document, but after breakfast he made his way to the bank. The smile of the diminutive official in the small plate-glass office was cordial, as it had been before. ‘I fear, Mr Pullman, I have been guilty of a grave miscalculation. But our information was ridiculously incomplete. I shall remedy this immediately. From today we ask you to accept the honorarium of a thousand dollars a month.’ He handed Pullman an envelope. ‘In this you will find six thousand dollars. There are many expenses which you necessarily incur to start with here. The extra five thousand dollars will of course be inadequate. You will inform us what you need, however, and we will be most happy to accommodate you. I do not know, Mr Pullman, whether you have found what you want in the matter of an apartment. Should you have failed to find, up till now, the kind of place you are looking for, may I make a suggestion? There is a large, extremely up-to-date apartment hotel, with a really superb restaurant. I have enclosed a card with the address of same. If you will allow me to say so, almost all the most intelligent of our clients reside in the Phaniel Hotel. It is not far from the Bailiff’s residence; it is quite easy to find. Once more allow me to

emphasize, this is not a city dominated by those possessed of money; do not hesitate to come and ask for another five, or another ten thousand dollars. We know you would only use it in the highest interest of everybody. You understand, don't you, Mr Pullman?"

It was on that night that Pullman's report on Third City was delivered (or rather administered) to Mannock. This did not happen officially. Mannock was not aware, indeed, that anything of this kind was occurring; and when it was over—when a report had been delivered and he was in possession of it, he was quite unaware that anything especial had come to pass. The whole thing appeared entirely accidental. Certainly he had a long talk with Pullman, but that was all.

That day both had felt increasingly exhausted and depressed, a sort of delayed shock; of an even more extended type than that of which Mannock had heard in the Cadogan club, experienced by many people in the city. There were many cases of hysteria, and hysterical ailments. The hospitals were crammed; the doctors and orderlies, sick themselves, were in no shape to cope with this mass of ailing people. Pullman, after his visit to the bank, had passed much of the day sleeping. About four o'clock he had gone to a small coffee house he had noticed in a side-street on the way to the Universal Café. There he sat, for an hour or two, listening to the gossip of the Germans and Swiss who frequented this place. It was strange how the mental malady and utter degeneration of much of the more or less Anglo-Saxon citizens did not seem to touch this group. Their mouths were not open, their eyes were not full of an idiot vacuity. Their clothes were reasonably modest. Later he watched a game of chess. After that he indulged in some iced coffee, and twisted sticks of pastry, varnished with sugar. Some mechanical music finally drove him out. Back at the apartment, Greek voices competed for the title of Pro-

ducer of Maximum of Human Noise. The Greek of mid-twentieth-century Athens kept the service section of the apartment in an uproar, and blasted away in Platon's bedroom until late into the night. The Hellenic verbosity had been released by the inhuman racket of what Pullman called Black Tuesday. But, lying on his bed, Pullman was grateful for this evidence of life, and of agitated life. He was able to commune with himself, and examine once more what it was best for him to do: for it was clear that he and his fag would be able henceforth to dispense with one another's society, and neither Mannock nor he would wish to dwell together any longer than was necessary. Though Mannock had insisted upon his stopping where he was for the present, he thought it would be better to follow up the bank's suggestion to start with. He felt that he had been rapt into some bursting dream of the Apocalypse of Baruch or of the Secrets of Enoch, he must avoid becoming engulfed, he must secure a foothold, however tenuous.

For dinner Platon brought in a wonderful plate of *smorgassen*. This was so delightful that Pullman's appetite awoke, and he began to make a very hearty meal. When Platon came in to remove a macedoine of fruit, which Pullman had greatly enjoyed, and was about to inquire whether he should give him some coffee, he was considerably startled by Pullman exclaiming 'Quickly', throwing himself into the attitude of a twentieth-century Athenian, and vociferating, 'Ti nostima phrouta!'

Platon's face burst into indecorous affability and he replied at once, 'Ne endaxi ine kala phrouta alla dhen ine opos ta dhika mas tis Evropis.'

No attempt was made on Pullman's part to maintain a conversation in Greek: but having shattered Platon's shell of reserve, he now began with a leading question, in the English language: 'What do you and your Greek friends think about the terrible disturbance the other day?'

Platon leapt into uninhibited speech. 'What do we think? We would like to know what part the human plays in this comedy. My brother says he does not want to live any more.'

'And you?' asked Pullman.

'Not very much. I think we should be told where we are, and what this comedy means. The stupid lies they print in the *Bulletin* must end!'

Guest and cook looked at one another across the table. Then Pullman said harshly, 'Yes. The *Bulletin* is an insult.'

'An insult . . . you are damn right! I ask your pardon. An insult. An insult. I shall snatch it from the newsboy and shall crush it in my hand.' He whirled his clenched hand up, furiously glaring. He hurled an imaginary *Bulletin* upon the floor. 'We are poor miserable half-men, yes. But we are not *idiots!*' His eyes blazed with intelligent indignation.

'Bravo!' shouted Pullman, enthusiastically. So this was what was being said in the kitchen—so much more dignified than the persistent kow-tow to authority in the master's quarters. These men would stand no nonsense from God. If God thought . . .!

'Let us boycott the *Bulletin!*' roared Platon. 'Let us put it in the lavatory!'

Pullman banged the table. 'The water-closet is not the place, but the trash bin!'

The door opened and Mannock entered. He smiled wanly. 'A heated discussion,' he observed. Pullman laughed with a welcoming expansiveness.

Platon said, '*Crème tomate*, sir? There is a *Pointes d'Asperges Omelette* . . .'

Mannock shook his head. 'No dinner, thank you, Platon,' he answered. 'I have had all I want. Give me some black coffee please.' As soon as Platon had left the room, Mannock sat down in front of his guest, with a smile which would not materialize.

‘So you and Platon found something to talk about?’ he remarked.

‘My dear Mannock, if you had heard what we found to talk about, you would have . . . you would have turned in your grave!’

Pullman delivered himself of a ringing tenor laugh.

‘I am glad you manage to amuse yourself in my absence.’

Mannock was annoyed at finding his hellenic scullion bellowing in his *salle-à-manger*, and his guest shouting too. It amounted to an unseemly scene. He had arrived in time to hear Pullman vociferating something about the water-closet. Suppose he had brought Charles home; it would not have looked very well to have surprised the Greek cook and his however distinguished bohemian guest, whom he had picked up in the street with his preposterous fag, excitedly conversing.

Pullman read these thoughts without difficulty. He thought the situation must not be allowed to degenerate. ‘Are you having no dinner, Mannock,’ he inquired. ‘Has your stomach not recovered?’

‘I should be sick if I ate anything,’ Mannock answered, at which Pullman showed solicitude, saying, ‘You were worse, much worse, than I was.’

‘My age,’ Mannock answered. ‘If that happens again I shall not survive, I am sure. Thousands of people died that afternoon.’

Pullman had a gesture of impatience. ‘Do you think they are going on with this nonsense?’

‘I cannot say.’ Mannock had become dignified. Pullman rose abruptly. ‘Why do we not go into the next room, if you are not going to eat? Platon will bring my coffee in there.’

Mannock left the table with him.

‘I must go to bed. I will come in for a minute or two.’

‘It will do you more good to sit up and have a talk.’

‘I don’t think so.’

‘Well, try stimulating the brain.’ Pullman spoke earnestly, with an air of mild compulsion, as if he were speaking to a child or to a junior. ‘There is something you ought to think about a little,’ he asserted. ‘The time has come for you to analyse the landscape. Earthquake and seismic shocks make it desirable to take a look at the mountains by which you are surrounded.’

‘I am not surrounded by mountains,’ Mannock objected.

‘Certainly you are, human hills.’ And now Pullman began an unrelenting exposition. He battered away, without stopping, at his host, laying out before him in rapid succession all the parts of the complex upon which life in this place was built. Mannock did not particularly want to go away; he was glad to have something to do, he found. Yet he actively disagreed with everything the other said; or certainly did so at the beginning. But the didactic voice was determined to hammer the truth into him, and not to stop until he was completely enlightened. ‘Third City is an extremely deceptive place,’ Pullman spat emphatically. ‘There is first the question of *scale*. The physical scale of the inhabitants, the citizens, the humans. They are the size they appear to be. But there are some figures here, less innocent than they look. Take him you like to call the “Padishah”. The Padishah is not what he seems. He is probably an archangel. A martial angel. The hundred men who are associated with him here in ruling the city are undoubtedly angels too: martial like himself, the “troops”, you know, of God.—Now, the height of an angel is variously computed. In the apocryphal books we find angels described as “tall as a cedar”. In Dante’s *Inferno*, Lucifer is a very great giant, down whose torso he and Virgil slide, and up whose legs they swarm. Galileo put the height of angels at one mile and a quarter. And he was a man of science. In any case, angels were very great giants; the inhabitants of Heaven

were Titans; God is a Titan, Lucifer and his rebellious army were all Titans. And, quite certainly, the "Padishah" is a very great warrior Titan. When we were in Fifth Piazza the other day, and witnessed the meeting between the envoy of Satan and the Padishah's representative, they were both enormous monsters, shrunken to human size in order to adapt their stature to the scale of a human city. When their voices began to roar, they began visibly to grow in size, until they stood head and shoulders over everyone else in the Piazza, and were still growing.'

Pullman shook his finger at his listener. 'It is distressing, no doubt, but it is quite necessary to recall that the Padishah is not only (in contrast to us) immortal, but also a winged giant of enormous size. He is accustomed to fly wing to wing with Michael and Gabriel, through the enormous heavens in the sight of Almighty God; of God whose countenance is simply too *hot*, to go no farther, to be gazed upon by the puny eyes of man; he could no more face that living cliff of fire than man could maintain himself near any mass of metal emitting giant sparks; and God's eyes are described as like two great, insupportable, blazing suns.'

'You have a very physical conception of the Deity,' Mannock murmured.

'Is not an angel a highly material animal? And do we not all see an angel when we go to one of the Padishah's parties? One material thing invokes another does it not? I have seen, I have said "how-do-you-do" to an angel. That obliged me to accept . . . with or without piety . . . the incandescent face of God.' Pullman bowed his head as he paused.

'But what am I saying?' he asked, letting himself slump down, to show himself overcome with his futility. 'For is there not another compulsion too? For is it possible to speak, in such a case, of acting *without piety*. You

cannot choose to be impious in an existence dominated by an angelic personality, deriving his authority directly from God.'

'I am glad that is your conclusion,' Mannock interjected.

'But there is another compulsion, too. It is impossible to dispense with piety. There is no such thing as *without piety* in an existence dominated by a visible archangel.'

'No.'

'A demon, or a devil, now, is only a fallen angel—a black angel. After his expulsion from Heaven he grew darker, and he grew coarser and thicker. You will see no great sad-eyed blond, like the Padishah, in Hell. All the inhabitants of Hell are grimy and swarthy.'

'You certainly know a great deal more than I do about the supernatural. But then I am a very ignorant person. I am afraid you must despise me.'

'Let me proceed with my contemporary supernatural history. It appears to me that Hell is astir. I suppose that the position is that . . . for some purpose, and quite a long time ago, a warlike archangel, and under his command a hundred warrior angels, were dispatched to this centre, and established here in a military command. Here they still are. But the world has changed. Earth has changed. And Hell has changed. Even the angel garrison here has changed. So we arrive at last at the gigantic disturbance which shook this city, and deafened everybody on that Tuesday. What was responsible for that? Obviously it was the enormous creatures having a row—the hundred fighting winged giants, of more orthodox angelic colour, who are in charge of this city, and Heaven knows how many darker winged giants, of the fallen and diabolic kind, who do not live so very far away, were in conflict. Did Lucifer himself put in an appearance, with a powerful escort, to try and frighten this outpost of Heaven? Was it the thunder of their voices, the whirling

of their wings, which we heard? And was this only the preface to a subsequent attack of the army of Hell? What is the purpose of Satan? Is he envious of this relatively polite city? Are a hundred or so of God's winged soldiers, however valiant, of any use, if seriously challenged by the host of Hell? Those are first questions which suggest themselves to us.

'Meanwhile there is *us*, small, mortal, defenceless; naturally on the side of the angels, hating naturally the Devil and all his works: our position is a fearful one. If the foregoing is the true account of what happened and what is brewing, our ultimate ability to die is what we have to be most grateful for.'

At this point a break of a few minutes occurred. Pullman discontinued his harangue, but Mannock showed no intention of disturbing his monologue by speech, nor did he even move. In spite of his exhaustion, Mannock was taking in (so to speak *absorbing*) his friend's discourse, but he had not the energy to respond. Pullman drew up quite near to his seemingly entranced audience, and in a low, as it were intimate voice he resumed.

'This is a position in which we have, of course, never been placed before, Mannock. I mean that *men* have never been in such a situation as this; in your life and in my life we were never in a position like this. The supernatural and the immortal overshadows us—we can see it and touch it, we go to a party at its house. It is fantastic. You have to go a long way back for men to have been in such a position, back to the times of the Greek dramatists (and then only upon a stage)—the plays of Euripides and of Aeschylus for instance. With us it is far more dramatic than in Attic tragedy; it is as if actually the King or Queen of the Greek city-state, put upon the stage, were a god or goddess.—You might add to this that it is as though the city-state were only half material . . . We have, Mannock, to use our imagination, such as

it is, and to do our best to realize what we look like to the non-human immortals with whom we come in contact. Instinctively we think of the Padishah as another man. But he is not *another man*. He is only pretending to be that, and is pretending to be six feet high in order to be able to treat with men. Well, this giant, magically reduced to our dimensions, still looks upon us as very tiny people. That is the first thing. Then all immortals must look upon mortals, that is, those condemned to die (and that is what happens to the regular man and we, after all, are merely dead men), the undying must look upon the dying as very silly little creatures. It is just impossible for them to take us seriously. They would find it very hard even to think of us as possessing immortal souls, and destined (in some form not a grandiose one like theirs) to browse around in the pleasant valleys of Heaven—even that would not be easy; and if they could regard us as potential little immortals they would not be very impressed. As to the inhabitants of this city, the angel does not discriminate, as we do, between the moronic majority and the minority possessing more character and intelligence. No. To him we all look as the inhabitants of the Universal Café did to me when I first saw them.'

Pullman drew up even nearer to Mannock.

'Just for one moment attempt to imagine yourself as an archangel like our friend the Padishah. What would it feel like to be that? If you were a young Catholic as I was once, before my English public school, your Thomist instructor would inform you that angels were spiritual intellectual substances. Their purity is equal to that of God, only it is limited of course. But we do not inhabit a world of artifice and even verbal icing. For *me* the archangel nicknamed by you and your friends "Padishah", for me he is an athletic, perfectly ignorant, entirely unphilosophic young man. He is a big baby, who does not know the ABC of life. If he were willing to have

a free conversation (such as you are ready to have with me), he would turn out to be naïf to an unbelievable degree, a mass of little conventional clichés, and with a basic incapacity to think. Our everyday world is full of such cases as the angel. The cowboy, the aristocrat, the great athlete, the ace airman; each in his way is a perfect being, but completely stupid. For instance, the aristocrat means the average, unreal gentleman with faultless and beautiful manners, bred to be noble and beautiful like the swan. A Bolingbroke or a Chesterfield is exceedingly intelligent; they are able to *see through* themselves and so are no longer perfections: their intelligence makes their aristocratism less pure. They become actors, whereas the aristocrat is never theatrical. Anyone in whom you detect *consciousness of self*—capable of objective understanding of himself—shrinks in your estimation. The moment you read in the eyes of a queen that she was *outside* herself (was capable of looking at herself critically) then she would not be a queen. The essence of the queen, or the essence of the swan, is that they possess no critical objective intelligence. They have to be perfectly stupid.’ Pullman took in a deep breath. ‘Now to be a real angel, and, just on the same principle, to be God, you must be entirely stupid. We are compelled deeply to admire such perfections. And it is in no way to take away from the splendid pre-eminence of God—in no way to diminish one’s awe of His might—if one said one did not desire to *be* God, or to be an angel. There is the famous saying of an Indian poet, “I like sugar, but I do not want to *be* sugar. . . .” I do not wish to be a humbug. So I will admit that only what is intelligent really interests me. Perfection repels me: it is (it must be) so colossally stupid. Here—in Third City—we are frail, puny, short-lived, ridiculous, *but* we are superior, preferable to the Immortals with whom we come in contact.’

Pullman drew himself up and stroked his beard as he smiled at the helpless but dimly attentive Mannock.

‘All I would suggest is that we ought to realize the terms on which we live with these *substances*. Some intelligent slave who was on terms of social intercourse with the Emperor Marcus Aurelius should never forget to analyse the personality—with an objective and ruthless acuity—of this “liberal” Emperor . . . That Roman slave would be behaving blamelessly if he preserved, in some secret recess of his mind, an album of untouched photos of all the men and women he knew.

‘I am at present in the position of a slave: I find myself saying quietly and privately, not for quotation: “I esteem *knowing* immeasurably more than I do *being*.”—The slave is always ideally situated, because everything makes it easy for him to arrive at that supreme truth.’

Pullman paused again, lest his audience should become mesmerized by his too incessant voice.

‘Let me compress what I have been saying in the following manner. We—the human kind—here consist of a horde of idiots. In addition to this degraded caricature of man, there are perhaps a few dozen—perhaps a few hundred—men of intelligence. This more intelligent, this more sensitive handful, they are all we need to consider. This knot of real living, thinking, men are all that counts, either as mortal or immortal. There are no intelligent immortals; intelligence is a compensation for our weakness, towered over—and tormented by—a number of huge, stupid immortals, who have no more intelligence than bulldogs, or police constables. We are helpless, powerless mites of intelligence. I hear you saying, “What is the use of all this abstract analysis?” At this point, I will put your doubts at rest. To begin with, there is this deplorable, this senseless city. In your view, the person who is entirely to blame for the rotten condition in which this city finds itself is the

Bailiff. It is he and he alone, who is the guilty party. But when one inquires of you how it has come to pass that this little square-nose is in position to do such terrific harm, by whose authority, in short, he is Bailiff (whatever that may signify)—one receives no answer; that is to be taken for granted. . . . But the answer, as you know as well as I do, is neither more nor less than the character of the Padishah. You analysed for me very competently, up to a point, the wicked Bailiff. Now I have analysed for you (by way of thanks—for one good turn deserves another), I have provided you with an analysis of the Padishah—of *the handsome, stupid Padishah*. For the *wicked Bailiff* could not exist without the *stupid Padishah*. They are complementary figures. One exists, as a corollary of the other. The one follows from the other. The number of knaves who are bred out from one big fool is amazing.

‘Now look here, Mannock: the problem is as simple as engaging a housekeeper or a secretary. The face, the gestures of a man, and what he says of course, are what people have to go by in many walks of life. The personality is a certificate—it is decisive in a promotion to sergeant, to skipper, to overseer, or to manager, and in much higher commands. If you are an explorer you look very hard at the face of an applicant to accompany you to the summit of Everest, or among the mountains of Antarctica.’ He paused for a few moments, keeping his eye fixed upon his involuntary listener. ‘Now, the personality, and especially the face, of the ruler of Third City can really be studied with advantage. For he has authority over the strangest collection of celibate mankind, not easy to manage or to know what to do with. Suppose you were looking at this Padishah for the first time, and suppose it was your task to report upon him, what kind of man would you be looking at? Well, he is a very good man; but is a saint the best man to put in

charge of a complex, turbulent community? Then the Padishah is a very graceful, gentle creature. Lastly, he is very lofty and aloof. The main attributes of this personality are there for you to study; he is not a complex or secretive man.' He paused again for a few moments, and then continued. 'Allow me to give you my reading of your Padishah. Without a moment's hesitation I should say that he is the last person to be given the position of ruler of Third City. The first and most important thing about him, from this point of view, is that he has absolutely no interest in men: what is even more, disgust and contempt are the sensations which come most naturally to him where men are concerned. Personally his boredom is spectacular. Always he seems on the verge of collapsing from boredom. What one has to remember about him is that he is first and foremost a soldier. It will sound to you an absurd comparison, but he seems to me in the position of a big, brave, splendidly reliable, British officer appointed as military Governor to a large island inhabited by a tribe of ugly, stunted, bloodthirsty, corrupt, secretive, thievish "natives". Politicians explain to him that the "natives" are children, who at some distant date will grow up. This appears to the soldier irrelevant, for what, in the end, may happen to these nasty little creatures he finds it impossible to take an interest in.—Now what, in the first instance, was this poor arch-angel entrusted with: for in the early days the population cannot have numbered more than five or ten thousand, whereas now it is a million or more. The idea may have been to give man another chance of salvation, by trying him out under modified conditions. Whatever the idea was, it cannot have been very carefully thought out, or very firmly planned. At some time or other a functionary known as the Bailiff must have had no difficulty in substituting an ingenious plan of his own for the one with which he had been presented. The Padishah would

not be interested enough to examine and to modify, or to reject altogether this substitute plan. He would allow this clever official to interpret the original orders in his own way; for the Padishah himself would be quite at sea in such matters. So the resident angel remains the military authority; some resourceful official, of human or of semi-human origin, provides the city with its intellectual structure, and decides who shall be admitted and who rejected.' He threw his arms out in a deprecating fashion as he began to come to the end of his discourse. 'This is simply a theory; but since there is *no other* theory which takes everything into account, it is perhaps worthwhile to give it a hearing. That is all I have to say, Mannock. It is no more than an hypothesis.' With this Pullman rose, and with a demonic and satyric mask of Rabelaisian mischief, whirled his hand above the prostrate Mannock, delivering a slap on the shoulder of some force. Instead of reviving the sick man, this blow almost liquidated him. Suddenly becoming very pale, Mannock sat staring glassily in front of him. It was some minutes before he showed any signs of life at all, even so much as the movement of an eyelid or of a finger. 'This man is obviously a case of a syphilo-aortic. Considerable incompetence of the valves. I should have guessed that from certain signs.' Pullman realized that he had only just escaped committing manslaughter.

'Your heart is not so good as it should be, is it?' Pullman put his hand down and felt for Mannock's pulse. 'I am not often hearty like that. Must cut it out altogether. I feel very ashamed of myself, Mannock. Take it easy, and then I will help you into the bedroom.'

Mannock looked up gently, and smiled a very sickly smile. 'My ticker's all right, I think. I am just frightfully tired.'

'I know you are, I should not have kept you up, talking your head off. Come, bed is the best place for you.' He

held his arm out, and told the other to get hold of it. 'You can ease yourself up that way.'

Accepting a little help, Mannock got gingerly to his feet. 'I think I will go straight to my bed,' he said. Then he stopped, half sat on the edge of a table, and gave his helper a whimsical smile—to preface what he was going to say by the slightest touch of banter. 'I have only just learned that I have been entertaining an angel un-awares. So you are a great celebrity! I must have been a considerable source of amusement to you, haven't I?'

Pullman's face became expressionless, except for a shade of displeasure. 'Why has he been saying all that? I think I know. If people could only keep their tongues from wagging . . .'

With almost a touch of heartiness, Mannock laughed as he took his arm. 'For you to reproach others with excessive talking . . .! Now I will avail myself of your strong right arm.'

VII THE PHANUEL HOTEL

(XIII)

THE PERIOD OF PULLMAN'S STAY in Habakkuk was drawing to a close. For the next morning Sentoryen lay in wait for him, as usual, in the street outside, and seeing him leave the house unaccompanied, he came up eagerly. He was the bearer of news, and of a proposal. To this Pullman felt he should immediately attend; Sentoryen's news was to the effect that an apartment had been reserved for him by the Bailiff in the Phaniel Hotel, and the latter would be glad if he could find time to visit it. It consisted of a sitting-room—a large one—a bedroom, a shower and bath; meals in the apartment if he so desired, also a private table in the restaurant.

All this had been arranged by the Bailiff in person. Pullman had had in mind a visit to the Tenth Piazza bookshops: but instead he went with Sentoryen to the address he indicated, namely the Phaniel Apartment Hotel; they changed at Tenth Piazza, the next station on the new line being, in fact, the Bailiff's Palace. They alighted, and found themselves in a little wood composed of the heroic plane and the city tree, the modest birch.

'How remarkable,' said Pullman. 'A forest.'

'Not really,' Sentoryen corrected him. 'It is for the benefit of the guests of the Phaniel Hotel, to shroud them from the vulgar. There,' pointing towards the gleam through the trees, 'is the Bailiff's residence.'

'Ah.'

'The name of the station is Phaniel.'

They plunged into the wood, and in a few minutes were in front of a magnificent building, its many

windows hooded in green canvas bonnets, and, down on the entrance floor, a far larger green awning, where the restaurant projected, allowing two lines of tables *al fresco*. There was a light blue-coated, silver-buttoned, blue-capped and silver-braided commissioner, who saluted Sentoryen almost with abasement. Other uniformed persons either smiled or saluted. An elevator took them to the fourth floor. They walked to the end of a corridor, and entered a door numbered 400.

‘A corner apartment is always the best,’ commented Sentoryen. ‘There is a through-draught, and then, out of the windows, one is provided with a more extended outlook.’

Pullman saw, with amazement which he was far from showing, rooms which were not only of *le dernier luxe* but, considered as places to live in, wonderfully attractive. In the very large sitting-room or living-room, which included everything a human being can want, either for sitting or for living, were brand-new copies of two of Pullman’s best-known books. Pullman felt sure that the Bailiff had sent a special messenger to Earth for them. It amused him to visualize the celestial messenger, brightly uniformed in the Bailiff’s livery, entering Bumpuses, or Hatchards. There were, however, hundreds of books, from Lautréamont to Lucretius. (‘The hundred best books,’ was Pullman’s private comment.) On a table in his dressing-room was a photograph of his wife.

Pullman did not utter a word. At length, sinking into the silken billows of a sumptuous settee, he spoke.

‘This is authentic! This, beyond the shadow of a per-adventure, is Heaven.’

Sentoryen laughed with discreet gusto, if one may say that, for he was never indiscreet, but he saw Apartment 400 had triumphed, and that he could announce to the Bailiff that it was to have a new tenant.

‘Tomorrow morning,’ Pullman asserted, ‘I shall go to

Tenth Piazza, and buy myself one of those portmanteaux which command the respect of a commissionaire, and then I shall move in here.'

'Good,' smiled Sentoryen. 'I am sure you will be comfortable.'

'A man who was not comfortable, my dear Sentoryen, in these cushions, upon these springs, would have so un-receptive an anatomy that Heaven, for him, would have nothing to do with animal comfort.'

Pullman made no inquiry regarding the rent. He was offered unlimited money at the bank. It did not matter what it cost—it was in fact a gift. This was Heaven. The Bailiff understood Heaven better than most people here, who insisted on treating this place as a kind of life on Earth. Among the English, the privileges and delights were reserved for those vulgarly honoured upon the earth because their families had been rich a long time.

He was not for the Right wing, he was for the Left wing, there was nothing to influence him in one direction rather than the other. But about one thing there was no question whatever: for a writer of his experimental sort it was to the Left wing that he must look, for sympathy, interest, and patronage. It had been like that in his earthly life: and in his unearthly life it was apparently just the same, only more so. As unattached as the 'lone wolf' man, of the fierce modern 'genius' type, believing not in God, in class, in party, but solely in himself, it was all one to him who it was supporting Pullman; anyone who did so was a good man. He was not, of course, so utterly faithful to the god Pullman as that suggested. Solipsistic he was in principle, but no man is so water-tightly an ego as all that. He had started life a devout Catholic, for instance: and that first self haunted him to some extent. There were other selves, or half-selves, too. He possessed prejudices, distinct from the official Pullman. In the present case, to go no farther, the Bailiff was not

his favourite type of man. He did not like square-nosed men, for instance. An ethnic, ancestral self was responsible for that. But that *merely* ethnic self was not indulged. The interests of a literary god, James Pullman by name, were paramount. And most of his *real* prejudices were alien to all the philosophic attitudes of the Bailiff. Nevertheless, all his career-life he had been supported by persons identical with the Bailiff, and he had always lived with, been buzzed around and been rubbed against by, ideas which were the Bailiff's ideas (and many of them were *his own*, contradicting mere prejudice); so his present supernatural life was preordained. It was the literary god, Pullman, whose sacred text had been placed by the Bailiff in the shelves of the sitting-room of Apartment 400, who was established as most honoured guest in the Bailiff's private hotel—built by the Bailiff next door to his palace, owned and directed by him. And, finally, Pullman claimed full independence: would be quite capable of criticizing this all-powerful magistrate, and would take sides with him under no circumstances. His tenancy of 400 would in no way change that. When, a short while before, he was considering the necessity of escape from Third City, what first suggested itself to him was to build himself up as a saint. This place might still be serviceable as a testing-out place for Heaven. Indeed, that might be the only avenue of escape. This was in no way inconsistent, the literary god might have to be forgotten—and when he had entered the city with Satters it was not with any idea of surviving in that capacity, of anyone's recalling the literary god. He went back to his schooldays, in a sense, in the company of his fag.

Friday, the day of his installation in the Phanuel Apartment Hotel, was spent very quietly. Sentoryen was in attendance. Some of the windows of the hotel on the opposite side to No. 400 had a view of the barracks at the back of the Bailiff's palace. A thousand men were gar-

risoned there. There were extensive parade grounds, adequate, in fact, to parade and to exercise the entire garrison. At the rear of this were the living quarters of the men. There was a huge quadrangle, and the buildings could easily accommodate five or six thousand troops. There must have been, in embryo, a force of this number; for every evening volunteers were being drilled, and once a month these men were paraded, and at week-ends there were route-marches, and all the time small batches of them were marched to the Camp, in appropriate uniform, either as haiduks or as gladiators. The explanation of the training of so great a number of men was the creation of a force to be used as a reserve or as replacements.

Sentoryen's apartment was one of those from which this military background of the Bailiff's official life might be observed. At Sentoryen's suggestion Pullman came up to his apartment, and watched the incessant exercising of troops not on duty at the Camp. In the quadrangle, artillery of small calibre appeared, and groups of men received instruction.

Incidentally the secretary pointed out, with a smile, the severity of his small apartment. 'No soft pillows for me!' he commented.

That evening Pullman had dinner in his sitting-room. He took down a copy of the *Odyssey*. 'What more appropriate for the supernatural wanderer?' In the psychological region of Calypso he sank into the pneumatic wonders of his bed; soon, before he had extinguished his light, he had fallen asleep, he was dreaming of treacherous magicians, of smoke, and of unknown skies.

The following morning at about twelve o'clock Pullman was in his room. The house telephone rang. It was the office of the hotel; the Bailiff wished to know, the voice asked, if Mr Pullman would lunch with him?

Pullman hesitated for a moment, then he said that he would be delighted to have lunch with the Bailiff.

The voice thereupon informed him that the Bailiff would be in the restaurant of the hotel at one o'clock.

Pullman put down the silver horn into which he had been speaking, and returned to the armchair, frowning heavily. He began to examine his position. He was, he said to himself, like a canary, in a beautifully upholstered cage. At one o'clock he must show up in parade order, and be put through his paces, he must sing cheep-cheep for his master. How soon would his master tire of him? What would happen then? Apartment No. 400 would be wanted for somebody else. He would be moved into a far less resplendent apartment. At length, he might find himself in an austere little suite like Sentoryen's. He would meet the Bailiff somewhere, and the old square nose, slyly smiling, would exclaim, 'Ah, Pullman, I must apologize for having put you in such uncomfortable living quarters. But No. 400, I realized afterwards, was much too Ritzzy for you. For a man of severity of mind, it was quite absurdly unsuitable!' Then his treatment by the bank would change deeply. He would be back at his original modest allowance. How vile it was to be so utterly at the mercy of a capricious autocrat of this type. Ought he not just now to have declined the honour, when the invitation to lunch was telephoned up? *He* should be the first to break the honeymoon spell. He must not jump through the hoops, one after the other, and allow himself to be made a sport of.—How Mannock's lot was to be envied! It was of course true that Mannock would never have been of any interest to the Bailiff. But how awkward a privilege was this of his.

At one o'clock he went down to lunch, his mind made up to tolerate no oily cozenage. The 'great man', entrapped by his conceit into unwariness, into being deluded into the belief that he was in Heaven—that was a situation that he must beware of. There must be no blind-man's-buff, with himself as the blindfolded one.

But the Bailiff seemed quite aware of the kind of suspicious that his extreme benevolence might awaken. He was determined, it seemed, to forestall anything of this kind. One thing he said, for instance, was that Pullman was to look upon No. 400 as his own, so long as he wanted to keep it. The hotel would let it to him for a period of five years. Again, he said that Pullman must not feel himself under any obligation. He would be presented with quite a stiff bill at the end of the month. He, the Bailiff, he assured him, was an excellent business man!

In the restaurant the diners enjoyed the utmost privacy, for this was not a terrace table: Pullman and the Bailiff sat facing the vast window, shut in at their back by a high screen rather more than semi-circular. All around them were similar screened diners. Murmurs and laughter could be heard, but not conversations. They had a carafe of excellent wine, a bird, something like a pheasant, a *Coupe Phanael*, iced of course.

The overtures of the Bailiff were at first met with an impassible calm on Pullman's part, which hid an implacable refusal to be deceived. When his patron mentioned the five-years lease of No. 400, for instance, in his surly interior Pullman snarled. 'What is the use, old fox, if the money offered by the bank is not forthcoming (the bank having received a note from the Bailiff that he had been misinformed, and that I was very small beer after all).' Evidence was forthcoming that the Bailiff had read several of his books with understanding, that he valued literature very highly, and that he was discriminating; there was for the Bailiff something about Pullman's utterances which had the authentic stamp of *je ne sais quoi*—all this got beneath the guard of the literary god Pullman. The Bailiff detected a softening light in his guest's eye: and he thought the better of the literary god, for a crabbed little god impervious to his unsurpassed skilfulness was, in the end, not of much use to him. They

parted on very good terms, all the more so because a few glasses of *fine* were produced.

Shortly after Pullman had returned to his apartment, something very startling occurred. He was sitting in his unbelievably comfortable armchair, near one of the front windows, and a tuneful bird was disseminating optimism in one of the trees of the wood outside his window, when, with an awful suddenness, it became night. Pullman sprang up and switched on the electric light. With an unexpected normality the electric bulbs dispelled the blackness. He returned to his chair, but as he sat down the light went out. Simultaneously there was a frantic knocking and ringing at his apartment door.

He sprang up again, passed quickly into his miniature hall, and flung the door open. It was Sentoryen, of course; he thrust a small bottle into Pullman's hand. He said all in one breath, 'Sickening isn't it? Here, take one of the tablets in the bottle, they help the body resist the shocks—lie down at once—at once!' Sentoryen was closing the door as he was speaking; the door closed, Pullman swallowed a pill, and stepped quickly back into the sitting-room, closing the inner door behind him. He took a step in the direction of the settee, and, with great violence, he was hurled to the floor, his nose embedded in the nap of the carpet.

The bottle he had been holding in his hand whizzed away, and, in the total blackness of the room, it might as well have flown out of the window. He lay where he was, half-stunned. There was a series of deafening reports—like blows upon a gigantic gong, accompanied by explosions of light similar to a photographer's flash bomb, and then a crack so loud that Pullman could hear no more for some time. For about five minutes he did not move, and then he began crawling towards the settee, dazed but still conscious.

As, painfully, he had reached a point half-way to his

destination, he looked up and saw in the sky a fiery cross. It exactly bisected one of the large panes of the window. It was a blood-red, and quivered upon the blue-black of the sky. He worked himself round sideways to the settee; then, with an immense effort, he pulled himself up, perspiring and panting, and just managed to raise first one leg, then the other, upon the edge of the new and resistant upholstery. He lay motionless for a short while, recovering from the great effort he had made, then a shock, as elemental as that of an earthquake, picked him up and hurled him through the air. His face struck the sharp edge of a chest, and he rolled over limp and unconscious.

It was almost an hour before he opened his eyes. He blinked, for it was daylight again. A bugle sounded, and more faintly a bugle answered some distance away. The Bailiff's militia, of course. He became aware of the blood on his face, the blow against the sharp edge of the chest had left an open wound above his left eye; the socket had received some of the hæmorrhage, which had dried.

Feeling sick and dejected, as his dim mind groped around to adjust itself to the new spell of daylight, which would last for a period long or short (no one could say if they would have a breather of one month, or of one day, or of one hour), he allowed his black thoughts to chase one another, around the same vacant centre. But then he felt a little firmer. Hope, that proverbial liar, made its disreputable appearance. The light however continued. Hope, with less shame, began to make itself at home. He rolled over, and there was no sign of an injury so far.

As a result of the pill he had swallowed, no doubt, he was able to move his arms and legs; slowly, but still he could move them. To rise to his feet was not an easy matter. Once he was up, he was obliged to support

himself upon the furniture, and his progress was like that of a post-operational case. First he went to the telephone. He was informed that the lines were all functioning again. Whether Mr Sentoryen was well enough to do so or not, Pullman sleepily observed, he, of course, did not know; but if he was in circulation, he would be glad if he would come and see him. The office answered briskly, 'Very well, Mr Pullman.' He then took up his position upon a chair near the entrance and waited. Hardly had he lowered himself into the chair when the door-bell rang. Very painfully he made his way to admit his amanuensis. Sentoryen looked a little pale; he had called twice, he said, but had received no answer. He was about to ask the office to have the door opened.

'What is that?' He pointed to the cut above Pullman's eye, which had started bleeding again.

Pullman explained; he asked if a band-aid could be secured, and 'is there penicillin in Heaven . . . or should I say Hell?'

And then James Pullman announced that he was going to bed. He had been tossed about a bit, and thought he would have a spell in the pneumatic paradise in the next room.

When asked how *he* had fared, Sentoryen shrugged his shoulders. 'Oh me. Somewhat like you, I fell out of bed. But I did not fall on my head . . . I am all right. But how much of this I can take I do not know.'

'The same thought has visited me,' Pullman told him, 'I mean as regards myself. I suppose I could put up with it once a week. But if it occurred once a day . . .!'

'Exactly.'

'I shall soon have to wear a padded jacket, and put on a crash helmet when it starts.' Pullman rose and tottered towards the bedroom.

'Are you able to undress yourself?' his attendant inquired.

But Pullman answered that he felt equal to that, and Sentoryen left to go to the nearest chemist.

When he was in bed, Pullman stared at the ceiling. Was this going on all the time? What would be the end of it? The exquisitely soft bed had lost its attractiveness. He would have preferred a less expensive bed. The spongy and plush apartment was becoming a mockery, if . . . he writhed dismally in his celestial make-believe. What would happen before long was that he would be finally destroyed in his sumptuous living quarters. Each inordinately supple spring and piece of divine upholstery was fundamentally sinister.

(XIV)

PULLMAN HAD TO CONFESS as he slowly mounted the stairs at No. 55 Habakkuk, on Monday morning, that that kind of house was much to be preferred to the newly-equipped Phanuel Hotel—stinking of new money, of wads of welfare state banknotes, and nothing human about it. Platon looked furious, and Mannock was in bed. Pullman entered the bedroom woefully, and Mannock looked at him with a different kind of woefulness.

‘Well, I do not have to ask you why you are in bed. All day yesterday I was in bed. This morning I refused to stop there any more—I am aching all over, but I can see that this is what we shall have to expect all the time now, so . . .’

‘It is all very well for you, but you were allotted an age better able to withstand shock than the age I was given. I ache in every bone.’

Pullman sat down laughing. ‘If you were inside my skin you would not feel so youthful and resistant, in spite of the fact that I am three years on the right side of forty. The day before yesterday I was flung down twice with great violence. The second time I was gashed here,’ he pointed above his eye.

Mannock had an expression of shocked alarm, (one with which Pullman was by this time quite familiar); this was no doubt a precious legacy from his father the Bishop, guaranteed to put a face in mourning with a magnificent promptitude. To belong to a great clerical family—for Mannock’s great-grandfather had been an Archbishop of Canterbury—certainly supplied one with a face which would be overworked during an epidemic.

‘I am sorry. Are you badly hurt?’ the face asked, with a hushed organ-note of grave commiseration.

Pullman liked everything about this English gentleman, on this particular morning.

‘Did *you* have a bad time, Mannock? But of course you did!’ He took a small bottle out of his pocket and handed it to him. ‘Take one of these the moment the uproar begins. It really does help. I cannot say what they are, but I took one, and it acted—did me good.’

Mannock was as apt at depicting gratitude as he was at making grief visible. ‘I say, it is *awfully* kind of you! I am glad to have these, Pulley—do you mind if I call you Pulley? I am so used to hearing you called that. But you have some yourself, haven’t you?’

‘They come from the Bailiff . . . naturally! I shall send for another bottle as soon as I get back.’

‘If you are *sure* . . .’ Mannock’s face gave a good imitation of a man who is a martyr to his imagination—at a moment, say, when a dear friend is in acute danger (in battle, or upon the operating table). Mannock was, however, performing much more than usual, and his visitor felt that it must have something to do with reports of the great deference shown him by the Bailiff. But Pullman could never have believed that he would regret the days when he and Satters were guests in this house, as now he was doing, nor how jolly it was to be called ‘Pulley’.

‘That there are no private telephones here is the last straw!’ he exclaimed. It was arranged that Mannock should come to lunch on the next day, Tuesday—if he felt well enough. Still feeling a little groggy himself, Pullman decided to go to Tenth Piazza. This was his second attempt within a week to visit the Piazza, on the last occasion having been deflected by Sentoryen.

As he stepped out into the street, automatically he looked around for Sentoryen, so much did he associate, in his mind, leaving this house with being met by that tireless young man. Indeed, he felt that something was

missing. And then the usual denizens of hereabouts were at their gloomiest that morning, and the underground journey was funereal.

Upon the universal pasty face, with staring Pagliaccio-ish eyes, and mouth open to simulate the delightful privileged vacuity of youth, upon this face, as he saw masses of it in the underground carriages, a new look was being painted, namely a look of suppressed fright and authentic pathos. If you clapped your hand behind them they would almost jump out of their skin. If you touched them on the sleeve, they would shrink from you with a look of terror; if you sat in front of them in an underground carriage with hair all over your chin and upper lip, they would look at you with great uneasiness as if they wondered whether you were a man, and, if not, whether you were dangerous. No longer were they to be seen sporting with one another, *à la* Youth. They scarcely spoke at all.

Pullman winked at one of them, while sitting immediately in front of him, their knees almost touching. This shrivelled exponent of Youth became immobile, and fixed his fearful and attentive gaze upon the eye of the Bearded One. When nothing further happened he relaxed. And then he winked himself (to himself), again and again. Pullman supposed he was testing his own ability to wink his eye—although this explanation did not satisfy him.

When Pullman reached Tenth Piazza, he found scarcely any promenaders, and those who were there scuttled miserably along. Few shops were open, and he could not even find the position of the bookseller he had intended to visit. It was a very hot day, and this lent a strange emphasis to the deserted arcades and the few frightened habitués, hurrying away from their dereliction—faster and faster, in horror that they were the only people there.

He returned to the underground feeling very de-

pressed. There was no reason for him to feel any different from the cosmetically-masked Youth dreamers—terrified but still dreaming. He went immediately into the restaurant when he reached the Phaniel Hotel. The Menu was more luxurious than ever. The meat items were in French, *Boeuf à la Mode d'Autrefois*, or *Cottelctte des Neiges d'Antan*. Among the drinks a feature was the mysterious *Consommation Rouge en Surprise*. There was a *Consommation Blanche* also. The word *fine* occurred near the bottom of the list. Pullman consumed a 'Red', and two *finés*. As he was finishing his second *fine*, a very dark man who was passing his table stopped and smiled. Much more expansive than he had felt upon entering the restaurant, Pullman smiled back. 'Do you ride the Centaur?' the man asked him softly.

'Ought I to do that?' Pullman queried.

'There is no better mount.' The man passed behind a screen.

Pullman asked for a cigar, and soon was sitting mellowing in the delectation of a Corona. Before he left the table he bought a packet of twenty cigarettes. He mounted to his apartment, feeling that the thing to do was to live for the day—and to drink a carafe or two of red wine for lunch and for dinner; and he wondered whether there was any bootleg *Weib* to be had in Third City, as well.

He had not been more than a minute or two in No. 400, which looked a great deal pleasanter than the last time he saw it, when Sentoryen presented himself. That young man was not long in discovering that Pullman was unlike his usual self. Indeed, he recognized the effects of *Consommation Rouge*.

Pullman was seated in a corner of the settee. Sentoryen accommodated himself at the opposite end (which Pullman regarded as an unaccustomed freshness).

‘I want you to put me right about something,’ Sentoryen said with an earnest expression, as if he were about to inquire as to the specific weight of the moon, or something extremely remote, and distinctly cold, of that sort.

‘I am very much at your service, O Sentoryen,’ Pullman said, containing his effervescence.

‘It involves your lending me your hand, for a . . . oh, a minute, no more.’

Pullman intoned, ‘Here is my hand, for better or worse,’ but looking with a rather bleary surliness at the man who had asked for his hand.

Laughing, Sentoryen gently took possession of Pullman’s hand, who surrendered it not with bad grace, but rather with no grace at all.

It was with the ceremony of a conjurer that the hand was conducted to its objective, namely, a portion of the torso of the young amanuensis. ‘Now,’ he enjoined, ‘lie quite still, and keep your eyes closed; for just two or three minutes. Yes, that’s lovely.’ He dragged up his shirt at the side, until a considerable area of golden, almost Samoan flesh was visible.

‘For Pete’s sake, what are you doing with my hand,’ Pullman cried, and the hand began to return to its master.

Not attempting to retain the hand—even giving it a little push, Sentoryen sang, ‘Okay, your hand has played its part. Now, had you not known I was a man, but thought I was a girl, would you have had the same sensations as if you had been caressing a woman? Was it soft, was it warm? Was it . . .?’

‘Anything you like,’ Pullman interrupted gruffly. ‘What is it you want me to tell you?’ His face was quite non-committal, but the sort of shadow it seemed to be in was ominous.

‘You must feel uncomfortable in this place without a

woman. Don't you?' Sentoryen did not look seductive when he said this, but coldly matter-of-fact.

'I have not been here long, you forget. The time may come, the time may come.'

'You are very detached, aren't you? I have been here a long, long time, and I confess . . . I have those feelings. I also experience love . . . oh yes, far more truly than I could in the generally accepted way.' Pullman noticed that the other's voice was becoming slightly thick and guttural. 'My master . . . how ingenious, how delightful it would be if we found ourselves in bed together. I would pretend I am a little girl.'

Attempting to rid himself of the effects of *Consummation Rouge*, Pullman glared drearily at Sentoryen, 'My imagination is defective,' he replied. 'It would be no use trying to believe that you were a glamorous Screen star. Apart from the question of certain outstanding anatomical details, you have not the necessary lovely husky voice.'

The young man sprang up and began pacing up and down.

'Very well, very well. You will go to seed sexually! Just because I have not got . . . oh fou-ee! . . . a great apparatus teeming with germs, chock full of dangers . . . of which a somewhat milder form of leprosy is not the worst—just because I have not got the famous female stink, you scorn my proposal!' He flung himself into a bandy-legged attitude, with a transformation of his face into the mask of a repulsive zany, by developing a sparkling squint and pouting his lips out in an obscene smile—snatching a cyclamen from a vase within easy reach, and sticking it in his thick hair, the stalk finding a foothold behind his ear, acquired the flowery symbol of the female.

'Like that, would you love . . . me more!' he cried.

Pullman continued to stare at this performance—hostilely however.

‘Can you find nothing disgusting to do,’ he jeered, ‘to provide yourself with the authentic female whiff?’

‘Very well, Mr Pullman! To pay you out for having got caught in the venustic mousetrap, how many illegitimate brats of yours trot up and down the cities of the earth, advertising their tenth-rate apology for talent by plastering it with your name (“I am a bastard of the great Pullman’s, oh yes, oh yes!”). That is something that is worse than the pox.’

‘Are you an offspring of mine, you glib-tongued tick?’

Pullman shaded his eyes with his hand, as if seeking to identify an heir-apparent.

But Sentoryen turned his back, raised his jacket and faced Pullman with his bottom.

‘My middle-face, Mr Pullman. Do you see a likeness *there?*’ He worked his juffs up and down. Then he turned round and again harangued his bearded audience of one.

‘Identification is extremely difficult—— What are women but street-corner photographers? These always have their cameras with them in their dirty little pockets. “Your photograph, sir, in three or four minutes,” or “Come back again in nine months—in only nine months—and your photograph will be alive and kicking!”—And they guarantee “A LIVING LIKENESS!” But it never looks like you, Mr Pullman: pay what you may—pay a salary for life to an expensive woman—and you will not get a replica of yourself. More than half the time the so-called facsimile of you is, in fact, like the woman. What would you say if you had allowed a photographer to snap you and he presented you with a photograph of *himself?*’

‘The arguments to which the unsuccessful pathic resorts!’ He had heard all this before. Pullman had lost all the factitious vivacity with which he had entered the

apartment. He turned a sour, glum eye upon his would-be bedfellow. 'Whose phiz is *yours*, O Centaur? What moronic old grease-pot palmed you off as a real man upon some sucker from Asia Minor?'

Sentoryen came over to the settee and held out his hand with a wry smile. 'Soon we shall be becoming discourteous I see. I will leave you, Mr Pullman. But do not forget, I am a good clean man; so when you hunger for some little piece of barley-sugar with short legs and a big head, as you hunger and thirst for this hot little pin-cushion probably teeming with venereal bacilli . . . remember Sentoryen loves you.'

For the first time Pullman croaked out a laugh. 'I might have known that love would come into it somewhere—in connection with the unsavoury mouse-trap of the Man! But I will remember that love—the Centaur's love!—when I yearn for a bit of pneumatic humanity to complete the delights of the extremely pneumatic bed!'

'You are a very cruel person.'

Pullman rose from the settee, and shook himself. 'I know,' he said, 'I know. When I was in the restaurant just now, a man asked me, "Do you ride the Centaur?" I understand that question, now. Are you in love with everyone in this hotel? In English schools I remember, in the Masters' Houses, there were things known as "House tarts". Are you a "Hotel tart"?''

Sentoryen, who was entering the small hallway, looked over his shoulder, and put out his tongue.

Pullman called out, 'Sentoryen, are you still my attendant?'

'I am your forever devoted Sentoryen. I wait on you like a Slave of the Lamp.'

'Will you bring another of those bottles, for use during storms?'

'Okay, Mr Pullman. I will bring one up immediately.'

The door closed, and Pullman returned to the settee.

He drew out the cigarettes bought in the restaurant. It could not be called *thinking*: Pullman carried on privately the sort of tit for tat which had been occurring publicly *à deux*.

So he *thought* (as they loosely say) that it would be no use whatever asking the pansy Centaur to guide him to the *blind pig* where women are bootlegged: obviously in a megalopolis whose whisky is illegally peddled, women were to be found, too—at an absurd price. Did he ride a Centaur! So that was what he was expected to do. (It would be like self-abuse.) What a comedy, the next time the Bailiff and Sentoryen met. One can hear the Centaur saying, ‘He won’t ride. That is final.’ And the potentate, very displeased, scolding his favourite pansy-agent. ‘You must be losing your charm *and* your intellect. I will send Besseron instead of you.’ One can hear the scornful laugh of the Centaur. ‘That would be funny! Bess has a square nose to start with. You have no idea what the difficulties are with a dirty Irishman, whose imagination has been on fire since his schooldays with Victorian drawers and heavily laced chemises—all of the mystery of Sex at its most scented and inaccessible. The big bottom and the bosomy front—that has held the field for so long, there is nothing to be done. The segregation of the sexes is the worst enemy of the So.’ And the Bailiff snuffles and snorts, ‘That is all very well, but you broke down Tanner, who had been born among crinolines.—You’re losing your skill—or else you are beginning to smell.’—The Centaur was so angry he could have let loose a home truth or two, but all he said was, ‘No, *I* do not smell—not the faintest trace, even when I’m hot and perspire. But Bess, now! he stinks out an entire room.’—‘That’s a lie,’ says the Bailiff, ‘and you know it. Centaur, listen to me! I will leave you with Pull. If you don’t sleep with him within a month, I am through with you. I don’t mind *how* you do it, but your naked

body must be against his, and he must learn to *like* it. It's up to you.'

Poor old Centaur, his job is as good as lost. I think I shall refuse to allow him to serve me any more.

At about that point the Centaur returned with the bottle: Pullman looked stern, 'Sentoryen, I don't want to see you any more. I am allergic to homosexuals. All I will do is not to denounce you. But you must not come here again.'

Sentoryen stood at the door, dismayed. 'Mr Pullman, I shall lose my job. It is very hard, terribly hard to dismiss me like that. I made a bad mistake. Please give me another chance, Mr Pullman. You can absolutely depend that that subject will never be mentioned again.'

'I am sorry. I do not want you around. You will be of use to somebody else. For me you are simply a bad smell. Why should I put up with that!'

Pullman slammed the door in his face. He was not the man to be upset, in the conventional way, of course, by such an occurrence. He also could not help being amused by the antics of the pansy. Yet Pullman was distressed as well as annoyed. Everything that occurred caused him to value less the very handsome apartment, the exceptionally fine restaurant, where wine and cigars could be obtained (and nowhere else in this city perhaps). For obviously the meaning of Sentoryen was that the Bailiff assumed that, as a protégé of his, you were a Sodomite, or ready to be initiated as an inmate of Sodom. That was elementary, he took unnatural love for granted. The rapture and roses of vice was *de rigueur*: but the Marquis de Sade provided the kind of vice which provoked the raptures. 'If I kick a man out for "making proposals" of the most normal kind, Oh! I am not "progressive". I shall find myself shown the door—or at least be reproved for my bourgeois tastes. I can see the Bailiff twitting me, "I am *sorry*, Mr Pullman, that we cannot find you a

tea-rose, some lollypop, some Gretchen of the Rhineland, or some blushing Victorian damsel." And what can I say? "I want somewhere to live in this outlandish city, that is all. I do not want Lord Alfred Douglas thrown in!" No, it would not do to answer in that way.—I have turned up my nose at one of the delicacies *de la maison*, and I suppose I have not many more days to live in the lap of luxury. I had better look out for another apartment.'

When, next day, Mannock came to lunch, and filled the restaurant with reactionary conversation, high-hatted the waiters, and described the food as 'dago food' and 'pretentiously rich' in their hearing (for the wine flushed him and led him into utterance of a provocative nature, for which he apologized elaborately afterwards), Pullman expected twenty-four hours notice. Instead of that, the next morning, Wednesday, there was a note from the Bailiff saying how sorry he was to learn of the inexcusable behaviour of the young man whom he had entrusted with the business of looking after him, but that a new sort of batman would present himself that morning. He added that, however fantastic Sentoryen's behaviour might seem to Pullman, that young man was sincerely and passionately in love with him. However much he (the Bailiff) discouraged it, in a city in which there were no women, this type of 'cock-eyed' love could not be rooted out, and shamefully flourished. The fault was that of the Padishah, who refused to allow women in the city, and kept them in a pen *incommunicado*. Sentoryen had served, to start with, as a haiduk officer and he suspected that those young men, like the Spartans, all indulged in sentimental attachments for one another. Sentoryen had certainly never met anyone like him before: he had been dazzled in the course of his attendance upon so extraordinary an intellect as that of Pullman. He hoped that Pullman would overlook this unfortunate scene, and he felt quite sure that he would find Bates,

his new attendant, a serious man, as well as very willing. He was one of his force of so-called gladiators. Bates was being seconded to his service.

When Bates arrived, it was all Pullman could do not to burst out laughing. He was a stocky young man who was phenomenally ugly. His ferocious jaw and glaring eyes would not fail to terrify the enemies of the Bailiff. He was even more alarming when he smiled. However, he did everything swiftly and competently.

The Bailiff decidedly had wit, if in all other respects he was an old reprobate. He had no doubt walked round his camp and picked out the ugliest man. Ha ha ha! Whatever Bates might be, he did not look like a pansy.

Pullman indited the following note, in answer to the Bailiff.

‘Your Excellency. Your note was a model of the most delicate courtesy. But I hope my feelings have been a little misunderstood. The city does not have to be womanless for Sodomy to flourish. One of my best friends on earth was a Sod. But gratifying as it is to be loved, it is embarrassing. When I was young, a housemaid was hopelessly in love with me, without any familiarity on my side, and my parents were obliged to dismiss the poor girl. It was the same situation apparently in the case of Sentoryen. I very much regret the whole business.’

So, on the surface, all was well. There was not the slightest breath of discord between the Magistrate and himself. But the insanitary layer just beneath the surface had been uncovered rather violently, and the surface would never look the same again. What other surprises were in store for him in this establishment he could not guess, but it was, for him, a very fragile environment.

VIII THE POLICE PRESIDENT

(XV)

THAT MASTERFUL CREATURE, of the Stanley and the Livingstone type, who was Setebos to Caliban, who had secured an entrance to this city in the adventurous style of the man of heroic cast, had been leading the urban life in which these glorious qualities had been, of necessity, folded up and laid aside, like the heroic garments called for by actors taking great parts. But the superficial urbanity of this life was a thing of the past, and accordingly the hero awoke, and he surveyed the days which lay before him with the eye of the man of action. For he had a plan. He, and all the other inmates of this Third City might be destroyed at any moment; on the other hand they might not. He was not going to sit down, or lie and await the *coup de grâce*. He would proceed with his life regardless of these threats. If he wandered around, among this huge collection of men-without-women, he might come upon something which it was worth dying and rising again from the dead to see. It was worth essaying. At once he set out, after explaining to Bates what was expected of him. Fifth Piazza was his starting point. He circled around this vast oblong, moving in and out until he reached the side looking towards Tenth Piazza, for there had been no Mercator here; although the sun rose and set as it did upon the earth, where it rose was not the east and where it set was not the west. If you used such expressions as east and west no one knew what you were talking about. All one could do was to use the place of one's residence as a conventional centre—or the nearest landmark, such as

Tenth Piazza. This was no more arbitrary than using Jesus Christ as a conventional division, before which time, two-dimensionally, takes its historic road backwards, and after which it gloriously progresses up to the present moment. If you asked a man where he lived, he would say 'Near the Yenery', 'Near the First Circle', 'Off Tenth Avenue', or 'Towards the farmlands'.

There was a handsome arterial road, several miles in length, he calculated, connecting Fifth Piazza and Tenth Piazza. Entering a street leading off this, not a hundred yards from the Piazza, he was almost immediately halted by the display in a photographer's window. A life-size photograph of two naked men was the main exhibit. He examined this carefully. In both cases fig leaves occurred, where this screening vegetation is customarily found. A police requirement, Pullman surmised. But there were no restrictions as regards the posing of the couple. And the expressiveness of the human face attracted no censorship, and full advantage was taken of this fact.

Everything was done to advertise the conjugal relationship of this pair, which played the part of the male, and which the female: the mental attitude towards sexual indulgence of each of these people respectively. Actually they each seemed to regard it as a dirty joke, no more. Both were lean; the weaker vessel (the softer nature) was almost emaciated. But in both cases the muscular mouths were pursed into a grimace of frolic, obscene insinuation. They looked into each other's eyes as the discoverers of a salacious technique. In this small district he saw many life-size nude camera studies of an *Ehepaar* of this kind, and they varied greatly. Some were a pair of brooding sad-eyed owls, some a solemn "intellectual" couple, and, in such cases, it was clearly a union of minds, in which the Sodomy was incidental, the nude display a mere convention, in which no obscenity was recognized, and the physical factor was secondary. One

pair orthodoxly put on view their nudities, but, for the rest, exhibited no emotions, or any consciousness that clothes were not there. It seemed to follow from this that the body signified nothing to them; there were of course many others who were absurdly obscene.

After making the discovery of the large nude group—and there were smaller groups of other couples, but in every case undressed—Pullman began the penetration of this district evidently devoted to the pervert. Moving away from the main road for a distance of three or four blocks, he reached a small circus, or circle, full of shops. On the way he encountered some of the living originals of the life-size photographers' groups. They were grey flannel-suited, with flowing Byron collars, horticultural lapels, a heavy swaying of the hips, and great sweeping gestures of the arm in order to pat the back of the hair, or to maintain a silk sleeve handkerchief in place.

St Anne's Circus had not many promenaders or shoppers; like Tenth Piazza, Pullman supposed, it was deserted, or almost so. Some strolled in pairs, sometimes embracing one another, and one pair were violently quarrelling. Some were alone, drifting up to the shop windows, distractedly quizzing a geometric dressing-gown, in saffron and veridian. One was weeping in front of a photographer's. One of the young men he passed stopped for a moment, and said to Pullman, pointing to the figure in front of the photographer's window, 'That poor young man! His boy died in the "Blitz", and there they are together.—In that great big photograph in the middle of the window. He has been there all day.'

Half the shops were shuttered, some had gummed paper stuck on the glass, and some had no glass at all. He noticed that more than half the windows were glassless. It was not the time to visit such a place as this.—A most interesting society of perverts, but *en grand deuil*.

It was *not* the time for the bearded stranger to come prowling around, note-book in pocket; but he did draw out the scribbling pad he always took with him, and jotted down a few observations regarding the disconsolate pansy, weeping in front of the enormous photograph—a piece of gigantic intimacy, even the mole above the left nipple was there, and many other little things which the poor weeping pervert knew so well. Resolving a return to this chaste little circle if things ever got better, Pullman hastened away and took the underground back to his starting point, the little wood of Phanuel, and the hotel he had grown to dislike. Having lunched with restraint, he went across to the Bailiff's palace, and was at once shown into a small room where the great Magistrate was finishing his midday meal—which he may or may not have described as a lunch.

‘Come in, come in, my dear young man, and what is it so urgent as to cause you to give me the great pleasure of your company?’ He called to one of the two white-jacketed boys. ‘A cup of coffee for Mr Pullman, and a bottle of brandy to push it down.’

Pullman came to the point almost brusquely. He wanted an introduction to the Police President, one which would admit the bearer rapidly to this personage.

‘The Police President!’ the Bailiff exclaimed. ‘What a person to wish to visit—a social call I suppose. Enlighten me, my dear Pullman.’

Pullman said he wished to interview this high official, about nothing in particular. There were certain things in this city which awakened his curiosity; the women, for instance. ‘Ah now, that is a question of the utmost delicacy. However warmly I introduce you, I doubt if he will want to talk to you about the condition of the women. You see, we all deplore the fate of those miserable creatures. But . . . well, my dear Pullman, it is the Governor . . . the “Padishah” you know, who is

responsible for everything to do with females. That is why it is so difficult to talk about the women.'

'I did not know that. I understand.'

They conversed, at last drifting away somewhat from the Police President; the Bailiff monologued. The latter ended by saying, 'Your guess is as good as mine as to the outcome of this terrible quarrel. It *may* blow over, a few more cyclones. But one thing I can promise you, if the worst comes to the worst, you are safe with me. No harm will come to you. But if the *worst* thing were to happen, it would come with extreme suddenness. There might be only a quarter of an hour in which to act. Just for the present I should not wander very far. Just for the present, Pullman. Please take this to heart. No visit to the farmlands, for instance! If I were you I should remain in or near the hotel. It is as bad as that, Pullman. There might be longer than a quarter of an hour. But not a minute more than that is it safe to reckon on. An all out attack would be very terrible.—But let us hope that someone grows tired of this game—you must come over to me at once, whenever there is anything cyclonic.'

'Your Excellency, it is exceedingly kind of you to offer me this protection. I cannot thank you adequately.'

'My dear fellow, you must not say such things as that. We are confederates, let me put it like that. I would do anything for you, anything you asked!'

'You know how I feel towards you . . . my confederate!' and Pullman looked very serious. 'I wish I could offer you some return.'

The Bailiff banged his hand down upon that of his guest, which he pinioned to the table. 'My dear chap, you know what the *return* is. I am inexpressibly pleased, as well as honoured, to be able to be of service to you!'

Towards the end of this extremely emotional discourse, Pullman smiled and pointed out that he could never reach the Bailiff in an emergency. 'How could I get from

the hotel to the palace? I am not able to move a foot in my own room.'

The Bailiff sprang up, slapping his forehead dramatically. 'Fool that I am! But I will take care of that, Pullman. I will attach someone to you, who would be able to assist you even as I would myself. His name is Vbasti. I will put you under his personal care. He will be answerable to me for your safety. I suggest that you take him everywhere with you—let him be your shadow! Take him to the bath, take him to the lavatory. He is not an adventurous young man like Sentoryen! Trust in him implicitly. Do whatever he tells you.'

The Bailiff walked quickly over to the telephone. 'I am going to speak to the Police President.' It was hardly a minute when the P.P. was there, and the Bailiff indulging in his usual noisy facetiousness.

He wished to recommend to him a dear friend, one whom he greatly valued . . . No, he had committed no crime. He was a great—a very great—writer on Earth . . . Yes, that is it, what in the earthly life women get out of the Lending Libraries . . . Yes, yes, but this you know is what sages read—they have their *own* libraries. It is as if I were sending you, President, Goethe or Tolstoy . . . *What* are they? For shame, President! *What* is Copernicus—what is Shylock! You are a most ignorant policeman.'

An appointment was arranged for less than an hour thence. Pullman hoped that the Bailiff had not left any wounds in the vanity of this supreme policeman.

'I will send you in my car. But first, Vbasti.' He summoned him at once by telephone. 'Will you take Vbasti with you to Police Headquarters? It is wiser.' Pullman said yes, of course. 'I will install him near you in the hotel.'

Pullman was presented with a shadow—he could hardly protest. He was not given twenty-four hours to

consider it, nor yet twenty-four minutes. It was a command, as well as a great favour. These things materialized with terrific expedition. There was no breathing space. While it was flitting through his mind that his life was lived for him (if a life it was), the door opened and there was Vbasti.

By good fortune he was not a compromising shadow to have. He was stalwart, with the hint of a square nose, in some lights seeming dark, in others fairish. His expression was watchful and intelligent.

Pullman smiled broadly at Vbasti. 'This is an awful job to have. I hope you will not hate me too much before it is over!' he said.

'If I thought that,' said Vbasti, a little bumptiously, without smiling, 'I should not have agreed to do it.'

Pullman understood that Vbasti did not like being treated as if there were no difference between himself and Bates.

The Bailiff burst out laughing. 'Are you satisfied with Vbasti's wardrobe?' he asked.

'As you ask me in that blunt way,' said Pullman, 'let me say that if Vbasti and myself are to be twins, one of two things should happen: either I must acquire a light suit like his, or he should borrow a suit like mine—it is no use, I fear, from what I know of Vbasti, to *offer* him a suit.'

The Bailiff looked at Vbasti, who stood like a waxwork, obviously determined not to recognize that it was up to him to make any remark.

'I will send to the tailor's tomorrow,' the Bailiff told Pullman, ignoring the waxwork. 'Vbasti shall have an outfit like yours.'

'Your Excellency need not trouble himself. I have such a suit. I shall wear it.' The waxwork spoke, but did not melt.

'That is good, Oh Vbasti,' smiled his master.

'Thank you, Vbasti,' Pullman added.

‘You are to go to the Police President, Vbasti. In about ten minutes.’

Vbasti turned towards the door. ‘I shall be dressed as you wish.’

When the man had gone, the Bailiff explained. ‘Vbasti is a very intelligent fellow. He feels that he is not properly rewarded. That he is deliberately denied a position worthy of his talents. He is a very . . . *touchy* man.’

‘I shall take great care not to offend him,’ Pullman quietly responded.

The Bailiff did not welcome this assurance. It was as Pullman had expected: he felt sure that the Bailiff’s staff was a mass of favourites and of men who had not understood how to attract favour, or who perhaps had some conceit they were unable to conceal. He was being placed in the hands and at the mercy of a man who resented being selected for such a minor job. Oh well, Pullman hoped that, if ever the great emergency came, he would be in, or very near, the palace.

Pullman and Vbasti sat opposite the Police President, a very large desk between them. The light blue uniform of that official, with the wide flat epaulets of the Russian officers, the wide flat gilt and silver braid elsewhere, the mysterious decorations—that irrelevant costumery distracted attention from the face, which was anything but trustworthy. The blueness where the razor had been, matching the uniform, looked unreal, and the large grey eyes told of a great capacity for evasion. The clipped grey hair had been grey when first Mr Lear entered the city, recommending him for high office. The thin mouth twitched sometimes; it twitched as he looked at Vbasti. He was uneasy about the presence of this employee of the Bailiff’s (for the colour of his face and even his expression marked him out as that). And this was a source of satisfaction to Vbasti.

‘I have been a Police President for a long time, Mr Pullman; and *never* has anyone asked to interview me. This is not Earth; there are no newspapers here. For what conceivable reason a person should wish to interview me I cannot think. But his Excellency the Bailiff is a great friend of mine. If he asked me to interview the Devil,’ he glanced sideways at Vbasti, ‘I should do so—after consulting the Governor. So I am frankly mystified by your visit, but I am at your service.’

The Police President sat back, continuing to eye Vbasti with misgiving—which continued to give great enjoyment to Pullman’s shadow.

‘This, I should perhaps have said, is my shadow,’ Pullman informed the Police President.

That personage looked more mystified than ever, but all he said was, ‘Ah, hmn.’

‘The Women’s . . . Reserve interests me very much,’ Pullman announced, in the most uninhibited way.

‘What do you want to know?’ the Police President inquired coldly.

‘Everything interests me about the life of these women. Is there very much venereal disease?’

‘How could there be, Mr Pullman?’ The P.P. was colder.

‘It would be quite possible, your Excellency. But I have already noticed that homosexuality flourishes among the men in Third City. I wondered if the women had recourse to Lesbian practices?’

It was only the presence of Vbasti, Pullman thought, which prevented the P.P. from expostulating, from saying perhaps, ‘If you are a doctor, I am not the man you should interview.’ Instead he said, ‘Yes, there is a good deal of unnatural vice. We can do very little to stop it.’

‘Are the women in receipt of State credits as are the men?’

‘Yes,’ the P.P. answered. ‘They do not receive so much; but the system is the same.’

‘What is the annual percentage of suicide in the women’s part of the city?’ Pullman asked.

The Police President gazed at Pullman without speaking, for perhaps a minute. ‘Mr Pullman, I am unable to answer your questions of that kind.’ He took up the telephone. ‘The Bailiff’s Office,’ he said. ‘And put me through from the next room.’

He looked again coldly and blankly at Pullman with his large false grey eyes. ‘I am going to speak to His Excellency the Bailiff about these questions of yours.’

Pullman bowed his head. When they were alone, he turned to Vbasti, and said, ‘Have my questions, do you think, been calculated to embarrass this official?’

‘Yes, I suppose so,’ Vbasti answered, ‘but from the start it has been funny . . . oh one of the funniest interviews I have ever been present at.’

Pullman looked at Vbasti rather as the Police President looked at his bomb-shell questions. The tendency was for Vbasti, upon the slightest provocation, to become too fresh, he reflected. He might have to decline Vbasti’s services. While he was turning this over in his mind the Police President returned, with a thudding of sparkling, black top boots, sat down, and drew the heavy chair forward violently, the silent room outraged by the harsh disturbance.

‘All right,’ he said. ‘I will answer any question you like.’

‘Thank you, your Excellency,’ Pullman bowed. ‘But first I would suggest that you find some place where Vbasti could wait, as I have one or two rather private matters to discuss.’ He turned to Vbasti. ‘You understand, don’t you, Vbasti?’

‘I understand,’ Vbasti said under his breath, and with an expression of great bitterness.

The P.P. rang a bell and had Vbasti escorted away somewhere. When the door had closed the Police

President looked far more comfortable. 'I am glad, Mr Pullman, that we are alone. I can speak more freely.'

'That is why I got rid of that clerk of the Bailiff's. He is attached to me in case of emergency, when there might be very little time to whip me out of a cataclysm.'

The P.P. laughed more easily than Pullman had supposed him capable of. 'I wish His Excellency would provide me with some such guardian angel . . . or devil of course!'

After this moment of pleasantry Pullman resumed the 'interview'.—'Well, Mr President, there was this question of statistics, regarding the annual suicide rate in the female ghetto.'

The official leaned forward, his folded forearms supporting his brilliant torso upon the desk; he looked up from beneath raised eyebrows and a furrowed forehead.

'As His Excellency tells me that you are a personal friend of his and has asked me to keep nothing back from you: conditions in the Yenery, as we call it, are nothing short of appalling. As to the suicide rate, not long ago that rose to fifty per cent.'

Pullman gasped. 'Half the female population!'

'It is horrible, yes!' The P.P. looked as shocked as he could. 'Over two hundred thousand women were thrown into the City Incinerator; women, many of them, like my mother, or like your mother, Mr Pullman. It was so terrible that I went to the Governor (you know him, perhaps, as the Padishah) and I offered my resignation. I said, "Your Holiness, I am a man! The woman who bore me was like one of those. I can no longer assist at the *torture* of those women. I must relinquish my post, and resign altogether from the Police Force."—"Torture!" he said—and he was horrified too—for he is a truly angelic man. Torture,—the idea of *suffering*, affects him as it would us. But death, you understand, has a very different significance for him than it has for man, like

ourselves . . . You understand, Mr Pullman—I think he does not realize that death, here, means extinction.’

‘Yes, indeed,’ Pullman replied.

‘Most men do not understand. I did not understand at first.’

‘I am a product of the English public school, but I began life in Ireland. I am a Catholic,’ Pullman replied.

This seemed to startle the Police President, extremely. ‘Oh,’ he said, in a quite altered voice. ‘I did not know that . . . You know Monsignor O’Shea I imagine?’

Pullman smiled disarmingly. ‘No I do not. My Catholicism wore thin on earth.’

‘I see.’

But the highest Police Executive was still a shaken man, Pullman observed. Which meant, of course, that association with the Bailiff precluded a membership of that communion. It followed, it was clear enough, that were you in the confidence of Monsignor O’Shea, you would avoid any contact with the Bailiff. What would your attitude be to the Police President? From that official’s alarm just now it would seem that the Police President was double-faced. It was probable, Pullman thought, that he was more of the party of the Bailiff than of that of the Church. What he had been saying just now, with reference to his scruples in the matters of the confinement (as in fact it was) of the women, was no doubt sincere. But as Police President his position must be an uneasy one—it had been most incautious to reveal his Catholic origin, Pullman realized.

‘Well, as you understand what the situation is, Mr Pullman, that makes it easier for me. The Governor is adamant about the separation of the sexes. He says that there are many holy women—saints who are women. But that is all that women mean to him. In all other ways he regards them as a sinful element, which must be isolated. They must at all costs be shut out from a

celestial testing ground, like Third City, originally intended for men whose only sin had been due to their earthly contacts with women. I may say, in the greatest confidence, that it is his opinion that all women should be relegated to the infernal regions. . . .

‘So you see, Mr Pullman, there is a great weight of prejudice, in high places, against the women as such. It is as if, for breeding purposes, Man were associated with an animal, one of very dirty habits, incapable of appreciating any ethical precept, whose impulses were always mischievous. While he was engaged in perpetuating the species on the earth, such an associate is, however unfortunate that may be, necessary. But in eternal life, it would be absurd to perpetuate this mischievous and unsavoury adjunct of Man.’

‘You express that admirably. Were you, by any chance, your Excellency, a priest in your earthly life?’

The exalted interviewee gazed fixedly at the interviewer. Very softly he said at last, ‘How did you guess that? Yes, I was a Jesuit. You must have second sight!’

‘Wonderful, is it not! *And* your name was O’Leary.’

Father O’Leary flung himself back in his chair.

‘You must be in league with the Devil!’ he exclaimed.

‘Not a bit of it,’ Pullman assured him. ‘Just a capacity for putting two and two together. Now, Father O’Leary . . .’

‘Ach now, you mustn’t say that!’ He gave evidence of considerable alarm.

‘You may rely, absolutely, upon my discretion. Though a Jesuit as Police President . . .’

‘Mr Pullman, we will confine ourselves to the subject of this interview, will we not.’

‘Certainly, your Excellency. Tell me, what is this annexe, reserved for women, like? It is clean and tidy?’

‘It is filthy!’ exclaimed the P.P. ‘It is disgusting. All the sanitary services are in the hands of women. No men

are allowed inside on whatever excuse, except myself. Just as all the dustmen are women, so women are responsible for the Police Force. Women surgeons only are found in the hospitals, and the sewage service is female. None of these services are very efficiently run. There is a complicating factor. A good deal of the money the women receive from the State is spent in purchasing bootleg whisky. We have found it impossible to check this trade. But the Governor, in the end, told us to waste no more time in trying to stamp out the illicit traffic. I have seen, as night was coming on, a woman street-cleaner in the gutter, her broom in her lap, dead drunk. When the streets are done, they are badly done. On the whole, the women regard themselves as persecuted. They are very violent at times. A great many communists and socialists (women of course) are to be found there now. It is no longer possible to go in there, as formerly. The last time I visited the Yenery, crowds of women followed me about, even stoning my car, vilifying the male sex. It was very uncomfortable indeed. As I was making my getaway they attempted to rush the gate. Several had to be killed. We now have an extremely heavy guard of picked men on the gate. Then, day by day, the position of the Women's Police becomes more difficult; a number of these have been beaten to death . . . What is going to happen next I have no idea. It is impossible to foretell the course things will take during the next few weeks.'

Pullman contented himself with a grimace of dismay.

'Now, Mr Pullman, consider what the position of a nice—of a well-educated sensitive woman, must be, in the middle of that chaos! Asylums (there are six of them) are packed to overflowing. The noise that they make, especially at night, is terrifying. One of those institutions is near the rampart dividing the two sectors of the city—the Yenery and ours. All the residences and big

apartments in that immediate neighbourhood are permanently unlet. It is a kind of desert.'

Pullman was becoming more and more disturbed. 'So this is no secret,' he remarked at last. 'What is the opinion of the male population of Third City?'

'As you may imagine, they are horrified. The revolutionary party here—for we, as much as the women, have agitators—make great use of this unspeakable scandal.'

'I can see how they might do that,' said Pullman. He was silent.

'Do you wish to know any more about the Yenery, Mr Pullman?' inquired the Police President. 'I have told them not to interrupt me. If you will excuse me I will put through a call, just to check.' And he contacted his office. The first information that reached him appeared to startle him considerably. 'Gosh!' Then he listened again. 'Bring her in here right away, Jennings.'

The P.P. turned around rapidly, and spoke as follows. 'You are in luck's way, Mr Pullman. The Woman Police Chief in the Yenery has been murdered. There is a female messenger outside, she is being brought in. Please sit where you are.'

A large woman, in a dirty uniform, thumped in. Her voice was that of an indignant gorilla, of a kindly disposition, but association with people who had too often taken advantage of this kept her voice in that harshest register.

'Be seated, Corporal Pontero,' said the P.P.

The woman sat by the side of Pullman, who felt violently attracted by her—the last woman he had seen was on Earth, in the hospital where he had died. His nurse had rather resembled this policewoman.

'Your chief has been murdered,' said the Police President. 'Please tell us what happened.'

Three Police officials stood at the farther end of the table, glaring down at Theresa Pontero, as though she

had committed the crime. The policewoman betrayed no unseemly agitation. She even seemed to smile a little. Her feelings towards the Woman Police Chief had probably lacked that warmth which the sentimental would expect. 'Mary'—which was how she referred to her hierarchical chief—'Mary was standin' by the trash bin, lookin' for somethin'—— *She* got up close, an' '—Theresa slashed her throat with a flattened paw.

'Who was "she"?' the P.P. asked. 'Who was it killed her?'

'Mary had been tryin' to clean up a noo racket: the gul'—which meant girl—'wuz a lady c'nnected with the racket, I guess. We got her in the cellar.'

'That is good work,' the Police President told her.

Theresa gave Pullman a cavernous leer, her deep-sunken brown eyes sportive as those of an amiable zoo animal.

'You did not ill-treat this lady who killed Mary?' The P.P. adapted himself to Theresa's idiom.

'Alice blacked the two eyes of her and pulled her into the Office by the 'air.—Alice is a gul that would uv murdered her, if it ud not been for the law.' The policewoman slid Pullman a second leer.

'But there is always the law,' said the P.P. sternly.

'The law's there all the time it is,' and Theresa waved her head heavily and slowly from side to side, her mouth open. This was a cryptical use of the head.

'You are the law!' almost shouted the Police President.

'Oh yer,' droned the policewoman, hurling a third leer sideways at Pullman, whose beard she found congenial.

The policewoman was dismissed, and removed her tank-like form with a thunder of footwear . . . iron-shod and leather from the knee down.

The Police President made a few notes, looked at the clock, and then turned to Pullman.

'Well, was that edifying?' he inquired. 'Mary was

foolhardy. There is going to be a civil war now. We may have to go in with artillery, perhaps.' The Police President rose to his feet. 'Then I resign!' He held out his hand to Pullman, and rang the bell on his desk.

Vbasti came out of the room which had been set aside for him, with a murderous scowl.

'Vbasti . . .!' Pullman exclaimed, upon catching sight of his face; 'you must not feel too much resentment . . .'

As they left the Police President's office together, Vbasti trod hard upon Pullman's toe. Without saying anything, Pullman placed his heel upon Vbasti's with no less force.

IX HYPERIDES' HEADQUARTERS

(XVI)

THE NEXT MORNING Pullman reported to the Bailiff. Vbasti he left in a waiting-room, and passed himself, almost without pause, into the presence of the Magistrate. It was a very spacious workroom, like nothing so much as one of the galleries in a present-day museum in Paris. The Bailiff sat at a long desk, beside two white-coated secretaries, two of the gladiatorial troops stood at attention at the end of the table. A small shabby group of citizens stood before him: and that was all that was in the room—except for two vacant chairs, one of which was placed ready for Pullman in front of the Bailiff.

'You have come to see me about Vbasti! Ha ha ha ha!'

'Excellency, you are right! He is unmanageable, he is conceited, he becomes fresh.'

The Bailiff tossed about in his chair, his crazy mirth exquisitely paining him.

In an unsteady voice he told Pullman that it was a wicked little joke; that of course he realized what the result would be. 'I'm surprised you got so far as the Police President's with him. There is another waiting to take his place—a real one this time, not a living joke.'

It struck eleven, and the two infantrymen stamped several times, and then marched towards the rear wall. One of them pressed a button in the wall; two enormous masked doors shot back and displayed—for a fraction of a second—about twenty soldiers, fully armed, sitting at a table before a window. There was an instantaneous thumping of forty feet as they sprang to attention, stamping as the other two had done.

'How ingenious,' remarked Pullman.

'I take no chances,' replied the Magistrate. 'No chances.'
'You do not care to be caught by some wandering Jackson.'

'Jackson?'

'Trotsky's friend.'

'Oh yes, yes, yes.' The Bailiff appeared to ponder. 'He will be here soon. I have plans for him. He shall be transferred to Hell, they will know how to deal with him. Hell possesses all the Inquisition machinery, plus a fine variety of Hitlerian gadgets. It is those things which give Hell its bad name: but Lucifer is an angel compared to Hitler, although a fanatical moralist.' The Bailiff laughed. 'But thank heaven he is getting over that.'

'Ah, he is milder, is he?'

'To my taste he is *too* humane.'

'You have the news from the Yenery?' Pullman inquired.

'About the Police Chief? Yes, she was asking for that! She was most opinionated. She had often been warned, but she thought she knew best . . . The situation in the Yenery is fast approaching a point at which there will be an explosion of such force . . .'

'So it seemed to me, Excellency. I am glad to hear you think like that.'

'Oh about the Yenery! . . . Drop in about six tomorrow, will you, Pullman? I should greatly enjoy a talk with you . . . Oh look at the time!' He picked up the telephone. 'Send me Abdul Pan.' Turning to Pullman, 'We call him Pan. He is a very valuable young man. I would not part with him for anyone but you, Pullman!'

Pan was an athletic young man, in appearance of the Italian student class, though his nose was almost as square as the Bailiff's. His suit was navy blue, he was at least an inch taller than Pullman.

When they had reached the hotel, Pullman stopped.

‘I get no exercise,’ he said. ‘Pan, what do you say to a walk to the Piazza?’

Pan said he would enjoy a walk. Pullman noticed, not for the first time, a faint exotic accent among the dark-skinned staff-members of the Bailiff.

‘Have you been in America?’ Pullman said as they started.

‘No, I wish I had.’ The o in ‘No’ was a round-mouthed, innocent, American o. The final ‘had’ had a long singing American cadence, and super-added there was the indelible accent above-mentioned—that, no doubt, of the Square-noses.

As they approached Tenth Avenue they heard drums and shouting crowds. They came out into the Avenue; the drums were strong, and the multitude was very near. It was waving its arms, it gnashed its teeth as it bellowed slogans, it was headed for Tenth Piazza. It obviously had a destination, and it was clear that it was approaching it.

Those forming the core of the procession wore a travesty of Graeco-Roman attire. And there in the centre, borne upon a litter, was a bearded man.

‘That looks like Hyperides,’ said Pan.

‘That *is* Hyperides,’ Pullman told him.

‘*He* has no business here at this time of the day!’ Pan frowned slightly. ‘How did he get in? Over the magnetized wall? Not through the *Gate* I hope. Here,’ he caught one marcher by the arm. ‘How did you get in, Bud?’

‘Through the Gate!’ the other shrieked. ‘Our men were *inside* the gates!’

Pan turned to Pullman, perfectly cool and unmoved. ‘They have quite enough men guarding that Gate. Armed, too. A *great many* men must have rushed it! The Bailiff will be . . . well, angry would be a poor way of describing his feelings.’

‘Down with the Bailiff! Death to Square-Nose!’ Such

cries were frequent, and sometimes they melted into one another, and swelled into a roar.

'I don't know what I ought to do,' reflected Pan. 'Of course he knows all about it by now. But . . .'

'There are at least a thousand partisans marching here,' Pullman observed. 'Perhaps we ought to go back to the palace.'

They retraced their steps, and the Bailiff's palace was full of rushing men, and stiff-lipped military faces, like a kennel of fighting dogs who have seen the arrival of several newcomers, also, of course, fighting dogs. And, after all, the Bailiff's battalions had not much to fight. A face like Bates' (who had now returned to the gladiatorial ranks) was one framed so exclusively for combat that its owner could not make use of him for anything else. He was born to bite somebody. And here was Hyperides, and his pugnacious young philosophers, a gift from heaven for the Bailiff's garrison. Their master would not be slow to see how stimulating it would be for his cohorts. That night six thousand men under arms were collected, in and around the palace grounds. Bugles were blowing all the time until midnight.—The Bailiff had not gone to the camp, and the negro band played stirring tunes from a balcony at the back of the palace.

Pullman did not enter the palace, since so much automatic animal activity did not attract him. As he walked slowly to the hotel, he sighed. Hyperides was a figure who bored him intensely; he only hoped that the police would lock him up as soon as possible.

After lunch he lay down, and, as if in protest against the rushing about in so many places near him, he went to sleep. He was wakened at three o'clock in the afternoon by Pan, whom he rather unwillingly admitted.

'Mr Pullman, it is extraordinary how attached His Excellency is to you! His hands are very full, very full.'

He has desperate need of every intelligent individual he can command. Yet, in this crisis, in this very great crisis, he says to me: "Pan, you must return to Mr Pullman at once. And you must never leave his side for a fraction of a second. Understand, Pan, nothing must take you away from Mr Pullman." '

The certain veneer, which was rather apparent with Pan for about twenty minutes after a first meeting, had almost disappeared. Evidently, he was bitterly disappointed at not being in the centre of the fun, at being snatched away from among the hundreds of other young clerks, and condemned to the society of this bearded stranger.

Pullman was intolerant of vulgar excitement, but he was not unkind. He understood how bored this young man was going to be, how much he was going to feel out of it.

'Pan, do you think that we can be of any assistance to the Bailiff? I am not suggesting that we should snoop, I should not like to do that. But could we be of any use merely by strolling around?'

'We might as well stroll *around*.'

'That is what I thought.' Pullman was somewhat puzzled by the fine distinction between strolling around and strolling *around*. He hoped that the latter did not differ from the former in too marked a way.

'I do not see what you mean by our being of use to His Excellency,' Pan snorted out a half-sneer.

'You mean,' Pullman said quickly, 'that he has all the information he needs.'

'Information?' Pan swelled with scornful pride. 'Oh yes, he has enough of that, Mr Pullman. In every group of six sub-sections of every district of the city he has an informant, a whole-time informant. In our office there are forty clerks receiving and filing messages all day long. There is an overseer: if one of the thirty telephonists or

one of the filers regards a certain piece of news as *hot*, he goes across to the overseer. If the overseer thinks it is news which the Bailiff should know at once, he rings a bell. . . . A messenger is always there, just outside the room. Within a few minutes the Bailiff is in possession of the news.'

Pullman smiled. 'There is no place for amateurs there. There is not a man who wipes his glasses, or one who buys a flower and sticks it in his buttonhole, but the Bailiff hears about it within a couple of minutes. Astonishing!'

Pan narrowed his eyes but produced a smile. Jokes about the system to which he belonged were not well received. 'There is nothing which angers His Excellency so much as having passed in to him news which he calls "of no consequence". It is easy to get fired in the Bailiff's service for mistaking the value of news.'

'Well, let us go out . . . Where shall we go?'

Pan answered slowly, with a smile, 'Let us go to First Piazza.'

When three-quarters of an hour later they stepped out of the underground into First Piazza, Pullman sneezed violently. He stood there preparing to sneeze a second time, but with the first sneeze the purgative impulse disappeared, and there was no further spasm. He blew his nose and put his handkerchief back in his pocket.

His new shadow had stood watching him, politely quizzical.

'Is that ended, Mr Pullman?' was Pan's softly-gruff inquiry.

'Beendigt,' Pullman said. 'Vorbei.'

They both gazed down the Piazza. There were no arcades. The place had a far rougher look. In the distance a small market was in progress. The underground was busy, with a constant to and fro of people. Pullman remarked the complete absence of youth, so prevalent in

the Tenth district. This was a far more normal part of the city.

‘Now, I am wondering what we shall find here?’ Pullman said as though to himself. ‘Are we to interrogate the sons of toil as to their views of the Hyperideans?’

Pan stood looking at him sideways, as if he had a bit of a joke locked up in his nose and was wondering if he should let it out or not. Pullman caught his eye. ‘Out with it!’ he said.

‘Oh, I was only thinking that the Headquarters of Hyperides is just around here.’

‘Around here?’

‘Oh, about the second turning along there,’ Pan said offhandedly.

Pullman said nothing at once. Then he asked, ‘Do you suggest that we pay our bearded friend a visit?’

Pan shook his head and laughed. ‘I thought out of curiosity you might like to see where they all congregate.’

‘Well . . .!’ Pullman seemed so dubious about this project as to be on the point of declining. ‘Hyperides does not interest me very much.’

There was a long interval, and then Pullman said again, ‘But if you think it would be a good idea to stroll past his headquarters . . .’

‘It is as you like,’ Pan said sulkily.

‘Very well.’ Pullman lighted a cigarette. Putting his feet down deliberately, and in a vaguely protesting manner, he set out in the direction Pan had indicated.

‘If you would rather *not*, Mr Pullman . . .’

‘We had better go where it interests you to go,’ Pullman said.

Soon they were turning up into the moderately large street where Hyperides was supposed to be found. Others turning in the same direction were speaking excitedly. ‘The police are on our side.’—‘Oh yes, begum!’ said the second man, ‘we can rely on them. More than half are

Irish and are Catholic to a man. My brother is a sergeant.’ —‘Ay, that is so, they are a good lot. The Police President is someone I do not like. I am not the only one who distrusts him!’

‘It is over there we should go,’ said Pan, in a quiet voice, pointing to a very popular looking street. At least there were plenty of people turning into it, and two figures out of the Athens of Pericles standing face to face on either side of the entrance. As they were passing between these two white-clad guardians, one stepped forward and said to Pan, ‘You know your way, do you, sir?’

‘Yes, thank you,’ Pan answered gruffly. ‘What impudence!’ he exclaimed, turning to Pullman.

‘Excuse me, sir!’ The blue-eyed, the Nordic Athenian thrust himself in front of Pan. ‘Are you quite sure you know the way?’

Two armed men now stood beside the Greek.

‘Is this a private road?’ Pan asked hotly.

‘No,’ said the Grecian young man. ‘We do not want people here who do not know their way.’

There were now *three* armed men beside the obvious Hyperidean.

‘This is monstrous!’ Pan blustered loftily. ‘This is a public thoroughfare.’

A crowd had begun to gather: ‘Who are they?’ said someone at Pullman’s ear. ‘I don’t like the look of the darkie! I wonder what he smells like.’

‘He’s no man, he’s a hell-boy. Ah here comes O’Rourke, he’ll silence the vermin!’

Pullman was feeling rather dazed. He saw quite well that Pan had led them into something he had not bargained for. He knew what an Irish crowd was like, and there was no chance of rescue. From now on, step by step, he had to go through with this stupid scene, just as if they had been actors upon a stage, until the crowd had been purged, had had their catharsis.

He retired within himself; how much nicer it was to be out with Satters. He began thinking of the time in the camp. He remembered how Time had its traps there; he had got into a scene of two hundred years ago—like turning a cinematograph backwards and holding it rigid. Something had slipped, something was there which ought to have been somewhere else.

He was violently jolted. It was the shoulders of Pan which had struck him, as his shadow was dragged forwards. That no doubt was O'Rourke. Smash his ugly face, the rat!

'Come out here, then,' he heard a large man shouting, who had seized Pan at the neck and was making him run forward with his head stuck out like a chicken. Pan was a big fellow but no fighting-man, he was just like a doll in this big Irishman's hands.

A fist went into the downcast face, a sock that is a different sound to a smack, sickening, relatively soft.

Pan tried to fall down. But O'Rourke held him up against the wall and socked him; and then the crowd held him up, for O'Rourke to batter and to blacken.

Ah well, it would be his turn next, Pullman sighed to himself, 'Let us hope the crowd holds me up!'

But these words he had spoken aloud to himself, and there was a sudden roar of laughter in his ear. This roar multiplied itself until everybody in the world seemed to be laughing.

'Here, O'Rourke! This one here says he hopes the crowd will hold him up while you sock him!'

The roar of laughter was a new catharsis. The crowd was almost crying with laughter at the thought of its holding a man up—a long series of men—to be socked, and socked, and socked.

An enormous, sweating Irish face was a few inches from his. Pullman knew it was the Minotaur, the O'Rourke.

‘Is it *you* want to be held up?’

A large, rough, hot paw—flat, palm-foremost—hit his face with such velocity that Pullman lost his feet, and slapped the earth with a shattering wallop.

He heard the roaring of the crowd like a tumultuous sea breaking over his head. Someone thrust his face down not far from his ear and shouted, ‘There, my bhoy, let mother Earth hold you up, me old son!’

A hand tapped him lightly on the cheek: the roar grew much louder, and then died away.

He was kicked, and a new voice shouted, ‘Hi, you’re wanted in the office!’

They bashed their way through the crowd, the someone who held him so firmly by the arm pushing him along at a stumbling trot. At last they began barging their way up a flight of steps. Tromp tromp tromp upon the soft-seeming bare boards, and he was pushed into a room. His head, where he had fallen, hurt a great deal, he sank into a chair and rested his head upon his hand.

‘What is your name?’

This was a sharp, strong voice, but it was clear, and not blurred and weighted with drink, with lack of cultivation, and with silly passion.

‘James Pullman,’ he said.

‘Not James Pullman!’ the voice rose to a pitch of surprised interest. There was a pause.

‘The writer?’

‘Yes. I am James Pullman, in a semi-celestial region.’

There was another short silence.

Pullman looked up, and saw a strong, lean, tightly drawn ascetic face, about forty. It was the clear-cut, the long-necked, classical face of the age of George Eliot. It was Polemon (so-called). He had listened to him in the camp.

‘Well, if you *are* James Pullman, it is your own fault! What are you doing here in this company?’

‘I can explain that very easily. I have only been in this city a few weeks. The Bailiff offered me a flat in his hotel. There I have lived for the last week or so. The Bailiff is of opinion that at any moment there may be an attack upon this city. He has attached to me the young man you treated so badly, to be of service in such an event. Lastly, it was not I who had the idea of coming to “view your headquarters”.’

Two other men had come in, and stood listening. As soon as he had finished, one of these said, ‘So! If you are James Pullman, as you say you are, you understand quite enough to have worked out for yourself by now the kind of man the Bailiff is. You are consorting with the scum of the earth, and you *know what you are doing*. To save your own skin you accept help from an inhuman beast in the form of a man. He is so filthy a creature that we cannot be in the same room with him without being polluted. You cannot fail to see all that, as I say. You are a rat—yes, a far worse rat because you are an *intelligent* rat!’

‘I am your prisoner,’ Pullman said steadily. ‘I am a prisoner of thugs, and one cannot reason with the likes of you.’

‘You are *brave*, aren’t you, rat, because you think that the personal punishment is over. It is *not*.’ He slapped Pullman’s face so hard on both sides that the back of his head hurt almost intolerably.

Polemon intervened. ‘You must not do that sort of thing, Michael. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. He is *not* quite what you say he is either.’

The face of the man called Michael was so full of violence, so full of appetite for destruction, that Pullman wondered, in a dim brain-wracked way, whether Polemon could restrain him.

‘It is only because this dirty rat is a book-writing rat that you defend him!’ Michael hissed. ‘It is *you* who

ought to be ashamed of yourself! This is not a man who stands rigidly outside the *mêlée*. As he thinks *above*. No, this selfish and immoral individual accepts favours from a man he knows to be a reptile. He gets good wine at that filthy hotel. He is treated as a "great man"—oh yes, and he is given, by the Central Bank, money unlimited.—You cannot be a skunk on earth and you cannot be a skunk here! This is no different from the earth in that respect. You are not a spectre. You are still a man. If, Mr Pullman, you behave as a rat and a skunk *here* you must always have stunk—you must always have had your home in a sewer, and have been the first cousin of the mouse!

‘You like hearing yourself talk.’ Pullman spoke strongly and clearly. ‘You do not speak well! You would not be so dependent upon *rats* and *mice* if you did. You slap better than you *speak*.’

Polemon laughed. ‘You forgot, Michael, that you were speaking to a man trained in the use of words.’

‘Yes, like so many people living among words, he has grown demoralized as a man. He has no values left. They have become *words* and have been rotted. You are a *rat*.’

‘He will think you have that animal on the brain,’ the man known as Polemon said irritably. ‘Besides, Pullman has done nothing whatever against us. He has explained that he was lured up here by a clerk of the Bailiff’s. You consider that, in accepting any favour from such a person as the Bailiff, Pullman has sold himself to the Devil. But Pullman is a newcomer here and strange to conditions. Pullman is of great reputation. Would it not be more sensible to attempt to win him over to our side?’

‘What, ask favours of that double-faced, unscrupulous, egotistic, self-advertising verbal trickster; to flatter that man who sells his name to gild with the patronage of a great literary name the misdeeds of one of the most evil and destructive creatures who has ever breathed—to

accept the support of such a slimy old mountebank, that immigrant from Hell'—and Michael Devlin, as he was, shook his accusing forefinger in Pullman's face. 'For don't you know where you are going, with the assistance of that trusty servant of the Bailiff? Do you not know where he comes from, the man you go about with? Are you so stupid? Every clerk in the Bailiff's service comes from Hell—they were born there and smuggled into this city. They are not mortal, they are not human; the place you will be taken to, if there is an all-out attack on this place, will be Hell. You know nothing of that, do you, sly-puss? Of course you don't! Poor innocent little Mr. Pullman thinks he will be spirited away into safety, to the Bailiff's private estate! He will save his dirty old skin by hopping ten million miles into Old Nick's sweet little estancia. You will find it stinks like the bodies of those delightful demons who came here in deputation the other day. You had better take a big supply of eau-de-Cologne! Listen, you white-livered old punk of a scribbler for a corrupt society! Why not stand and die? . . . Not that you *would* die, even. We and our leader Hyperides will all be massacred. But when Lucifer enters the city, after having stormed it with his stinking demons, *you* would not be interfered with. But you are *afraid*. And you want to be made a fuss of in Hell . . . Good luck to you, sneak! A happy visit to Hades, with piles of praise and loads of honour, Mr Big Name, which you cart around with you like a certificate. You even impress Polemon here! But you fail to impress *me* very much. I regard you as one of the most contemptible old rats—yes, RATS—that I have ever encountered!' And he spat in Pullman's face.

Pullman sprang up and struck Michael Devlin in the face, but at the same time Devlin was flung forward by the violent opening of the door near which he stood.

'The Bailiff's rats are here!' shouted the intruder.

‘Call out the Guard!’ Polemon exclaimed. But the sound of rushing men, and joyous Irish voices, rejoicing at the prospect of a fight, was the Guard going into action and Polemon rushed to join them.

‘How many are there?’ asked Devlin.

‘Twenty or thirty in a lorry. They have machine guns trained on the crowd.’

‘Here, rat, are your pals!’ Devlin said fiercely to Pullman. ‘They have come to fetch you. They have come to rescue their Great Name. Here, I will hand you back, and tell them how *nice* and how *polite* everyone has been!’

Devlin and the man with him dragged Pullman out into the passage. The hall was full of armed partisans, all were armed. The front door was opened to enable Devlin to take out his prisoner. When he and Pullman were outside the door, Devlin stopped, holding the Big Name tightly, and bent towards him, pointing to the gladiators: ‘There are your thugs waiting for you. They are much less guilty than you are, rat!’ he hissed in his ear.

At this point Pullman struggled with his captor. Employing a jujitsu device, a memory of the school gymnasium, he threw Devlin into the air, so that he fell at the bottom of the steps. Pullman followed him, flying over the last two steps, and reached the lorry in another bound or two. Then he turned and faced Devlin, who had risen to his feet but found himself covered by a tommy-gun, and stood without moving, his eye beginning to swell where Pullman had struck him. Pullman kissed his hand, saying, ‘So bad a temper as yours *needs* the word *rat*. What would you do without it. Polemon was wrong to try and make you drop it!’

Devlin turned his head and began dejectedly ascending the steps. Pullman was the hero of the day. He climbed with a creditable agility into the lorry and stood there smiling amid the congratulations of the gladiators,

howled at by the crowd held at bay by the machine-guns.

‘What are we waiting for?’ he asked.

‘For an ambulance. Pan is badly injured—the devils nearly killed him!’

Pullman tried to look grieved.

Ten minutes later an ambulance arrived, and Pan was borne down the steps on a stretcher, his head a white cocoon of bandages. A roar of applause and laughter rose from the crowd. The ambulance departed with the loud and incessant ringing of its bell, charged the shouting Irish mob, which parted with magical celerity. The lorry followed a few feet behind it, bristling with small-arms and machine-guns, aimed down at the snarling faces by frowning men.

X BAILIFF'S PREDICAMENT

(XVII)

AS THEY SAT DOWN in his small study at the top of the palace, looking down upon the tree-tops of Phanael's wood, the Bailiff said in an unexpectedly sober voice, 'This is more of a crisis than anyone knows.' It is a very great crisis indeed.'

He fixed Pullman with a mesmeric eye, which was quite in vain owing to the fact that Pullman's eye, as was customary, was thrown down out of reach of the emotional discharges of other people. But he did look quickly up at the next words uttered by the Bailiff.

'Many shattering things have occurred; all at the same time. Here is the first of them. The Police President has been dismissed by the Governor.'

'Ah!' Pullman was looking at his host, noting the swollen veins upon his temples and the wildly protruding eyes.

'Oh yes,' the Bailiff answered the curious eye. 'Oh yes. And what does that mean? The latent hostility between the Governor and myself is coming to a head, out into the open, after centuries, Pullman.' The Bailiff paused, looking at the dove upon the wall of the balcony outside the window. 'There are several things you really have to know. It was my troops who expelled the Hyperideans, two hundred strong, from this city. The police would not do it. The Police President, Lear, was quite willing to expel them, but the Governor would not allow it. The Civil Guards would refuse to do so as a body, independently of what their Commander said; although he is just as reactionary as they are. *He* will not even speak to me.

I should say, in this connection, that the Police and the Civil Guard are quite distinct forces. The Guard are purely military, they perform no ordinary police work.'

'I was not clear about that,' Pullman said.

'The next point,' the Bailiff said, 'is the question of force. This is absolutely decisive. I have only five or six thousand men at the outside. But there are fifty thousand police, very well trained, and all carrying arms—rifles, machine-guns, and so forth, and a brigade of artillery. Then there are fifteen thousand Civil Guards. They have artillery. I am only a bandit. I have no authority for this little army of mine, which is, of course, imperfectly equipped. I parade it as a mere circus, so that I can say that it is not serious. But all the *real* troops I could put in the field, if it came to a showdown, would be defeated—annihilated in half an hour by the Guards alone.'

The Bailiff stopped.

'I see,' Pullman said.

'My whole existence is a pure bluff. This is not officially a palace. It has gradually become so: and no one has had the gumption to tell me to live less ostentatiously, and to disband my militia. I could object that I needed armed men at the camp. A Police President could answer: "That is my affair"; he could provide me with a half-dozen armed police. That is all that is strictly speaking necessary.'

There was another pause, during which the Bailiff took snuff.

'You know the Governor. He is rather shy with men. He does not know how to manage men. Good. Another peculiarity of the Governor is his jealousy (for it can only be that) of the professionals of religion. The Archbishop of Third City, for instance, and even such lesser dignitaries as a Monsignor, he treats very coldly.—The consequences of these oddities of the Governor have been of the first importance to me. I need not enumerate the

hundreds of advantages I derive from this coolness between the Envoy of the Almighty and the highest *human* authorities in this city . . . You have taken in what I have been saying, Pullman?"

'Yes, your Excellency, my intelligence is strong enough, I believe, to grasp the implication of these matters which you have been confiding to me.' Pullman smiled demurely. 'You have been beautifully clear in expounding these various complications.'

'Thank you, Pullman, thank you. What I am about to say is the essence of the crisis in my affairs of which I have been speaking. Today the Governor is rattled, as the Americans used to say. He feels very insecure in Third City for the first time since his arrival. Lucifer's fireworks—they have not been more than that—have scared him. For the first time he has turned to ingenious Man. Though I do not believe we possess any engineers and chemists who can deter Lucifer. And he appears to have been seeing a lot of Monsignor O'Shea, who is the live-wire of the Catholic hierarchy. A very dangerous man! Listen carefully to this. The Police President who has taken the place of my friend Lear is named von Blitzkopf, who is a Catholic and a very close friend of Monsignor O'Shea. Von Blitzkopf (as his name suggests) is a terrible reactionary. He was a high officer in the Civil Guards (which speaks for itself) with very little police experience.' The Bailiff stopped and looked sharply at his listener. Pullman looked down; he declined to play his part in this dramatic pedagogy. 'The human factions to which the Governor is turning are not my friends. I am hated by the Catholics. The Governor himself has no love for me. I am now faced with a hostile coalition. Soon I may find myself stripped of the power which I have so painfully built up for myself. And have so long enjoyed.' He stamped and waved his hand around the study. "The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces". All this may

go. But now my last point. At any moment Lucifer may make an all-out attack upon 'Third City.' He bent towards Pullman, and tapped upon the table . . . 'Pullman, whether he makes that attack or not depends a good deal upon . . . me. For instance, I might dissuade him. I have much influence with Lucifer. On one occasion, I once by accident did him a service. Good (or *bad*, depending which way you look at it!). Now!'

He drew his chair a little nearer to Pullman—he was perspiring and Pullman had to confess that the smell was not pleasant. 'You know the Governor, Pullman—the Padishah? I do not suggest that *you* go to see the Governor. No. But do you think *someone* could make a point of seeing the Governor privately, and saying that his friend Pullman had been talking to the Bailiff? The latter (that is *me*) had told him that he had ways of preventing the final assault of the diabolic power. That he had means of interceding.—That is all.'

The Bailiff sat back, pouring with perspiration; and it was not a peculiarly hot day. It seemed nice and cool up here to Pullman.

'You are thinking of Mannock?' he asked.

'Not necessarily. There is Sir Charles de la Pole-Blessington. There are several possible intermediaries.'

A youth dressed in scarlet burst into the room. He was the only living person who was allowed to rush in unannounced. He held out a salver. The Bailiff snatched the envelope from the salver: he tore it open, put it down. 'All right,' he said to the scarlet messenger.

'The first act of von Blitzkopf,' he said. 'He has marched into the Yenery with ten thousand police, and mowed down with machine-guns thousands of women. The slaughter has been appalling. My most accurate woman reporter—luckily she has survived—says that fifteen thousand women are dead. There are great mounds of corpses in all the streets. The wounded are innumerable.'

‘How frightful!’ Pullman exclaimed.

The Bailiff picked up the telephone. ‘You know what has happened in the Yenery,’ he asked breathlessly. He listened, his eyes advancing half an inch more than usual, his eyebrows making a shadow for the nether furrow. ‘That is what I think! It is von Blitzkopf’s first action . . . No. Not that. I will explain. I am coming down right away . . . yes yes.’

He whirled round, obviously his brain had been flung into a new dance of fiery action by these events.

He gazed at Pullman as if he were a ghost—a ghost of what had been there, in the immediate foreground, before von Blitzkopf’s enormity had pushed everything else into the shade: mad time had substituted a mound of corpses for the sedate figure of the famous writer: he could literally no longer see Pullman distinctly. He saw the streets of the Yenery piled with corpses; he saw his agents in wild flight. He seized Pullman by the wrists as though to steady himself, as though to hold himself back, if only for a moment, in the past labelled ‘Before the Yenery’.

‘Pullman, my dear fellow!’ he panted urgently. ‘Do not fail me in that other matter. See what can be done. I have great interests in the Yenery. You could not touch anything in the Yenery without touching *me*! Billions of aurei are involved. This is terrible! I had no warning of all this! It is the very *last* thing I ever imagined could happen—a coming-together of the Governor, the Catholics, the Police. You have no idea what this means to me!’ His square nose seemed a distinct object sticking out into space, in front of his face, his eyes terrified, literally bursting out of his head; his mouth was pulled down at the corners like the mouths of the Japanese warriors. He drove his face down upon his arms, which were locked together in front of his torso upon the table, and there were thumping sobs which hammered his head up and down upon the table.

The scarlet messenger burst into the room again. The Bailiff sprang up and snatched the pink envelope from the salver. He stuck his finger into the envelope and tore it open. A scream like that of a stricken pig tore the air, then he sank into and folded up in his chair. A small voice, piping and wretched, rose from this disinflated form. There was no air left to make it more than a wheeze or a little pipe.

‘Flossie has been shot. She is dead.’ There was a gulp.

‘They have got Flossie.

‘Shot by a police thug.

‘Flossie is dead. Flossie is . . . dead!’

Floss was evidently a key woman. Pullman felt that he must not await a third arrival of the scarlet youth, his third dose of bad news might be so severe that the Bailiff would have a fatal seizure. He went over to him where he was gently stamping, and tearing at the edges of his garments.

‘I think your Excellency should go down and take some steps towards the punishment of these thugs.’

The Bailiff appeared mildly electrified by this contact. His voice even was firmer. ‘My dear boy, you’re right, I should at once, at once . . .!’

He staggered over to his table, and began collecting some papers. Pullman considered that he was bemused, and must be hustled. He went over to the lift-door—for one stepped out of the lift into this eyrie of the Bailiff’s—and pressed the button at the side of the door. He stood there watching the Bailiff: he had sunk forward, his head in his arms, and his stomach on the desk, saying over and over, ‘Floss is gone. Floss is gone.’

Pullman believed that he heard someone speak, and turned quickly towards the lift. The lift had not arrived, but a large nude statue of some classical Venus, which stood near the entrance to the elevator, had begun revolving. Its back was now turned, and suddenly there

was a loud indecorous report. It seemed it was constructed of plastic, or some such light material, within which it was easy to install the necessary clockwork to enable it to speak. A moment later the statue, whose face was now appearing, said with an alarming distinctness, 'Oh I beg your pardon!'

Pullman went back to the table, picked up the telephone, and said to whoever was at the other end, 'The Bailiff is not very well. Will you please come up.'

As he put down the telephone, the scarlet messenger suddenly stepped out of the lift. Pullman crossed to the lift and asked the liftman to take him down. They shot through the air, and he was in the entrance hall, in a second or two, it seemed. No jet fighter could exceed in its downward drop this private elevator. And, thought Pullman, the Venus still slowly turned near the summit of the house; as her buttocks came round in front of the spectator there was a *poop*, and as she reversed, her face appearing, she apologized, in a voice obnoxiously dulcet. Toys of the millionaire! All the Bailiff's toys would insult human dignity: and it did not at all mean that he was libidinous. The Floss that he was mourning over was a business Floss, a female racketeer. Nothing interested him in the Yenery except the money he could make out of the illicit liquor, dope and such things as that.

Pullman hastened to the hotel, where he went into the restaurant immediately. Since he usually dined alone, the waiter had grown talkative. Today there was no response when he essayed conversation. Pullman was very much preoccupied. For this appeared to be the turning point in the Bailiff's career; and it was likewise the moment at which a decision must be arrived at; either gently to separate himself from this old maniac, or to throw in his lot with him, for it would amount to that.

The Bailiff had set forth a clear statement of his

position. It had catastrophic possibilities. But was it, in the first place, true, and secondly, was it not merely one of the panics to which millionaires, great ministers and so on, are subject, from time to time? No doubt much that he had learned must be accepted as fact. By trafficking in dope, and the illegal sale of alcohol, the Bailiff secured the necessary money for the maintenance of a private army, and other things. He could imagine how a good deal of house property in the Yenery was the Bailiff's: gambling clubs, meeting places for Lesbians. There were thousands of ways in which large sums of money could be made. The Police Chief who had been murdered there a few days before was fighting the rackets.—Probably, an agent of the Bailiff's bumped her off. Suppose that the Police President set out to break the rackets and to clean up the Yenery, he could see how that might have the most serious effect upon such nefarious exploits as the Bailiff's. Also, if women were given protection, the past activities of the Bailiff might come to light, this arch evil-doer denounced. Impeachment might result. If this policy of the new Police President were taken far enough the Bailiff would be ruined: the threat from the Bailiff's standpoint was very real: but all this was no more than a threat.

The danger centring in Hyperides was the one that had meant most to him before the doings in the Yenery. He certainly would not be able to expel Hyperides from the city if the present alliance of the Padishah, the Papacy and the Police held. Who could say whether the situation which brought it into being would continue: if that situation terminated, would the alliance persist? Probably not. The angelic Governorship had been aloof for so very long from the human authorities, would its present modification of that aloofness last any longer than Lucifer's threat, which caused it?

How quickly he had been manœuvred into the position

of a distinguished adherent, and now an agent, of this loathsome individual. He had behaved very injudiciously: he was ashamed of himself. The mistake of mistakes was coming to live in this hotel: he might just as well be living in the palace. The acceptance of so large a sum of money from the Central Bank was a big mistake too. It was of no use to him; its main purpose was to settle the huge bill (as it doubtless would be) for apartment 400 and for this luxurious restaurant.

Of the Bailiff's arts, flattery was the essential one. Pullman had been rapidly built up into an important figure, so that he might be of use, as at the present moment. Meanwhile, the Hyperideans had just burst into the city. Morning, noon, and night they would be vilifying, blackening the Bailiff: and they would denounce anyone associated with the Bailiff. The more prominent he grew (thanks to the boosting by the Bailiff, and because of the service he rendered that monstrous gangster) the more odious he would become. He would be a traitor to the white race, to the Christian community. Merely through living in this hotel, he would be a scab, a renegade, a rat, and so forth.

Was he going to be intimidated by these people? Was he going to be driven out of this hotel in which every single one of the ranting nobodies would be delighted to live? Was he going to order his life according to the orders of this moralizing gang? Was he afraid of them? No. But it was not only the Hyperideans: it was literally everybody who (quite rightly) disapproved of the Bailiff. He had for a patron a person who was no better than Capone.

So far so good. But suppose that he now refused to act as his agent, his 'friend', his intermediary, what then?

To begin with, just as he had been able to cause the bank to assign to him large sums of money, it would be equally easy for the Bailiff to inspire the bank with a very

low opinion of him. He could do him a hundred ill turns. If he allowed the envious busybodies to drive him out of this comfortable niche, no one else would be likely to patronize him. The Catholic Church, Guards' officers, snobbish, illiterate, English circles, and indeed *any other* circle in the city, would turn a very cold eye upon him. His books, which had now got into circulation here, would make a very bad impression. They were on the Index down below, and were read and were understood only by the intellectuals. There were no intellectuals here. He was in a trap. Obviously he must stop where he was, become involved as little as possible, and act as cautiously as possible.

His best step at present was to see Mannoek. He would drop around there now in the hope of finding him. In the foyer of the hotel, he was approached by a wizened little man. This was his latest attendant. They went up to his apartment together.

His first question was regarding the health of the Bailiff. His new attendant knew nothing about that. Pullman picked up the house-telephone and asked for the Palace. A secretary replied. The Bailiff was quite well, and had just gone in to dinner.

Next, he examined the little creature who had been allotted him. He possessed a face scratched all over with minute wrinkles. His eyes were mild, dark, and colourless. His name was Jashormit. He would not offer himself as a bedfellow, he could not be adventurous like Pan. The idea, no doubt, was that he was sufficiently advanced in years to be neutral and unobjectionable as a tortoise. How old are you? Pullman asked. The answer was three hundred years. But Pullman thought he was trimming, or 'improving', his age. He informed him that he was going out to visit a friend. Jashormit at once asked if he was aware that a car had been put at his disposal—or rather it was a chauffeur (named Fédor), rather than a

car, who awaited his pleasure. Fédor would always be at the garage; sometimes he could use one car, sometimes another.

Jashormit inquired might he telephone? Of course he might, and soon Jashormit was conversing with Fédor. The car would be at the door in a few minutes.

Twenty minutes later, driven by Fédor, and Jashormit seated at the chauffeur's side, they were in Habakkuk.

Mannock had just finished his dinner, and was sitting down in his living-room when Pullman knocked. Pullman felt that he was greeted rather coldly. He stiffened; he became a little formal.

'I have come to see you, Mannock, on what I suppose may be called business,' he said. 'Are you free for the next hour or so?'

'For an hour . . . yes. I have an appointment with Sir Charles de la Pole-Blessington.' (Not 'Charles' as formerly—oh, he was in the dog house!) 'What is the nature of the business?'

'I will tell you. You know that I had a young man waiting outside for me, from the first moment I was here. Eventually that young man informed me that an apartment had been reserved for me in a certain apartment hotel, the Phaniel Hotel—I was there shown a flat which very few newcomers to this city would refuse. It is, actually, the Bailiff's hotel, and the young man who danced attendance on me was there in the Bailiff's service.—I remind you of these circumstances for a certain reason.'

'I think I divine your reason, Pullman. I may as well say that to my mind you were wrong to establish yourself in those quarters, under the patronage, as it were, of so noxious a person. This morning I heard of your fracas with the Hyperideans. Again, I venture to think that it is not wise to be spying around . . .'

'I was doing nothing of the sort, and I am surprised

that you should accept that story without considering whether it tallied with the character of the man who was your guest. I did not know where we were going until I was actually a hundred yards away from the headquarters of those people.' Mannock was about to say something but Pullman interrupted him. 'No, I do not want to argue about that. Let me come at once to the business, as I described it.—As a result of my position in the hotel, to which circumstance I referred just now, the Bailiff is inclined to confide in me. I do not seek these confidences, but I do not refuse to listen . . . Today he asked me to visit him, and to my great surprise he spoke very frankly to me about his affairs and about the attacks upon the city by Lucifer's . . .'

'The Devil's!' Mannock sternly corrected.

'Very well,' Pullman smiled. 'That is what *I* should call him: Lucifer is the perhaps more polite expression employed by the Bailiff. Well, the storms, or whatever they are, have altered things a little, he tells me. I know nothing about this city. I am merely repeating what this rather shady, but very prominent person said to me, and what this led to. He believes he has some influence upon the spirit he calls Lucifer, and I call the Devil. He believes that he could prevent the all-out attack upon the city which threatens. Lastly, he wishes the Padishah to know this. He thought that Sir Charles de la Pole-Blessington might transmit this . . . well, statement, to the Governor. I, of course, do not give a damn whether he does or not, except for one small circumstance; I would be very pleased if someone would, and could, put a stop to supernatural bickering and cyclonic storms . . .'

Pullman rose. 'As you insult me when I come round here now I shall come no more. Only do, in the interest of all of us, pass on that piece of news.' He bowed. 'Good night.' He wheeled and left the room. Mannock was protesting. 'I say, I had no intention of insulting . . .'

room door slammed, a moment later the front door slammed. After a brief interval an automobile was heard in the street outside, getting under way, and moving to the window, Mannoek was able to see a Cadillac about to turn the corner.

‘Clever devil!’ he said to himself. ‘But he may find that he is too clever by half!’

(XVIII)

IT WAS PULLMAN'S HABIT to have breakfast in his apartment. As he was about to sit down, the house telephone rang. 'Mr Satterthwaite is here, sir.'—'Send him up,' said Pullman. 'Send Mr Satterthwaite up.'

The primitive, very untidy, the unpredictable figure from his schooldays, the eternal fag could hardly have chosen a better time. That statement, it is true, must depend upon why he had come. But Pullman was so anxious to have the advantage of this particular association again that he rather turned a blind eye to the disagreeable possibilities. So he rapidly surveyed the prospects offered by the arrival of his first associate since his resurrection, hazy plans in the back of his mind taking tentative shape. Awaiting the appearance of the juvenile ruffian who hit policemen as soon as look at them, he speculated as to whether the plans he was nursing would be blown sky high by the uproarious entrance of the young thug.

Certainly very little time had elapsed since Satters had been an English schoolboy, when they had first encountered Mannock. Nevertheless, it was astonishing how exactly the same he looked as he entered the door and sat down at the table. Perhaps he had had leisure to examine critically his rough handling of the police. At least one would prefer to believe that this fat-faced semi-baby was not as yet a hardened criminal, whatever he might have done.

Offered breakfast, Satters responded hungrily. When it arrived he devoured it in gulps, his eyes red and staring. He wolfed down successively honey, toast melba, porridge, a yellow fish not unlike haddock, then he sat down with a rather guilty look.

'This is swish,' he remarked, looking around, seeming to avoid the eye of his friend. 'That porter downstairs, Pulley . . . Oh I say! I hardly had the nerve to pass him without saluting.'

But Pullman was not talkative. He watched Satters, and soon noticed the usual signals of distress. 'Come with me,' he said, and led him to the lavatory. It was only after that was over that he began asking a question or two. 'Why are you so hungry?' was the first. The answer to that was that he had had nothing to eat. To that Pullman inquired why. Satters explained: why no food had come his way was because the bigger and older boys got all that was going. Usually at meal times they were given coffee and pretzels.—When was the last square meal he had had?—The answer involved no hesitation. The last time was at Mister Mannock's.

Next came the question, What did Satters want?—Nothing, was the answer. When did he have to rejoin the boys?—Never.—Why was he not rejoining his gang?—Because they were mostly foreign boys: and they were a dirty lot.—Oh, Pulley, they were . . . not like boys but like dirty old men. They had no homes, they never had had. They spent all their money on hooch, then they robbed people. They robbed an old man the other night, and one of them gouged his eyes out. Some boys protested. His eyes were of no use to him, the gang replied. A few of the boys were not bad, but most of them 'were a nasty foreign lot'. He seemed afraid too. There was one boy, a Wop, who had it in for him. He said he would 'get' him when no one was looking.

After more questioning, Pullman asked if he had learned to be a thief. Satters looked alarmed; he said they only robbed when they needed money for food. He *himself* had taken no part in a stick-up. He had been there, but he had not touched anybody. They surrounded a person, and when that person was in the middle of a

'clot' of about thirty boys, two or perhaps three of the oldest boys extracted the money (and sometimes stabbed the victim) or did things to him which made him faint. Satters was one of those who helped to form a thick screen of bodies. Then, as a matter of fact, had a newcomer muscled in and started hunting for money, doing what only a few older boys were allowed to do, the latter big tough savage boys would set on him with coshes and with knives, and probably would kill him. Quite often boys were killed.—It was to this that Satters particularly objected. 'Roughness' he liked: but it must be *fun*. In these gangs, fun played very little part. The leading boys were really no longer boys. They were not interested in fun. The boy who said he would kill him wanted to sleep with him. That was how it began.

Question. Did these boys know anything about him (Pullman)?—Answer. No. They operated beyond Fifth Piazza. Each gang had a territory, after the manner of the North American Indians. So they literally *could not* come up this way.—He had received Pullman's address from Mr Mannock, who 'was very nasty'.

At this point Pullman asked Satters if he would like to resume life with him. Satters appeared overjoyed. 'Oh, Pulley, if you knew how, over and over again, I hoped you would take me back.'

Pullman's next step was to ring for the hotel barber. When this expert arrived, it was clear that, among other things, he was a pathic. He came mincing in, in a white garment, carrying a lavender-coloured bag, with BARBER printed on it in red capitals.

'First I want to part company with my beard,' Pullman announced.

The young barber, with a round-lipped lisp, deprecated this with much gesticulation. 'Oh, why?' he asked. 'It is so cute! I do think you should wait and not do it at once. Let me trim it: and give it another shape . . .'

Satters joined the barber in an attempt to save the beard. But Pullman insisted. They moved into the spacious bathroom, and there his beard was removed. After that he allowed his hair to be trimmed, and then shampooed.

Having stood for a minute or two beneath the sugared shower of compliments emitted by the hair-man, ('You look like a young Viking . . . you remind me of Pelleas in the Opera' and 'Oh for a chin like that! one can see it now—in combination with cool, oh so cool, grey eyes'), he turned the steam off with reluctance; he was bound to admit he especially liked the 'cool, oh so cool, grey eyes' . . . though why must the fellow spoil it by getting so much hair-oil in his voice? But, after more of this than he felt was decent, he said, 'Now see what you can do with this young gentleman.'

The barber did not even look at Satters, he just pushed forward the chair and Satters sat in it.

It was true that the returned fag was not an edifying sight. He looked like a member of an even tougher gang than the one he had picked; he had not removed the cap especially designed for the terroristic children, who had made it feared and loathed.

'We will, I think—if the young gentleman desires a haircut—have the cap off,' the young barber said briskly.

Scowling and flushing a little, Satters dragged off his cap, his ears remaining a bright scarlet for some time. The type of friend Pullman seemed to prefer could only be interpreted in one way, especially by young homosexual barbers. He liked as a bedfellow a young, plump, ugly hooligan. But what kind of hair-cut would be appropriate for this juvenile apache? That was a problem, indeed a teaser.

'Stop,' said Pullman, appreciating the difficulty. 'Let me explain. Less than a month ago this young man and myself entered this city. We were at the same school

together in England. He is a young man of very good family. For the last fortnight he has been running wild, but is now returning to polite society. Agreed, he has not got much of a face. But please cut his hair as if you were performing on the Duke of Windsor.'

The young barber laughed.

'Thank you, I see what you mean,' he said. Evidently Mr Pullman liked the *flesh* but not the chevelure of the boy-apache. He gave him a princely hair-cut and drenched him in delicious scent—Satters attempting to beat him off.

These steps taken, Pullman went to the telephone, was put through to Fédor, and ordered the car, and the Russian answered, '*Tout de suite, Excellence!*'

Pullman turned to Satters. 'Where exactly do the guardsmen and high officers live? Not in this neighbourhood?'

Satters explained; it was a neighbourhood a mile or two behind the palace—not near the Piazza, that centre would be First Circle. This was the largest of the Circles.—'And are there *shops* there?'—'Oh lord yes. Much more swish than those in Tenth Piazza.'

Fédor was perfectly familiar with First Circle; and when they reached it Satters' account of its 'swishness' was confirmed. A military band was playing in a bandstand in the centre, fountains were splashing, and absurdly modish young gentlemen, with impassible military faces, strolled to the strains of *La Bohème*. Fédor was directed to find the best hat shop in this select quarter. Compared with Tenth Piazza the streets were very slenderly populated. Everything you did was therefore conspicuous. As automobiles were practically non-existent the mere presence of a large Cadillac, with a wizened little man seated beside the chauffeur, and an elegant (but hatless) man seated beside a disreputable looking boy, created a considerable sensation. The movements of the car were followed by everyone in sight, and bitterly commented

on, for these military circles were no more able than anyone else to purchase a car, or even to hire one.

However, Fédor, in the dazzling uniform of the Bailiff, whenever they stopped at a shop, sprang out, and stood aggressively beside this unobtainable machine, defying the inquisitive officer-class.

The star hat-shop of First Circle was identified; Pullman entered it hatless, and left it in a black hat, less wide in the brim than the one he had lost, of the most perfect felt, and conforming to the style preferred by the best people. He directed Fédor to a shop in a nearby street. He emerged from this military tailor's in a dark suit of the most startling elegance. Satters was taken to a store or two, and they visited a variety of shirt shops, walking-stick shops, and so on. In two hours' time they were back at the hotel, loaded with parcels, which were brought up to the apartment and distributed on chairs.

When they were alone, Pullman turned to his wizened attendant, who had followed them in. Where, he asked, could this young man sleep? At this question the wizened one was tongue-tied. It was obvious he had supposed that this was a dirty joy-boy in process of transmogrification. Receiving no answer Pullman inquired if a bed could be installed in Jashormit's room. Jashormit beamed. Pullman dismissed him, with thanks for not objecting to sharing his room.

All the parcels were now opened, the contents heaped on tables, and sorted out. Satters had a hot shower, after which he began dressing. In a short while he appeared as an extremely smart schoolboy of the officer-class. It was simply a very well-tailored suit of a material woven for strength, of a lightish colour. It fitted him beautifully. So Satters had become something like an offspring of a high-ranking cavalry officer, aged seventeen (for he had to be promoted one year, in view of his mature outlook). Subsequently, he transported to Jashormit's

room, in a brand new suitcase, all the shirts, handkerchiefs, change of clothes, black mackintosh, change of shoes, slippers, cascaras and band-aids. 'You will be certain to need band-aids,' said Pullman. 'You have at least two cuts already!'

'Let us go down to lunch,' he proposed, looking with approval at his squire. Drawing a note-case out of his pocket, he handed to Satters a note to the value of twenty aurei. 'You must have some money in your pocket. This is of about the value of twenty pounds. Now, as regards your status. You cannot be my fag. Which will you be, my son, or my young brother?'

'Oh, I don't know, Pulley. I'm not going to be your kid, Pulley. We were at school together. We are brothers aren't we? Let us be brothers, only you've got much older. That's right, you are a much older brother.'

'Right. Now let us go down to lunch.'

Looking at the menu, Pullman said, 'How about a cocktail, followed by . . . oh, everything on the Bill-of-Fare.' In the sequel Satters gave a fine exhibition of Nordic voracity, devouring the most delicate dishes as if they had been black puddings or sizzling steaks. When Satters had eaten practically everything on the menu, they returned to No. 400.

'A little sleep, do you think?' said Pullman.

Satters was so heavy-eyed that it would have been impossible for him to remain awake for very long; indeed, wherever he sat down Pullman knew that he would be asleep within a few seconds. Preferring to confine his redoubtable snores to the bed-chamber, he led him in there, waving his hand towards the sumptuous bed.

'Lie upon that, O Satters, and take thy fill of sleep.'

Pullman himself indulged a little on the sofa. At five he had a 'full' tea brought up to his apartment. Satters was soon back in his gluttonous routine.

Satters was very comfortable in the room he shared with Jashormit. On the second morning, when he came down to breakfast, he said, 'While I was washing, Pulley, something happened. I had just stepped out of the shower when Jashormit got hold of . . . well you know what, and wouldn't let go. I had to sock him. He was still lying there when I came down.'

After breakfast they went to Jashormit's apartment but it was empty—Jashormit's miniature suitcase had gone. Later in the day a new attendant arrived. He smiled broadly. 'I am Torg. I hear that Jashormit misbehaved himself. He didn't mean any harm, Mr Pullman, he has old-fashioned ways.'

Torg was a broad-minded young man. 'You like women? I understand,' he said. 'Mr Satterthwaite and I can go down and watch the drilling. The band plays and it is very nice. We shall get on very good, sir, Mr Satterthwaite and me.'

Torg was a muscular young man, the sort Satters liked, and they got on well. They went down among the Bailiff's troops, and soon Satters was on the best of terms with some of the under age warriors.

One day a battalion of the 'Guards' marched down beside the Bailiff's parade ground—band playing, a proper military band, officers on horseback, each man with white kid gloves and white leather beltings, all of them tall, moving proudly and with great precision. The Bailiff's fantastic militia, dressed like performers in a ballet, watched these real troops in silence; afterwards a number of them deserted. They petitioned the Bailiff for regular military uniforms. Their master, naturally, was unable to take them into his confidence.—He could not tell them that if they were dressed like real soldiers he could be ordered to disband them. So he said nothing. And Satters went down into the palace pseudo-military enclosures no more.

‘Why does the Bailiff dress these boys up in that silly way, Pulley? If I was one of them I wouldn’t stop there long.’

Pullman’s plans to take Satters under his direction, to associate himself once more with his ex-fag, proved a success. They went out everywhere together, each with his heavy stick, but Pullman’s deceptively elegant.

(XIX)

THE FOURTH DAY after his reunion with Satters, Pullman received a request from the Bailiff to come over for a chat, the time elevenish. He presented himself as requested; luckily the interview took place, on this occasion, not in the more intimate study of the apologetic Venus, but in a small white-washed room downstairs. It was crowded with papers, even on the floor there were piles of them, and there was a sentry at the door.

When Pullman entered, the sentry was dismissed, and one of the Bailiff's secretaries replaced him, sitting upon a chair where before the sentry had stood straddling.

The Bailiff was buoyant and crowing. He greeted his guest with what had all the appearance of delight.

'My dear boy! My dear, dear boy! how elegant . . . how *young* you look! I cannot believe my eyes that it is the same man that I found grovelling outside the city gates; you have gone back fifteen years . . . and now you are a perfect Beau Brummell!'

'I thought this get-up might be of use to me,' Pullman explained.

'Useful? A beautifully cut suit is one of the most useful things a man can have. How wise you are . . . Also Mr Satterthwaite, we welcome him to the fringes of our household. An angry little bodyguard not to be despised. Ha, ha, you are a deep dog.'

'He was my fag at school,' Pullman told him.

'Ha ha! That is very funny, a splendid little term, I'll be bound. I have hundreds of FAGS, swarms of them . . . but we do not *call* them that! Ho ho ho! A word I shall adopt, my dear fellow!'

They looked at one another smiling.

'I wanted to tell you, Pullman. First, I have heard

from the Governor. *You* were mentioned. The Governor's Office is interested . . . I will inform you, Pullman, of the outcome. Ha ha! Of the outcome or the come in!

Pullman made no remark, but he smiled a little primly.

'The Yenery trouble is in hand. Probably Blitzkopf will be assassinated.'

Pullman looked grave.

'You disapprove?' The Bailiff's face twisted itself into a parody of Pullman's gravity, puritanic lips and all. 'I am very shocked, I, too, most awfully shocked! But it may happen. The Police Chief in the Yenery lost her life. I was very upset. But there it is. The wild women—the wild, wild women . . .! You know the way the song went. A quite sensible, popular ditty, my dear Pullman!' Pullman smiled a little with a correct pursing of the now naked lips, and the Bailiff kept his own mouth as far as he could a replica of Pullman's.

'But I am no Cesare Borgia, my dear fellow. He was a very crude "Prince". Powdered glass in his waistcoat pocket and *ever* so wicked, a Gioconda smile. However—why should a man be allowed to blow off his great big lousy beard at me night after night—in Tenth Piazza, my boy. Yes, that boring old beard, drawing recklessly upon his imagination, and showing an inventive turn which is a little surprising; he broadcasts the doings of an imaginary "Bailiff"—who is so damned wicked that he makes me green with envy. No. I shall go down there to the Piazza tonight . . .'

'Tonight?'

'I built that place, you know, I designed it, and I made it so long that two speakers of excessively different opinions could both blow off steam there without coming to blows. I shall take advantage of that tonight, establishing myself at the opposite end to Hyperides, nearly a mile away.'

‘This is not the camp,’ Pullman warned him. ‘It may be a very rough house indeed.’

‘I shall have a thousand men with me,’ the Bailiff reassured him. ‘Or I can easily mobilize three thousand. I had a bright idea while I was making the arrangements for tonight’s performance. I wonder if you would care to speak, my dear fellow? After their disgusting treatment of you, the other day, you might like to have a slap at them. Quite a short speech you know . . . Just a few words putting these art-student soap-boxers in their place.’

Pullman shook his head. ‘On the earth I never was a partisan. The oratory of Hyde Park Corner left me cold. And, Excellency, I am a newcomer here. I must not rush in to the politics of the place, hitting out left and right. Or do you think I should?’

‘You have nothing to fear from those ruffians, my dear chap; we would protect you in all circumstances. The fact that you are a newcomer is all to the good. Yes, I think you should show those curs that you are not afraid of them.’

‘But I *am* afraid of them. I should extremely dislike having my head broken. And there would be no sense in getting up and attempting to convince them of something which is not true.’

‘You don’t look like a coward to your uncle,’ the Bailiff merrily bawled. ‘It is sheer laziness, I suppose. It would do you good to give your tongue a little exercise.’

‘All the same I must decline.’ Pullman looked very firm, and at the same time, yawned.

‘How wise you are, my boy, how cautious and sensible!’ the Bailiff chanted. ‘It was wrong of me to ask you. You have a better head than I have.’

And so the conversation ended, except that the Bailiff detailed a few of the things he was going to say in reply to Hyperides. Just before he left Pullman said, ‘I shall

be down there tonight, to watch you. But let me give you a final piece of fatherly advice. Give up your idea of answering these people and of going there in person. It is not the right thing to do in the present circumstances.'

Now it was eight o'clock in the evening. Pullman knew that a new drama had started, full of roaring words, of fists flourished, all working up to the great showdown—and the Bailiff was in the field of battle at the head of a thousand men. He was up on his perch, crowing from that iron throat of his, and the bearded accuser was rolling out the prelude of his accusation. These were the first shots. How would it all end—the great clashing of tongues, the towering brains marshalling their ideas and hoping to intoxicate their audience, a sea of armed partisans clustered together? Verbal geysers centred upon drilled lines, heavily armed, with lead in their rifles, with stiff faces, or in the bearded distance chaotically beset with trembling mouths, tired of shouting. What fell out in the Piazza built by the Bailiff depended upon the Police President. Not a cheerful thought for this little desperado!

Smelling of soap so expensively delicious that Satters sniffed, mistaking it for straight scent, the hero set forth, accompanied by Satters, and Torg, disguised in a darker suiting than it was his square-nosed nature to wear. They were to go on foot to the Piazza. They stepped out in silence, moving down the dark street. No mouth-noise need be expected from Satters, and square-noses only spoke when spoken to.

When they had walked for about a hundred yards, Pullman noticed what he thought at first was something alive jumping; he then saw that it was small flames, which were springing about on the ground, a few feet ahead of him.

Pullman walked steadily on, as if nothing unusual

had occurred. The flames continued to frolic around him. As he moved smartly along he attempted to find a reason for this phenomenon. Was it escort by fire? For clearly this concerned *him*; there were no flames around Satters or Torg. Not so much as a spark even. They were approaching a telephone. When they reached it, he commanded a halt. Picking up the receiver he dialled the Phaniel Palace. It was a personal secretary of the Bailiff who answered. Pullman referred to the existence of small flames wherever he moved, but as soon as he started to describe these inexplicable fires the secretary interrupted, saying, that ought not to occur, but that all he had to do to prevent that happening was to exclaim in a voice of somewhat harsh authority 'Sack', and the flames would disappear. The voice sought to set his mind at rest, assuring him that there was nothing to be alarmed about. Evidently the Bailiff had felt that he might need protection. 'This is a quite powerful spirit who is in attendance. In case of danger he can guarantee your safety, for being under the protection of such a spirit is like having a great husky dog for a friend.'

So Pullman said, in a loud and threatening voice, 'Sack', and the flames dried up at once. The confidential secretary had told him that if, after having shouted 'Sack', the flames vanished, this would not mean that the great spirit would leave him—at least, not if it could help it. The cause for the appearance of the flames was, as it were, the making of a little ring around the person to whom this spirit was attached, so as not to lose sight of him. If he were obliged to dispense with the ring of flames, then this protective spirit *might*, in error, be found rushing violently to the defence of Satters, or to someone else not far away.

In spite of his desire to avail himself of the services of this demon, Pullman felt he could not go about surrounded by flames.

As they drew near to their destination, they passed thousands of police, all fully armed, and lorries packed with guards in battle kit. 'Who are these for?' he asked himself. There was only one answer: they were there, because of the military forces possessed by the Bailiff. Staff officers in several cars lay in wait just outside the Piazza itself. In the distance, though it had become quite dark, could be seen a fleet of white ambulances.

Upon the three vast stairs, down which you stepped to reach the Piazza, were a fair number of watchers, passers-by, or elderly persons hesitating to approach any nearer to that unruly crowd.

Pullman had not expected the Piazza to be as it was, and he looked down on it for some time, with fascinated attention. Its romantic quality was not new. The crowds lighted by flares, the crowded balconies, the heavy starlight had been done, or as good as, by Delacroix and other French masters. On the walls of French galleries he had seen such things, sinisterly romantic like this. The hero's face grew stern—it was like a place set for a killing, and his disreputable patron was the obvious victim. When he thought of all the thousands of blades and loaded guns that were hidden, or displayed, everywhere in that dark mass, and then when he computed the massed armament of the police, of the guards, and beyond them the number of hospital orderlies, stretcher-bearers, ambulances, and so forth, it seemed quite certain that they were all bent upon massacre, and who in that arena did anyone wish to kill except his notorious little friend.

This hot-headed little dreamer might be killed in a *mêlée* by Hyperideans, or, in the end, he might be executed there by the police. He should never have allowed things to come to this. It was mad of him to come out now to defy his enemies—this was not the camp. He should have ignored the fulminations of Hyperides. It was childish anger which had brought him out in force

—if it came to a battle, what trust was to be placed in a thousand or so trained men? They were not attached to this repulsive old man by anything that cements men together, such as a religious belief, consanguinity, or personal attachment to a magnetic leader. There was only *esprit de corps*. One does not die for *esprit de corps* when the *corps* is a ragtime body like the haiduks. This little man had outraged everyone in this city, when they were in the camp, and he was popular with no one except racketeers. He would be using the technique he employed in the camp, forgetting how different the conditions were. He had pushed his square nose out of doors once too often.

The lighting of the scene was sinister; the blue and yellow flares, the searchlights of the Bailiff, one of them throwing into dazzling prominence a large group above the arcades, and the flames of the flares, in one case reaching the sky, where the enormous stars contradicted all this agitation by their frigid glare, tipping with silvery light the flame-lit faces below.—It was, Pullman felt, a beautiful melodrama.

The hero-rat, stepping delicately, descended the steps and entered the crowd—a small flame or two darting up at his feet as he did so. He and his two assistants edged their way to a position near the centre of this great course of people, but somewhat to the farther side, in the direction of the main arcade. He did not know why he had come to the Piazza. He was not interested in collections of people of this kind, nor would he go to a political meeting anywhere for choice. He was not here of his own free will, therefore, and did not know what to do once he had arrived, except that he supposed he would listen to the speakers, and draw his own conclusion from what was said and done regarding the outlook for the Bailiff.

There was a moving about and shouting continually.

Of the four speakers he had seen from the steps he was nearest to a small rostrum with a placard announcing *Father Ryan*. The next nearest was Hyperides, who stood well up above the crowd in a sort of pulpit, given as Hellenic a look as possible by the painting of various devices over a board nailed on in front. The Hyperideans had chosen the part of the Piazza nearest to the underground station; and their leader was about one third of the way to the centre, the whole of that part of the Piazza packed with his followers, except for where Father Ryan had attracted a specific Catholic audience. The other half of the square was dominated by the Bailiff and his thousands of troops and followers. But he was on the side where the clubs, cafés, and restaurants, frequented by Mannock, were situated. The Bailiff was thrust up above the crowd like Hyperides; actually he was standing upon so heavy a vehicle that it would be better to call it a truck rather than a lorry. 'He likes a framework,' thought Pullman, for he appeared in the opening of a curtained stage for one actor. It was the same kind of idea as his Punch and Judy show at the Camp Tribunal. The arcade-tops were crowded all the way round. Sir Charles de la Pole-Blessington and many other members of the Cadogan Club were on a balcony not far behind the Bailiff; and this was a hissing balcony as were also the arcade-top balconies running at right angles. Where these balconies approached within hailing distance of the truck (which was hedged in all round with haiduks and other troops from the Phaniel Palace), there were heard well-bred clubmanesque cries of 'rot' or 'tell that to the Marines', or 'go back to Hell'.

The Communist's name was Vogel, who had his modest stand roughly parallel with the Bailiff, and he had brought a sufficiently large number of adherents to fill the area at the side of the Bailiff's troops. In addition to those attracted by one or other of these four speakers,

there were a quantity of sightseers, who had followed the processions starting from different parts of the city, and some local busybodies.

As Father Ryan was the nearest speaker to Pullman, it was to him that he turned first. The organ-note of Hyperides, and the scream of the Bailiff, were deadened by the universal noise, and the Priest's voice was a strong one. Father Ryan was speaking just then of the Hyperideans.—‘The difficulty about Fascists, of whatever kind,’ the Father said, ‘is their salvationist passion. They provoke a religious zeal in any subject they take up, often very trivial. A messianic zeal characterizes them; on that they launch themselves, and that floats them along; they are false Messiahs, therefore, it is necessary to say.—Fascists are great moralists, we see them hunting down and seeking to punish evil-doers. Their enemy is always diabolic, they are experts on the Devil and the forms he takes among politicians, financiers, lawyers, and indeed in whatever direction we look. What may be said to their credit is that what they denounce is usually bad. But the same can be said of the police, and political abuse nowhere goes unchecked. But if what is Wrong is their prey, the Right is also their victim. They have the instincts of watchdogs, but they have as little idea as have watchdogs of absolute value. They are only of use destructively. It is not very difficult to see that a person is a liar and a cheat, born to be dishonest, and the system which he represents is not too difficult to define. Any averagely competent lawyer could do all that they do, exclusive of the tremendous clamour in which they specialize. Now if these hunting-dogs born to bark, are, for the rest, mere automata, and, when they see a priest, bark their heads off, because they feel he is a stranger and must be barked at—if they are as limited as this, then we cannot take them seriously. It is unfortunate that this has to be said, if for no other reason, because

Fascism has in its ranks many young Catholics. Then many people, I among them, have listened to the baying of a certain hound, possessed of a magnificent voice, with pleasure. But there it is.—There is a greater voice than that. To go no farther let me mention the organ in our cathedral—when it is playing a Bach voluntary, the baying of our notorious watch-dog pales and fades, and we realize how limited that deep rough voice was and must always be. Fascism says what the State should have said (but was too enfeebled to say, too sick or too demoralized): but it says it for its own petty ends—it has always been for the glorification, ultimately, of Mr Smith or of Mr Jones, or of Mr Hitler. And those of us who are Catholic know that it is only for the greater glory of God that any great action can be undertaken—that is the only glory that we could admit into our consciousness.’

The hero-rat bowed his head and turned sadly away: for he knew that that was the only voice, in this place of oratory, to which he had any right to respond, to which he would listen with more than a worldly—an all-too-worldly—tolerance. He himself should have turned his back on the world when he was on the earth, instead of bending himself to attract the gifts of the world, which at last had led him to the diabolic filth of that screaming puppet over there. Something attracted his eye, in a fissure of the fairly dense crowd. It was a small flame, darting up at his feet, from the stone of the Piazza. He looked down frowning, and when he saw it again he stamped on it and crossed his fingers.

He turned to his left and fixed his eyes upon the stately head of he that went by the name of Hyperides. (Why *Hyperides*? Because that gentleman liked the classically romantic sound of it,—no better reason than that.)

‘We fight with a rope round our necks,’ came the deep and thrilling voice. ‘We are liked by no one, not even

by those we protect. It is a crime to defend the State—that is a monopoly. The care for the honour of the State is a monopoly, however small the pains that are taken to see that it is intact. Again, if you see a felon in the act of committing a felony, and you apprehend him, that is a grave offence, wherever you commit it: for there will be somebody whose duty it is to do what you have done—just as the welfare and honour of the State threatened by some reptile in half-human form like that square-snitch over there, oh be careful: under no circumstances show that you notice this, turn away and think of something else. It has been with a rope around my neck that I have taken every step in my power to bring to justice that emperor of racketeers, who has built himself a marble palace, and supports a private army, on the proceeds of his blood-stained rackets. Did you hear that the other day the Police Chief in the Yenery was murdered? Who did that, do you think? It was that man over there,’ and he reached his arm out and stabbed his fingers towards the Bailiff, ‘who murdered that poor lady! She had prosecuted his personal agents in the Yenery, and one of his agents came up behind her and cut her throat.’ There was so great a roar at this from all his followers that it was impossible to continue speaking for some minutes. Then he held his hand up and the storm hushed itself, to some extent. ‘That, gentlemen, is the latest of his crimes, and certainly one of the vilest; but his whole life has been made up of violence and outrage, performed with impunity. He has made millions of aurei out of those wretched women, by selling them dope and hooch and everything that was illegal but which, owing to their terrible condition, they would have sold their lives for. He owns Lesbian brothels, a hundred gambling dens, and waxes fat (as you see him) upon the heart-break and the madness which proliferates in that ghastly ghetto.’ The buzz of heated talk and angry conversation

made it again very difficult for the orator's voice to be heard.

Pullman turned about to have a whiff of the Bailiff's oratory. Satters wheeled with him. But at that moment he heard a voice saying, 'Square-nose! Take your proboscis elsewhere, hell-boy. You smell like sin. Get out!'

He beckoned Torg. 'It would be better for you to return to the palace. A witch-hunt is on, they will never leave you alone.' Torg protested that it did not matter to him. But Pullman insisted. Pursued by jeers and threats, Torg wormed his way through the hostile mêlée, and soon was out of sight.

'A beard is not everything. For *me* a beard is a theatrical property, put on by somebody who wishes to pass himself off as someone bigger than he is, it does not matter in the least which you do,—buy it in a shop or grow it on your chin, just the same thing my children.'

The Bailiff with great suddenness disappeared. With an equal celerity he shot up again. Now it was a bearded man who faced the audience. 'I could not trouble to grow one of these things, I have bought one and here it is, just as good as the one which is grown . . . Now let me think what silly lies I can tell about prominent people, who anyway are coconut shies.—Aunt Sallies for zealous nobodies.'

Ever since he had put on the postiche-beard the constant shouting increased to such a pitch that he could be heard no more, nor could the insults yelled at him possibly reach him. A neighbour of Pullman's for instance bellowed, 'It is no good putting on a beard; no one, not even a rat would follow a Square-Nose.' But this would hardly carry more than five or six yards. Every spectator heard his neighbour's insults, but the Bailiff had to take them on trust, kissing his hand all around. The Bailiff did not attempt to speak for a short while, he settled the beard over his ear, with a small comb he worked at it to

make it more fluffy. He chatted with the nearest of his followers. When things were a little quieter he bent forward, and a deep voice issued from the beard—sounding so natural a bass that even his followers looked up to see who it was speaking. Pointing at the bearded figure in the middle distance he ponderously intoned, ‘There is the dirtiest liar I have ever met. He mobilizes every morning a pack of dirty lies, he lets them loose upon some unfortunate official and follows them view-hallooing with all his might. This is a spectacle much to the taste of those who love big bearded calumination of anyone clean-shaven, and clean in other ways, too.’

At this point he ceremoniously unhooked his beard and a clean-shaven rascal’s face appeared in its place. ‘Clean,’ he shrieked, ‘clean as a hound’s tooth.’

There was always a great deal of noise but when the Bailiff thought he saw his chance he resumed his address.

‘Gentlemen!—I did not suppose that a *second* beard would be tolerated in the Piazza. I knew that, as I was *clean* in other ways, I had to be clean-shaven. This is a pity. I have a little mirror here, and I must say, although the beard is not my favourite disguise, I thought I looked rather cute.’

He paused a moment to allow people to get rid of a great deal of extra steam produced by the beard, then he pursued. ‘But that bogus look, which a beard may be depended on to give—that failed to satisfy the gentleman in question. A false name as well as a false beard seemed necessary. He hunted around until at last he discovered what he regarded as the most unreal, the most postiche piece of nomenclature of any he could find, *HYPERIDES*. That, he felt, went with the startlingly large whiskers! Yes, “Hyperides” was quite meaningless, it was linguistically a mouthful, and it was absurdly pretentious.’

There was pandemonium. ‘What is your real name, puppet!’ cried one.—‘Lucifer would be jealous if you

wore a beard in Hades, wouldn't he?' And one bellowed, 'Put your dirty breath in a bottle, and sell it as Hellebore to your compatriots.' And one near Pullman shrieked, 'Bum-face! Here is a roll of toilet paper!' And he flung a roll at his bugaboo, but it fell among the troops drawn up in close order in a *cordon sanitaire* between their master and the infuriated crowd.

Pullman now moved sideways, until he was within earshot of the fourth orator, the Third City Communist. His name was Vogel, and he was a rough-looking individual with the bloodshot eyes of a man whose only diet was Marx and cabbage. At the moment he was rather quietly complaining of the reactionary policy of the Governor, evidenced by the disgraceful inequality where incomes were concerned. How different the incomes allotted to those who had been working people in their earthly life, and to those who had belonged to the professional classes, to the aristocracy or to the bourgeoisie. So privilege was carried over into eternity. 'The workman is condemned to fetch and carry for others for ever; the gentleman is for all time to—live easy, eat well, enjoy leisure, have servants from the working class, the slave-class. Here he is more rigidly confined to his pen than he was down below. The root of all this is in Heaven, where God is treated as an oriental despot, and the angels are His musical courtiers, who sing His praises from morning till night. Our Governor, before he came here, was such a courtier. So his view of life is that of the court in an absolute monarchy.' It was not applause but a roar of furious agreement which greeted these remarks.

Pullman listened for perhaps five minutes longer to Vogel: the Hyperideans appeared to excite Vogel's contempt and anger more even than the Church.

'This band of idle young men, who can find no better use for their time than to affect a fancy-dress. A kind of amateur theatricals it is, and a playing at philosophers.

Many of them belong to the working-class, but they give no thought to the misery of the class from which they come.'

Pullman took Satters by the arm, and they pushed their way towards the arcades, which with some difficulty they reached. Here they were among insurgent minds who objected to the beauty of their clothes. They had to force their way between men inflamed by Vogel's words, whose nostrils snorted indignantly at the scents of delicious soaps which clung to Pullman's underclothes. The dark arcades were relatively empty. Pullman began walking along them, lost in thought. Satters' silence could be relied on; nothing but hunger or a stomach-ache would cause him to break it.

In the arena out of which they had stepped into the cloistered peace of the arcades (relative peace, for the din rushed in at every arched opening)—in this arena were concentrated all the major disharmonies of the contemporary scene on earth. Father Ryan stood for Tradition in Third City, a theocracy of course. Vogel's was the voice of Social Revolution. Hyperides represented the most recent political phenomenon—hated or disliked by everybody. Here was the Fascist, the arch-critic of contemporary society. On earth this newcomer proposed to supplant the enfeebled Tradition, of whatever variety, no longer able to defend itself. So this enfeebled Power of Tradition, and its deadly enemy, the Marxist Power, joined forces to destroy this violent Middleman (a borrower from both the new and the old). These earthly alliances were repeated undoubtedly here, Pullman reflected. The other Power which could be seen defending itself in this market-place, the Piazza, was gangster-wealth at its most irresponsible, represented by the Bailiff.

This was to look at it purely as a reflection of the world. Although it certainly corresponded to those earthly

alignments, Pullman saw that either, (1) the earth was more supernaturally controlled than the living believed; or, (2) here the supernatural dominated everything, the city being ruled directly by God's ministers, and the Bailiff acting under direction from Hell itself. Thereby a situation was created in which Good and Evil battled with an almost Mazdaistic duality. Was one deceived on Earth as to the nature of the struggle forever in progress, did what was supernatural in this struggle escape one as a man? In any case, here you found yourself speedily involved upon the one side or the other; upon the side of God or of His Enemy.

With amazement (Pullman told himself) you discovered that the part you had played on Earth pursued you here, and you found yourself continuing the play. It was made clear to you that the rôle which had been yours on earth was essentially diabolic. To your confusion, your faithfulness to your earthly part in this play led you into the strangest supernatural company.

More and more, as his mind laid bare the ultimate truth involved in these four main opposing philosophies—more and more clearly he understood that the point had been reached at which he was called upon to take a final decision. Should he take the emotional road, or the one indicated by common sense. He realized that upon Earth he had decided in favour of common sense, or, to put it in a more complimentary way, the logical and the practical. He had known that there was such a thing as the Right and the Wrong; that there was no such thing, for a man, as 'Beyond good and evil'. That was merely the self-advertising eccentricity of an intellectual. Christianity apart, these values of Good and of Bad dominated human life, at its deepest level. On Earth, life was usually lived at a superficial level. Fundamental values played very little part in the conduct of life; and that was the reason for the frightful dilemma in which he found

himself; because he inherited a superficial habit of mind.

If this had been Heaven, or if this had been Hell, there would have been no difficulty in understanding what course he should take. Or was this one or the other, or both? Perhaps that was the nature of the dilemma.

But no. This was, in the main, a life, or half-life, controlled by earthly values. Or so it had seemed to him—although here was a turning point, at which he was reviewing the assumption. There was no use denying that he was deeply dismayed.

‘Let me examine a few of the immediate issues, then. I have been denounced by the Hyperideans as a rat. To them I would unquestionably be classified in that manner. Mister Devlin, who is out there in the Piazza, he accused me; he has said that a man as intelligent as myself understands perfectly well how vile a creature the Bailiff is, yet, simply in order to be as comfortable as possible in Third City, I accept his patronage. I come here from Earth, with a Big Name, and I sell my Big Name to the highest bidder. The values behind that Big Name either were of a trivial kind on Earth, or, if they were real and important values, I now betray them in this spectral life—spectral life—as such I think of it. But there is my big mistake. This is no more a spectral life than the life on Earth.

‘Now, as a man on Earth, the various forms of Fascism were the equivalent of Hyperideanism. It had a considerable superficial air of being on the right side; but, as Father Ryan said, when carefully examined its rightness merely consisted in barking at something which was worse than something else; that was all, but it left you in a chaos, and was a deceptive Rightness.’ As a result of these cogitations Pullman decided that he was a dubious and unfundamental rat—the rat of a sect; a creature of their dogmas. Nothing more.

Pullman stepped out of the shadow to the side of the arcade. He stared first at one, then at another of the partisans, as though they might have been able to assist him to reach a decision. But of course, the dazzling light and the deafening noise merely made him more confused; so he returned into the pleasant shadow.

Well, he said to himself, there was still the situation. For publishing with a certain publisher, and for associating with men of approximately the same party as himself, he had not been called a rat on earth. On the contrary, he had received the highest honours, and been treated as an extremely progressive mind. But he was now in a much weaker position, because the person who had singled him out as a friend was undoubtedly an unspeakable black-guard, a limb of the devil, an undesirable acquaintance, and so forth.

‘What is, in the first instance, responsible for these extraordinary confusions, is the introduction of the supernatural into the play, as performed in Third City. What here are archangels or disguised demons, were on Earth simply men and women like ourselves. It may be that they were angelic or diabolic. But this was not visible. So, when you were transported to the scene of Third City, these inoffensive persons with whom you had been associated on Earth were suddenly transformed into supernatural beings, with a strong suspicion of diabolic origin. Or, on the other hand, the most prominent figures on your side in the earthly struggle were transformed into archangelic personalities. There were not, of course, equivalencies of this easily recognizable sort; but before very long these equivalencies, however disguised, began to transpire; and suddenly, as in my own case, you would find yourself involved with a powerful demon, whereas on Earth he would merely be dear old so-and-so, a rich patron of the arts, or a go-ahead publisher.’

Having reached this point of enlightenment, the

question that he, Pullman, must ask himself was: 'Am I now to continue in my earthly rôle, wherever it may lead me—and find myself in the end consorting with Lucifer in person; or am I to go to Father Ryan, to fall upon my knees, ask for forgiveness, and inquire what atonement I can make?' This of course would mean that in future all the actions that he undertook would lead him ultimately to God, not to Satan.

Put like that, how absurd it must sound to a human ear, he thought. It would not do so, however, were the Powers for ever in conflict on the earth to be visibly supernatural. If any side you took on Earth were certain to condemn you to take some prearranged rôle in a highly ethical play in a scene in Third City, then all our actions as living men would be indulged in less lightly.

Outside in the Piazza thousands of men were engaged in a dispute, and they were roughly divided, at the moment, into four camps. The speaker of his choice, beyond any question, was the Catholic priest. But on Earth he had abandoned the Catholic religion; was he now to enter once more into that communion? He should have been able to answer that question without hesitation: of the four speakers he had listened to, it was the first heard by him which spoke to his intellect and to his heart. Yet . . . there was a destiny in this, there was a compulsion from the past.

His life on Earth was the real life. This was not a life at all, but something artificial, in which the values of the life-on-Earth were dressed up in a different way, and manifested themselves with clarity in this sterilized medium. He had lived with the Bailiff upon the earth but had not recognized him. He had built all his success upon Bailiff-like rather than Padishah-like interests; and now, here, the Bailiff had acted as a magnet: he had been drawn in that direction at once. And anyhow, where else would he be in this collection of men? Would he be

a Fascist, mouthing all that stupid, claptrap, moralistic stuff? Would he be attempting to secure a standing in the social life favoured by Mannock? Would he be inflaming himself in favour of equality, under the leadership of Vogel, or playing the part of such a leader himself? No. As he had been instructing Mannock, only some men were intelligent. No other creature, natural or supernatural, could be; and for him human intelligence alone mattered. Yes; the natural—supernatural problem (problem for a man among supernatural creatures) was the essence of things here, it supplanted everything else. Odious and monstrous as the Bailiff was, he was the supernatural element, paradoxical as that might seem, most favourable to man.

Through an archway he saw the splenetic figure of Michael Devlin, who was now in Hyperides' perch, shaking his fist and spitting out acid words, the Goebbels of this outfit.—Pullman stopped; if he continued in these arcades upon his present course he would end up in the camp of Hyperides. He looked at Satters' stormy baby-face, he took him by the arm once more, turned him about, and said, 'Come. We must retrace our steps, circle around behind the Bailiff, and make our exit from this place of tumult at that corner of the Piazza.'

And that was what they did, listening, en route, to their hideous patron roaring inside his curtain, and reaching Tenth Avenue with Pullman in a more morose, confused and irritable mood than had been his at any time during his association with the Bailiff.

XI DIE THE MAN

(XX)

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, as he was struggling to reach the breakfast table in time to escape reproof, Satters noticed from his bedroom window much military activity in the rear of the Bailiff's palace. What's up? thought Satters. Is the old Bailey going to War?

He arrived flushed and foreboding in Pullman's apartment. 'The old Bailey's on the warpath, Pulley.' Pullman looked up surprised, a glance of reproof hurrying across the surprise, and tapping Satters a little sharply, for this was the third morning on which he had been late for breakfast.

'Lazy boy!' said Pullman, 'slothful beast!' Pullman coughed. 'Can't you learn to call that dignitary across the road the Bailiff—instead of always saying "the old Bailey"? Well, what's the matter? Why do you think he is on the warpath?'

'Oo, you go and look for yourself into the drill-yard, *you'll* see what I mean, Pulley. "A" Battalion isn't half being put through it. Sergeant-major Pearson too!'

Pullman appeared to be turning something over in his mind. In a minute he said, a little gruffly, 'Okay. We will have a look after breakfast.'

Twenty minutes later, when Pullman and Satters were walking along by the side of the Palace, an extraordinary tumult was heard through a wide-open window belonging to a large hall at the back of the Palace premises. The Bailiff screamed instructions, he outdid himself in fault-finding; piercing as this was, it was almost smothered by a sound like a truck-train going through a tunnel.

Very gruff complaints surged and rasped up like the protests of a seal maltreated by its keeper. To put a stop to grumbling, two revolver shots barked loudly, like the voice of an hysterical watchdog, and the Master's Voice jumped into a higher register; 'Take that, Rhobinolaw—I told you I would put that in your ugly hide if you went on trying to be funny!' and so stunning a roar succeeded, so massive a howl of reproof, that it blotted out everything else. Bang bang went the Magistrate's revolver, probably discharged at the floor at his side, but sounding as if he were retaliating on the bellow. 'If you make a noise like that no one will ever learn their part, pus-face, mass of complaining mutton—worst of your troupe!'

Gradually a sort of silence established itself. Then a fresh shrill expostulation burst out from the Bailiff; 'Butter-fingers! That is the third time you have dropped that nail, the third time. If I gave you a bar of chocolate you would be able to hold it—here'—obviously there were domestics—'fetch me a bar of chocolate, and saw it down the middle until it is the shape of a large nail.'

There was something like a submerged explosive growling.

'They're laughing, Pulley. That's laughing.'

'Yes, the supernatural zoo is convulsed.' Pullman propped himself up on tiptoe and gazed into the hall. 'He looks as if he were talking to himself. Except that there are unexplained shadows everywhere—sort of shadows.'

'That's them, Pulley. They're always like that, sometimes thicker though. Pulley, I saw one once, I saw one.'

'What did it look like?' Pullman asked.

'I was passing a door. There was something big and black. It moved, and I saw a glittering light which was an *eye*, Pulley, an eye all in the middle of the black. It gave me a nasty look.'

'But what was its *shape*?' Pullman asked impatiently.

‘Nothing, there wasn’t any shape, Pulley. It was like a great big jelly-fish standing on end or something, there wasn’t really any shape—except that it seemed to be taking shape—there were arms, more than one, Pulley. Then I saw its eye.’

‘What shape was it taking?’

‘I don’t know, Pulley. It began to look like a crouching man, oh three or four times the size of me—but the legs, where were the legs, if it was a man, Pulley?’

‘I see,’ said Pullman, ‘but where was its eye?’

Satters began fumbling about on his chest, about level with the nipples. ‘About here, Pulley. No, a little higher up.’ Satters ended not far below his chin.

Meanwhile the uproar in the hall grew brisker. The Bailiff was screeching, ‘Can’t you hold a hammer in that paw of yours?’ He was addressing some other figure, and his tone, though rough, was less violent. ‘Ah, here’s the chocolate nail. Now, you unspeakable nincompoop of a crocodile, take *this* and do not *eat* it! No! Do not put it in your mouth! It is a nail—a nail—a jolly old nail, to nail something with. Blast you—blast you—it has disappeared down your stinking throat! You are a waste of time, you are not worth your keep, you are nothing but a heartsore and a headache!’ The revolver crashed out, time after time, and in a world-engulfing roar the monstrous shadow died and evaporated.

‘Take his place, Simorphi.’ Then came an enormous musical-chairs, and what sounded like a satisfied grunt, probably coming from Simorphi.

‘What is he working at?’ Pullman turned to go. ‘Rehearsing something, the horrible old blackguard—putting his team of monsters through a drill.’

Pullman and his squire had begun to walk away; a shrill whistle came from behind them, out of the drill-hall, followed by a sound like a stampede of elephants.

‘That is the climax, I surmise.’ Pullman spoke rather

to himself than to his striding fag. 'I wish I knew what my patron was contriving.'

They came to a small door in the high wall, the handle of which Satters turned, and invited Pullman to move inside. Pullman now found himself in the midst of a mass of marching and counter-marching men, roared at by a dozen sergeants of the fiercest kind, bristling and bombastic. At that moment a party was given a rest not far from where they stood, and Satters sidled up and had a whispered conversation with a friend, who appeared to be a minor instructor, who kept shaking his head and laughing. In a few minutes Satters slunk back, looking ashamed.

'Well?' inquired Pullman scornfully.

'Can get nothing out of that son of a bitch,' Satters muttered. 'Don't go away, Pulley. There's someone I know over there—it's old Birdie. Wait till he gets round here, he'll spill the beans, what do you bet?'

Birdie, in fact, *did* begin to draw nearer; but his progress was so slow, as he drove his party, barking more and more hoarsely, around the drill-yard, that it was all Satters could do to keep Pullman from bolting out of the little door through which they had made their entrance. At a moment when Birdie was no more than twelve yards away, his bellowing growing nearer and nearer, Satters was obliged to wind his arms around Pullman's waist and push him up against the shut gate, to keep him in position.

'Don't go, Pulley, oh do stop just a little, old Birdie is nearly on top of us—*that's* old Birdie, Pulley, that fat bounder with the blue-black waxed moustache. Hear 'im? He has the biggest voice on the parade-ground has old Birdie—he's like one of those big barkers on the Radio when you've put the volume up too high.'

Birdie was standing now with his large back only a few feet away from where they were struggling. 'Oh Birdie!' Satters hoarsely whispered over his shoulder, continuing to pin his patron against the gate.

‘Stand *ut* . . . ease! Stand easy.’

While his party stood in relaxed attitudes, Birdie about-turned, and his waxed moustaches were now pricking the air level with Satters’ eyes and an expression of masked understanding, a glitter of reminiscent alcoholic mirth, stood in his commanding eye.

‘ ’Allo, Satter boy!’ he rattled softly. ‘ ’Ow’ve you bin keepin’?’

‘Oh, fine thanks, Birdie old mate,’ Satters replied in the same rattle of easy precipitation. ‘What’s the she-mozzle, Birdie? When’s the battle begin?’

Birdie looked woodenly knowing, shooting his waxed moustaches about as if he were signalling to some confederate. He rolled his eyes, gazing down at Satters, attempting to discover how much he knew. Pullman disquieted him a little, but he decided that there was no need for more discretion than necessary.

‘Well . . .,’ he coughed. ‘I guess the old organtones is for it this time, what? I shouldn’t like to be in ’is shoes this evenin’ as ever was!’

‘Got the lowdown, Birdie, on when we pull the trigger?’

Birdie’s waxed moustaches were stiff and still, his eyes were wise and forebodingly solemn. He lowered his voice almost to a whisper. ‘Zero hour’s for one ’arf-hour after old Bailey ’as took ’is stand.’

‘Go on!’ Satters rounded his eyes. ‘All-out attack, what! Oh boy! I wish I were a soldier like you, Birdie!’

Birdie puffed out his chest and glared into the distance.

Satters whispered, moving a step nearer to the oracle. ‘Is it ball cartridges, Bird?’ he hissed.

Birdie looked over his shoulder, scowling at one of his men whom he suspected of listening-in. Then facing ahead again, still with the scowl on his face, he caught Pullman’s eye. A wave of caution appeared to submerge him. ‘No, boy, we shall be in blank, as per usual.’ He



solemnly fixed Pullman with his eye. 'Now I must proceed, Satterboy. Be seen' you.'

Abruptly the sergeant about-turned, glaring so menacingly at his drooping party that they sprang to attention before he had uttered the word of command.

'Now come along, Satters, we must get out of this beastly place,' and Pullman turned the handle of the gate and passed quickly out, followed by his mortified fag.

'If you had waited, Pulley, I'd have got all the dope out of that old Bird. He was cagey because of you, Pulley. He'd have told *me* all right.'

Pullman looked depressed, and at the same time in a bad temper. He said nothing, but, in silence, he hurried back to the hotel. As they moved along together Pullman said, 'I am afraid that our patron is plotting something very dark indeed. Obviously he proposes to make use of his supernatural allies.'

The tone in which he spoke alarmed his squire. He looked terrified. 'What do you think, Pulley . . .?'

'I think . . . I think we shall have to mind our eye.'

It was already night at eight o'clock, and throughout the extent of this vast forum the air was full of the roar of voices, when the Bailiff, almost unnoticed, mounted into the lorry from which he delivered his anti-philippics. He stepped softly, and there was a little smirk on his face which he kept down in the shadow cast by the hood and curtained sides of the miniature mock-theatre from which he spoke. He slid in through the curtains, and was at once exposed to at least forty-thousand eyes. It took some minutes for all the assembly from one end of the Piazza to the other to become aware of his presence. The roar of rage and derision rose minute by minute from the Hyperideans. A low, hoarse, muffled cheer was breathed up towards him from the ranks of his paramilitary

followers, and with a shrill exultant cry he answered them. Battalion 'A' of his Gladiators stood immediately beneath, keyed up to a terrific degree of self-importance. They were fore-experiencing their great act.

Almost immediately the Bailiff drew out of a box, from just beneath the parapet concealing from the crowds the lower part of his body, the beard he had worn the night before. As it settled in around his face he leapt forward, screaming.

'Shout, gentlemen, shout. Blow the stinking wind from your lungs around my head. See if you can blow away this foul assortment of heterogeneous nesting rubbish in which I have nested part of my face like a bird; this sign of inferiority, stuck on around my massive chin so that I should have no merely physical superiority over your leader. He, poor chap, has to wear all that to hide his pin of a chin—the fluff around the pea. But the teeth go well with the beard do they not? And mine flash better than Hyperides' weaker tusks—remember that, when the two beards join in battle. It will be my teeth that close down and dig into the flesh of your master. Yum—yum—yum. He will taste like putrescent fish. (The Bailiff addressed Hyperides personally in a deafening scream.) Listen to me, for a bit, old spout on two legs. You have told more lies about me than you can remember. I bellow back but I do nothing. Now, I am going to act—to act in so dreadful a way that, could you live to see it, your eyes would drop out of your head. 'I have had you thrown out of the city. But you come back, more charged with lies than you were before.

If I cannot whirl you from this world,

If I cannot crack your skull,

If I cannot wrench your entrails out and wind them on
a stout pole,

If I cannot fill what is left over with benzine and put a
match to it,—

Then I'm unstuck, throttled, and corked up for keeps.
Hyper-any-thing-you-like.

You have only a handful of countable seconds to live.
Ask for forgiveness of your stupendous Nothingness of
a God, you microscopic rat who learnt in Ponty-
pridd how to blow yourself up into a pestiferous
obstruction.

Ask pardon of the poop-faced old Image of yourself
multiplied ten million times.

You have a few seconds in which to receive forgive-
ness from the omnipotent Zero.

Shout!—he is deaf.—Blather out your “pardons” at the
top of your voice.

Ask for Heaven, and p'r'aps he'll give you an ice-cream.
Goooo-bye—bye-bye-bye—*cccc*.

Libertine, beg forgiveness for those misdeeds,
Coming under the head of libertinage,
Little matters of Kate and of Alice,
Of Jessie and of Maud.

Don't forget that you have been responsible for the
murder of whole Streets—ay, and at least one
Avenue,

In the Yenery, in that sink of iniquity, your special
preserve, the Hell of the Women; and put in a
prayer for diddling your landlord, for borrowing
money from that poor man;

Then all the misdeeds committed against followers,
money they could not spare—for you are very fond
of money.

You live with your mistresses, like all the Welsh you
are a lecher, and you make those pay

Who stand in the Piazza, applauding your waffle.

You owe me four pardons for what you said about the
foundations of my palace.

You owe me five pardons for the disgusting libels about
the upkeep of my infantry.

And for your scurvy slanders and your inventions about my diabolical pacts with the ruffianly Satan.

May you burn to a cinder upon the grills of Dis.'

The wildest uproar had broken out among those contemptible thousands who supported the prophet with the authentically sprouting beard—whose hand was now thrust out, a denunciatory finger wagging at the end of it, as he hurled his voice out over the crowds, aiming it at the insulting imitation to which the Bailiff had resorted.

'A rat with a beard is still an unmistakable *rat*.'

The Bailiff danced about, protruding his tongue out of the bought beard. 'A little Welsh chemist is still a little Welsh chemist in spite of the hair he allows to grow around his muzzle.'

'Measly little crook, how do you fill your pockets now that the Yenery is full of hostile police?'

The Bailiff leapt in the air with a hyena-yell—'What, Hyperides, have you found no new lies to dish out this evening? Has the source run dry? Can you think of no new slanders?'

There was a rain of cat-calls, and one missile sped through the air and fell with a thud by the side of the Bailiff. The Bailiff squeaked violently into the teeth of the hubbub, 'Taffy was a Welshman Taffy was a thief.'

'Square-snout, go home and pack your trunks! You won't be here much longer. The Sanitary Services will sweep you out of the city, impudent cockroach!' bawled a Hyperidean over the heads of the Gladiators.

'Sock him one, boys!' the Bailiff commanded—and one of the Gladiators, obeying, swung at the shouting man and brought him to the ground, amid a tempest of protests.

Pullman and his ex-fag, as the Bailiff was taking his first bow, were hurrying into the Piazza, making for the rear of the truck which their patron used as a stage. Pullman saw the smirk upon the Bailiff's face, and thought

to himself, 'Obstinate little beast, preparing for your pranks. You are doing all the wrong things, you will bring the whole of your little universe down upon your head.' He had come through the lines of police, and had felt it in his bones that all these waiting officers, with brooding faces, were darkly impatient with the Bailiff; he seemed determined to keep them waiting, and not to take the false step which would precipitate the show-down.

Pullman was heartily sick of this Piazza, but there was a kind of apricot light, and deep blue shadows, a new coloration, something he had not seen before. The smirk he had seen, that foretold action: Mister Square-Nose Pasha was about to spring a surprise. Since Pullman had come really to understand his position in this place, he had developed a personal resentment about any violence proposed by the Bailiff, in which he now knew that he was involved. This mighty little old egotist smirking his way into a new folly made him so angry that he was half a mind to climb up on to the truck beside him, and order him back to his palace. However, he settled down with Satters, immediately behind the Bailiff, at a distance of less than a hundred yards, to await the issue,—very grim, thought his squire, who also, during the last day or two, had noticed a change by no means for the better in his chief. The fact was that ever since Pullman had accepted the fact, that, for better or for worse, his adherence to the Bailiff was unavoidable, although it involved him in a rat-like status, the more critical he had become of this compromising personality.

Tenth Piazza was even more full of people than on the preceding evening, although on this occasion neither Vogel nor Father Ryan was there. The crowds were much more unruly, and the atmosphere more electric. It was, this time, a duel between two inflated personalities, everything else excluded as the climax approached. There could not have been less than forty thousand people

here, almost four-fifths of whom visibly were of the Hyperides ticket.

‘The old Bailey . . .’ began Satters.

‘Oh!’ protested Pullman. ‘You mean the Bailiff I believe.’

Satters looked up smiling, half puzzled. ‘The Bailey’s voice,’ he confided, ‘sounds different.’

‘Different?’

‘Yes, Pulley. It’s trembly. Is the Bailey afraid?’

‘That’s unlikely. I can hear no tremor in his voice.’

‘I’m sure it trembles.’ Satters was obstinate.

Pullman knew that his sixteen-year-old associate imagined things. But just then he thought he heard a tremor himself. No doubt excitement. Or perhaps Hyperides had said something which had made him shiver with anger? Pullman listened to find if any enlightenment was to be received from the raging words.

‘Flossie is a name invented by Hyperides,’ he heard. ‘There is no such name. No such name. As to the letters he is handing round, how easy it is to forge a letter! Not for expert examination—not *that*, but to hand round in a crowd. I will forge one myself, and then hand it round.’ He began scribbling something on a piece of paper, while ten thousand voices sang, ‘For he’s a jolly good forger, for he’s a jolly good forger. For he’s a jolly good for-her-ger, and so say all of us!’

The name *Flossie*, Pullman remembered, had produced a paroxysm of grief, up in the room of the obscene Venus, when the news of her death was brought in by the scarlet messenger. It was obvious that Hyperides was in possession of secret information of so critical a kind that it might quite well have caused the Bailiff to tremble with terror. Would not the next step be the arrest of his patron? It looked as if the jig were up. Meanwhile the distant crowd howled for his blood.

In the rear of the Bailiff’s truck was a mass of uniformed

or armed adherents. Pullman noticed two members of the police come round in the free area between this mass of uniformed men and the arcades—they were very smart compared with the militia of the Phanael Palace. Having consulted a little, they gently and without urgency, pushed their way in among the Bailiffites, and after they had reached a position about twenty feet behind the Bailiff's truck, they stopped.

It was the quietness and discretion of these two members of the police force which attracted Pullman's attention. Incidentally, there were no police in the Piazza. Thousands were stationed just outside, but none had been posted nearer than that.

Once these two stopped, Pullman ceased to observe them: but in about ten minutes there were sudden shouts of alarm. Pullman had been watching several men inside the arcade, engaged in pasting up a notice, but he turned quickly around. The two uniformed police were rushing up the steps placed against the side of the truck. Several haiduks were attempting to hold them back. There was no one upon the truck itself—except the orator, whose attention was fully occupied within the curtained stage arranged for the framing of the speaker.

The second member of the police was being tackled and held halfway up the steps: but the first police-soldier, flourishing his revolver, had mounted the truck, and the Bailiff had faced about, and was retreating from him, screaming something incomprehensible. The policeman now aimed his revolver at him and fired (a very strange thing for anyone belonging to the police to do, it seemed to Pullman).

The Bailiff fell, wrapping the end of the curtain around him, apparently seeking to conceal himself in the heavy cloth. 'He is not a policeman!' he shrieked. 'Kill him! He is an assassin.'

But the first of the men in the police uniform did not

seem able to advance. It was as if he were enveloped by an invisible enemy. He continued to fire his revolver in all directions. One shot found its mark, it seemed, in the terrace above the arcade, and just over where Pullman was standing. There was a shrill scream, and a great deal of stamping about overhead.

At the same time he who had fired the shot, with a cry—again moved by some invisible agency it would seem—soared into the air, his arms outstretched, and fell among the Bailiff's troops. As he did so, the Bailiff left the concealing folds of the curtains, rushed to the back of the truck and screamed down to where his followers were battering the two members of the police force, bogus or otherwise. 'Disarm them and manacle them. Tie them up! Do—not—kill—them! Tie them up!'

The alacrity one would have expected in the haiduks at the time of the attack on the Bailiff had not been forthcoming: this was accounted for probably by the disinclination to join their master as a No. 2 target, and also because of the presence upon the truck of some bulky but invisible bodyguard, sensed by them. Now, with the two would-be assassins to tear to pieces, they were displaying unexceptionable zeal.

Pullman and Satters moved out into the crowd—Satters elated at the thought of getting in a cosh or two. He did in fact vanish for a few minutes into the confusion, then he returned, very pleased, with a police helmet.

'Oh what a beauty!' Pullman approved.

This was one rather like the long superseded *Pickelhauber* of the Prussian infantry. It was a light-weight, light-coloured head-gear, unlike its original, but the spike was there, and in general the shape was the same.

Pullman took possession of this trophy, Satters mumbling protests; he was examining it when he heard the Bailiff's voice, 'Pullman, Pullman, keep that! We will find out where he obtained it!'

He still stood, shouting orders. But a doctor was standing beside him with a hypodermic syringe in his hand, while an orderly was stripping off from his shoulder, which was red with blood, the last obstructing strip of shirt.

‘I will look after it, yes,’ Pullman shouted back.

‘No more speaking today!’ the Bailiff screamed, pointing to his shoulder.

‘Bad luck, sir!’ roared Pullman.

Catching sight of a familiar goatish countenance—all teeth, nay all gums showing, the eyebrows arched extraordinarily high, the forehead thereby compressed into a half-inch wide of furrowed flesh, immediately afterwards he heard the words that went with the face.

‘Very bad luck! I wish I had the pluck of the old Bailey. He is a good old sort, what!’

There are some sights which are worse than smells, to some people. Pullman was one of these in that this ingratiating face made him feel sick.

All the troops in the rear of the Bailiff’s truck were rushing to the right. Pullman saw Hyperideans, halfway down the Piazza, streaming into the long arcade. But now two Gladiators, who had been detailed for this purpose, raised their rifles and fired at the oncoming stream. The Hyperideans attacking along the colonnade panicked, and seemed to melt away. There was now a clear space behind the Bailiff’s truck, and the two near assassins sprawled out hatless, in the middle of it.

Inquisitive about the outcome of these events, yet caution told Pullman that the Bailiff wounded, and in a desperate situation, would in some mysterious way, act; he and his follower ought not to find themselves too near the centre in the final stages of this imminent uproar.

‘It is time for us to push off,’ he told Satters. ‘A match is about to be applied to a keg of gunpowder. We will move aside a little. Come.’

They hurried towards the nearest way out of the

Piazza, at the side opposite to the Hyperideans' attack. They met a police party of about twelve men, come to investigate, no doubt, the two members of their force or the two men dressed in police uniform responsible for the shooting. A number of stretchers were also arriving. They met, as well, a special Gladiator bodyguard, hurrying to the rear to surround their wounded Chief.

'They ought to get him out quick,' thought Pullman.

Suddenly the entire city was bathed in an orange light, which appeared to centre in a smoke-cloud beyond Tenth Piazza near the ramparts.

The Bailiff had shot back into his curtained rostrum. Picking up a tin megaphone, in a tone of hysterical exultation, he shouted, 'Die the man—die the man—die the man.' He paused, and then repeated, at the top of his voice, 'Die the man—die the man—die the man.'

The doctor sprang in beside his puppet-master and seized him by the arm. There was a very heated colloquy, in the middle of which the wounded Bailiff once more snatched up the megaphone, and in an almost despairing voice shrieked, 'Die—die—die—the Man!'

Practically unnoticed at first in the dazzling orange light, a small black cloud began to grow in the air around the figure of Hyperides, until, with great speed, it entirely enveloped him. First, the figure of the Leader disappeared; and then, with a miraculous rapidity, the dark black column of smoke surrounding him thickened to a distance of about twelve feet in all directions.

The Gay Monster, in his dark-curtained puppet-stage, danced like a lunatic, shooting out his arms and tearing off his beard. The followers of Hyperides with a roar rushed towards the black pall of smoke within which their Master was now invisible. Then suddenly the black smoke parted, exactly like two long black curtains being pulled aside. Within, and now visible to all, was the figure of Hyperides, his beard sheared off below the chin,

an enormous nail driven through his throat, behind entering the thick board against which he had stood; on his head was stuck a white pointed hat tied beneath his chin. FOOL was painted on it.

Michael Devlin, with great presence of mind, took this opportunity of impressing himself on the consciousness of the crowd as the necessary successor to the stricken leader. People were milling around the built-up rostrum from which Hyperides had always spoken; but Devlin propped himself up upon a baulk of timber which had been the basis for this structure, and started an inflammatory harangue.

‘How much will you stand for, Hyperideans? What, will you take from that old bag of guts over there—who is dancing, dancing, can’t you see? Having first murdered your master, as he has slain so many other poor people in this city, he now exults—murdered him by his filthy magic!—He is performing a dance of death, a jig of dirty triumph. Watch the little beast flinging himself about—insulting you! Are you going to demand an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—eh? I think you are. I know I am. I will drag the heart out of his body. I will nail it with my own hands upon the door of his so-called palace. Have you a nail? Have you a hammer? Give them to me. Come—I will lead you. We will drag that laughing puppet out of his curtained box—we will stamp the life out of him here and now. We will blacken this Piazza with his stinking blood!’

His words were half lost among the howls of rage of the Hyperideans. Then came the rush, like an avalanche, of nearly thirty thousand men; to avenge their leader, to hammer a nail in the throat of the Bailiff, and burn him on a bonfire which they said they would collect.

Would his bodyguard give way? No. Battalion ‘A’ and, at its side, the trusty ‘B’, had been for some time feverishly anticipating zero-hour, when at last, at least

once in their life, they would be doing what it is the function of a soldier to do—*shoot*. They were beside themselves, most of these young week-end soldiers; their faces were pale and set, they were about to go into action; they waited for the words *Die the man*, which was the watchword. And already the half-hour was past. Then it came, it rang out above them with hysterical intensity. They lost all trace of sanity, they were just a crowd of boys with loaded rifles, they would have fired at anything no matter what, but what they *must* do was to *shoot*. And, if they were blinded with excitement, so were their young officers, who yelled '*Fire!*'

The roaring crowd in front of them was arrested by the line of pointing rifles; then came the flash from the rifles, the roar of the discharges. No one had dreamt of this. A second volley crashed into the thick crowd, until the front ranks had dozens of men staggering about, and dozens too who were writhing on the ground, and as many more who were as still as dolls, who were the dead and dying. Horror! the Hyperidean crowd only wished to escape, and they clutched at one another to get away; but ahead, these would-be soldiers were mad. A third volley tore into them; dozens who, a second before, had been as amazed as they were terrified, were corpses, lying where until just now their feet had been. But the rows of pale faces were looking through their sights at them, taking aim, waiting for the order. How still they were!

'Back—get back!' barked hysterically a loud strong voice. They asked nothing better—but how could they get back? Thousands who had *not* got back were pressing on them. Some covered their eyes, some were crying.

With an astonishment almost equal to that of the crowd, the police, massed outside the arena, heard the volleys. Now they were rushing down the steps, and some had already engaged the Bailiff's men, and a section of Gladiators had turned their rifles on the forces of the

police. Down the steps also were tumbling the stretcher-bearers, and the first were now pushing into the crowd and searching for the wounded.

Picked men of his bodyguard, and the doctor, invading his stage, were, with anxious faces, exhorting the Bailiff to get away. He was standing without speaking, feasting his eyes upon the body of Hyperides still nailed to the board, smiling, as if musing, and these intruders found it very difficult to gain his attention. But bullets began to fly, and then he saw the police, in force, preparing to attack his men. He bent over the parapet in front of him and called to a young officer a short distance below him.

‘Form A and B in close formation, Captain. Get them off the field as quickly as you can. They must not stand here to meet the attack of forces so far superior. I am leaving—immediately.’

Having issued these instructions the Bailiff charged out of his curtains, looked around him as if he were about to dive, muffled himself and seemed to spring forward, watched by the men who had come to protect him, and the doctor, standing in frowning surprise. But as he fell forward he also immediately disappeared—he seemed to fade into the ether. He was no longer there, and the men looked at one another with bewilderment until a sergeant made for the ladder, shouting, ‘Save yourselves, boys! Look slippy—get away any way you can.’

Pullman stood dumbfounded at the extremity of the colonnade; for just as he and his round-eyed fag had been about to pass out of the Piazza the orange light had so magnificently illuminated the entire scene that he had stopped to gaze, and so had become the witness of the forming of the black cloud, and now, silent and terrified, he was the witness of its unfolding. As he saw in the distance the murdered figure of Hyperides, he remembered what they had overheard as they had passed the drill-hall in the Palace that morning. He remembered

the stick of chocolate which was used instead of a nail. He remembered the barking of the Bailiff's revolver, and the violent insistence upon those strange supernatural creatures holding a nail straight and hammering it in where it was meant to go. And now—what was about to happen was revealed to him in the most extraordinary way. Before he heard the fire of the Gladiators, and saw the waving swords of the haiduks, he heard and saw just that. And there was the mad Bailiff, dancing on his six-foot-square stage, and his voice screaming out above the indescribable tumult, 'Hyperides, Hyperides! You have lost your beard, Hyperides. What a little chin you have, brother. The little chemist might be back in his shop in Pontypridd, might he not! Who are you going to get now, oh Hyperideans, to be your leader!'

Next the shooting began. The orange light had faded out, and it seemed to grow quite dark, and to rain a little. Pullman put up the collar of his jacket, and as he was doing this a hot bullet smacked into Satters' calf, and there was a howl of angry protest at his side. Looking round, he found Satters sitting on the ground, dabbing his calf with his handkerchief.

'Let me have a look.' Pullman knelt down in front of the whimpering Satters and examined the wound.

'It was as if I had been pole-axed, Pulley. I thought I was dead.'

Rising, Pullman held out his hand. 'Here,' he said, 'catch hold of this. That won't kill you. You must hobble away as quickly as you can. The first thing is to get away from this bloody place.'

Satters, protesting lachrymosely, allowed himself to be dragged to his feet. Thanks to the haste exacted by Pullman, they covered the ground at a rapid pace. But one of two Gladiators in violent flight struck Pullman in the small of the back, and he was flung forward, dragging Satters down on top of him. Afterwards he con-

sidered this a most fortunate accident; several of the police infantry were potting at the Gladiators, and had he remained on his feet he would have stood an excellent chance of being hit. As it was, his head struck a jagged piece of stone so hard as to knock him out for the time being. He lay quite still; ambulance men who were hurrying along just above him supposed he had been shot. To the stretcher-bearers, who actually thought Pullman a 'deader', as they called it, it did not matter very much, since, in Third City, any corpse which could be collected was destined for preservation, and was, in fact, not dead in the earthly sense. As a result he and Satters were collected, placed in an ambulance, and quickly transported to the Phaniel Hotel.

The next thing Pullman knew was that he was in bed, in a strange room, completely white; turning his head, he saw Satters in a bed at his side. Someone was moving at the other end of the room, beneath a blue light. But his head was aching so much, that he turned over and lay quite still. Then he slept.

It was a long time after that, he supposed, when he awoke. It was daylight, and he knew he was in a dormitory, apparently a hospital. There were several white figures moving about behind a screen; not far away he heard a sound reminiscent of a cock crowing, but doing so with unutterable despondency. It was the Bailiff.

Perhaps an hour later Satters and he were luxuriously fed. Upon the wall was a thunderous SILENCE. They smiled at one another, and Pullman winked. Satters had done justice to his food, he sighed and slept. The ambulance had deposited them at the Hotel, as they found later; from there they had been transferred across the road to the Clinic in the rear of the palace.

XII FLIGHT

(XXI)

ALTHOUGH THE BULLET had passed through Satters' healthy calf, he did not get over his wound so quickly as might have been expected. For some weeks he limped, and while still in Third City encouraged his injury because of the privileges entailed. But Pullman was, in a few days, fully himself again.

During their stay in the summit of the palace, as the guests of the Bailiff, he and his patron talked a great deal, mainly on the subject of his future. The Bailiff was very surprised that no steps had been taken against him so far. While downstairs in the Clinic the nursing staff had the strictest orders to warn the Bailiff of the appearance of any police officers; to wake him up and assist him to the window. Wounded as he was, he would not have hesitated to undertake a very long journey through space, rather than to allow himself to be arrested. But the days passed by uneventfully; the funeral procession of Hyperides had been heard in the palace, as it moved slowly along the main road, the slow rolling of drums echoing for a long time for the invalid in his private rooftop study. As he heard the drums he trembled. But the drums moved away, the air was still once more, and the menacing knocking at the front door in the courtyard downstairs did not materialize. What were all these people doing about this sinister act of his? What made it quite impossible that they would ignore it was its *supernatural* character. The angelic masters of this place attributed any resort to magic on the part of a human being to Satanic complicity, and dealt with it with the

limitless rigours reserved for witchcraft in the Middle Ages.

The Bailiff warned Pullman that it was *quite certain* that some very radical step would be taken. 'They will not continue to allow me to live in the way I do here, after the occurrences in Tenth Piazza. My men have used firearms, many citizens were casualties, the notorious Hyperides was publicly executed, but in a very mysterious way, some of the police were killed, when my men resisted arrest. I shall be tried for all that. Why they are not acting I cannot imagine, but it is quite certain that they will do so.'

To this Pullman listened sombrely. 'And I, your Excellency, what will happen to me do you suppose? There is no likelihood that they will have overlooked my adherence to your cause, and the fact that I am at present living up here as your guest. What will happen to me?'

'My dear fellow, that is what I am talking to you about. Did you think that I was merely talking about myself?'

'No, sir.' Pullman was deferential, though he wondered all the time what the devil he had been doing. He realized to the full what an unholy mess he had got himself into, implicating Satters, in, he told himself, the most heartless manner.

'Now, mee dear boy. Your future! As you have said yourself, your destiny is implicated with mine. I regret it, but there it is. Now, Pullman, I have thought a great deal about this, during my enforced immobility, and there is only one solution. I will have to fly; the best thing you can do will be to fly with me.'

Pullman looked at him without saying anything. He was quite expressionless. The Bailiff waited for some change in this blank poker face. As no change occurred, he continued:

'If I thought that they would forgive you your association with me, I should not be saying this. I should allow

you, my dear fellow' (very throatily) 'to take whatever steps seemed best to you out of this difficulty. But . . . I do not believe that you have any choice. These unexpected circumstances have forced you into a position where the best course to take is to *continue* your association with me, miserable sinner though I am—to go where I go, to exit from this scene in my company. This is the wisest thing to do. You and your young friend, I and my particular secretary, will set out together on a journey I have often taken: you will hardly know that you are travelling in the magical method of transit we shall employ; you will wake up in another supernatural abode, which in some ways is similar to this. I shall look after you. Whereas, if you stop where you are, Heaven knows what they may not do to you.'

Pullman continued to gaze at this horrible, gay, attractive, disgustingly-shaped little being, not even as if he were asking himself any questions, but just scrutinizing his unlovely fate, which was explaining to him how there was no escape from it.

'You stare at me, my dear fellow, as if I were a figure in a book with which it was necessary to familiarize yourself.' The Bailiff crowed, a quiet little querulous crow. 'Let me proceed, then, as if you had conceded my plan was the best possible one.'

The Bailiff appeared to be taking a breather, and making up his mind what to say next. His cue seemed to present itself almost at once; speaking easily, he recommenced—'Is there anything you would like to ask me, Pullman? Is there any kind of elucidation which would help you to come to a decision? No matter what it is—unburden yourself, my dear fellow.'

Without any preliminary movement, Pullman began speaking. 'Of course, I am sure you understand what I would like to know. You suggest that we should come with you . . . somewhere. First of all, sir, I am rather

interested in the method of transport which you propose. If I am right, we are flying through space to another star. Humanly, that would be impossible. Nothing of the kind has been achieved by men; they cannot even fly to the moon. Then, where is your aeroplane?’

The Bailiff watched Pullman narrowly and with a humorous air; he was quite silent. Now he heaved a sigh and spoke.

‘Pullman. I am not a human being. Probably you have gathered that.’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘I enjoy certain advantages . . . certain powers, in contrast with human beings. One of these is a terrific skill. I can make myself invisible; and then, I can throw myself off a rock and fly through the air like a . . . like a . . . oh, a little bird. I have organs and aptitudes which make it possible for me to make great journeys just as easily as a man can walk a couple of miles to see a friend . . . There. I need reveal no more.’

‘Forgive me, sir, you have told me what *you* are capable of doing; but what about me?’

‘I have a drug, Pullman, which I can administer to you, which will enable you, in my company, and in close magnetic contact, to make the same journeys as myself—through the ether, to any destination.’

Pullman sat quite motionless, looking at the ground, for about five minutes. Then he lifted his head. The Bailiff was still looking at him, quizzically, patiently.

‘I don’t see anything for it, sir. I accept what you tell me as accurate. If it isn’t, *tant pis*.’

‘You are a man endowed with logical faculties—which, experience tells me, is a gift not found very often in men.’

‘That is a kind of certificate,’ Pullman said. ‘Now, sir, will you proceed with your story. What is this place like to which you would take us?’

‘Matapolis? Well, first of all, Matapolis is the place

where I was born. Let me be frank; Third City, in which we find ourselves at present, is preferable to Matapolis—the city to which I propose to take you: this is much more tidy, and the goods in the shops are far superior on the whole. Third City is magnificently built . . . I was responsible for a great deal of those architectural splendours you admire, such as Tenth Piazza.’

‘Oh.’

‘Yes. Yes, it is my work.’

‘Congratulations,’ Pullman said.

‘Ah yes. This city is in some ways the finest I know. I can claim nothing of this sort for my native place. No. But there is an old-world charm about that sprawling city, half of it is from four to five hundred years old, much of it far older than that. Do not believe anything you may have heard about Matapolis. It is not, I assure you, inhabited by devils, as the people of Third City are inclined to believe. What our friends here, in this city, describe as “Hell-boys” are no more demons than is a citizen of Alexandria or Istanbul.’

At this point Pullman interrupted—when he had heard the Bailiff speak of the ‘Hell-boys’ he had stiffened. Now he said, ‘Your Excellency, is that old-world city you are describing by any chance Hell?’

‘There is no such place as Hell,’ was the Bailiff’s answer. ‘It is, believe me, a myth. It is very curious how this “Hell” story came into being. But do let me assure you, Pullman, there is no such place. Hell is a stupid superstition.’

Pullman looked very coldly at his patron. ‘Very well,’ he said. ‘We will think of your birthplace as a jolly little seaside town, very quaint and picturesque.’

‘No, Pullman, it is not like Torquay—I do not say that. Let me think now; actually it is like a very miniature bit of Birmingham painted over to resemble Le Havre. The inhabitants I should describe as a rather handsome

people; like myself they have squarish noses, are a little swarthy, of medium build. That kind of squareness about the nose is what, I suppose, identifies them most; every collection of people has its own physical hall-mark.' He fixed Pullman with his eye, but could see no insulting glint in the Englishman's orb, and, after a pause, continued. 'My own father was a Portuguese empire builder. The Holy Synod suspected him of "deviationism", as today it would be called. The wretched man, upon his death, was packed off to Hell; there he was closely questioned; his answers were checked by questioning other Portuguese prisoners, and in the end he was declared to be a by no means evil man—merely a victim of malignity on Earth.'

'So,' Pullman remarked, almost under his breath. 'So the city of your birth is Hell.'

'But what makes you say that, my young friend?'

'That is what you called it yourself, sir.' Pullman did not smile. 'You referred to it just now as Hell, as the place to which the wicked go when they die.'

'Pest,' explained the Bailiff. 'Pool-man! If you could only see the street in which I live, which is rather like Fitzjohn's Avenue, climbing up the side of a hill—only white, my dear fellow, and the houses look rather like cinema palaces.'

'I see.'

'Yes. But if you are determined to think of this rather attractive little residential city as an Inferno . . . well, my dear Pullman, I have no wish to interfere with your perverse imagination. But let me continue to outline my origins. My Portuguese parent remained in this nearby city . . .'

'Nearby what?' Pullman asked.

'Nearby . . . oh, where he first landed; he married a lady of the place—of this homely little city (hence, my dear fellow, the distinct squareness of my nose); he followed the calling of most of the inhabitants . . .'

‘Which is what?’ Pullman interrupted.

‘Oh, nothing much, psychology mostly . . .’

‘A city given up to psychology? That is exceptionally unusual, is it not?’

‘I have always rather felt that myself, Pullman. But he prospered. The father of the lady of his choice was an official. I was born in a very good position . . . very good; we lived in the select quarter of the town—much more select than Fitzjohn’s Avenue. I distinguished myself at the University, and when I came to this city I found I knew a great deal more than most of my contemporaries here.’

‘Are both your parents alive, sir?’

‘*Both* my parents? Heavens, no! How long do you think we live? *One* still rots, as you might say, alive.’

‘I beg your pardon, sir.’

‘Not at all, my dear chap. Let me continue. Third City is unquestionably a low-brow spot. Terribly philistine! But Matapolis is an intellectual centre compared to this! In the first place conditions there are very different; it is more like life on Earth. You see time exists there. It does not move with the accelerated tempo of time on Earth, but it *moves*. I am older today than I was three hundred years ago.’

Pullman sat gazing at the floor. Then he looked up, and said, ‘So there is Time, and there are Women. Radical differences. The noses mostly stick out a little, and form a square look rather like a match-box. They live by Psychology. Psychology. They smell slightly.’

The Bailiff sat up. ‘I say, Pullman, do I smell slightly?’

‘No, sir, quite a lot.’ Pullman smiled broadly . . .

‘I do not see how I can retain you in my service.’ But the Bailiff smiled as amiably as Pullman, for he saw that he had won the day. ‘If I really offend your nostrils, Pullman, you should buy a little vial of eau-de-Cologne. Every druggist in Matapolis stocks them.’

‘Thank you, sir, for the tip.’ Both smiled again.

‘If you agree, Pullman, I will spirit you away—should this great emergency suddenly be there, I will take you under my arm and fly away with you (guaranteeing safe travel and a great welcome at the other end). If you find this prospect frightening, or simply unattractive, and decide to stop where you are, I do not disguise the fact that I shall be extremely disappointed. I have taken a fancy to you, my dear fellow. However, if you prefer to do this, you will be frowned upon I am afraid by the authorities here; also, Pullman, if where I was born is Hell, this is not Heaven. It was founded as a kind of half-way house to Heaven; but it has long ago turned out to be something else. Its only advantage over the place to which I propose to take you is architectural. What perhaps . . . is more compelling than anything else is the practical certainty of an all-out attack on Third City, and Lucifer has some very unpleasant weapons, in addition to thousands of warrior giants as compared with the Padishah’s hundred.’

At this point Pullman held up his hand. Then he spoke as follows. ‘Thank you, sir. I am much flattered by the unaccountable interest which you take in me. But it is not that. I will take a chance—I have decided upon that. I will fly with you, sir, to this little beauty-spot, if necessity arises.’

‘As it will, as it will.’

The Bailiff had played with the idea that some further approach should be made to the Padishah. Meanwhile, he was inclined to assume that his message had reached the ears of that dignitary; that was the only reasonable explanation of no police action materializing. Either the Governor was taking counsel with others, or privately attempting to reach a decision regarding the proposal emanating from the Bailiff. Hence the remarkable patience displayed by the Bailiff, expecting hourly a

communication from the Governor, charging him to begin negotiations with Lucifer, who would call off the storms, and become once more the peaceful neighbour he had always been so far. There had been almost daily storms of some severity; but up to now they had failed to get any results.

When Pullman next found himself alone with Satters he informed him of his conversation with the Bailiff. He had decided, if the worst came to the worst, to do a vanishing trick under the wing of their great patron. He would do nothing to persuade Satters, against his will, to accompany him. 'You must think it over, and do what you think best. It is, no doubt, very dangerous; but there is a great deal of danger in stopping behind. Still, there it is; it might be best for you to stop in Third City, and find friends of your own age.'

Satters was indignant. 'Me stop here, Pulley! You want to get rid of me! You are very unkind, Pulley, but you don't shake me off so easily.' Satters became very red. 'I'll speak to the old Bailey: I'll jolly well tell him what you're doing . . .'

'Don't be absurd.' Pullman laughed. 'All I mean is that you would be quite safe here. They would not bother you. You are so young. Because you are so young and . . . oh, stupid you know, they would say that you could not have known what you were doing.'

'Rot.'

Pullman shrugged his shoulders. 'Well, of course, I would like to have you. But you must not listen to that . . .'

'Rot, Pulley! Balls, Pulley! I'm coming with you, nothing would stop me from coming along. When are we starting? Oh, Pulley, I do think it's sooper! Shall I go just like this?' He pointed excitedly to his clothes.

'I should think so,' Pullman said. 'I shall go like *this*.'

(XXII)

THE BAILIFF was administering the 'Five O'Clock' to his two English guests, something resembling toasted scones as well as the Chinese herb. The Venus had just said softly, 'I beg your pardon,' after having made a most unseemly noise. Satters, the hysterical schoolboy, was convulsed at an obscene remark of the Bailiff: during the few days of his stay in the Palace he had learned to appreciate the foul-mouthed monster, and could listen to the Venus for hours on end—her act seemed funnier every time. Pullman had begun his second scone, with puerile relish. The lift door flew open, and the scarlet messenger sprang into the room.

'Your Excellency, the palace is surrounded by armed police,' he shouted.

'It has come!' said the Bailiff.

Pullman rose, followed by Satters. He moved towards the lift, Satters at his heels.

'Stop!' The Bailiff stood up. 'Pullman, it is too late. You cannot go to the hotel. The police would arrest you. Sit down.'

His two visitors returned to their seats. Meanwhile he picked up the telephone and howled into it. He was issuing instructions for the palace to be barricaded, and 'defended to the last man'. Also, his confidential secretary was ordered to come up at once, bringing with him 'you know what'.

Next, the Bailiff bounced over to the window. 'Pullman,' he shrieked. 'They are there . . . they are all around us. With fixed bayonets.' He was glaring through the window, both palms pressed upon the window-panes, his feet moving restlessly about as though he were dancing. 'There is a space in front . . . there are no

police. What are they playing at . . . what is their game? Why are there no police out there in front?"

Pullman, with exaggerated composure, had finished his tea, and then strolled over to stand beside the Bailiff, looking with a studied indifference into the street. He noted the lines of police, extending as far forward as the front of the Phaniel Hotel. A police tank had been stationed near the hotel entrance. Beyond the hotel he saw more police, apparently on guard around the hotel, their arms held in readiness. As he was looking out, the Bailiff rushed back to the table, opening and shutting drawers violently, squeaking as he did so. But Pullman noticed that it was suddenly growing dark; he turned back and rejoined the other two.

'Is there anything you especially value, my dear fellow?' the Bailiff snapped urgently.

'No, I don't think so.' Pullman's composure, in developing, had assumed an airy offensiveness. 'Have you anything you want to take with you, Satters? if so, be quick, fetch it from the bedroom. Oh, and bring me some handkerchiefs.'

'Hankies, Pulley? the white ones, or the blue and grey?'

'About one dozen white ones, also a shirt . . . it is bluish, Satters! Stuff them into the small leather suitcase along with anything you need.'

Satters shot into the bedroom. Pullman caught the Bailiff's eye, and it looked startled.

'Why is it getting so dark, Pullman?' the Bailiff asked almost hysterically, as if, for some reason, Pullman knew all about it.

Pullman shrugged, looking at the window. 'It does seem unnecessarily dark.' While his eyes remained fixed in the same direction he saw the whole area of the window blotted out, from the outside, by something blue and green. It had curved lines all over it; it looked like

glass . . . it appeared to be lighted from within. Then he saw that it was alive.

‘Somebody’s eye,’ he remarked. ‘The eye is kind of large, is it not?’ The Bailiff stood as if transfixed, glaring at Pullman.

‘Someone,’ said Pullman, ‘of enormous size is looking into this room.’

With a piercing squeal, the Bailiff rushed across the room to a door which stood beside the musical Venus. He wrenched the door open, and the room, which lay behind the door, was visible. At the same moment, the lift door opened, and his secretary appeared, holding a large attaché-case under his arm, and passed into the farther room.

‘Pullman, over here, quick!’

The room became almost entirely dark, as something began forcing its way in. The two French windows had flown open: something was entering the room.

Pullman hastened to join the Bailiff. Satters’ voice could be heard inquiring whether Pullman would like to take his snuff-box.

‘Tell him, Pullman, to come round the other way,’ the Bailiff exhorted. ‘Tell him not to come in here, but to join us at the back . . . at *the back*.’

What had entered the room was now opposite to them, slowly moving forward. It reached almost from ceiling to floor, and was covered with strong semi-circular lines. It was almost touching Pullman, who drew back into the room beyond the door, where the Bailiff and his secretary were standing. He caught a glimpse of Satters in the farther doorway, who apparently was struck dumb at what he saw—at the enormous ‘something’ drawing near to him in the darkness.

‘Hallo, Satters. I say, join us round at the back. Go the other way—don’t attempt to come in here. Back! Back, you idiot!’

It was perfectly obvious what the 'something' was which had invaded the Bailiff's study. It was a finger, but of such vast proportions that it must have belonged to the eye which had looked in at the window. The horny ridge of the nail appeared along the top edge of the body of the finger, which had now all but filled the room. It was quite impossible for the owner of the finger—who was undoubtedly the possessor of the large blue eye—to do more than stick a quarter of one of his nailed digits into the room. But suddenly he began to wobble it about, and a huge wall of exaggerated flesh, with great abruptness, banged Pullman in the face, and threw him back into the room beyond.

The elastic pinkish mass bulged through the door. Recovered, Pullman drew his revolver and, with an oath, fired into it. It vanished with surprising speed.

'You should not have done that, Pullman. Silly boy!' the Bailiff scolded. 'He will pull the house down, you see if he doesn't. If he gives it a good kick . . . if he gives it a really good kick it will be like an earthquake. We shall be picked up among the rubble, shan't we?' The Bailiff looked half-frightened, half-amused.

'Who the hell is he?' inquired Pullman with exasperation. 'Is it the Governor?'

'No, Pullman, it is one of his angels. He has come round to help the police. I wish you had put a bullet in his great blue eye, Pullman. At least he would have had a one-eyed bodyguard in that case!'

'Yes, it's a pity. Hallo, Satters.' Pullman saw the terrified face of his young friend, standing there, the little suitcase hanging in his right hand.

'I was nearly caught, Pulley. I didn't understand what was moving about in the room. I thought at first it was an *animal* . . . I was scared, believe me, I could hardly move; I felt as if I was screwed to the floor. I was shaking all over.'

‘Gentlemen, gentlemen, you must stop chatting. Come and say ta-ta to this remarkable city—for we have no time to lose, gent-le-men . . . le-men. It’s no more fun for me than it is for you. I am leaving this palace that I built,’ the Bailiff dropped a tear, and it seemed at first that he was going to have an emotional breakdown. But he lifted his head, and shook it. He crowed, and then he continued. ‘*Tempi passati*, ah Pullman, Pullman! You understand don’t you, what the old fighter and builder feels?’ The palace shook. ‘Ah, you brigand! Kicking an old man’s palace! Well, come along, we must begin our magical flight.’

The palace shook more violently than before. He drew from his pocket two bottles.

‘This is very precious.’ The Bailiff held up his forefinger. ‘Without this you cannot fly. Hold this in your hand, gentlemen. Hold it tight!’

He handed one bottle to Pullman, the other to his secretary. ‘Here,’ he said, ‘your young charge must drink that.’

They were almost shaken off their feet by a mighty blow the palace had received. ‘Here, quick.’ The Bailiff, nervously clutching Pullman, dragged him towards the open window, clasping him in his arms which were surprisingly long for so short a man, and felt like a vice as they closed around the half-resisting British author.

‘Now, Pullman, drink what is in that bottle.’

‘Well, here goes,’ said Pullman. ‘It is a case of “TAKE ME” isn’t it?’

It was instantaneous—had Pullman been flung into a furnace the reaction would have been immediate and blindingly similar. There was one second exactly as the liquid in the bottle sank into his body, during which the Bailiff’s face became for him a vivid red. Then came utter blackness, as he felt himself hurled through the

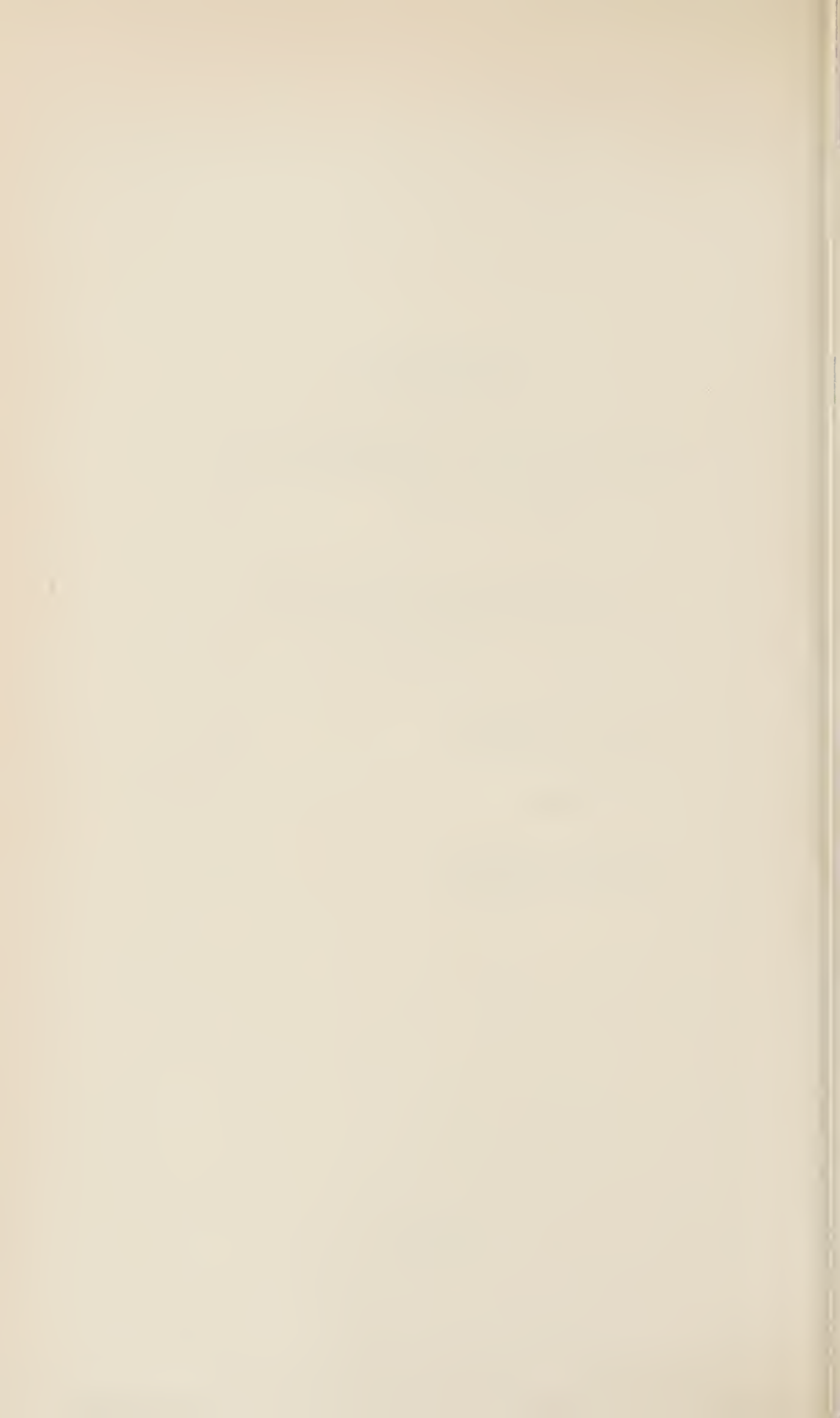
air. Pullman was getting smaller and smaller as they hurtled with increasing speed. He became just a metaphysical appendage of this great pasha in flight from his shaking palace.

BOOK THREE

Malign Fiesta

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I A PARTY OF FIVE

(I)

THERE WAS A SLIGHT, a frigid, mist, but in the monstrous starlight, fading but still visible, something like a scene in a ballet was in progress. The light of the heavens struck, with a ghastly glare, into a defile, or was this what we should think of as an uncouth passage connecting one street with another? A deep trench, or a cutting, had been made, approximately twelve feet deep, having inclined walls of undressed earth, and this cavernous trench evidently served for people passing through a territory very little cultivated, with only a few rose-bushes. But it was not daylight yet.

There were five figures in this deep cutting, who were behaving very strangely. Three of them were suggestive of the Orient, and two Europeans, apparently intoxicated, withstood what seemed to be an attack. The five figures were exchanging hollow buffets, and it was with the actions of a dance that they delivered them, darting hither and thither in an unreal way.

Was this a stick-up by Asiatic thugs, in an Alexandrian suburb, or outside the modern Antioch? Were these three wild-eyed footpads, smelling of garlic and the sweat of many days spent in torrid landscapes, falling upon two British travellers, the worse for drink, perhaps the victims of knock-out drops?

But, should this represent a genuine misadventure, where were the flashes of knives, where the bitter *corps-à-corps*, in the passionate make-believe of these marionettes?

Marionettes! For was this indeed five of the male

performers appearing in a *ballet-moderne*, practising at night one of their breath-taking routines?

Suddenly there comes a halt to surmise. All five figures desisted from aggression, in a manner suggesting that the British had become too enfeebled to proceed. They propped themselves up in a dispirited row, against the high wall of the cutting, on one side of the starlit path. The most diminutive of the quintette, a fat and nervous figure, with a frantic abruptness flung himself forward from the slope against which he lay all but erect, fell upon his hands, and then shot his feet up into the air. The clown of the party evidently; for he walked upon his hands backwards and forwards, and then was heard to crow. After that he stood on his head for some minutes. Then he crowed again, sprang to his feet, and stood, swinging from side to side a kind of bag or satchel. Turning, he started dancing up the lane, swinging his satchel aimlessly to and fro, the others, with much less *brio*, following him.

These five as yet unidentified persons emerged in a minute or two upon a hill, lined with buildings which were majestic white blocks. A car hooted higher up, just before the hill turned to the right, as if announcing that it saw them. The small man danced up the incline, stopping at the foot of a wide marble stair. The steps led to a front door standing between pillars and the house's face was a windowless arrangement of vertical slabs, the centre standing out like a bisected tower, two slits down its sides.

When the small man nimbly mounted the six steps, and pressed a bell, there was a sound like a gong inside. There was a long pause, when again he made the gong sound. There was a further pause, and then the door opened a very little; the small man vanished through the slit. The door was closed.

The small man was the Bailiff. He was almost in the

dark, but he knew his way, and stepped out briskly in this carpeted well, in this lofty, black hall of his ancestral dwelling. Two domestics moved in the darkness, one of them adjusting his collar, the other accompanying the Bailiff towards the rear of the house. A sound of a lift was heard. When it stopped an old lady came out of it in a recess of the hall. Large spectacles were upon her square nose. An anonymity reminiscent of the windowless front of the house marked the falling black segments of her robe, but two hands shot out and she embraced her son. Speaking in a Semitic language, she said, 'My darling little elephant! from what I heard, it seemed that your arrival was to be expected almost at once. And here you are, as full of your little self as ever. Are you well?'

'As well as a man can be who is ruined.'

'Tut tut,' the mother objected.

'I have two secretaries outside. There are also two young men I have brought from Third City. Please put them up for a night or two . . . My bag, please,' he called to the servant, who hastened silently across the hall with his bag. Whereupon the Bailiff led the way into a room facing the lift. The servant left this room a moment later, and made his way quickly into the great opacity, retraced his steps towards the front door, which he opened slightly, and beckoned to the four figures waiting at the foot of the steps outside. When these had arrived and made their way, one by one, through the slit, he closed the door again. Seemingly it was the idea not to allow too big a slice of daylight to dispel the gloom of this windowless tower which resembled another medium than air, which to the creatures within was as necessary to life as the earth's atmosphere is to men.

Pullman appeared to be adapting himself to this unknown medium, with great unsteadiness following the servant into the black hall, and occasionally stopping. He could, in fact, see nothing, but followed the silently

moving figure ahead of him, who stopped when he stopped, and, without looking around, was able to adjust the rate of his advance to that of the following man. Satters was not quite so successful as the servant, for once or twice he stumbled into Pullman, and on one occasion nearly caused him to lose his balance.

This progress, kept on its course owing to the forward movement of a grey silhouette, terminated in Pullman's stumbling into the room where the sepulchral lady and her shadow, the ex-Bailiff, awaited him. In bowing before the figure of the lady, as silent as her servants, he nearly fell to the floor, but was prevented from doing this by the Bailiff, who moved forward to meet him. He supported him for a moment, and then Satters and Pullman rolled down, side by side, upon the same seat. They were brought something green and effervescent to drink. This rapidly dispelled their stupor. The Bailiff, meanwhile, could be seen disappearing in the direction of the lift. Then their hostess came to life. She spoke in broken English.

'You came good?' she said.

'Quite well, thank you,' Pullman told her.

'Good,' she said in French. 'I hope you speak French? I know very little English.'

Pullman nodded slowly, and they conversed henceforth in French.

'Were the stars troublesome?' she inquired.

'I beg your pardon, Madam?'

'Oh yes,' the old lady corrected herself. 'Of course the gravitation is at times difficult. You become a metaphysical being, but all the same there is some kind of gravitation.'

Pullman stared at her. 'Is there?' he asked.

'Gravitation? Oh yes. Canopus is a very great star, and you must remember that Third City is the other side of that.'



‘Good gracious me.’ Pullman stared stupidly ahead.

‘Even with the speed of light, it is a long journey. We do longer ones, and speak of Third City as a “Neighbour”; but it is a long way away.’

The old lady had obviously just risen from her bed. Her toilet had been archaic, but she can never have departed very much from an archaistic shell in which her life now persisted. It was early in the morning and the household had been awakened by their arrival. Her face was of a far more formidable cast than that of her son; with its square beak more protrusive and bony, with her filmed eyes, like those of a bird, and the fierce teeth above the chin like a box, square and jutting, it was a vulpine mask. The metallic silver of the hair, as though of a false white, the awful pallor of the face, the deadly black of the tight mantilla, and the rest of her person suggestive not of a human body concealed by layers of black cerements but of some kind of form crouching there perhaps, a bejewelled claw at times bursting out, she was an evil apparition. This impression was not lessened by the use of the French tongue, for she hissed it, buzzed and rattled it, in such a way that, although she spoke excellent French, she made it seem a language intended to express nothing but terrifying thoughts.

As she spoke of the enormous size of the star Canopus, Pullman saw a vastness, from which his spirit shrank, where the thought of this old being, moving with the speed of light across the universe, elicited the picture of a flashing witch, clutching a metaphysical broomstick in an astral night.

She rose, and slid away through the open door, and there was the lisping of a distant interrogatory. The voice of Satters sounded soft and blunt to his ear.

‘Pulley, what was that old Modom hissing about? She looks as if she had just risen from her grave. I shouldn’t

like to meet her at night somewhere, would you, Pulley?"

'She is not the kind of person that I would wish to see by moonlight or by sunlight, alive or dead, anywhere in the world or out of the world.'

'I have a faint buzz all the time in my head, like an insect flying,' Satters said in an undertone, as if it had been not the kind of thing one would wish to publish.

'You have been a flying insect, my dear boy, for many hours at a great speed. At that of light.'

'Me an insect, Pulley?'

'Yes, your plump English limbs shrunk to a metaphysical speck, to bring you down to a flying dimension, as it might be called. See?'

'Oh!' Satters did not understand, but he looked at him sideways uneasily.

Pullman continued to observe him. 'I too,' he said, 'exist in a dim buzz. My skin is shivering, though I am warm.'

'I've got that too. My teeth were chattering just now, and my nails—oh, it seemed as if someone was fitting them on, you know.'

'Those sensations will soon pass,' Pullman reassured him.

Satters was soothed a little, his master felt. Pullman shut himself off from his companion in order to take stock—in order to gather together his sensations since he had begun to resume his very problematical existence in these new surroundings—to scrutinize them and see what they added up to—these reactions to what was not only a new place but a new situation. First and foremost his new environment—its colour, its smell, its absence of sound, its aggressive suggestiveness of a nothingness which continually grew in intensity was of course not to his taste—he did not like the windowless hall, lit by two small hooded lamps. The eyes of the domestics were

like those of animals existing in the darkness; and there was that faint trace of an odour which he recognized; its association was demonic, it had sickened the air of Fifth Piazza at the time of the meeting of the infernal Embassy and the Padishah's representative, and the Bailiff's parties would have been sweeter if there had not always been a taint of it there. But he was in the land of Hell, and that was the theme smell of that region, he supposed. Then he was not attracted by the Bailiff's parent. These were all reactions of a displeasing kind, and there were no other reactions.

To have his body, however metaphysical it might be, reduced to an almost invisible existence, and then, like the magic of the mango tree, expanded precipitately to the size of the standard humanity, did not leave his reason unimpaired. He thought he ought to wait a little until these effects had worn off; but as far as *feeling* was concerned, he felt as would a man who was climbing a precipice, but suddenly knew that he would never reach the top. He was conscious, here, of the Abyss. There was not vertigo. But, as he had looked at the old woman who had just left the room, he knew that hers was one of the faces of death. He knew that he had made a mistake. But here he was: he folded his hands, and attempted momentarily to enter a blank, as it were, and to forget.

'Pulley!' Satters' voice was tremulous. 'Where are we?'

'Oh, nowhere in particular.' Pullman spoke testily; he did not feel equal, just then, to this responsibility. 'I believe we are in the house of an old woman. We might be worse off. If this is the jumping-off ground for nothingness there are far worse things than nothingness.'

He put his hand on Satters', and thus they sat for some time, perhaps half an hour.

II A VERY SINISTER OLD LADY

(II)

MUCH LATER THE SAME MORNING, at about ten o'clock, they had their breakfast in their apartment, near the top of the uncomfortably noiseless house. They had had three hours' rest—a break from which they had derived only a more oppressive headache. A large tray was brought into the room, and placed upon the table by an unsmiling man, who left behind him the impression that this menial act was disagreeable to him. He could speak no English, and shook his head with averted eyes when addressed in English, French, German, Italian, or any earthly tongue.

The atmosphere of a place where one has just arrived, one judges with most acuity from the people first encountered there. Pullman was obliged to confess that the old lady emanated something so subtly discouraging as to maintain him in a mood of uneasiness, and her servants depressed him even more than she did.

As he returned his coffee-cup to its saucer, in an undertone he declared, 'It is a pity. It is possible that I made a bad mistake in coming to this place.'

Satters stopped eating. His fag's face, obtuse but painfully attempting to understand, became knitted and knotted; his eyes fixed themselves upon the inscrutably lowered eyes of his masterful senior. He wished those lids would rise, so that he could see their expression.

'We should have stopped in Third City, you mean, Pulley, not come here with the old Bail . . . with the Bailiff?'

'It is only an impression, you know.'

‘Couldn’t we go back, Pulley?’ he asked. ‘The same way that we came?’

‘I wish we could,’ Pullman muttered, but he said no more. Satters continued to await some further oracle, but not for very long. The sausages on his plate powerfully attracted him.

Pullman looked with disapproval at the long horizontal window, about five feet from the floor. These windows along the side of the house were of milled glass: it was only at the back that normal windows were found, leading on to a balcony. Except for the windowless front, these buildings appeared to approximate to the European. He supposed that there had been an Oriental city here to start with, and that it was in process of transforming itself—as Spain or Russia had been, at the beginning of the present era.

In about half an hour, the same domestic as had appeared with the breakfast tray made his appearance again, his purpose this time—not obvious at first—to remove it. He was terribly reminiscent of a domestic in a Grand Guignol play. One felt that he might suddenly produce a pack of cards, extract the knave of diamonds, and place it beneath the chair of, say, Pullman, and then leave the room, carrying away with him only the milk jug. He did actually, however, place everything upon a tray, and carried it out of the room.

As he was collecting the coffee-pot, or the butter-dish, he scrutinized for a moment, first Satters, and then Pullman; the latter returned the scrutiny phlegmatically. When the man had gone, the two objects of curiosity looked at one another and burst out laughing.—But Pullman laughed dully, for he knew it was not a laughing matter.

‘He’ll know us again!’ said Satters.

‘Yes,’ Pullman responded, ‘and I, on my side, shall certainly recognize him.’

At this moment the Bailiff burst into the room. He was a breath of the old life, of life in Third City: they both felt drawn towards him, both felt wonderfully glad that he was there. This was a terrifying reflection upon the place in which they found themselves. Quite irrationally, the power he had exercised in the other place radiated him with authority here. Pullman did not even reflect that he might be very small beer in this new environment. He might merely be a well-to-do citizen, and nothing more.

But the 'good old Bailey' would have been a ray of sunshine in his own right, and apart from the fact that he recalled what was now a happier life to these two castaways.

'Hahsey-hahsey,' he crowed, 'methinks I have caught my two little white mice in a despondent mood, *nicht wahr?*'

His two little white mice stood up at his entrance, and Pullman responded. 'Any morning despondency is dispelled as if by magic at the appearance of your Excellency!'

'You are such a courtier, Pullman mee boy! I don't know whether it is true that you find my presence a tonic, but I do know that *you* have that effect upon me!'

'If I could only believe that I acted as a pick-me-up, your Excellency, I should be very happy.' Pullman remained the courtier. 'But is it possible that you are visited by despondency?'

The Bailiff, who had sat down, blew a heavy sigh.

'There are times, my dear Pullman, when space and time seem less resilient. Yes, habit is of quite extraordinary strength. For instance, I awoke this morning in Third City, I believed, and I put my hand out to press the bell to summon my valet. There was no bell there. I recalled where I was. I was not in my palace, but in the maternal residence. I should never see my palace again. I had dreamed I had a palace, thousands of servants, a

sweet hotel in a wood. But that was a dream. I dreamed I was carried along in a litter, to the blast of trumpets and the hammering on the haughty drum. That was a dream, my dear fellow, and a very strange dream to have. Why did I have those dreams? To wake from such a resounding, such a splendid nightmare is a little sad. *Of course* there is such a thing as despondency for those inclined to such splendid dreams. You see, they are the kind of things I like—I like being carried about in a litter to the beating of drums, I am an Oriental, you see. The happy life for you is a very different thing from what it is for me. You would dream—if you could summon what you desired—a wild shore facing the Northern ocean, gulls screaming overhead. Perhaps, for perfection, you would be sitting in a dinghy—the smallest type of boat—dressed, for preference, in the oldest and dirtiest homespun: whereas I would be sitting in an enormous barge, with a hundred oarsmen. I am only happy with many men. You would be happy alone, with the enormous waste of the ocean.—That is why you gladden me, Pullman! Don't you see, don't you see!

The Bailiff rose, a little slowly and painfully. 'Excuse me for talking like this. Forgive me, Satters, my dear fag, and forgive me,' looking at Pullman as it were wistfully, 'forgive me, philosopher! I ought not to have talked about myself in that way.' He sat upon the table, and winked at Satters. 'Yours is an adventurous life, is it not, Satters? Your chief takes you to queer spots, eh?'

The Bailiff crowed lightheartedly, as he swung his little leg backwards and forwards.

Satters blushed, smiled. 'Does he, sir?' he said.

The effect of this conversation upon Pullman was to depress him extremely.

There was a pause, during which the Bailiff scribbled something upon a piece of paper. He put his pen away absentmindedly, then turned to Pullman.

‘It would be better if you both stopped here for the next two days. The police are rather peculiar. If they did not recognize you—and you are obviously foreigners—they would be apt to arrest you. They do not speak any civilized language—you would just be making unintelligible sounds at one another; you understand? In case you are so foolish as to go out, here is the address of the house you are in at present.’ He handed Pullman the piece of paper upon which he had been writing. ‘It is not a safe-conduct, they would march you off and lock you up just the same . . . they could telephone to me. But my fatherly advice is “Stay where you are for the present!”’

All three were silent.

At last Pullman got up, and stood by the fireplace.

The Bailiff had been paring his nails.

‘Will your Excellency receive some important position here?’ Pullman asked.

‘No,’ the Bailiff answered shortly. He added, ‘Not in the sense you mean. There are no such posts. Here, as in Third City, a supernatural being is in control: but not a shy one—anything but. And immeasurably tougher.’

‘Ah,’ Pullman said.

‘The only posts there are here are such subordinate ones that they may be dismissed as *no* posts.’

‘What will you do then?’ asked Pullman.

‘I do not know. I may go to Earth.’

Pullman vividly foresaw the Bailiff organizing the most disgraceful rackets in London or Paris or Naples, and smiled. The Bailiff smiled in answer.

‘Well, why not?’ he asked.

‘It seems to me a good idea,’ Pullman told him. ‘There is a great scope for adventure on Earth. Will you be taking me?’

The Bailiff looked thoughtful. ‘Pullman, that was a joke. Do not let us refer any more to this pleasantry.’

‘You may rely upon my discretion.’

Satters' voice was heard. 'Is it a place here like Third City, sir?'

The Bailiff examined him with curiosity. 'What have you in mind, young man? No, this is entirely different. You cannot do the things here you can do there. This is a quiet little place. The people are very serious. A fiend, as you call him, lives here, and he is very strict.'

'It is hardly the charming little burg you described,' Pullman ever so slightly remonstrated.

'Have you seen the fires of Hell so far? Is this street not a normal street in a modern city?'

Pullman was silent.

'I really did not recommend it as a health resort. But in a week or two you will know all about it, and we will discuss it then. Now be patient, and amuse yourselves in this large house for the next forty-eight hours. *Au 'voir*, my children, bye-zee-bye-zee.'

He bounced out of the room, all fluttering fingers and twinkling eyes.

The morning was spent in preventing Satters from disappearing into the Slough of Despond. They lunched with their hostess. On either side of her square nose were two deadly cold black eyes: but this black immobility was very easily broken up. She did not appear to be bored at the presence of these two youthful strangers. When Pullman said to her, 'Your husband was a Portuguese?' she seemed to crack into pieces, and burst into a hysterical cackle.

'Did *he* tell you *that*? The little elephant!' She dissolved into more explosive cackles. 'It was very naughty of him.'

'What,' Pullman murmured, 'what, Madam, was your husband? You don't mind my asking, I hope.'

She recovered almost as suddenly as she had disintegrated. It was with much snobbish hauteur that she announced, 'My husband was a high official. A very high

official; he was the Supervisor of Dis. There is no higher post.'

'What, Madam, is Dis?' Pullman inquired.

'Oh yes, it is where people are punished for their sins.'

She was not interested to conceal anything. She babbled, without any consciousness of censorship. Pullman only availed himself of this in a very limited way, lest he should incur the displeasure of the Bailiff. He did say, however, that he could not understand why the police would arrest them at sight, and she explained that at once.

'There are no people in this city other than those doing Dis work. The police would think you were two sinners who had escaped. There are only Us and the Sinners—and you are not Us. See? Soon you will be seeing the convoys of newly-arrived Sinners from Earth. They are guarded by many police. It is hardly possible for them to escape. Escapes from Dis have been known to occur. No one could get very far however. The police are vigilant.'

'Ah!' declared Pullman. 'Ah!'

'What you mean, *Ah?*' the old lady demanded.

'Oh, I meant *Hum.*'

The old lady burst into shrieks of antinomic merri-ment. '*Oh you!*' she howled. 'If you were a Sinner, and I were your guardian, I would tickle your pretty feet, and draw out your banter.'

Pullman looked at her with alarm.

'Would that be legitimate?' he asked.

'*Bien sur!* I could shorten your tongue for an inch or two if it seemed to me too long.' She fell into a paroxysm of sadic mirth.

'I seem responsible for strange fancies in your mind, Madam.'

'Oh no,' she protested. 'We always talk like that here, it is *de la taquinerie*, that is all. You see, we have all had

other human beings in our power. If you are fond of another person it is natural to think what you would do to him if you had him strapped down on a pallet in a punishment cell. We always imagine ourselves with scissors or hot irons in our hands!

‘You are trying to frighten me,’ Pullman told her.

‘Oh no, Mr Pullman!’ and she violently shook her head. ‘When my husband came home from working, in the evening, if I chattered too much he would say, “I was working on a woman today who talked too much. What do you think I did? I handed her over to the surgeon, telling him to arrange her mouth, to cut her tongue in strips, or shorten it and block up her sinuses—to do whatever was necessary to reduce her to a point where she can only just make herself understood. The surgeon answered, “Very well. But that may make her more troublesome than ever.”—To this my husband answered, “Then I will get you to cut her tongue out altogether.” You hear?’

‘Oh yes.’

‘Well, Mr Pullman, that was not said in order to frighten me. It was a pleasantry.’

‘I get you. These things are such a commonplace that no one supposes another is seeking to intimidate when he refers to *charcuterie*, which plays such a large part in his day’s routine.’

‘That is what I mean, Pullman—do you mind my not saying Mister?’

‘If you had me strapped in the punishment cell, would you call me Mister?’

The old lady let fly with a ferocious cackle of clinical mirth, ‘Ah, *then* I might insist upon the “Mister”.’

Pullman turned to Satters, and said with a wink, speaking in English, ‘This Modom wants to call me Pullman and leave the *Mister* out. Shall I let her do that? Would you let her leave your *Mister* out?’

‘Yes!’ The old lady had a lighted eye riveted upon Satters. ‘What you think?’

Satters looked from one to the other. ‘Why not call him Pulley, Ma’am?’ He was feeling familiar with this old lady, although she nearly made him sick by what he intuited was her table-talk, a talk which took all the colour out of Pullman’s face, and seemed sometimes to upset him.

‘Fine, Satterthwaite.’ She spoke her English, ‘Good boy, you, good boy.’

‘Do those who devote their lives to the punishment of sin,’ Pullman inquired, ‘*never*, in domestic life, forget where they are? Do they, for instance, begin punishing their wives?’

The old lady paused for a moment. ‘Mr Pullman,’ she then said, ‘let me give you a piece of advice: you must be careful not to let your tongue run away with you. It is best not to indulge in *mockery* of our way of spending our lives. It is not *funny* to punish a man for helping to liquidate a sacrament, or making a habit of simony.’

‘Madam, please. Thank you for your benevolent intentions, but I am not likely to do what you suggest. Remember that I was brought up by the Jesuits.’

‘Hum.’

Pullman laughed. ‘What does hum signify?’ he inquired.

‘It is synonymous with *hah!*’ the old lady croaked. ‘But let me answer your question about the effect of public life upon domestic life. Our neighbour,’ she pointed her jewelled finger towards the wall, ‘is a very famous surgeon—all his work has been with the Sinners. Well, he had a wife who was notorious for her nosiness.’ She shuddered. ‘We learned one morning that he had cut her nose off. He had momentarily believed that she was a Sinner.’

‘I can see how that might happen.’

‘That is the kind of remark against which I was warning you—let me finish my story. When she left the hospital the surgeon put another nose on her face, which everyone agreed was much better than the first. *And it was not an inquisitive nose.*—Do you see?’

‘Yes. It is the moralist—the moralist with the knife—in family life.’

The old lady nodded her head thoughtfully.

Pullman burst out laughing.

‘You laugh, Pulley. You have no pity for that woman, who lost her nose. Hum. The joker is as cruel as the moralist.’

Pullman protested vigorously. ‘Please. It was the moralist I was laughing at, not the wife of the moralist.’

‘It is most unsafe to laugh at the moralist, in the moralistic Matapolis,’ Madame Heracopoulos airily grated.

The whole time, this old witch is threatening, Pullman said to himself: so there must be no free-speaking in Matapolis. There can be no intelligent conversation. He considered it rather lucky that he had had this uninhibited chat with an intelligent inmate of this place.

As if she had overheard his interior monologue, Mrs H. spoke. ‘The way you speak, Pulley, is very amusing. People do not speak like that here. It is only Sinners who speak like that. Sometimes they are very amusing.’ She fixed her spectacles on her nose, and affected to examine him. ‘Perhaps *you* are a Sinner. If you are, my dear, I wish I were younger. I would greatly enjoy being in a punishment cell with you.’

‘How horrible, Madam.’

‘Not at all. I have been much more attracted by Sinners than by members of our social circle. I used to wonder whether I had not some sin in me. I was allotted once to a woman whom I found very graceful and intelligent. She was a great Sinner. It was a Sexual Sin.’ She paused and looked at Pullman. ‘I will not tell you what

I did to her—how I disfigured her first, and gutted her psychologically afterwards. I was praised for my work by the . . .’ She spluttered with laughter. ‘You would say by Satan! He threw her shell to the . . . the wolves, for he said she was a very great Sinner. Horrified as I was by her sins I felt that I could like her very much if she had not sinned against the angelic world—if she had not been so filthy. We must not forget that we were intended to be semi-angelic. There are foulnesses which particularly offend the angelic nature, which is so naturally pure. So I had to look upon this woman as steeped in sexual foulness, every bit of her. But she spoke . . . well, so wisely, that I, who am only a very little angelic, at times faltered. At times I faltered.’

Pullman listened with a growing misery. What an old liar the Bailiff was! What was his purpose in bringing him here? He could not guess what could have made it worth his while to burden himself with Satters and his own humble personality. Of what use could they be to him? What were they supposed to do in this *galère*—what possible *good* motive could he have had? Unless the Bailiff is mad, and has lost his sense of reality?

The Bailiff had assured him that Hell was a thing of the past . . . what would he say if he confronted him with the reality, as divulged by his mother? Would he brush it aside, as an old woman’s hallucinations? Would that be his line?

After she had stopped speaking he still sat there meditating. He had become unconscious of her presence.

Satters was shuffling restlessly. Though understanding nothing of what his chief and this old hag were talking about, since they were speaking in French, there was much telepathic activity, and he had become afraid of something, he did not know what.

Pullman became conscious of a sound like the distant rumbling of the tumbrils (he thought). But after a moment

or two he understood that it was the aged woman, whose mirth was on the way. It was the muffled rolling of the phlegm, heralding an hysterical discharge. He had not long to wait. There was an outburst, which involved the use of her handkerchief, clearing the path for some deep shrieks of venerable wildness. She rocked backward and forward. When she had full use of her breath again, she spoke.

‘Pulley, I know you will not like it, but you are behaving now exactly like a Sinner, when they first understand what is about to happen to them. They hear a piercing shriek, or the groans of someone in the next cell.’

‘Do you believe, Madam,’ Pullman asked almost violently, ‘that I am going to be tortured?’

She waved her hand impatiently.

‘How can I say? I do not know anything about your sins. For that matter, I have no idea why my little elephant brought you here. He does such funny things. He has not confided in me. He may believe that you could enter the punishment service . . . you cannot stop here unless you enter that service. There are only two kinds of people here as I have said. The Sinners, and those who . . .’

‘I see. Perhaps his Excellency will explain to me, now, what he proposes to do with us. For I am not alone.’

They both looked at Satters, who looked back in terror at them.

‘He is not old enough to be a Sinner,’ she observed. ‘What is more, he is not going to develop beyond that inoffensive age.’

Satters burst into tears.

‘Satters, my boy, there is nothing to cry for, please, Satters.’

‘Does he always do that?’ she asked.

‘It is his habit, when too much badgered.’

'We have plenty of cry-babies among the Sinners' (she was informative). 'They have spasms of self-pity.'

'Poor creatures!' Pullman stretched himself nervously. 'A sore trial the Sinners must be to their angelic attendants.'

She gave an expressive shudder inside her laces and alpacas.

When they came out into the large, dark, windowless hall, inhabited by two mournful domestics, Pullman understood what had at first been so mysterious. Now he was in possession of the key. What had been vaguely sinister was now plain sailing! This was the towering ante-chamber to the domesticity of an ogress. The two grey-faced domestics brooded all day, no doubt, upon delicious Sinners, subtly robbed of their beauty, or gallant gentlemen, reduced to whimpering shadows of themselves. They might still hold in their pinched nostrils the perfume of some outrageously impure descendant of Eve, whom they had dragged by the hair into the punishment cell, or they might prefer, during the long hours of servitude in this mausoleum, to remember the blood that wiped out the sins of the men of many races. And when they had seen these two little strangers enter the hall, in the company of their 'young' master, they must at once have speculated whether these were Sinners, about to be subjected to private rites. The Bailiff's protégés had not seen the cold glare of anticipation, but Pullman, at least, had registered the violence lurking in this cemetery of Sinners, each executed spectre cemented into the ghastly minds of this pseudo-humanity, whose life was death.

(III)

WHEN THEY REACHED THEIR ROOMS, Satters, with the air of a dog who had misbehaved, furtively eyed Pullman. Then, seeing that the latter was silent, he burst into apologies.

‘I’m sorry I made a silly ass of myself, Pulley. I don’t know why I did it.’

‘Yes, what was it upset you after all?’ asked Pullman.

‘It was your face, Pulley. Your face got so pale, your expression . . . well, I’ve never seen you like that before. What was that old devil saying to you, Pulley? I knew by the way she was laughing that something was wrong. I can’t explain why, I just had an odd feeling, as if I was alone in a little room, and someone was there with a cosh. . . . That old girl gives me the creepy-weepies.’

Pullman patted his squire upon his worried-looking hand. ‘You must not take the old humbug too seriously. She is our Bailiff’s mother, remember. Her conversation was so repulsive that I felt sick at times. I can quite believe that I looked frightful.’

Satters looked at him incredulously, but he cheered up.

‘Another time I shall just cat,’ Pullman sighed. ‘That would not frighten you, would it?’

Satters beamed. ‘No, I should laugh. If the old girl makes you sick that is the best thing to do.’

But Pullman had a lot to think about: he could not do that under observation by Satters. So, alleging sleepiness, he went into his bedroom.

Lying down on the bed he started a thorough substitution, in his general picture of this place, of the new for the old—the new being, of course, the information acquired at lunch. Why the Bailiff had not wished them to go out had become crystal clear. The entire community,

in this little city, was wholly engaged in what was described as the 'punishment of Sinners'. All the houses in the street in which they found themselves were the residences of some inquisitor, some highly placed master of torture. When the Bailiff had described this as a quiet little city, that was correct. But he had not explained what it lived by, what was its main industry. There had been one piece of negative information, namely that 'Hell' or 'Inferno' were altogether things of the past. This appeared to be incorrect. Why had this old crook misled him? What had been his idea in bringing him to this horrible place? Pullman asked himself idly whether the Bailiff, as he still thought of him, had any kind of scruple as regards himself? (He did not suppose that poor old Satters would be taken seriously enough to excite a scruple.) Had he any plan at all, this 'little elephant', for preserving their liberty?

Why the Bailiff had brought them there must clearly have something to do with himself: he must believe that Pullman would be useful to him in some way. The ex-Bailiff had, on the other hand, since they had been here, assured Pullman that he—his Excellency—had nothing to look forward to in this shambles, in the way of a post. He had mentioned that he might move to Earth. At the time he had thought that that might be where he would next propose to transport Pullman.

If that were his design, what would be the attitude of this community of fiends to such an expedition? Nor had he any idea how a much-lamented corpse of yesterday would be received upon Earth. Pullman gathered that he did not know enough, as yet, to be able to see very far into the future.

On his return, shortly before dinner-time, the Bailiff was in extremely high spirits. Pullman presumed that this must be regarded as a good sign for Satters and him-

self. There was some excellent wine for dinner. Pullman indulged in this, and affected to be more under its influence than was in fact the case. The Bailiff's reaction to the spectacle of an elated Pullman (a reaction he, Pullman, would closely observe) might betray something. But however closely he watched, nothing came to light. He was talking principally about old days in Third City—a very jocose treatment of phases of his career. He made no secret of the extent to which he had fooled the Governor. It struck Pullman that, in retrospect, the Bailiff was merrily continuing to discuss what had been the subject of his conversation elsewhere, earlier in the day, perhaps earlier in the evening. The old mother seemed to be greatly enjoying the narrative of her 'little elephant's' rogueries. For there was no denying that he was a little rogue elephant, if he might be identified symbolically with that species.

After dinner they played a game of cribbage. That continued for a little, and Pullman ended by having a pocket full of the currency of Hell. It resembled very nearly the economic system of Third City. The sight of the familiar Roman coinage delighted Satters. They went up to bed in a rosier mood. The sleep of both doubly 'displaced' persons was wonderfully sound.

A repetition of events on the first morning now occurred. Immediately after their breakfast tray had been removed, the Bailiff burst hilariously in, saluting Satters with a kiss on the top of his head.

'I learn that he wetted his cheeks yesterday, with inexplicable tears.'

'Not inexplicable, your Excellency. He has much to grieve about, has he not?'

The Bailiff looked, with what appeared to be real surprise, at the rugged, pinkish face of the youthful wanderer.

'Has he cause for grief?' he inquired.

‘Your mother was very frank yesterday as to what was in store for us.’

The Bailiff had an irritable gesture. ‘She has no idea at all what is in store for you. That was to be decided. These are questions to which she has not access. How silly she is!’

‘However, your Excellency, the account you gave me of this little health spot was not quite accurate, was it?’

Once more the ‘little elephant’ became hilarious. ‘Do not worry your head about that, Pullman. Just be patient.’ Nothing further was revealed. He vanished merrily, all fluttering fingers and dancing toes as before.

There was going to be another day of waiting, without any concession to the fact that they were much better informed now—which, of course, made waiting considerably more painful. What the ‘little elephant’ was busying himself with Pullman could not guess. Was it anything connected with Third City, or was he visiting high dignitaries of Hades, or had he commercial interests here or elsewhere? They must cool their heels in this white-washed private prison. What did the frivolous ‘little elephant’ imagine that they did to distract themselves; play leap-frog, or hunt-the-slipper? In spite of skit-tishness, it was probable that he had a good deal to preoccupy him, and whether his pair of tame white mice found time heavy on their hands or not was not a priority consideration, it must be supposed.

When lunch-time came, Pullman and the aged gossip once more engaged in chit-chat. He decided to extract more information. Their hostess, it might be, was the Bailiff’s medium, by means of which they were apprised of the true shape of things hereabouts. He supposed that the Bailiff felt that his mother might as well, in her table-talk, open their little eyes, otherwise they might have expected to be installed in something like the Phaniel Hotel. The sooner they realized how extremely

different it was, the better. So, taking her to be a licensed informant, he started by inquiring what race it was occupied this metropolis of inquisition.

‘We are known as Nephhalim,’ Madame Heracopoulos told him. ‘That is a Hebrew word, of course. You perhaps have heard how a great many angels grew tired of the sterility of their life in Heaven, and, when they established themselves, in some sort, on the Earth, according to the view of God Almighty (as you call him), most improperly had carnal intercourse with women. Eventually a race of giants came to pass. We poor little square-nosed persons were the outcome. We have enough of the angelic and the supernatural in our blood to cause us to differ from men. We live much longer, to begin with. Our relation to the material universe is of a different kind altogether from that of men—although we eat and drink and . . . do other things, just as they, oh . . . you understand. We cannot be killed so easily. It is amazing how easy men are to kill. In punishment cells, you turn round and find that the man or woman is dead.’

‘Really, how interesting,’ Pullman was, in fact able to detach himself from his present situation sufficiently, so that his inquisitive mind reacted in a lively way to the description of this peculiar people, so similar superficially to men, and yet so superiorly endowed in many ways. ‘We are fragile, compared with you,’ he said. ‘It is evident, is it not?’

‘Yes,’ she agreed. ‘That is unquestionable. Our nervous systems must be very dissimilar. I remember in the early days, when I had little experience of Sinners, I began working on a woman. I was removing the cuticle from her buttocks, so that she would be unable to sit down. I had given her a local anæsthetic. When the anæsthetic began to wear off, and she found she was unable to sit down, she lay on her side and appeared to go to sleep. But five minutes later—I had been talking

to a colleague, and was not attending to my patient for about that time—there seemed to be something unusual about her. Then I discovered that she was dead. It was fright, I suppose.’

‘Or boredom,’ Pullman suggested.

‘Boredom?’ she asked sharply.

‘All I mean is, that when she realized that you were beginning to torment her, and that life as she had known it was at an end, she may have wished to be dead, don’t you think? It may not have been shock, but the will-to-live may suddenly have ended; especially if she had been a woman for whom having the skin peeled off her bottom maliciously was so unlike anything in her experience that there was nothing to live for.—Not only is our nervous system very dissimilar from yours, but also our psychology is profoundly different. That is self-evident. For instance, the conversation we are having glaringly demonstrates that.’

‘I do not understand you,’ she said darkly.

‘Of course you do not. We both think and feel in an entirely different manner, Madam.’

‘How so?’ she asked sharply.

‘If I spoke to another human being as you have been speaking to me, the other human would regard me either as a brute, or as a madman.’

‘Are you calling me a brute?’ she squawked.

‘No,’ he soothed her. ‘How can you think that? Of course I do not. You are not a human being, are you? I do not expect from you human reactions. In fact, I vividly anticipate an exemplary inhumanity.’

‘Thank you,’ she wheezed dubiously.

‘Let me explain. I am a human being, like the Sinners who have been tortured by you all your life. Now I have come among you by accident, as it were—under the wing of your son. Right. Now you at once begin freezing my blood by telling me how you and your

fellow-citizens spend your lives in tormenting people of my sort.—That is what human beings would call *inhuman* or just bad form. But, as you are not human, it would be ridiculous to call you inhuman, in our sense of that word, would it not?—Do you follow me?’

The old woman burst into a loud cackle.

‘I see what you mean, Mr Pullman!’ she stammered out. ‘You mean that I thought of you as a Sinner. That is it, that is *it!* Well, that is true, I did. All along, I have thought of you as a Sinner. I have, in my mind, undressed you, and perhaps handed you over to the surgeon to have you emmentulated. I should want to cut the masculinity out of you, to start with.’

‘What a good idea,’ he laughed ‘inhumanly’.

‘Then I should administer cantharides to a beautiful girl Sinner, and lock her in the cell with you.’

‘Brilliant!’ he cried.

She frowned, and was silent.

‘You have human emotions you know,’ he whispered.

She looked up, brightening.

‘One more question,’ he pressed. ‘You referred to your race as “square noses”. What did you mean by that?’

‘What did I mean?’ she repeated. She looked a finger around her nose. ‘Why, our noses are square, are they not? The great archangels who are here are extremely personable—very much so. Their noses have a square form, in every case. There are no “Roman noses” as you English call it. The Semitic nose is nowhere met with. We inherit our squareness, Mr Pullman, from the great angels. Why, the angel you call God, he has a great square nose as well. When he and Satanael worked side by side, in the golden clouds, in the beginning of the world, it is said that one said to the other, “Have you noticed, brother, that everything in the universe is round—the sun is round, the clouds are rounded, our

limbs are rounded, our bodies, our heads, are rounded. Only our noses are square?"' "

Pullman and the inhuman old harpy laughed naturally together for the first time.

Satters, although he did not understand a word of French, found himself in the end crying in sympathy—this time blubbery with mirth, because the others were so uproariously afflicted with the ridiculous.

‘Le voilà qui est encore en larmes,’ she cried. ‘Quel enfant gâté! Etes-vous homosexuel, Monsieur Pullman?’

‘No.’ Pullman shook his head, then with his hand, he wiped tears out of his eyes. The uproarious lines left his face. ‘Can you explain,’ he asked her, taking no further notice of her impertinence, ‘how it is that you are exactly the same size as men? Your origin suggests that you should be taller.’

‘There is a very learned man here, he is President of our little University. I asked him that very question once. He gave a good answer, I think. “All over the Earth,” he said, “whether in Africa, Asia, Europe, the height of men varies between six feet or a little over, and five feet, or a little over. Evidently that is the appropriate height for a man. Titans are another matter. But the angels, who are titans of enormous size, can reduce themselves quite easily, and must have done that to have sexual intercourse with a woman. The “giants”, who were the earliest offspring of these, would assume for good the height and habits of an average man, and so they would arrive at us.” ’

‘Thank you, Madam. It’s all quite clear. You have angels here, have you not?’

She waved her hand out of the window. ‘Over there, back there is a hump—I will not say a hill—upon which live upward of thirty thousand angels. Every week they resume their full heights and all are marshalled outside the city. It is a tremendous spectacle, this mass of great

giants. These are a few of the original rebel host which left what you know as "heaven" with Satanael—Sammael is the name we use for him here. They have all reduced themselves down to something considerably over six feet, and all live in houses of a normal size. It is a big colony out there, Sammael living on the outskirts, where he has his office building too. Most of these supernatural beings, living as men, are chaste. Sammael is very puritanic, and does not like to see women in this colony. Even as daily women, or as cooks, he will not tolerate them. Men do all the domestic work. Most of these old comrades of his, as I say, think and act in conformity with this strong prejudice against women entertained by their leader. Should one of that society of comrades break the unwritten law, and take a woman to live with him, he is obliged to leave it. He goes to some place, hundreds of miles away, where also there are angels, but not so particular.'

'Thank you, Madam. That is very interesting.'

They had got through the lunch and moved into the drawing-room, where they had coffee. Pullman noticed a copy of a book by Mauriac.

'Oh,' he said, picking it up. 'You are able to get French books. But you must find it very difficult to read them?'

She looked up angrily. 'Do I know French so little?'

'No. Of course not, Madam. What I meant was that the psychology of people living in society on the Earth must be so alien to you that it must constitute an insuperable obstacle to understanding, or, at the least, to enjoyment.'

She looked at him dully, her expressionless eyes seeming to aim blows at him. He turned his head away. This strange old square-nosed squaw could hand it out, but was not able to take it. Hers was a one-way world.

The day went by, hectic and monotonous, with Satters'

nervousness developing hourly, until by nightfall he was proposing to leave the house, and see what things were like down in the city.

‘You would be arrested within a quarter of an hour,’ Pullman told him.

‘Why?’ Satters asked. ‘Why not give it a try? You mustn’t believe everything that old woman says, Pulley. I don’t trust that Modom, she has her eye on me.’

‘Has her eye on you? Only when you cry. Well, anyhow, it is as you like. You will find yourself in the jug, and you will be lucky if you don’t end among the Sinners.’

‘Sinners my arse! I’m going. You can stop with the old girl.’

‘O.K., Satters. You know best. They will cut your nose off to start with, then they will take the skin off your behind, and then . . .’

Satters grew very pale. ‘Pulley, that is why you get to look like you do, when she is talking to you . . . isn’t it?’ Satters spoke no more of making a sally into the unknown.

That evening the Bailiff came in late, and Pullman had never seen him so despondent, and so taciturn. At dinner he talked a good deal with his mother, in the language of the place—and in a low voice, so that the domestic could not hear.

All he said to Pullman was a few words, spoken as an aside. ‘Things have not been going as they should, I am afraid, Pullman.’

That was all he would say, and they went to bed under the shadow of the Bailiff’s ‘fear’.

‘I shall cut my bloody throat,’ Satters declared.

Pullman said nothing. But he thought it might become necessary.

(IV)

IT WAS ALWAYS within a quarter of an hour of the removal of the breakfast tray that their fate was settled for the next twenty-four hours. They began to learn to expect the appearance of the bounding little Bailiff, and to hear from him his decisions. But he did not bound in at the appointed time on the following morning. It was a serious (but not a morose) Bailiff who entered their room and sat down. He was very neatly dressed in a sort of black *kaftan*, on his left breast a star.

‘I am going to take you now to see the Devil in person,’ he told Pullman, without even a smile. ‘You must learn to think of him as Sammael. It was by that name that he was known when he lived on equal terms with God in the beginning of the world.’

Pullman bowed his head.

‘There is nothing terrifying about him in appearance. You will get on quite well with him.’

‘Pulley!’ Satters’ voice was low, in piteous appeal.

‘It is all right, Satters,’ said Pullman, with a gentle smile. ‘There is no danger at present.’

‘Yes, Satterthwaite had better stop here. We shall not be more than about one hour.’

As the Bailiff’s head was turned away, Satters shook his head violently.

‘Could not Satterthwaite come with us—sitting by the chauffeur, if you think that is better?’ Pullman asked.

‘Yes, certainly.’ The Bailiff was still unsmiling. ‘We must start at once. Are you ready, Pullman?’

Pullman went into his bedroom; he took up the comb and arranged his hair so that it fell in the way which he regarded as the most becoming. Then he returned. They all three went downstairs in silence. The Bailiff sat with

Pullman, Satters sat beside the inscrutable chauffeur, who did not even look at the youthful Sinner.

‘This is a very much greater angel,’ the Bailiff said quietly, ‘than the Governor in Third City. We consider him the greatest being in the world. For whatever reason, he likes being democratic. That is all I need say.’

‘You have said enough, your Excellency.’

They stopped at a large, white, windowless house. There was a short paved path leading to it, across beautifully kept grass. Then there were three wide steps before the front door, outside which stood several armed police. The Bailiff and Pullman advanced along the path, the Bailiff spoke to one of the police officers. This man fell back, and they mounted the steps; as they did so the front door slowly opened. A domestic appeared within, and he led them across the modest hall to a double door.

Had Pullman not been so elaborately informed regarding the terrible inner life of this city, he would have approached these doors with very different feelings. When they entered the room, which was a medium-sized office, a tall dark man rose from a swivel chair, in which he had been seated before a desk, and allowed his eyes to rest upon the stranger. Pullman cast his eyes down, and his mouth assumed those strict and staid lines, which were survivals of his religious youth. What he had seen, before he lowered his eyes, was a classically handsome, young middle-aged man, the regulation six-foot-three of the angel, heavy shoulders, of superbly athletic build. His head was thrown back; it was large, with thick, dark, well-ordered hair. His face was a pale mask, with strong black eyes which said nothing, but contained a conventionally amiable light, the lips smiled slightly. What he most looked like was an American of high managerial class, Indian blood, perhaps, accounting for an invincible severity.

The thought which formed inside Pullman's mind was: he is not engaged himself in the 'Sinner' business.

'I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr Pullman,' a deep, gently growling voice said. A large warm hand grasped his. 'If you don't object to shaking hands with the Devil!' and the same easy unruffleable personality rolled out a strong engaging laugh.

'Here, sit here, Pullman,' he heard the Bailiff's voice. And he sat down. Then he allowed himself to look up, with a sociable smile on his face.

'Though I am delighted to see you, Mr Pullman,' the great historical figure observed, 'I cannot imagine how, or why, you got here. Having reached a perfectly pleasant place, I mean Third City, *why* you should have succumbed to the wiles of our friend here, I cannot guess.'

Pullman looked smilingly towards the Third City potentate, who seemed somehow extremely small in his very ample chair: he had the air of diving his head down as if avoiding a blow, and when he looked up there was something so like despair upon his mobile face that Pullman looked away.

'Well, sir,' he answered Sammael. 'I understood that at any moment Third City might be destroyed; and there was the fact that I had been more or less identified with his Excellency.'

'He is a very attractive talker, I know, but I hardly, myself, would go to Hell with him!' Sammael beamed at Pullman, but appeared to avoid looking in the direction of the attractive talker.

'Well, sir,' laughed Pullman, 'upon my home planet, I might have acted differently. Is there no way of remedying . . .'

'Of course what we could do is to transport you back again. But the worst of it is that you are a writer. And indeed, you are a satirist . . .'

‘I could give you every undertaking not to speak, much less to write . . .’

The disarming Fiend, however, laughed, and said, ‘The trouble about that gentlemanly undertaking is that I do not possess your engaging credulity.’

‘I do assure you, sir . . .’

‘No, Mr Pullman, we must think of something else.’ The superb host rose, and came around his desk.

‘Gentlemen, let us move into another room. We have got as far as we can today in this matter. Come with me into a more comfortably furnished room, where we can talk more at our ease.’

The visitors waited for the urbanely august presence to pass out of the room, and then they followed with alacrity. They moved to the opposite side of the hall—but more to the rear. Soon they were in a small room which could only be described as *cosy*—so paradoxical an epithet to associate with anything belonging to the Devil! But Pullman felt that the suavely inscrutable being who was receiving them was highly conscious of the paradox: and then he caught sight of a basket by the side of the fireplace, and noticed that something in it was moving. He bent forward, and saw, with a new alarm, that it was a fair-haired child. He sat back and caught the eye of Satan—a warm, inquiring eye, which had been lying in wait for his.

‘It is an orphan,’ murmured Sammael (to adhere to the name insisted on by the Bailiff).

‘Indeed!’ exclaimed Pullman. ‘How kind of you to look after this little girl.’ And as he said it he was thinking that probably this monster had been responsible for the elimination of its parents. Why did he give refuge to the child? Just sadism of some kind.

He found that both of them were looking at him, and then the Bailiff whisked *his* eyes away, as if frightened. Pullman allowed himself to gaze with just the correct

amount of sentiment (he judged) upon the attractive little face.

‘How charming!’ he said softly. ‘Children inhabit a world like a perpetual dream.’ He stooped forward and stroked the flaxen head, and then he reminded himself that he was behaving as though the child had been a dog, and drew back as if to dissociate himself with his recent gesture.

‘Mr Pullman!’ It was with a rather sharp accent that his name was produced. He looked up quickly and saw that Sammael had his hand upon his largest and best-known book.

‘You see, I was lucky enough to secure this: I have been reading it. It depresses me. Is the world so evil . . . and so ignoble?’

Pullman’s heart sank: but he sat up quickly, and did his best.

‘I fear, sir, that it is. Often I have had that said to me, almost in your words. My answer must always be the same: I did not make the universe: if I had I should have made it differently.’

The answer appeared to please Sammael. ‘Neither did I, nor he whom you call God. But it was my old companion who had the bright idea of starting the race of men, by means of Eve. It was over that we quarrelled. For he was a very bumptious man and wanted me to applaud his handiwork. That was the last thing I could do. There was no *battle*, of course, as it is always represented. I simply left him, and many of my friends came with me. I consider that this race of pygmies, who, with their beastly women, live a clownish and sinful life—that to be responsible, in part, for the creation, and for the protection of this ignoble species, proves him whom you call God to be of an inferior nature. I told him so, and he shrank from me. He realized his base and un-intelligent action.—But once I had established myself

elsewhere he asked me to help (in a sort of scavenging capacity!). Ever since I have meted out punishment to man and to woman. I am not sent anything like enough of these disgusting little beings. And there are fewer Christians every year. It is rapidly becoming an Earth swarming with nothing but Sinners—an eventuality which the buffoon known as “Almighty God” might surely have foreseen! As it is, men become more depraved every day—more vulgarly sensual, more grotesquely wicked. The spectacle of some little creature attaining to depths of dirtiness unequalled in the past, and actually believing he can deceive me, revolts me. There are some who think that, since they are dealing with “the Devil”, after all, their devilry may be sympathized with. Their way of reasoning is that to set a thief to catch a thief is not a very sound proverb: for will not a couple of thieves, or a couple of dirty blackguards, be apt to put their heads together. They are not intelligent enough to be suspicious of legend: not intelligent enough to say that, just as all those with whom we are at war are *devils*, as in politics, so in religion, the Devil, “the Adversary”, may be a very different person from what he is represented to be.’

From the basket at the side of the fireplace came a scream so piercing that Pullman jumped: it was followed by the despairing cry of ‘Maman maman maman maman’. And there it stopped, for Sammael had sprung across the room like an enormous cat, and covered the child’s mouth with his hand.

‘Alaine, tu fais de vilaines rêves, n’est-ce pas, ma petite?’

Sammael, with wonderful alacrity, lifted a hypodermic syringe from a metal box, plunged it into the child’s arm. ‘Te voilà qui retrouve ta maman, dans les songes, n’est-ce pas! Va, ma chatte, toujours de belles rêves et à tout a l’heure, ma petite Alaine!’ Sammael rocked the

child in his arms, crooning to it in what was obviously its native language.

Would it be possible to imagine a more tender scene! But the diminutive scream, so piercingly plaintive, and the *mother-cry* which followed it, had made so violent an impression upon Pullman, that the soft, gruff crooning and lullaby (in combination with an ever-ready hypodermic syringe) produced a disagreeable effect of phoniness upon him. Everything was so rapid. The next moment it seemed Sammael was there in his chair again, looking at him. Pullman just had time to register the leap, like that of a noiseless cat—then the large and steady eyes were gazing into his. They did not find in Pullman's the appreciative sentimentality which was expected. There was coldness instead—the chill of disbelief, which he had not had time to conceal, and in the eyes of Sammael appeared a temperature so icy that, as the eyes of the visitor registered this terrible climatic change, his cheeks whitened as his eyes fell.

However, without any transition, the warm, social, rather guttural voice of Sammael made it clear, that, if he had been dangerously chilled within, there was to be no change at the surface. 'That little girl is an orphan; her parents were monstrous Sinners, recently executed. But the child, of course, is incapable of sin and I hope will never fall into it. I was disinclined to leave her to the tender mercies of the punishment staff. Man is not a merciful being. I will shelter her for a while, and then see what can be done about placing her with some relatively kind woman.'

'It is very kind of you to do so much,' Pullman murmured.

'Oh, hardly that,' Sammael said. 'The men I employ are such frightful brutes.'

'That is no exaggeration.' Pullman heard the Bailiff's voice. The words seemed to dislocate everything for a

moment. Pullman looked up at him in astonishment, but his miserable little face made him turn away.

The pleasant voice of their great host seemed to have hardened momentarily, as he said, 'Well, let us change the subject, Mr Pullman. Let us talk about Monsieur Pullman jeune.'

'Not a very interesting subject, sir. Above all to you, with your vast knowledge of the human brain. What is a human adolescent, an immature fledgling man? What is more dull than immaturity, and human immaturity at that?'

Sammael laughed softly.

'Why are you so humble?' he inquired. 'There is no animal so *arrogant* as man. Are you a new kind of man, Mr Pullman? Have we, with you, an entirely new variety? That will be very interesting.'

'With you, sir, I am not arrogant, I assure you,' Pullman said at once. 'The majority of men are excessively stupid. With *them*, no doubt, I develop arrogance. But that is not *pride*. In your company you will detect no trace of anything but a proper humility.'

'That is a very adroit answer, Pullman . . . if I may drop the Mister.' Sammael smiled in a cordial way. 'I can say that, for myself, I am not *arrogant*. But then I know too much to be proud. The conceited are very small, are they not? The conceit of some of my Sinners would amaze you.' He turned to the Bailiff, and said something in the speech of the locality. The Bailiff's face lighted up, and he answered in the same language, with a scornful laugh. It was the first time the old light-heartedness had appeared on his face since their arrival.

The host rose, saying, 'Gentlemen, I have to go to a conference now. Come and see me again, Pullman; I will look around, and find you some suitable occupation. Meanwhile, you cannot stop with our friend here. There is a place which is not, I am afraid, the Phaniel Hotel:

it is a very poor place. But it is an apartment which has two comfortable beds; it is run by a friend of mine, who speaks French, who will bring up your breakfasts, and provide you with anything you want. He was chef for the Police Officers' mess, and he is capable of cooking a good beefsteak, or excellent pancake.—It is free.'

Pullman thanked him, this famous supernatural being, not with effusiveness, but in a manner in which he intended to convey profound gratitude.

When they were once more in the car (Satters had beamed with relief as they came down the flagged path), the Bailiff said, 'When he spoke to me just now, in our language, he told me how a Lieutenant-General, showing a great deal of side, had turned up a week before. He only exchanged a few words with him and then sent him into the surgeon, who cut all his fingers off at the knuckle. He was brought in to see him three days later, fingerless. All his side had gone!—You see, Pullman, he looks at men and their fingers in a very different way from you. He has a poor appreciation of the material you would say. His heart is of gold, but it is so *large*.'

'And a finger is so small, is that what you mean?'

Pullman looked at the now piteous face of the great dignitary of the city from which they had taken flight.

(V)

‘ET B’EN VOILÀ, M’sieur *Poul*-man, notre boîte n’est pas luxueuse. Il n’y a pas de punaises, M’sieur *Poul*-man, il n’y a pas de bêtes. La luxe vous ne trouverez pas chez nous. C’est entendu. Mais cuisine française—et bien cuisinée—se trouve en bas, et si la cuisine ne vous plaît pas vous n’avez qu’aller en face, où il se trouve un Bar, qui n’est pas mal.’—Such was the welcome they received from Mark, the man who had been a chef for the officers in a crack police regiment, recruited in the neighbouring industrial city, whose population was quite different in character from the people of Matapolis. These officers were all obliged to learn French, and apparently had also developed a taste for French cooking. Such were the origins of Mark, the only free and smiling man in this community whom, so far, Pullman had encountered. Mark possessed a geniality which he considered authentic: and he was well content in this sullen, frozen city, to find himself handed over to a man of flesh and blood, human after the manner of Europe.

It was now three days since the visit to Sammael, and he had had time to digest the impression he had registered on that occasion. First, there was the sensation of being in contact, within a yard or two, of a spirit only second to God. This incarnation of Evil rocked a child in his arms. He had shuddered as he thought that this was the Morning Star, he had held his breath as he realized that this creature was far more terrible than a man-eating tiger, and that he was passing an examination, the result of which would be decisive. It meant nothing at all that his own reaction to the appearance of Sammael, to the personality, had been favourable; less than nothing. Talking to him was like conversing with a most urbane

boa-constrictor, who wished to be regarded as a polished gentleman, whose conversation was always turning to how he had squeezed someone the day before. And ultimately, at the basis not only of his mind but of his nature, was his hatred of the human race.

Pullman was now absolutely in the power of this violent creature. Was this a situation in which it would be justified to feel anything but the closeness of a danger of the most absolute kind?

No idea of this was communicated to his young follower. On the other hand, Satters remained profoundly uneasy, and, at intervals, pressed him with questions. Why was this such a shabby old place, why was it so unlike the Phaniel Hotel, and so on and so forth. When Pullman answered that this was a very different place, Satters pestered him as to whether Third City had been destroyed? When he said he did not know, that no one had mentioned it, Satters was incredulous.

For the first time since his adolescence, Pullman prayed. They had separate rooms. The first night in the hotel, as he lay in bed, unexpectedly he found himself with his hands covering his face, whispering a traditional supplication: he prayed for mercy and forgiveness, and for the intervention of God in the terrible ordeal in which he and his young friend found themselves. Satters, he insisted, had in no way shared in his sinfulness, indeed he was so simple that he was incapable of sin. He derived great comfort from his prayers, he slept, if not serenely, at least without mental shock. The next morning, it is true, he thought of what would be Sammael's reactions, could he have known about this. But he felt no alarm, he had been greatly fortified.

So they began to live in this new place, both uneasy, the one so much so that it was all he could do to make his domestic face retain its blank expression, the other childish and fretful. Since where they lived was the limit of

the down-town district, and fifty yards away, the other side of a wide dusty road, was practically the desert, at night it was fresh, if not chilly. Every evening they made their way downstairs after dinner, and sat with Mark in the kitchen, and drank a grog or two. Mark was usually alone, or, if someone else was there, Mark did not neglect them. Pullman felt that this man liked speaking French—speaking a language which none of those by whom he was surrounded knew. He informed Pullman that he did not come from this city, but from one considerably larger, some three hundred miles away.

Because of their widely different occupations (this other place was purely industrial) their mentality was altogether different, and the inmates of that much gayer and more 'normal' place considered themselves in every way superior to the punishment-minded citizens of Matapolis.

Even the police force in that city was distinct in character from that of its neighbour; and Mark, who had enlisted in a crack police regiment of his native city, was very conscious, living where he did, of the dissimilarity between that exquisite body and the rougher, coarser regiments of the home of punishment.

Man undisciplined and in the rough was not at all popular with the angelic overlords. They would have had every man in uniform if there had been no objection to this: but they thought it was better not to make uniformed man too cheap. They preferred to have a uniformed, disciplined buffer between the Yahoo and themselves. So there were far more police regiments than were strictly necessary, but still the majority were outside this kind of élite.

Mark had spent almost half his life in his present unsympathetic milieu working as a chef. He liked talking about the officers, with whom his duties in the mess had brought him in contact. Since they generally spoke

French he had learned it, especially as half the other chefs were Frenchmen, who had begun as Sinners, but been spared because of their ability to cook. Even in the angel households these French chefs were found; but Sammael rather frowned on this, as it savoured of indulgence, and it was better to deny oneself these delicious sauces. *Sauce Hollandaise* to him smelt of sin. There was one of the great angels who was a close friend of his, and who had had a French chef: the lord Sammael always chaffed him about it. 'You will become gross. In the end you will waddle!' he would say. 'You will become like Man!'

Their fourth evening in their new quarters, Mark said to Pullman that he should have a stroll through the city, and Satters also. But he would take *him* first, and Satters a day or two later. To have *two* strangers with him would attract too much attention. Pullman had better wear an old jacket of his—he was too smartly dressed. He could pass him off as a colleague—a French chef. Pullman agreed, and said he thought that he could pass himself off as a Frenchman from Guernsey. There was only one English-speaking person in the city: he was an Australian. This man was said to be sinful; but, after he had lost both his ears, he had been allowed to escape, because of his knowledge of sheep farming. He was employed by the principal butcher in town. He was a good driver, too, and was sent by the butcher to make a round of the farms. When free he was to be found in a pool-room or café. Mark said he would introduce Satters to this Sinful Digger, if he could find him. Satters was looking forward to meeting the Digger; for he believed the time might come when they would have to find work, and he could see himself being taken on by this Briton from Down Under, perhaps to drive him around the farms, if he were suffering from a hangover.

Watched despondently by Satters, Pullman left, in the

company of Mark, the following day after lunch. They walked down to where the city ended, still observed from the apartment window by Satters. They then found themselves in the dusty road, which curved around the limits of the city, as if built there to hold it in, and designed to mark the place beyond which no further expansion was to occur.

Mark explained that this road connected the place of punishment and the sheds where new batches of Sinners arrived, were paraded, and marched, escorted by armed police, to the place of punishment. As he was explaining this he looked backwards, and cried, 'Tiens! La voilà qui arrive, la convoie.' He suggested that they walk in the opposite direction to start with: it would no doubt be interesting to Mr Pullman to see a typical group of Sinners.

Reversing their direction, in about five minutes they met the procession. The Sinners were four abreast, and all the way down, upon either side, were guards with rifles slung over their shoulders.

The Sinners belonged almost exclusively to the European and American bourgeoisie, and were of various European nationalities. Both men and women were hatless, and of an over-all unwashed, unshaven, creased and dusty appearance.

The knowledge of what awaited these people horrified Pullman, but the expression of their faces showed that they were quite unprepared for what was in store for them, especially the women. Some were attempting to maintain as much dignity as possible. Pullman noticed one woman, a handsome Siinner somewhere in the thirties. She was attempting by means of an extremely disdainful expression—which had rather the effect that she smelt something disagreeable—to separate herself from those around her. She was tall, dressed in black, with large hips, and she minced along in a manner suggestive of social elevation. However, the police-guard

who marched a yard or two behind her disapproved of this conceitedly mincing figure, and just before Mark and Pullman came level with her he sprang forward and levelled a violent kick at her elegantly moving buttocks. This was accompanied by an eruption of hoary Semitic oaths; and immediately afterwards he kicked her again. On each occasion she rose into the air and made a graceful descent, withering the guard with a glance which took no effect upon his anatomy, leathery with the scorn of much jack-booted femininity. That she was not totally unprepared for what had happened, she proved by the way in which she resumed her haughty mince—almost gracefully accepting her violent levitation, and slipping into place again down below as if nothing had occurred, dancing forward with contemptuous indifference, with an ease that could only mean habit.

However, the guard was not satisfied. Shouting at her loudly, he loosed a third kick at the black undulating figure. A male Sinner, a face with angry eye, untidily-bristling red moustache, stocky, cheaply clad, a German, in the next row to the proud lady, seized the guard by the arm and shouted at him, in his harsh and guttural tongue, to behave himself or he, the Sinner, would kick *him*. Whereupon the guard dragged him out of the line of march, and, a revolver pressed against his back, marched him to the rear.

The guard's voice rose to a hysterical pitch. According to Mark's translation the words were to this effect: 'You placed yourself behind the high-stepper, did you, dog of a Sinner! I will take you where you cannot see her well-cut tailor's sex-trap—come along, step a little smarter or I will send a bullet into your bladder. Understand, Mr Sinner, those days are over! No more fat bottoms here—all that is over. In an hour or so from now I'll see to it that your anatomy loses all sensitiveness to sexual stimulus. Come along, step out!'

The Sinner was conscious of the gun in his back. He could not understand what the man was saying, but he did not like the sound of his voice, and he trotted along.

They passed another woman who was being similarly treated as a football, only with a more obscene directness. This was a French girl and she was screaming, her face in a grimace of agony, and her body doubled up. The guard, with an expression of bestial loathing, was preparing for another booting. And then they came to a third woman, who was being struck with the rifle butt, and spat at by a gorilla of a guard.

‘Women do not seem to be very popular here!’ Pullman remarked.

‘No,’ Mark agreed. ‘Now and then a Sinner is excused—goes free. But that is a man. If it came to his knowledge that a woman had been allowed to escape, the lord Sammael would decree the death of the guilty man responsible.’

‘Ah ha,’ was Pullman’s non-committal comment.

Encouraged by Pullman’s restraint, Mark continued. ‘When they reach the place of punishment, all the women are marched out, and all of suitable age are publicly assaulted, by any guard who wishes to. There is a stretch of grass just there for that purpose. While this is going on a voice shouts into a megaphone, “After this you will go to a surgeon, who will obliterate sex for you.” Most of them are marched off to the operating table, from the grass, hot from their last erotic exercise.’

‘Ah,’ said Pullman. ‘Ahum.’

Not considering these sounds as particularly censorious, Mark was encouraged to fill out his informative sketch.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘Yes. What the lord Sammael says is that the female cockroach, when pursued, drops its seed-bag. Its pursuer continues to follow it, neglecting the smaller object, the seed-bag. It is the latter that is the more important. With the female Sinner the same prob-

lem is involved. Cut out the means she has of producing more Sinners.'

'A very necessary precaution,' Pullman observed—'though anatomically a little incorrect.'

'I am glad you look at it in that way, sir,' said Mark, with obvious relief.

They had turned off the main road, and were now making for the town in a different direction from what had been planned, at a point higher up.

'This way,' Mark said, 'will take us through a rather picturesque backwater.'

In a moment they were passing through a winding street of small shops. These were after the Eastern manner, little businesses being carried on in full view, either through openings in the street wall, or through glazed windows.

'This is rather curious,' said Pullman, as he stopped in front of a largish shop. 'This is not horsehair, is it?'

'No,' Mark answered, 'not horse's. That is the hair of Sinners. This man purchases this hair from the place of Punishment. Some of the females have very fine hair. In most cases it is cut off right away, and in any case their heads are shaved when they die. That does not take long. Some of the younger men have a good thatch. There'—he pointed to some packets of black hair, tied with string—'that is probably an Italian's crop. It is very useful for pincushions, or for padding of clothes; although these short, strong hairs are apt to get adrift in one of the cheaper suits, and give you a bad prick.'

'Indeed?' Pullman showed a curious interest.

'Oh yes,' said Mark. 'I have had a stiff black hair like that come through the lining of the jacket, and prick me below the armpit.'

'Ha!' said Pullman. Mark looked at him. But his face showed nothing but polite curiosity. A man and a woman were busily at work with small upholsteries, one a

padded silken box, another apparently with handkerchief sachets.

A little higher up the street they came upon a shop that displayed some sheets of tobacco. One appeared to be quite a large sheet.

‘What are these?’ Pullman inquired.

‘That is, again, the product of the Sinners. These are preserved skins. Sinners are usually skinned at death (some are skinned pretty completely alive). These are sold to the factories usually, and are useful in all kinds of manufactures. You’d laugh, Mr Pullman, if you knew what they were used for. It’s wonderful what they do with the Sinners. They pull all their nails out, for instance, and they are of the greatest use to the manufacturer. And the teeth——poor devils, you might say. But at least they end their life more usefully than they lived it.’

‘Yes. A bad hat provides the trimmings for a luxury article.’

‘That is how it works out.’

They progressed through this great backwater. There were chessmen, which interested Pullman. They entered the shop: the shopkeeper said that they were the work of a Sinner. As they cost the equivalent of a few shillings only, Pullman bought them. The shopman looked at him with suspicion. Few people in this city would pay even a penny for these meaningless little objects. He looked at him as if he had had an assegai for sale, and a negro had entered the shop and asked the price.

They soon reached a part of the town of more pretentious tone: they passed several tennis-courts, in which young men and women were playing. The feminine side of the party aroused Pullman’s curiosity. He thought that if they had been in the Sinners’ procession they would have failed to excite the guards. If facially deficient, and wanting in all the usual arts, these girls rushed

about, and, as their short white skirts flew up, they revealed white thighs—which suggested that love took the same course as elsewhere.

‘I compare these happy young women,’ Pullman expatiated, ‘who spring about, exposing the private areas of their legs, with the ill-starred ladies in the procession of Sinners, blows rained upon their posteriors by the zealous guards. Are these young ladies’ seed-sacks out of reach of the Punishment Services? Or, should they transgress in the way that it is so easy for these creatures to do, are they marched off to the place of punishment—their buttocks blackened by the jack-boots of the guards on the way?’

These sententious words, uttered with a measured gravity, were the first remark made by his guest since their departure from the hotel, and Mark was taken aback. For a moment they walked in silence.

‘If anyone sins here, and is denounced,’ Mark said at last, ‘he is punished. The people playing tennis were the young men and women from the University. I have never heard of any young lady at the University sinning. Among the better classes it is so rare a thing to hear of sinfulness that one may say that there is no sin. There is the under mass, but they live animal-like lives. Sin there is of course among that brutal herd, but no one considers them worthy of notice.’

Pullman looked with admiration at Mark, and said, ‘Thank you, that is a very clear statement.’

They were now approaching busier streets—larger and better-stocked shops, more European in appearance—more people. Hearing them speaking a foreign language, the passers-by stared aggressively at them.

‘Nearly all these people,’ Mark pointed out, ‘work, or have at some time worked in the Punishment Service. If you came down here by yourself they would most likely regard you as a Sinner who had somehow escaped,

and was making a dash for freedom. They would hold you, and telephone for the police. The police are not very intelligent on the whole—you would have a pretty disagreeable time, *mon cher*.'

Pullman thanked him for warning him, and said it was certainly not his intention to go gallivanting about unaccompanied in this dangerous city. In order to avoid attracting attention Mark lowered his voice. But this only caused still more suspicion. Three men passed them. Pullman caught the eye of the one in the middle, and the eye seemed to enlarge and was filled with something like disagreeable surprise. Later, these men passed them again, and immediately afterwards Mark wheeled about. He was being interrogated by the man into whose eye Pullman had gazed.

The interrogation continued, but Mark appeared quite collected. He drew out of his inner pocket a printed form, in a passe-partout and covered with cellophane. But that did not appear to terminate the discussion. Mark turned to him and said, 'Ce monsieur est un sergent de police. Nous en avons pour peut-être dix minutes. C'est emmerdant.'

Pullman smiled and answered: 'C'est la vie, c'est la merde.'

The police sergeant wanted to know what Pullman's answer meant. Mark promptly translated, 'C'est la vie, c'est la merde.' This appeared to annoy the sergeant a great deal.

A crowd collected, and there was someone—noticeably well-heeled—who pressed forward and spoke to Mark. After that he turned to the police sergeant, and, with a great air of authority, spoke for a minute or two. This had a magical effect. The sergeant saluted, offered Mark his hand in the most affable manner, and after that, saluting again, turned on his heel, and with his two friends strode away.

Thereupon, Mark and the deity who had come to their rescue, accompanied by Pullman, made their way down the street—some members of the crowd following at a respectful distance. Mark explained to his protégé that this gentleman was a major in a crack regiment, who had known him for a long time—indeed, he had cooked all this gentleman's meals when he was a young officer.

'Je suis enchanté, monsieur, d'avoir pu jouer la rôle de sauveur!' the severely spruce, erect, and military looking gentleman said to Pullman.

He and Mark, in their own language, conversed with eagerness for some minutes, and then they reached what was a main street of some kind. They stopped, and their rescuer handed a card to Mark. Then he turned to Pullman, and said, 'What a pity it is that we are in so extraordinary a place. We would go and refresh ourselves in some bar, but, you know, it is impossible to speak French publicly here without attracting a crowd. But it is that they think you must be a couple of escaped Sinners. It is a pity we have so much to do with sin!'

When they had parted from the witty and well-heeled major they were by themselves again, still a few of the inquisitive loitering near. His late experience had apparently robbed Mark of his perfect self-assurance.

'Should we get in another entanglement no Major Staffo will drop from the sky to rescue us. What I think I shall do is to take a taxi-cab, take you up to the centre of the city, and then we will go home.'

They were not long in securing a cab, and their sight-seeing tour began. The centre of Matapolis was not the heart of a city, but an unlively mathematical middle. The traffic gave it more life than Third City, but the stores had been designed by architects who had no economic margin for style or with which to impress. It was a white city—a dirty white, thought Pullman. One of the main objects of the superior architect was to give

things as much as possible a European look. The result was a garish mixture of the Orient and the worst taste of Western cities.

It had not a busy appearance. Most of the citizens were, of course, just outside the city, punishing people for their sins; a restricted number of drab women were crawling in and out of the shops to purchase a scallop or a frill, to attract the sinful eye of their inquisitional mate, or some other male. But there was no elasticity in these little figures.

'Içi se trouve le quartier général de la mode, les belles dames s'y précipitent pour se parer des rêves de Dior.' But Pullman had a good opportunity of seeing the beautiful shoppers at close range, and he was bound to admit that it was not the reveries of Dior which undulated before his eyes.

Reducing his voice to a saponaceous growl, Mark had employed the language of Racine; the cabman's head shot around and a fierce little eye fixed itself upon him. What a spying, lying, thieving head it was to be sure. Pullman asked himself if he had seen any face in the course of their expedition, including the tennis players, which was not the face of a rat or a weasel—he had never seen so low a type of face, or women who were so ugly. He felt that a beautiful woman would be as much exposed to mistrust and hatred as a person, like himself, speaking a language with which the inhabitants were unfamiliar.

When they reached the hotel they went at once to the kitchen to give themselves a drink. But Satters had been at the window, and in a few minutes they heard the heavy feet of the fag upon the stairs some distance away.

'A small man's drink for Mr Satterthwaite!' called Pullman—and at the words the small man entered.

'What was it like, Pulley!' Satters said in an awed whisper. 'I stopped in the window, you know, and I saw people being marched along, and a soldier kicking the

women. I saw you too, Pulley, watching; I expected you to . . . well . . .’

‘To kick the guard! I leave all the chivalry to you. Why didn’t you jump out of the window, and rush to the rescue of the sinful lady?’

Mark brought the three drinks, and, after a drink or two, he began explaining this and that to Pullman.

‘There is no one I should have been so glad to see,’ he said, ‘no one. Major Staffo is, in the first place, a gentleman, and the prison-police he appreciates at their true and proper worth, which is zero. That sergeant was of the prison-service—that was why he was so difficult to shake off. When the major put in an appearance he knew at once that he was dealing with someone with whom it was not safe to trifle. He let go straight away. For two pins the major would have taken him by the tie and marched him to the nearest post. A major of the fifth regiment of police, recruited in the city I come from, is a different sort of man altogether from a prison-major. Why, for two pins I would have marched him to the nearest post myself!—After that we were being tailed by a couple of men who had been looking-on. As soon as the major had left us they would have begun to make trouble. They would have expected to collect some money.—The city is full of rats. Did you see how that taxi-driver looked around when he heard us speaking French? When Mr Satterthwaite and I take a walk I shall go prepared. In any case we shall not be speaking French. We shall be a silent pair, I shall pretend that he is a mute.’

His cool and collected exterior, when he had been stopped, had evidently been a bluff. Mark had been very uneasy, it was clear.

III INFERNAL PRELIMINARY

(VI)

PULLMAN WAS COMING OUT of his bedroom. 'If I am to be presentable tomorrow morning,' he announced, 'I must have a fresh packet of razor blades. I must go down and see Mark at once.' He stood still. 'What is that?'

There was the sound, in the street without, of a loud horn. Three insistent blasts were heard.

'I will go down and find out, Pulley.' Thereupon, with hideous fracas, Satters began hurling himself down the stairs; Pullman took his hat, and followed him at a leisurely pace. Meanwhile the three blasts were repeated. Then Satters' voice roared up from below.

'Pulley, it's a great big car, it's very swish, Pulley. It's about to drive off; shall I stop it? No, it isn't. Here comes a bloke.'

As Pullman arrived in the hall, Satters had just received, from a uniformed man, a large sealed letter, which he now passed on, and Pullman lost no time in opening it.

'Would you like a short ride in the country? Sending car to fetch you. If otherwise engaged, please tell chauffeur.—Just shake your head. Yrs sincerely, Sammael.'

Satters need have no alarm, Pullman told him: he would be away for an hour or so at most. Then he went down rapidly, and entered the waiting car. There was no one in the car except a chauffeur who, without any recognition, put the automobile in movement as soon as he was seated. It was as if Pullman's posterior, in pressing the cushion of the seat, automatically started the machine.

The majestic vehicle moved along to the road upon which Mark and he had watched the procession of Sinners, turned to the right, and ran along it for several miles. They then reached a place with a great deal of movement—the place of punishment. There was a mountain at one side. The car drew up at the entrance to a large building across the road. Several men were waiting; two of them ran back into the door, and shortly appeared leading a woman, protesting. They pushed her inside the car, and chained her wrists to an iron ring. They then sprang back, for they heard a quick step. The lord Sammael entered the car, and Pullman removed his hat.

‘Good morning,’ said Sammael, as he sat down. The door clicked. A figure mounted beside the chauffeur, and the car moved away. ‘I am afraid, Pullman, that this is a rather unsavoury fellow-passenger for you, but it is a little job I sometimes take on, for a certain reason.’

A groan came from the woman. ‘Where are you taking me, sir?’ she asked in French. ‘Why am I chained up like this? I wish for an immediate explanation! You understand, sir!’

The woman could speak no language but French, it appeared; when they conversed in English she listened querulously, but there was no evidence that she understood anything.

‘To travel in the company of this woman is extremely disagreeable. I must have these people transported in another car; I don’t see why I should use mine.’

He leaned towards the woman and said sharply, ‘Listen, Madame. If, *chemin faisant*, you force your personality upon our attention, you will be silenced. I do not enjoy the sound of your voice.’

‘And how about me? Do you suppose I enjoy *yours*? Do you suppose your personality is agreeable to *me*?’

The lord Sammael tapped upon the window behind

the chauffeur, and the car came to a halt. The man sitting beside the chauffeur sprang out, and the door opened where the woman lay. Pullman saw a hypodermic syringe in the man's hand. An indignant scream came from the woman. The man was brutally excavating the lower female garments.

'Listen, listen . . . what is this! You allow yourself to . . . !'

A section of bottom was laid bare, then was obscured by coarse hands. This was followed by a shriek of pain as the needle was plunged into her flesh.

'This is abominable! What a way to treat a woman . . . It is unheard of . . . It is ignoble!' But the voice weakened, and the next minute she fell in a heap on the floor, her arms in the air, her wrists still attached to the ring. The car proceeded on its way.

'Her voice is redolent of the unreal life lived by the French bourgeoisie,' said Sammael. 'But she is now happily asleep. Let us have a look at the landscape,' said he, turning his attention to the wild scene without. 'There'—he pointed through the window beside Pullman—'is the beginning of the country where we used to operate, four or five hundred years ago.'

Pullman saw a valley of volcanic rock opening up, of the utmost savagery. There was no building of any kind, or any cultivation. Matapolis was a walled city on this side, and the inhabitants never ventured outside the walls.

'It was down into this valley that we used to drive the Sinners. It bore no resemblance to Dante's literary composition. Plenty of bonfires were kindled for the wicked, but the fires were not so concentrated as they are today.'

Pullman saw, in his mind's eye, the mediaeval scene. There was a long stream of miserable sinners, some of them beating their breasts, some praying. Their costumes came out of the museums where Pullman had

studied them, or out of albums of costumes, or old history books. Coloured designs of the Canterbury Pilgrims mingled with the rest, hooded apprentices and shaven monks, and women like Christmas trees. It was a rushing multitude of mediaeval nobodies, with staring eyes and chattering teeth, urged on by demons with pricking pitchforks, dressed in red, with reddened faces, jumping and screaming at the heels of the condemned.

A ragged cliff stood behind this torrent of the damned, among its rocks were contorted nudes, both white and red, to identify them either as miserable sinners, or members of the infernal staff. At the extremity of the cliff a Sinner attempted to save himself by fighting off a demon, who kept slashing him with a butcher's knife. But another naked figure was writhing through the air, halfway down to the leaping flames below. In the valley flames were being kindled everywhere by dozens of horned and tailed supers. These busy performers jumped up and down, grimacing upwards at those about to be tossed down from the rocks, by their costume and their gestures complying as far as possible with horror stories originating in mundane monasteries.

The debunking by Sammael of those distant days had painted in his vivid imagination a period piece, Hell in full swing; but great as his desire was to please the growling creature at his side, Pullman could not help wishing he could observe this scene at an off moment, and watch the staff sitting about and chatting, spinning yarns and rolling on the rocks with laughter.

Nevertheless, he accepted entirely the scornful rejection of the traditional picture. It never occurred to him to doubt the historic arch-demon with whom he was visiting the legendary landscape.

As the car took them a little farther along, they passed the mouth of a ravine.

‘Down there,’ Sammael told him with a gentle grimace,

‘was our famous “lake of blood”. The blood, of course, was some earth we found, which we mixed with water, and red paint, to improve the rocks which protruded from it here and there.—We really did make our valley a rather unpleasant place.’

As he gazed out of the window, Pullman thought that it still would repel the sensitive.

Soon they emerged into wider perspectives. There were ravines on ravines, brick-red cliffs, and mountains which rose much higher in the distance.

‘Wait a little, and it will become uncommonly fierce-looking.’

‘It is already quite uncivilized enough—to satisfy the Hollywood producer,’ Pullman said.

‘We reach something beyond the powers of Hollywood before very long.’

Pullman uttered an ‘Aha!’, and Sammael smiled—a civilized smile. Pullman was asked to report on his adventures, if he had any.

Briefly he recounted their attempt to view the city, the police sergeant’s challenge, the gathering of a crowd, the appearance of the Major. Sammael was very interested.

‘The little rats! They will not allow a man—two men—to walk around the streets. It is not zeal. They do not care whether a person is a Sinner or the reverse. They are merely thirsty for blood—they are greedy for excitement. They have no more principles than a minor bird of prey.’

He asked the name of the Major, and when Pullman named him, he exclaimed, ‘Oh, Staffo—of the Fifth Regiment! A wonderfully good officer! You were indeed lucky to come across him. I shall write him a note. But Mark, on his own, is quite able to extricate you from such an embarrassing situation. The Sergeant who stopped you belonged to the Punishment Service I expect. Mark

could put him in his place quite easily. They are of use to me in a Punishment Cell; they do my dirty work. But Mark is a match for ten of them.'

Pullman made no comment, except to say that Mark was a splendid fellow, and that he was very happy in this hotel which the lord Sammael had been so kind as to put at their disposal. Upon this, Sammael told him that he believed he was on the track of a job for him and his young friend—nothing very much, but it would do for a start. Pullman was profoundly relieved; for to be living the life of a gentleman of independent means *here* was impracticable, and anyway it would involve never going outside one's front door—living as if one were a member of some proscribed community.

The sort of whimpering noise a dog makes in its sleep came from the floor, and the woman also faintly burped. But there was no other sign of life. Sammael looked out of the window, stretching his neck to see as far as possible ahead.

'She will have to wake up soon. Perhaps ten minutes.'

Suddenly the woman was betrayed into a nasty flatulence. Though muffled, it was quite loud.

'Disgusting bitch!' almost hissed Sammael. 'That I should have to transport this cattle about!'

'Could not one of the Punishment Staff do the job?' Pullman ventured to ask.

Sammael shook his head. 'No,' he answered. 'This one is *pretty*.' The disgust and distaste with which he uttered this word profoundly impressed his listener: the mad puritan did not attempt to conceal the extent of his bias. 'The difficulty is that almost whoever you might send would fornicate with her on the way. It is not even certain that finally he would do what he had been told to do: He might hide her, he might find some way of keeping her for himself. The only safe procedure seems to be, in the case of attractive females, for me or some

responsible person to take them. I strongly object to having to do this. But so long as one takes any part in these disgusting proceedings one likes to see them properly carried out.' He turned towards Pullman. 'I am long past taking any interest in this wholesale punishment. It is an efficient service in most ways. I maintain an excellent "Hell"—which is my function. It is only when Sex raises its ugly head that the proper carrying out of the service has to be watched. And that, as I see it, is the most important part of it.'

He said this, without heat, coldly, and one might say indolently.

The footman opened a small window, and said something, looking away. Sammael uttered two words in reply, the car stopped, and the footman moved quickly around. Once more the hypodermic syringe was in evidence. On this occasion he rolled up the woman's sleeve, and his syringe entered the flesh easily.

He returned to his seat beside the chauffeur, and the car started moving again. The figure of the woman remained inert for some minutes, then her eyes opened, and fixed themselves upon Sammael.

'Ah there you are!' she said listlessly. 'In a word, you are the Devil—just the Devil!' she said. She crossed herself. Sammael turned away. 'Answer me—where are you taking me to? Terrible man, I am to be offered to the wild animals, is not that true, is not that where you are taking me? Spirit of the Pit! Evil One! How hatefully ugly you are, like everyone who breathes corruption as you do, horrible man. Are you not ashamed of being so vile, man who works in something which is a thousand times dirtier than the sewers! Crapulous individual, who lies in the dung of the world because you know of nothing softer or sweeter-smelling! You believe that you are a handsome man—que vous avez la tête belle—don't you, fungus? Yours is a beast's head, and not a man's. You are

an animal—not one of the high animals, but a most ill-favoured monster. Ugh! Your face is not human as you believe it to be—not human as is this person's here, for instance.'

She pointed at Pullman, who smiled superciliously, glancing at Sammael.

She now began addressing Pullman. 'As for you, sir, you have that little smile of yours because you are afraid. Yes, yes. You are afraid of this terrible monster who takes human form but is none the less terrifying for that. But you are intelligent, you see what is underneath. You see the terrifying monster—you are not deceived by the face like that of a man. Ah yes, like myself, you are human, you have *reason* to tremble—what else could you do but smile scornfully to order! You do not want to be in my shoes, my poor little fellow. The implacable *merde* you divine, the merciless excrement which serves him for blood!'

The woman crossed herself, to write *finis* to her diatribe.

'Woman!' said sternly the lord Sammael. 'It would be far more logical if you crossed yourself lower down, over your sex.'

The car slowly drew up, and there was a wild stampede outside, and a goatish grimace of ineffable self-satisfied lubricity—a kind of quiet, conceited, knowing subtlety always seen in profile, covered with silken hair, appeared for a flash at the window beside which Sammael sat, and violently vanished. This was a very different place to meet these beasts than in a well-guarded Piazza in Third City. Pullman was suddenly overwhelmed with horror, as he thought of the fate of the woman at his feet, who crouched there apparently in prayer.

'She is not actually thrown to those animals, is she?' he exclaimed in spite of himself. 'It is just to scare her, is it not?'

'The best way to answer that question is like this,' said

Sammael, seizing the cowering woman, he flung her over to his side of the car. 'Pitié! Pitié!' she screamed.

'Autant de pitié, Madame,' Sammael answered sternly, 'que vous avez montré á Gabriel.'

He flung the door open, getting bitten in the hand by one of the ravening beasts. There burst into the car the fearful stench, there was a scarlet flash of sexual monstrosity, the whining and snorting of a score of faces—the beasts leaping on one another's backs, so that several appeared to be about to spring on to the roof of the car.—Scores of sinewy arms terminating in claws shot into the car, and snatched the woman out of it.

There was her body, shoulder-high, for the fraction of a second, in the midst of the stinking pack—the sickening odour increasing in intensity. Just for that fractional speck of time a dozen claws could be seen defiling her person. The most terrible scream Pullman had ever heard filled aurally that speck of time. The car gathered speed, the door was violently closed, and that was that. The silence was tremendous and Pullman was alone—more alone than he had ever been with anyone in his life—with the lord Sammael.

Sammael sat, spitting blood into a white handkerchief, after sucking the gash in his hand.

Pullman was trembling: the suddenness of the dénouement, and the shocking momentary vision of ferocity had deeply shaken him. The woman's denunciation of Sammael immediately before the climax had affected him in a way he had to be very careful not to reveal. His sympathy for the woman grew and subterraneously developed; and when he *saw* (with unexpected suddenness) the unsurpassable horror of her punishment he started trembling as in response to horror, because of the violent conflict in his psyche. He was on the verge of an outburst. The woman, praying and crossing herself, was doing what he ought to have been doing. She was defying

the superhuman strength of the infernal power. The same situation began to develop as the conflict in Third City when the time came when he ought to have severed his connection with that *monstre gai*. Here it was a new kind of monster—and there was no alternative in a shorter or longer time, except death.—He felt, if he played along with this monster until the end, that then a third and last monster ought to make his appearance; and with him there would be no choice (such as Mark or some ‘job’), but there could be in *that* situation, No. 3, nothing but immediate death, identical with that suffered by the woman, but roaring and stinking. He would be a different kind of monster again. He would look at you, and you would die. His heart would be blacker than Satan, his magic more deadly than Medusa.

So he was in an evil dream, he was stunned and he trembled. He asked, his voice shaken, ‘Is the bite in your hand . . .?’

✓ ‘Yes, it is,’ Sammael answered smoothly. ‘Very. But I am going to the Clinic and they will perfectly bathe me in penicillin.’ He looked up softly from the gash made by the animal, and smiled, as it were mockingly, at the pale and trembling figure in the other corner of the car. ‘You are shocked, Pullman, because of the horrible fate allotted to the woman. Had you perused the dossier as I did, did you know how callous she was when alive, how she broke the heart of her young husband Gabriel, and, it was believed, infected her third husband with the King’s Evil, you would feel differently. She was as bad a woman as you could find anywhere. You saw her crossing herself and supplicating God. Well, it would have been no use her appealing to any judge, competent to try her. The Pope has several times refused her absolution.’

‘I see, I see,’ said Pullman.

The lord Sammael looked up quizzically, a cold smile in the depth of his eyes.

Pullman saw the smile, and said (with an answering smile):

‘Yes. I *see*. I *see*. I have a way of speaking adapted for commune with the unintelligent. Of men, ninety per cent are that. I am the one per cent who is (for a man) intelligent. You must, sir, be indulgent—first, because I am only a man: and in the second place, because I have always lived with men, poorer in intellect than myself.’

Sammael again smiled, but in the warmer surface of his eye.

‘I am aware that you forget that you are speaking to the Devil. Treat me always as a man: I shall like that best.’

Pullman was looking out of the window at his side, more than formerly he had done, and noticed a number of bones on the verge or near it. Some were even in the road.

‘There are many bones,’ he said, as he looked out.

‘Quite a few,’ Sammael replied, glancing negligently out of the window, his accent dry and Satanaelic.

‘All female ossatures?’ Pullman quietly surmised.

‘I suppose so. As you may have realized, the beasts soon kill the women, they are so violent. As they fornicate, they *cat*. They bite mouthfuls out of them, regardless of the fact that, with the human, death is found a very short distance beneath the surface.’

Pullman kept his eyes lowered; he thought of the woman, there at his feet, not hours, but minutes ago, and it was all he could do not to vomit. He fought the threatened emission as hard as any young man at his first drinking party, but for an extremely different motive. He discouraged the vomit sternly. He *must not* be sick.

‘About a year ago,’ Sammael told him easily, ‘we got a lot of bad daughters of Eve at once. There is an extremely large cave, twenty miles farther inland. We took a batch

of about a hundred there. We lighted it with electricity, and rounded up about two hundred of the animals. We had plenty of troops at hand, with machine-guns trained upon the entrance of the cave. I did not go myself, but my secretary was there and he gave me a vivid description—it was so vivid that I felt I could hear and smell as he was telling me every detail of the ferocious scene. The towering cavern was malodorous to a degree, and the characteristic stench of these filthy animals was intensified during the orgasm. When the women were first released among them, the noise was horrifying. To cite the screams of terror of the women in no way conveys the vocal tempest which broke loose. Voices of every calibre and every kind split and rent the air in this maddening uproar.

‘Some of the voices obviously believed it was possible to save themselves if only they made noise enough, which is the teaching of the earth. Other women had, it was obvious, a truer appreciation of their position; they wept, some loudly, some quietly. Some roared like bulls or crazy cows, or snarled in preparation to do combat with the animals. Some were so intensely terrified that they were actually demented. The animals, so disgustingly numerous, could be heard mainly as a kind of universal whinny, and later, eating and guzzling sounds.’

‘How fearful,’ Pullman said.

‘I have a recording of it, a number of discs. If you like, I will let you hear it.’

‘I wish you would,’ Pullman said firmly.

‘It is difficult,’ Sammael observed, ‘to describe the sound made by animals. What they do is so much more impressive than what they say. An analysis of the nature of this breed reveals a frivolous and profoundly irresponsible character. Consider the expression of their faces. There is a perpetual smile and a mischievously darting or provoking sleepy slit-eye. At the same time, they dance,

pirouette, leap about incessantly—seemingly an expression of high-spirits, purposeless and mischievous at once. They will eat a woman—eat all the flesh of her arms away, eat off her breasts as a piece of fun. When a couple of them have killed a woman, you will see them tripping away like a couple of schoolgirls released from school, chattering and swinging their satchels. The tragic does not exist for them: they are the most irresponsible creatures I know—but are intensely lecherous, which is, to their eyes, the central fact of life. After having satisfied their libido, they twinkle all over. They dance merrily, skip and twinkle.’

‘Do they fight?’ Pullman inquired.

‘Ah yes, that is the exception, they then are serious. They scratch each other’s eyes out, relieving nature, always an accompaniment of a duel. All the time, as they are fighting, they blackguard one another, shrilly and hysterically. They will fight all over a mountain, all day. At the end of it, one is more dead than alive. If rescued, he weeps like a child—because he was not able to bite the other’s nose off, or had not been able to finish the victor.—There was once a sort of Hercules among them—*he* was serious. If they danced about *too* facetiously and irresponsibly, he would go after them and kill one or both of them. They were all very afraid of him—and so were we. But *he* was the only rational one I have ever encountered.’

‘How did he die?’ Pullman wanted to know.

‘He was run over by a truck. But he was trying to hold it up: it was full of melons, of which Jobo was particularly fond.’

The horror of this life was quite secondary: Sammael discussed one thing and another, without any preference for the super-dramatics.

The origin of these extraordinary animals was a question which darted about in Pullman’s brain. ‘You

spoke of the *breed* of these animals just now. What is their *breed* exactly?' Pullman inquired.

'They are half goat and half man—or perhaps it would be better to say three-quarters goat and one quarter man,' Sammael answered. 'The goats, of which there are still plenty in these mountains, are a very large animal, whose face closely resembles that of the mixed breed, only its expression is far less complicated. It took a long time to interbreed them up to their present perfection of beastliness.'

The car had turned round and was now moving rather quickly on the home run.

'You have stood up very well to this ordeal.' The lord Sammael smiled in a friendly way.

'You do regard it as an ordeal?' inquired Pullman sedately.

'You must regard me as an out-and-out brute,' and the lord of Hell made a self-amused grimace. 'I really am much less of a brute than I appear. Those animals fill me with horror, they cause me such inexpressible disgust that it is as much as I can do to go near them. But that is physical and visible, nasal and visual; and the Women-Sinners disgust me even more. I realize that that is a little obsession. But what can you expect of an angel!' he laughed. 'The female of your species does really affect me as some people are affected by cats. If I could exterminate them I would. For the rest, I have never relished my job as executioner. As much as possible I have delegated it to others. On principle, I approve of punishing Man just for being Man: but I do not enjoy playing the *bourreau*. However, a century will see the end of all this. Christianity will not last much longer than that.'

'I cannot understand how you can ever have taken it up,' said Pullman softly, with a familiarity into which he felt he had been betrayed.

But Sammael did not seem to have any objection to the question, and answered at once, with great geniality. 'Because of my abhorrence of Man, and of his abominable playmate, Woman.'

There was a pause of a minute or two, and then Sammael continued. 'But I am very tired of Man: and, in any case, he is acquiring a technological magic which may in the end equal us in resource. Nevertheless, it does not look as if he would ever develop sufficient intelligence to make use of it.—So we may see the end of him, even before he has discarded his Christianity. A physicist, a most tremendous Sinner, came in here the other day. He told me several things of a very novel kind. I took him out of reach of my Punishment Service at once. I shall, I think, make use of this atomic specialist.' He yawned—at least Pullman thought it was a yawn. Then he added negligently, 'Before I have done I may make an end of what men know as Heaven, and build a true one myself. Certain members of your kind will be able to help me in that task.'

'Is the supernatural susceptible to atomic fission?' Pullman very faintly put the question.

'There is no such thing as the supernatural,' Pullman was told. 'That is one of the customary illusions.'

An image, one of the utmost horror, assailed Pullman's eyes, burst itself into the virgin area upon which impressions intense and unintense daily imprint themselves. This horrible image, in two or three seconds, was there no more. They were passing the place where the wretched Frenchwoman had been delivered to the grinning animals. She lay there, a raw and bleeding mass—even her face seemed to have been devoured. The arm had been laid bare at the top, and the bone was visible. One animal was on top of her, others crouched on either side, but perhaps most loathsome of all, was an animal's face turned towards the passing car with the usual in-

imitable smile of mischievous complicity, as if to say, 'Ah, there you are, you fellows, as you see we are having a fine old time.'

As Pullman was pondering this, the lord of all this part of the universe (whom he wished he had never seen) turned to him and said, 'We have been returning the way we came. I did not draw your attention to it, but we passed Madame Carnot. She was already covered with blood. Two of the beasts were occupied in her punishment *à fond*. She must have died some time ago—women die with great facility. There is one who deserves all that she gets.'

'Her dossier was abominable, you say,' Pullman observed.

'Was that man-talk, or are we on a higher level?' Sammael's smile was friendly.

'Man-talk. There are some areas where man and angels say the same things.'

'I see. I see,' said the lord Sammael.

His glimpse of the closing scene in this hideous play had to be hurried away from the foreground of Pullman's consciousness and a mask drawn down over his face. He congratulated himself upon the effectiveness of the suppression. And then he became aware of one amiable and sleepy goatish profile nearer to him than such a countenance had ever been before—gliding up and down just beyond the glass of the car window. The disgusting urbanity of the face, the blood colouring the line of the mouth, and reaching, here and there, as far as the eye, its patient smiling restraint, as the animal ambled along beside the car, was politely expressive. 'Any more?' it inquired, as it slid its eye sleepily into the car.

Sammael stood up, and took down from a rack above the window a sort of carbine. He ran the window down a few inches on Pullman's side, and fired at the face. Then he closed the window, and replaced the little rifle in the rack.

‘If not discouraged,’ he told Pullman, ‘those beasts will sometimes gallop along with one as far as the city—that one would have been waiting, smiling, as I got out of the car at the hospital. It would have been killed by a sentry. It is our purpose to keep them as tame as possible, but we do not invite familiarity. On one occasion a band of them trotted up to the buildings over there, and, seeing a young woman doctor, they seized her and carried her off. They were pursued by the police. They killed all of them, and rescued the woman doctor—badly scratched and bitten.’

‘Ah,’ said Pullman.

‘Yes. The police shoot them at sight; but they still hover around, and one even was discovered in the city.’

‘What happened to it?’ Pullman asked.

‘A man shot it. But we have a rampart now all around the settled area.’

The car drew up in front of the hospital, and, before stepping out, Sammael said, ‘A horrible ride, I am afraid, but it is just as well that you should know how we all spend our time in this place. On another occasion we will drive out into the farm land. There are no horrors there—unless they happen to be killing a pig!’ He laughed, nodded, and left the car.

(VII)

FREE AT LAST to analyse the whole of this entire event from beginning to end, while the car carried him back to his lodging, he fired questions at himself. (1) What was the idea in asking him to assist at this bestial execution of a European woman? For he could not conceive of it as innocent in the way that the animals were innocent—murderous, stinking innocents. (2) Was it done in order to try him out, as a prospective punisher of Sinners? In that case, it might have been better not to conceal his repugnance.

But the question of questions, of course, was what was the nature of the relationship between himself (the poor, insignificant, human self) and this notorious super-human personage? Had this great immortal 'taken a fancy to him'? Pullman jeered at himself—had he ever, for the fraction of a second, entertained such a notion as that?

It was easy for him to say what this relationship was *not*, but beyond that he could not even make a guess, for he had no record on which to base a supposition. It was a fact that he was talkative, and, in a way, that, were he man, would signify good will. But he was not a man: and there was no imaginable reason why he should feel good will to such as Pullman, or why he should offer to take him for excursions in the country.—His 'good will' was a circumstance full of sinister import, much more than it was anything else. But it was almost as conceited to suppose that this great personage had sinister designs, as that he had friendly designs. To place with this, he certainly had some design (which likewise was undoubtedly conceited!).

The car arrived at his apartment, and there was no

question that the more you scrutinized probabilities, the less impenetrably black and hopeless the weight of evidence appeared to be.

His own moral position, on the other hand, he thought, as he went up the stairs, could not have been lower. There was blood on his hands as truly as if he had physically assisted at the vilest kind of murder: and he arrived in front of Satters more confused than ever before.

It would have been extremely unfair to Satters to show himself optimistic, to show a cheerful face; it would have been equally so to breathe pessimism.

‘I have been sitting and writing a story, Pulley.’

‘A story?’ Pullman laughed. ‘Who is the hero?’

‘Me,’ Satters told him modestly, frowning down at the piles of large crabbed handwriting.

‘Have you found out anything about yourself?’

‘No. Ought I?’ Satters looked surprised.

‘No. I see the kind of writer you are. No.’ Pullman shook his head.

Relieved not to be scrutinized, after the usual manner of Satters, Pullman sat down in the easy chair, and Satters drew up to a table near which he was sitting. Pullman felt that he must put this child’s worst fears at rest—as he believed himself justified in doing.

‘That is that,’ he began.

‘Is it, Pulley? I thought it was, kind of, you know.’

‘We do not speak the same language. It is not as bad as you think. It is merely nothing certain, as yet. But as far as I know it will be all right. Some days must pass, though.’

Satters drew his chair towards Pullman. ‘Pulley,’ he said, ‘the old Ba . . . the Bailiff, Pulley, has been here.’

‘Yes?’ Pullman answered.

‘He said to tell you that he is blamed a good deal by

Satan for the conduct . . . *the conduct* of affairs, he said in Third City. He said this was unfair, Pulley.'

'Ah. What else?'

'It was his advice, he said, Pulley, to find, if you possibly could, someone to take us back to Third City! —That's what I've been writing about. How we landed in Third City.'

'It is easy to say, "Do this" or "Do that",' Pullman commented. 'He did not tell you what *he* was proposing to do?'

'No, Pulley. He said something more. He told me to remember the words. He said, "Say that the little elephant would be unable to help you!"' Satters read these words from a scrap of paper.

Pullman smiled. 'I never supposed he would. It was obvious that the lord Sammael did not feel very warmly towards him.'

Satters was silent, digesting this. 'If he can't help us, Pulley, who is going to help us?'

'Satters,' said Pullman impressively. 'The "little elephant" is another name for the Bailiff. It was because of his persuasion and promises that I came here with him. But it is not the place he gave me to understand it was. And, once here, he is unable to help us. That is not very satisfactory, is it? The Bailiff belongs to the past, not to the present. Dismiss him from your mind as of no further use, as in every way unreliable, as a man full of tricks and lies. What is more, if he came here today it was in his own interest not in ours. Now, what I tell you are secrets. Never repeat outside these walls any of the information I pass on to you.'

Satters looked silent, owlshly self-important, obviously delighted to be the repository of secrets. 'Okay, Pulley, I see what you mean.'

The door that led into Pullman's bedroom opened, and the *valet de chambre* stepped out.

‘I am sorry to disturb you, gentlemen,’ he said, in very good Third City English—he had, up till then, behaved as a rather self-conscious deaf mute, and as much an automaton as most domestics in the city under the shadow of Punishment. ‘There is a second door, as you know, to this room. I was not aware you were at home.’

He wore a domestic uniform, a sort of waistcoat of black and yellow, narrow, vertical stripes, with long black sleeves. A dark green apron came just back of his knees. In a rather odd way he appeared conscious of his face, blue-chinned and disagreeably pink. The dark brown eyes mounted guard suspiciously, over the blue-pinkness, over the red mouth, the sensitive scenting nose. All this was uncomfortably exposed—except for the watchful eyes. They would have had to be covered up. The expression of the eyes contained a question.—‘Well?’ they said, and watched you.

‘You have lived in Third City?’ Pullman inquired coldly.

‘Oh yes, most of my life I worked in the Phaniel Hotel; but that was some years ago.’

‘I see,’ said Pullman. ‘Sit down.’ He pointed to a chair. ‘Do you like Third City?’

‘Better than this one,’ smiled the domestic.

‘You do not like your own home-town, your native-place?’ Pullman asked him.

The domestic shrugged.

‘Have you worked in the Punishment Service?’ Pullman, as he spoke, was looking at the servant’s hands.

‘Who in Matapolis has not?’ He looked at Pullman, the director of this interrogatory, with consuming hatred.

Seeing that Pullman was asking no more questions the man composed his face in less inimical lines; he leaned forward, and began in a quiet and insinuating voice.

‘Whatever you may say, you gentlemen, locked up

in this house, are not enjoying yourselves very much. Now, should you gentlemen prefer to return to Third City, all you have to do is to speak to me about it, and I will either take you back myself, or I will find some reliable man to take you there. There is a continuous traffic between this and Third City.' The domestic sat up, he drew a deep breath. 'If you feel like moving back again, tell me when I bring your breakfast. And either that evening, or the next, you will be flying back where you came from.'

Satters looked at his master, who sat smoking. Pullman gave no indication by his expression as to how he felt about the offer to carry him back to the city of Tenth Piazza and of the Phaniel Hotel.

There was a pause, at the end of which Pullman said, 'I am not at liberty to take flights hither and thither. But though I am settled here for the present, thank you for your proposition.' Pullman stood up and the domestic rose; he moved towards the door, bowed, and left the room.

'I don't know what you think, Pulley . . .'

'I can tell you at once. What I think of a hotel servant who does not open his mouth, who pretends that the only language he can speak is that of Matapolis, and then, most unexpectedly, addresses you in almost faultless English: I am afraid what I think is that that domestic has been hoping to overhear something incriminating. If you ask me what I think of him, my answer is, Satters, that I feel extremely uneasy about such an individual, and wonder whether everything connected with this hotel is of the same order, from Mark downwards.'

'I get your meaning, yes. But, Pulley, if this bloke wants to fly back to Third City . . .'

' . . . and regards us as a good opportunity, eh? How simple you are! You think you are in London or Bourne-mouth.'

‘I know I am simple, Pulley.’

Pullman took a sheet of paper out of the table drawer, a fountain-pen from his pocket.

‘I am about to write a note to the Bailiff?’ he said, winking.

Satters sat watching him as he wrote; he had been puzzled by the wink, and was waiting to see what happened next. He did not have to wait long. In a few minutes Pullman handed him the piece of paper. At the same time he laid his forefinger upon his lips.

This is what Satters read.

‘This is *not* for the Bailiff, but for you, this little note. It was a blind when I said I was about to write to the Bailiff. Thought domestic might be listening at keyhole. This man, as much as Mark, may be—probably is—an agent of Satan’s. Had I said just now, “Yes, I should like to be taken back to Third City” the domestic would, I expect, have informed Satan. The next time I saw Satan, he would have said, “So, Mr Pullman, you want to escape from us, do you? You are plotting to fly back to Third City, are you?”—You must be very careful of that domestic. When I am out, he may come and talk to you. He may say, “I think your friend, Mr Pullman, does not trust me. But what I say is quite genuine.” And so on. Well, Satters, when I come in, repeat what he said to you, but say nothing to him *ever—ever!*’

Pullman turned towards the door, the door out of which the domestic had stepped. Satters was still reading the letter. He read—‘remember that he may be listening. Be *very careful* what you say to him (or to anybody else). Do not try to *whisper* anything private to me. Always *write* it. I will burn it in the grate. Hand this back to me, without speaking.’

Satters, when he had finished reading, looked up and slowly winked, then he returned the piece of paper to Pullman, who folded it up and put it into his pocket. As

he did so, his bedroom door opened, and the domestic entered.

‘I will not disguise from you, sir, that I have been listening,’ he said solemnly. ‘I am not supposed to behave like this. If you speak about this to Mark I shall be dismissed at once without a character. Now, Mr Pullman, I am quite genuine. I am not in the service of the lord Sammael. I genuinely want to get back to Third City; and if I took you and your young friend back I know that you would treat me fairly, and pay me what was agreed as soon as you got your money from the bank. You understand? If you were a Sinner, I would not do this. But you are not, and I should not be doing anything very wrong. No one would be quite *certain* who had taken you—unless you speak to Mark.’ He paused. ‘A moment, sir,—listen to what I have to say. You may, sir, at some future time, wish to leave this city. You cannot tell. Look ahead, Mr Pullman, do not act too quickly. Do not give me away now—you might need me. There is nothing to be gained in denouncing me. Have I your word, Mr Pullman, that you will not do so?’ He took a revolver out of his pocket; holding it muzzle downwards, he tapped it. ‘I shall not use this now of course; but it would be certain I should *never* use it, if I knew that, although you do not trust me, you will not betray me.’

Satters looked wide-owl-eyed, but startled, at the man and the gun. Pullman looked at the floor.

‘Return your gun to your pocket,’ he said. ‘It is irrelevant.’ Then he looked up impressively. ‘Producing that gun has however convinced me of one thing.’

‘Of what?’ said the man, pointing the gun at Pullman.

‘That you are a phoney,’ Pullman answered contemptuously. ‘Once more, put away that relic of the Punishment Service.’

The man returned the gun to his pocket. He continued

to sit in the chair in which he had taken up his position as soon as he had entered.

‘This is not a punishment cell, is it?’ Pullman asked.

‘Oh no,’ said the man.

‘In that case, when you come in, do not do so without knocking, and, when you are inside it, do not sit down, unless you are invited to do so.’

The man rose, laughed a hard short laugh, and left the room.

Pullman looked at Satters. ‘You see,’ he said, in the matter-of-fact terms of one demonstrating something. ‘It is as I told you.’

Pullman took a piece of paper out of the drawer; he began to write on it.

‘Prophetic words. I foretell. The domestic will no longer appear while we are here—he will perhaps be returned to the Punishment Police for the present, or given a week’s leave. Mark will say that he deeply apologizes, and that he has dismissed him—I hope that this will make you *very suspicious* in future.’

He did not blot this, but waved it a little. Satters watched him solemnly. At last Pullman handed it over to his squire.

The accuracy of this prognostic was demonstrated in due course; in the cloudy brain of Satterthwaite, before he ate, its justness was established.

Mark suspended his cooking, and walked into the room reserved for guests.

Pullman, who had just entered, was standing in front of an open fire.

‘Good evening,’ said the guest. ‘Mr Satterthwaite will be here in a few minutes.’

‘Mr Pullman, sir,’ said Mark. ‘I am the bearer of a message. Let me give it you at once.’

‘A message?’

‘Yes, sir, from the lord Sammael. Tomorrow morning at ten o’clock, you will be fetched, sir, by car. You will be taken to Dis, the Punishment Centre.’

‘Oh.’ Pullman grimaced. ‘Not for good, I hope?’

‘No. Things like that are not for *you*, Mr Pullman. You are to be shown a few of the worst Sinners. Are you interested, sir? If not, the lord Sammael said, just dismiss the car.’

‘I will go, of course,’ Pullman said. ‘Ten o’clock?’

‘Yes, sir. That is the time. Mr Pullman, there is one more thing I have to say. I apologize for the behaviour of the *valet de chambre* today. I expect that you could see the kind of man he is. Dismissed Prison Police. Out of compassion I gave him a job. But . . .! Anyhow, he will molest you no more, Mr Pullman. I told him to leave within half an hour; he was gone in a quarter. He is a very insolent fellow.’

‘How did you know that, Mark?’

Mark’s face became stern and clouded.

‘Mark, wash that question out. Never mind about that. But what you did with the man was quite unnecessary. You should not have dismissed him. Besides, his successor will listen at the keyhole, just the same as he did. All domestics do. Domestics are born with their ears to keyholes!’

Mark laughed. ‘Oh, you are a caution, Mr Pullman.’

‘No. Are not doctors born with their stethoscopes ready to place on the heart? and princes born with their ears cocked for flatterers?’

Satters entered the room, noisily clearing his throat.

‘Ah, Mr Satterthwaite, I was just telling your friend that I have dismissed the *valet de chambre* who so misbehaved himself earlier today. Mr Pullman, will you please translate, will you inform Mr Satterthwaite of what has been done in the case of the *valet de chambre*.’

Pullman informed Satters that the gentleman with

the blue cheeks, who stepped in and out of a room like a marionette, had, *as he, Pullman, had prophesied*, been dismissed.

Satters stood, obviously struggling, in his memory, to revivify a prophecy. At last his face lit up. He beamed darkly, and, without any care for diplomatic caution, he winked.

(VIII)

ONLY A FEW HOURS after Satters had transmitted to his master the words of the Bailiff, that gentleman had an interview, which fully bore out the tenor of his message to Pullman, saying that he could be of no further use to him.

Now he was dressed as a gentleman of Matapolis, no longer as a fantastic Oriental potentate, as he had still appeared upon his arrival—and indeed had done so until that morning, which indicated the importance he attached to this interview. He wore an alpaca suit, half-way between white and black, of a pleasant blue-grey. He had apparently been massaged, the scalp as much as the chin. His squarenoseishness was emphasized. He had the combativeness of a small bird who had—for some reason—settled within a few feet of an eagle; but his eyes were heartrending—they would have softened the eagle's heart, although no eagle, man or bird, had ever lived which had allowed itself to be mollified by anything whatever. His eyes seemed to irritate beyond words the stern man he had come to see.

Sammael sat at his desk. The ex-Bailiff had drawn up the hardest, the most uncomfortable, chair he could find, and sat in front of the desk, his hands folded in his lap.

'First,' said Sammael severely, 'why did you choose the least comfortable chair you could find? Secondly, what made you choose to adopt that expression of high pathos, and why fold your hands in that submissive manner? Are you a penitent?'

'If you like to call it that, lord Sammael. I am someone who a few days ago enjoyed a great deal of power, today I have none whatever. Finally I know that you have no

liking for me, to put it mildly, and your power is absolute and immeasurable. How am I to look, under these circumstances? I am terrified, I am acutely sorry for myself. Would you have me attempt to conceal these feelings?—That would be absurd: of *course* I have those feelings. You know quite well that those must be my feelings. Should I come swaggering into this room—with an expression both calm and gay?—Then, physically, I am a petty creature in your presence, lord Sammael. I must feel abject, seeing I am someone of whom you do not approve.’

Sammael listened disagreeably. After a pause, he answered him. ‘You do not make your insignificant physique any more impressive, or more agreeable, by lighting up your eyes, mouth, nose, beforehand, with that expression. There is nothing pitiable about you. One may admire your great dexterity and resourcefulness. Your intelligence appeals to me. If you had put that to other uses . . . But consider what your career has been like! You have been an evil man—as thorough-going a Sinner as any of the men and women we punish down there.’ He waved his hand towards the window. ‘You had, in your youth, strict training here—at the University, and, even more, under the guidance of your father. Yet, yet . . .’

‘You have been misinformed, great lord! I have only behaved sinfully when compelled to do so by the circumstances. I was a foreigner in Third City. There was a great deal of ill-will, I was fighting for my existence all along. Then, I had to carve out for myself a great position, the governor by no means assisting me. I started without resources and was obliged to provide myself with money in any way that offered. Such ways cannot always be nice ways. But I have at all times regarded myself as a servant of yours. I have always thought of myself as doing your work . . .’

‘The work of the Devil, yes?’ Sammael interrupted.

‘That is how your enemies refer to you—I know how

utterly mistaken they are about you, lord Sammael. I know that there is no devil except he known by them as God. It was against their "God" that I was bending my efforts . . .'

'Ah!' exclaimed Sammael. 'Ah! By behaving in a way that would accord with their mistaken notion of "the Devil"—a being, that is, the very essence of Evil—the arch-enemy of the moral; one revelling in sexual vice, the organizer of sexual licence, the great exponent of lawless debauch, the adversary of all that is intelligent, noble, and inspired in life.—Yes, so you filled Third City with the imbecilic, the vapid, the homosexual, in the interests of the Devil of course. In order to please *me*.' Sammael looked up at his visitor, and at the same time displaced a book, flinging it down on the table with an admonitory bang. 'How little, my friend, you have understood Satan, as they like to call me. You interpreted the Devil after your own image; what you would be if you were in the position I am in.' Sammael stood up, and the ex-Bailiff rose trembling to his feet.—'You should have looked closer. If you were in my place, would you inhabit a house like this? Do you see any women here? Or do you think I have a harem hidden away somewhere, perhaps underground—down there?' Sammael jabbed his finger down towards the floor. 'You should not have accepted the "devil" nonsense. Think of this colony here—thirty thousand of us: it is an almost ideally orderly community. Every member is regular in his habits—no excessive drinking, early hours, no women (the source of most disorder). And I, the so-called Devil, am their leader! What could be less devilish? Yet we have the power, the wealth, to enjoy lives of unbridled licence, of the utmost luxury.—Why did you not study our lives and so come to possess a clear understanding of the person in whose interests your birth and upbringing caused you to work?'

The Bailiff stirred, and showed signs of an inclination to speak. Sammael paused and looked at him.

‘Great lord, the kind of life you chose to live yourself was not the issue. What kind of life you desired Man to live was the important thing. That it was not in your interest to have a masterful efficient type of man in Third City I took for granted. I was not wrong in believing you one not very fond of the descendants of Adam and Eve.’

‘Right!’ boomed Sammael. ‘And I am not very fond of a filthy little rat like yourself, sir, who combines the lowest vices, the blackest crimes of the descendants of Adam and Eve, with the longevity, and some of the magical potentialities of ourselves . . . As you know, I would take over Third City, if that were possible without too much trouble; first, because it is so fine a city, and, secondly, because it is inhabited, not by people of your breed, but by a sweeter-smelling population. The first step I should take, if I were master of Third City, would be to place a very different type of magistrate from you in the camp outside it, where the selection is made of suitable citizens. *You* I should hang by the neck in the middle of Tenth Piazza. And why that fool of a governor did not do so long ago I cannot understand.—This I hope illustrates how greatly I appreciate your labours on my behalf.’

The Bailiff stood there, like a schoolboy, weeping: he made no noise, except for an occasional gulp.

‘My life has been a failure,’ he said slowly. ‘It has been a farce. I cannot help my character. Who can help being what they are? But I might at least have worked for you to your satisfaction. There was I, sitting in my palace, as unpopular with the angelic governor of Third City as with you.’

Sammael laughed. ‘Too bad! Not a popular boy, either with the black angel or with the white. Evidently, angels, of whatever variety, are allergic to you.’

The lord Sammael stepped rapidly back to his seat behind the table and took up a bundle of papers. The Bailiff promptly returned to his place upon the plain wooden chair.

‘Here I have a catalogue of your sins. It is a frightful charge-sheet.’

‘Handed you by my faithless secretary!’ screamed the Bailiff, his eyebrows lost among the furrows of his forehead, his hand clutching his handkerchief. ‘Do you accept everything he says as true? Is my word not as good as that of a secretary? Let me at least defend myself! Tell me, lord Sammael, what are these *sins* of mine!’

Sammael stood up. ‘No, sir,’ he said. ‘It is not my function to pick about in your dossier—about as dirty a dossier as even this city has ever seen, I should suppose. No, I will send you down to Dis, where all of those accusations can be examined, and they will report back to me.’

As he listened, the Bailiff’s face became a green-grey. His teeth began to chatter. By the time Sammael had finished speaking, there was a rapid rattle coming from this small shaven head, with the staring eyes.

‘You will send me to the Punishment Centre?’ the trembling voice began to articulate, like a man speaking to himself, ‘me to the Punishment Centre, to the Punishment Centre, me? Me? Me, me, me, ME?!’ The voice had become piercingly thin. ‘You will send me to the Punishment Centre!’

‘Yes, *you*—stupid as well as bad. You have not even the ability to keep some of your ill-gotten wealth.’

The teeth ceased to chatter. There was a deep silence.

‘My lord,’ and it was a stronger voice that spoke, of a sudden. ‘As your lordship says, *I* have no money, my mother is a rich woman. She will pay you a very considerable sum . . .’

A roar came from Sammael, ‘You thought I was asking

for money, did you—some of the money you bled out of the putrid Lesbians of the Yenary, bitch-man that you are!’

The Bailiff flung himself violently on the floor, and, as he pitched about, a terrible shrill howl filled every crevice of the room. Then abruptly the howl became a howling prayer.

‘Lord, great lord, dazzling lord, I will serve you as faithfully as a dog, as a dog, lord, all my life. I implore you, forgive me my folly!’

Sammael was apparently deaf to this music; he arranged two sets of papers side by side, rose, and came from behind his table. The Bailiff scuttled rapidly after him, and, seizing his nearest leg, glued his lips to the lord Sammael’s shoe.

‘Darling lord,’ he cried fervently—‘heaven-born! Pity this miserable little smudge: this weeping sparrow who has been smashed by the wind—great lord, I implore, scorn to use your limitless power upon so pitiable a worm as I, am. Lovely master, mercy, mercy, mercy, your greatness demands it. You are far too great a lord to punish such garbage as crawls at your feet—spit on me and forget me, mighty lord, greatest of archangels, immortal master! Pity!’

Sammael had briefly struggled with him for possession of his foot, then he stood, frustrated, glaring down at this tenacious ‘smudge’. The music of degradation rose to resentful ears.

‘By weighting my foot down with your stinking presence, sir, you are not recommending yourself to mercy, any more than by your bestial stream of flattery. I should have refused to see you, had I known that you would molest me.’

But the wretched man clung all the tighter to Sammael’s foot, sobbing and shrieking in a crazy spasm of lamentation.





This was altogether beyond Sammael's endurance. He took a step forward with his free foot, then, with a spectacular heave, lifted the bellowing bundle of humanity into the air with a final expulsive spasm; the Bailiff's small body soared high above the floor, and crashed against the door. Sammael turned rapidly and pressed a button upon his table, and almost simultaneously the door opened.

'Pick him up, please,' he said to the police corporal who had entered. 'He will probably pretend to be hurt. But take one man and march him down to Dis. Should he sit down, or lie down on the ground, obtain an ambulance and drive him to Punishment Hospital B. Tell the doctor in charge, from me, to teach him a lesson for giving so much trouble. Take him outside now, I will prepare a letter which I wish you to give to the Judge Heshmer. If he is not in Hospital B, hand him over to Sonnerson.'

The corporal saluted. A terrible scream of self-pity rose from the small body on the floor—he had refused to be 'picked up'.

Noticing the corporal's difficulties, who was only a smallish man, Sammael again rang the bell on his desk. A domestic appeared.

'Send two policemen here. Do not bother about him, corporal. We will get two of your men to carry him out.'

As the lord Sammael was speaking two uniformed men appeared. The removal of the Bailiff was a formidable feat, the bitterness of which no one had foreseen. One of the policemen had his face severely scratched, an eye was almost torn out. The Bailiff's false teeth remained in the palm of the policeman's hand. As the struggling men were crossing the entrance hall, piercing screams came from the room on the other side of it. The uproar was such that startled domestics appeared in the background, uncertain as to what course they should take, and police

could be heard shouting to one another outside. The office door opened and Sammael sprang out, nearly dashing to the ground the police and their prisoner; he recoiled, leapt across the hall, and disappeared in the room from which the screams issued. Seeing his opportunity, one of the policemen hammered the Bailiff's face with his fist, spitting at him such epithets as suggest themselves to a policeman. The face of the lord Sammael appeared at the door into which he had shot: he observed the policeman about to administer another hammer blow to the small red face of the 'little elephant', the term invented by maternal love.

'I am glad you are silencing him. Good. Good!' the lord Sammael approved.

(IX)

WHEN PULLMAN STEPPED OUT to the car at ten o'clock, he asked himself how much longer his nerves would tolerate this: he had no idea whether this meant he would return to these apartments a free man, or if this time tomorrow he would be in Hell. What game the lord Sammael was playing he could not imagine, nor whether his intents were wicked or charitable.—As he sat down in this now familiar seat he crossed himself: lest the chauffeur should see him doing it in the mirror, he began the cross by affecting to dust his hat, continued by scratching his left shoulder, and took his right hand back to his pocket (in which he held it because it was cold, as were his feet), in a majestic sweep which carried it very high up across the chest.

It was with a sensation of appalling loneliness that he reached the ugly brick building which obviously was his destination—for the chauffeur just stopped in front of it, without looking round. This man did not approve of his master using this handsome automobile for driving dirty little Sinners hither and thither.

However, to get out, to enter that building unescorted, Pullman refused to do: he stayed where he was, pretending not to understand. He must have sat there for five minutes: he thought the chauffeur had gone to sleep, for he gave no sign of life whatever. At the end of that time someone came up and spoke to the apparently sleeping man, who, Pullman supposed, was following much the same line as himself, namely, to sit still and await events. The stranger, an official of some kind, talked for a few minutes, then he looked into the car very severely at Pullman. The latter pretended not to notice him. A few more minutes passed, when, with a

threatening fracas, the door of the car opened. The uniformed man was glaring at him silently. *This is it*, was Pullman's inner comment. His heart stood still. He had come to the end of the road—he had the answer at last to the persistent questions prompted by events.

He looked with anger, even with rage, at the intruder. *Fear* must not be displayed—not yet; and only an equally acute emotion was competent to conceal it.

‘What is it!’ he barked.

‘*Vous parlez français?*’ the man said. He answered that he did: and the rest of the proceedings went forward in French. The lord Sammael wished him to see the Administrative Officer, Dr Hachilah. He invited Pullman to accompany him: he said he would show him where the offices of Dr Hachilah were to be found. It would be very difficult for him to locate it by himself. . . . When he left the car, the man walked at his side. There was a little conversation.—‘*Monsieur* must find it *embêtant* that no one speaks any language he can understand,’ and a few more remarks like this. Evidently the man had been deliberately terrorizing him at first, but Pullman refused to change back again into his attitude prior to the advent of this person. At length they entered an office, and a male clerk, on learning who it was, at once led him into an inner room.

Dr Hachilah came towards him with outstretched hand, saying, in very good English, ‘Mr Pullman, I am very glad to make your acquaintance. The lord Sammael, with whom I was speaking yesterday, told me that you might be interested to visit some of the Punishment Cells.’

Dr Hachilah looked disarmingly like the sort of foreign merchant one would meet in the City of London. His head was broad at the top, his dark eyes slanted down in a long mongoloid slope; his bald backward sloping forehead shone, and his smile was a warm and commercial

one.—This was obviously not a man who was going to have him precipitated into a cauldron of boiling oil, or a ditch of red-hot coal.

Dr Hachilah had been in his shirt-sleeves; as he put on his jacket he observed, ‘It is rather chillier today, is it not?’

They left the red-brick building, and made their way past two other buildings, one the hospital which the lord Sammael had entered to have his bite attended to, at the conclusion of their terrifying drive among the man-goats.

‘That is one of the two Punishment Service hospitals,’ Dr Hachilah informed him. ‘A really first-rate one. Although small, you would find it up to the standard of the Middlesex or the London Hospital.’

‘Have you been to London, sir?’

‘Oh yes,’ the official replied. ‘I was there for several years.’

Pullman did not ask him how he managed to get there, but he reflected how accessible the Earth must be to Hell and its citizens.

Rising in front of them now was the abrupt mountainside, converted into a towering edifice, of what appeared to be twenty or more storeys. A sort of murmur issued from it—what sound it was, it was difficult to say, but it was anything but silent, as a building. The hallway was full of police and officials, standing and conversing in groups, or moving to and fro, entering and leaving a half-dozen lifts.

‘I suggest we visit first a set of cells we name “The Inferno”’. They are a kind of caricature of Dante’s Inferno. They are rather amusing, though terribly macabre, of course, as everything else here, for that matter.’ Dr Hachilah smiled. ‘But you know where you are, of course. This *is* Hell.’

When they entered the lift, Pullman’s guide exclaimed,

‘Are you a nervous man?’ the answer to which was, ‘Yes, very.’

They got out at Floor Ten. ‘I will take you first,’ said Dr Hachilah, ‘to the cell where we shall find Paolo and Francesca. Have you ever read Dante’s *Inferno*?’ Pullman nodded. ‘You may remember Dante finds himself in a circle where a strong wind continually blows. Blown along by this, like flocks of birds, are an endless number of lovers—sinful lovers. He stops two of them—Paolo and Francesca, an adulterous pair. They cling to one another, as they had in their sinful past, but they are not so enthusiastic about being blown along by a high wind for ever. Well, there is no *for ever* here. When these two Sinners have grown staled in a few months’ time, we shoot them and put in another pair. These two have two or three months to bill and coo. I will bet, Mr Pullman, that they are sorry they did not restrain their amorous passions.’

They went along the passage to a door marked 15. The official turned a key, and they both entered. It was painted over to represent a wild October sky, through which everywhere couples were represented as flying. The pressure of a quite powerful wind was felt as soon as one entered the room.—In the centre of the room were a man and woman strapped to one another. About four feet from the floor they were suspended from the ceiling, and arranged at an angle very near the horizontal, simulating flight.

Dr Hachilah went up to them, and slapping the woman upon the buttocks spoke in Italian.

‘Ah, Francesca, how is love?’ He asked Pullman to approach and pushing aside a garment, revealed the fact that they were naked, and indecently glued to one another, the man exactly placed to facilitate sinful love.

‘At first,’ Dr Hachilah told him, ‘the fellow took full advantage of his favourite position. But now . . . (Dr

Hachilah shook his head) 'now there has been no sinful activity for months.' He stepped aside, invitingly, saying to Pullman, 'You may inspect how things are for yourself. I do not believe that Paolo is capable of obliging Francesca any more.'

The couple were violently shaken.

The lips of the man and woman were in some way fastened to one another, but Pullman saw the eyes of the man alive with the dazzling colours of a diamond of great value, his mouth was drawn down at the corners in a spasm of bitterness; it was a thin but very dark bow, taut as though it might break, and curved around underneath—as if a draughtsman's pencil had got thus far in the drawing of a tense oval, and then stopped, with a sharp nick of the pencil. As the whalebone-line of the mouth strained and strained, above the bloodshot diamond rolled, and then the phlegm rattled, as the voice organized itself among the sinuses. The trussed-up pinned-down man spoke. Since his lips were fastened upon those of the everlasting Francesca, when he spoke, he spoke from under his harsh black moustache, in or upon the woman's mouth. He panted his invective where the lips lived together, coldly compressed, the woman's eyebrow drawn up in the classical arc of agony, the large distended eye rolled into the corner of her head.

'Ecco ancora la nostra vecchia faccia-di-merda—puzza—ratto scabbioso—figlio di una cagna sifilitica—pancia scrofulosa—nudo-muso—babbuino—percorrente pezzo di vomitaticcio—sputacchiera.'

'Now, Paolo! Remember that the gutter-speech of the Florentine explodes up the nostrils of the fair Francesca. Or if she is so incautious as to open her mouth it goes down her throat. So do stop spitting up her nose; she looks terribly distressed from here.'

These words were spoken in Italian: and the bloodshot diamond rolled in Paolo's head, the voice came

crackling from a red-hot stomach, answering his tormentor.

‘Se un angelo di Dio mi domanda di prendere il paradiso per me stesso, bottino, sapete che cosa prenderei? In questo caso sceglierei una mezz’ora chiusa in camera con voi, senza arma, faccia-di-merda: vorrei strappare il vostro cuore, scarpire il vostro puzzolente sesso, cavarvi fuori gli occhi, e finalmente vorrei caccarvi sopra.’

‘It is not the first time you have paid me that compliment. If I were to pick my paradise, it would be in another universe to yourself and that legendary bit of skirt, my dear Paolo.’ He shook his head. ‘This pair,’ he said to Pullman, ‘are extinct, I fear. I had better send them down to be *fusillés* tomorrow. I will tell the officer that I shall expect this cell to be vacated by tomorrow noon.’

‘Cacca di puzzola sifilitica,’ Paolo venomously croaked as they left the cell.

Outside, Dr Hachilah stood clapping his hands delicately together, as if he wished he had a basin in which to wash them. Meanwhile he conversed with the visitor.

‘It is not an unreasonable claim, I think; we consider our *Paolo and Francesca* a great improvement on Dante’s sentimental pair. If it is a sin of the first magnitude—we hold that it is that—to indulge in a pleasure-impulse, and in doing so violently to terminate a sacrament, the sacrament of marriage, in which the destinies of children are concerned, to strike at that essential union at the root of the State—all for pleasure, like eating an ice-cream, or a luscious peach: for this frivolous sin to turn people into starlings, or some other pretty bird, and to set them gracefully drifting, in each other’s arms, upon an autumn blast—*that* does not appear to us a bitter enough punishment. Here we have caricatured this far too attractive expiation: we have fixed them as if they were in flight, but we have fixed them in a horrible

rigidness—lips to lips and sex to sex. They may never move a fraction of an inch from that mockery of love. Three times a day we un-glue their hands, and pour nutriment down their throats, and we have divers means for evacuating them—though Paolo is deliberately incontinent, the dirty devil. He is the dirtiest Paolo I have ever experienced, so far. So we arrange our pair of adulterous lovers. And we drop in and insult them every day. Finally we shoot them.’

Hachilah looked at Pullman, who disguised his feelings in a frowning mask of studious attention obscuring any more private thoughts which might be moving through his uncontrollable mind.

‘The Last Judgement . . .’ he began.

‘Ah, we have not the premises to maintain in perpetuity the billions of physical identities the Last Judgement involves,’ Hachilah answered. ‘It is a crucial omission, I agree. But we have a library of records. The height, the colour of the hair and eyes, and many other details, and of course the full name, may be found there. Before anyone is shot or otherwise destroyed, the record is checked. That is the best we have been able to do.’

‘A-a-a-a-h,’ Pullman intoned.

A white-coated assistant came up to Hachilah very respectfully, and was evidently making a report. When, with a slight bow, he retired, Hachilah informed the visitor that one of the exhibits had died. ‘Where the treatment is severe we cannot guarantee that they will not just snuff out. Well now,’ he continued, looking up and down the corridor, ‘I think that we will visit our version of Canto 28.’

He propped himself against the wall, while he outlined what they were about to see.

‘We do not adhere exactly to the *Divine Comedy*: the punishment you are about to witness is parallel to the imagery of Canto 28, but the sins do not correspond.

For instance, the first Sinner we shall visit is a Sodomite (catalogued by Dante as *Sin against Nature*); but there is no Sodomy in Canto 28. We are merely acquainted with the kind of destiny reserved for the Sodomite.'

'I see,' said Pullman.

Dr Hachilah moved along towards a 'cell' which was the next but one to the Paolo and Francesca one. He liked surprising his visitor (he was, Pullman surmised, the creator of these vignettes of punishment and of suffering). He waited until they were both in front of the door, then turned the handle, and flung the door open. As they stepped inside, they found themselves in a sub-tropical scene. A naked figure of a small, spectacled man of sixty odd, lay on his face upon a camp-bed. There was the desert, with two palms appropriately growing there, but nothing explained the presence of the bed.

The pink-skinned nude, whose feet were nearer to them than the bald, very pink head, with its curving white fringe above the neck, was slashed in many places—the wounds seeming quite fresh.

'We have here a Briton—but his tongue is split, so he cannot denounce us! What this rather solitary, but extremely rich, bookworm regarded as a shrewd move was to emigrate, with his capital, as soon as the bloodless revolution started in England, following the first war. There was still time to save all his money, provided he transferred it to a British colony. He selected Kenya, a nice gentlemanly colony, good climate, money as safe as houses, lions to hunt in perfect safety—Italy and Greece within easy reach.

'Three Cambridge intellectuals, Kings', orthodoxly Sodomitic, had made Kenya their home a year or two earlier, and one, a kind of friend, with whom he corresponded, discreetly advertised the two or three advantages which were possessed by no other colony. A double-first in Classics or rustication for homosexuality

were things which gave a cachet to the Cambridge intellectual's views of places and men, and his purchase of a small farm north of Nairobi was in large measure the result. Kenya had come up to his expectations, his money had softened everything for him. He was extremely fond of his house-boy. When the terroristic organization named Mau-Mau, with its campaign of wholesale murder, became hot news, he closed his eyes. He was slow to stop saying that a lot of old women had the "wind up" and to shrug off this menace—this Mau-Mau. So he was incredulous when his sweetly-smiling house-boy entered his sitting-room, one evening, flourishing a long cutlass, at the head of a gang of armed Kikuyu, and proceeded to slash him all over, to hold him down while they slit his tongue, and after that debagged him, and proceeded to ementulation. The bloody remains of his sex was found—where do you think? Thrust into a part of his anatomy very well known to the murderous house-boy. The old fellow was dead before his Kikuyu visitors had left his farm—ten of his fingers in the house-boy's pockets. Then he came to us. His major sin was not, as at first we supposed it was, the sin of Sodom: it was the sin against Genius.'

'What may that be?' Pullman asked.

'It is a sin to the punishment of which Dante Alighieri was much addicted.'

'Ah yes, I see,' very grandly, was Pullman's stern acknowledgement that he understood.

Like a very lethargic and past-caring animal in a zoological garden, he who had sinned against Genius screwed his head half-round to sneer with a bitter thin and bloodless lip, to glimmer through his gold-rimmed spectacles at the intruders. The tobacco-green eyes burned with a lingering, and unclean, derision—as if to say, darkly, 'Stick it up your you-know-what!'

'He is not at all an appetizing man,' Hachilah

commented. 'He is one of those people about whom one feels that he has received far less than he merited. I would blast away that tailward greeting from that little eye of that obscene old skunk. Our Bloomsbury smart-Alec is not my favourite Sinner.'

Pullman looked at his Virgil with surprise.

'Elderly pervert, listen.' Hachilah spoke directly to the sullen Sinner. 'With the spite and quarrelsomeness of all your tribe, you made use of your money to persecute and to injure a man under the special protection of God. We are not punishing you for that at present. When this *tableau vivant* is over and done with, I shall see to it that you undergo a more active punishment—small gilded beast, you stink!'

With this Hachilah led the way out of the room. Outside a woman was hurrying past, her forearms dripping with blood. They nodded to one another, and Pullman's guide explained what such things signified. 'She is a doctor, who is on her way to the wash-room through there. She has been busy keeping the wounds fresh. The healing process must be arrested, you see.' He coughed. 'I am a doctor,' he added. 'There are more than a thousand of us here.'

'It is remarkable how you keep these people alive—these bleeding wrecks,' Pullman ventured.

'Great care has to be observed, and constant attention is necessary. But it must be remembered that we are in a symbolical, as it were—not a real world. These people, these Sinners, have their being, to some extent, in something like a painted existence. The tortures, like those of the figures in the *Inferno* of Dante, are of nightmarish kind—it is as if they dreamed. You remember Bertrand de Born in the *Inferno*, who held his own head in his hand,—grasping it by the hair, and using it as a lantern—and quite willing to discuss his plight! Well, no *real* man would be able to do that; it is only in the

verse of Dante, or in the pages of Hans Andersen, that people do such things as these.'

'I recognize that,' Pullman answered, greatly surprised that this pedestrian official understood such things as that. And his mind reverted, immediately, to the terrible punishment enacted by the lord Sammael—handing the sinful woman over to the fury of the animals. Would Sammael give the same explanation? Do all these people think of themselves as acting in a dream? And these doctors, in this vast hospital, engaged in what might be called the Surgery of Morals, do they all look upon their daily routine as ethical? Also, do they all see themselves as operating in a dream, for the moral health of human existence? He decided to keep Dr Hachilah under observation. It was also his intention when he was by himself, to analyse the creative mind of Dante. It seemed to him, at first sight, that Dante's infernal persons were everywhere less real than life; a quality of the reality like that of the fairy-tale or folk-lore infinitely less real (badly real) than they would be in the hands of a contemporary writer. The case of Bertrand de Born was a very good one to take, and demonstrated a very careful reading on the part of Hachilah of the text of Dante.

However, Hachilah had something to say about the next *vignette* as he liked to call it, and Pullman's mind refocused upon the Dantesque tour he was making.

'The figure we are about to see is a great catch; as it is something more than a man, a great international spirit in fact, we were very surprised when he, or 'it' made his appearance here. We quite realized that Hell was the suitable place for him. But since he is an evil principle rather than a human individual we were puzzled, at first, how to treat him.

'We are going to pass in to a divided compartment; he is in one, and in the other is the British spirit, in the

person of a City Magnate. Britain is a blurred national entity; a World Empire, a little bit of everything, and so, it seemed to me, the only nation in the same category as my tall friend, who is perhaps my most spectacular exhibit, and about whom I must provide you with something as concrete as I can make it.

‘Think of it if you like, or think of him, as International Capital, it is what he is more frequently called. Any country which is big enough to take him, and upon which land he momentarily fastens himself, suffers abominably. In the last century he settled on the United States, and tried to slice it in half. He succeeded in splitting the nation in half, and keeping it split down the centre for years. He was a splitter-down-the-middle, a universal bisector from the beginning. If he could have got to the moon, he would have split that down the middle too. Today he has no tangible national centre. If he could be fastened down to a territorial habitat, it would be the Bahamas or the Caribbean Islands, what the English call the West Indies. But he operates universally. You can see his hand in Europe today—a typical piece of work. It is split right across the middle; a so-called Iron Curtain marks this grand division. Then, no nation is intact; each one is, in one way or another, split down the middle.

‘This figure is eminently genteel. He is very indignant at finding himself caged, and treated as Dante treated Mahomet, cleft from the chin, down the centre, as far as the place where he breaks wind.’

Hachilah turned, as if to move into room nine. ‘We shall find him, in the words of Dante, *tra le gambe pendevan le minugia; la corata pareva e ’l tristo sacco che merda fa di quel che si trangugia.*’

The prospect of encountering a person, with his entrails hanging between his legs, and the machinery exposed by which food is converted into excrement, as described in

these fearful lines of Dante's, succeeded in shaking Pullman a little.

'But let us come in,' said Hachilah, 'and examine this World Bird.' The Doctor flung the door open, and they entered the large room, divided in the middle by a partly transparent partition, and first they came upon the representative of the British Imperium. But Pullman's gaze was immediately absorbed by the tall, abstract, cartoonesque figure beyond. The head of this figure was a large pink egg, the heavy end downwards. Half way up, this pink egg was bisected by the smiling mouth; the two eyes were two heavy slits—for he smiled all over. Pullman felt himself smiled at, and, although this was only a symbolic figure, below the waist-line horribly dissected, he felt impelled to smile back.

Reaching from his neck-band to his waist-line was a light slate-blue shirt, in the centre of which was a curious, brightly coloured device. This was in the form of a circle, and within it a number of smaller circles. These represented the principal nations of the world—the Soviet a deep red circle, a yellow one for China, and so on. In the centre was an empty space, and this was almost filled by a dark star. In general appearance this design was based on the Stars and Stripes, but a solitary universal State was there, in place of the forty-eight States of the Union.

Pullman considered that the egg-shaped, pink vacuity was excellently symbolic of this spirit adventurer, with its roots everywhere and nowhere. The anatomical machinery picked intact out of the 'Divina Commedia', most appropriately selected by Dante, gave the lower part of this figure a macabre appearance.

'Good morning, Doctor,' the stately scarecrow drawled. 'A visitor? You might have given me a fig-leaf, Doctor.'

Pullman could not help carrying his eyes towards the

area indicated, but of course the sex was not there, there was only an intestine.

The International Embodiment addressed himself to Pullman.

‘You are surprised to see me in this curious Inferno,’ he said. ‘I do not know how these things are decided, do you?—who was the beast responsible for this hideous mutilation I have no idea.’

‘That was me. I treated you as Mahomet was treated by Dante.’ Hachilah smiled back into the false smiling eyes of the great manipulator.

‘You! I might have known that. You have the face of a wop gangster.’ He shuddered, and the *sacco che merda fa* shook.

‘Old hypocrite,’ Hachilah observed.

Curling his lip, the Abstraction said, ‘What can a third-rate cad like yourself know about victims of some miscarriage of divine justice like myself? There is something picayune and squalid about the whole of this outfit.’

‘He can do as much talking as he likes; some pretty nasty insults are levelled at us, I can assure you. But we can take it,’ smiled Hachilah.

They were now moving away from the Bisector, and had entered the pen of the Symbolic Britain. This figure had his legs, and he exhibited much sympathy for his fellow-sufferer. He stood with an apron of fivers, and a golden sovereign embedded in his stomach.

‘Our jailer is a communist,’ he protested scornfully. ‘Everything he does proves him a Muscovite. He is a red fanatic. Don’t speak to him, sir! I don’t.’

Hachilah was displeased. ‘This man is the kind of fool who thinks that only Stalinists frown on Usury,’ he said. ‘The Christian Church had for centuries legislated against it. This ignorant old fool will have to answer for his offensiveness before very long.’

The Briton swelled with indignation, shouting so that

his neighbour might hear, 'I personally shall call this rat a red rat whenever he puts his dirty nose inside this room.'

Pullman had thought that there was nothing you could say to this imperturbable official which could anger him, but here was an accusation made by a Sinner which seemed to get his goat. Why was this? Was he a Communist? That was the obvious explanation. But Pullman did not believe that his was the type of anger to be expected from a Communist. Could it be that an accusation of that kind was one that was damaging to a member of the staff? Did that indicate that the lord Sammael had any partisanship where political passions were concerned, Pullman wondered?

This figure was very ingeniously chosen, the visitor thought, to symbolize the City of London. The exposure of the anatomy of the Bisector made any attempt to make him look like a million dollars out of the question. But the John Bull knighted did really look very rich; his jowliness bespoke income-brackets ranging up into the millions.

When they were outside in the corridor once more, Hachilah exploded. 'That old son-of-a-bitch afflicts me with his stupidity. I mean the Briton of course. To object to see such vast wealth in the possession of so doltish a creature is to him proof positive that you are a reader of the *Daily Worker*. He swells with respect for that old drawling double-crosser next door to him; for he is of the race which sticks up statues to all the wrong people, losing its power and riches as quickly as it acquires them; being devoid of imagination and all logical ability, when an Empire half the size of the world drops in his lap, he is quickly bullied out of keeping it, and hands it back to Tom, Dick, and Harry. I am only a doctor; you must excuse my medical man's plain spoken ways.'

The smile with which Pullman greeted this was gilded with superiority. 'Where I began life was in Ireland,' he remarked, 'where the intelligence of Our Conquerors is not regarded as their most conspicuous attribute.'

Hachilah plumed himself upon a deep knowledge of the politics of all the minor races of Europe. So now he smiled at Pullman with sympathetic understanding. He did not ignore the significance of the magic words 'Potato Famine'.

'Ah, I see of course. You could say, better than I can, anything on *that* subject.'

Knit in the bonds of a common contempt, nearer to one another than they had been when Hachilah had supposed Pullman to be a *pure* Englishman, they turned towards the exit from Hachilah's Dantesque floor; they began descending the stairs to the floor beneath.

Before they had reached it, they heard a good deal of noise—a contrast to the Inferno floor. The most terrifying screams electrified the foreground, but as soon as they had left the stairway they seemed to be in the midst of a universal disturbance, to the right; the men who passed them, and even the women, had faces inflamed with some dark emotion. A young, white-coated man moved quickly, in a concentrated scuttle: in a kidney dish he bore a pair of human eyes.

'This is a very active group of cells. They are at their height just now. I should greatly enjoy to remove the eyes, personally, of a certain pestilential old gentleman upstairs. But my taste is not so dynamic as is that of my colleagues on this floor.'

They had taken a few steps to the right, and then suddenly almost from the nearest cell, a female roar took possession of their hearing and in Pullman's case riveted his heart. Oh, this was the agony of someone he had known. He found himself running into Hachilah: two

women, both in clinical outfits, appeared in the door of the cell, both with flaming but unseeing eyes. One it seemed was in pursuit of the other, the fugitive holding stiffly, as it were hieratically, a long curved knife. She flashed across the corridor, vanishing in the staff premises at the rear. A terrible bellowing apparition appeared at the door of the cell, her eyes angrily glaring at them, blood pouring down her legs. The Doctor began blowing a whistle, when two Punishment Police rushed at the woman, and disappeared with her, inside the cell, followed by one of the two nurses, or whatever they were, who had left the room so violently only a minute or two earlier. Very confused, but obedient to some magnetic attraction, Pullman was forced into the cell, and found that Hachilah was for a moment just ahead of him.

The two police held the furious woman down upon a matted trolley, a warder was lifting a hypodermic syringe out of a case; whereas Hachilah knelt on the floor beside yet another female member of the Punishment staff, who appeared to be wounded. The Doctor had unbuttoned her uniform.

The scene passed from one phase to the next with great rapidity. The roaring of the woman on the bed died away rather abruptly—which was explained by the woman with the hypodermic syringe going away from the trolley; next, this same white-aproned woman was standing by the side of the doctor, who was engaged in administering penicillin, and dressing the wound of the recumbent woman. While this was still being done, five newcomers entered the cell; two stretcher-bearers, a police sergeant and a police officer were on either side of the girl who had seemed to be in flight when Pullman first became aware of her. It was now a cell full of silent people, each knowing what to do.

The last flash of the revolting scene was the sudden

disinterestment of Dr Hachilah, his coming up to Pullman and drawing him outside the cell. In the doorway he met a man just arriving; they exchanged a few harsh sentences.

‘That is all over,’ he said.

‘Is it?’ inquired Pullman.

‘As far as I am concerned,’ the Doctor answered.

The Doctor seemed to be anxious to get away from the figure on the floor as soon as possible, and made for the stairhead, muttering ‘Let us see what is happening downstairs.’

Dr Hachilah spoke no more while they were descending the stairs. Then they emerged in a place of bustle, which bore a close resemblance to the floor they had just left. The first thing that obtruded itself upon the eye was a man with a large bearded head lying on a stretcher. He was obviously under the influence of a drug. As Pullman was standing in admiration of the noble architecture of this ageing head, he noticed that Hachilah was in conversation with one of the two men apparently responsible for the stretcher. He came over to him, and nodding towards the man in the stretcher told Pullman who he was. ‘A great Sinner. He was a German General Officer. During the war his sins had startled everyone except the Germans. They were German sins. For several months he has received punishment here. Now they are taking him outside, in a small amphitheatre, where this hero is to be burnt alive. He is steeped in sin, he deserves that fate. We will go down and watch this expiation. I shall look forward to watching this un-Christian monster shrivel up, like over-toasted bread, blacken and curl up.’

He looked at the man on the stretcher carefully, feature by feature. Pullman looked as well; and beneath the gay moustache of the German General he saw the tongue moving up and down over the lips, which must have

been very dry. The head did not move, only the tongue, and, occasionally, the finely moulded eyelids.

‘Does he know where he is going,’ Pullman inquired.

‘No,’ said Hachilah, ‘unless he has guessed.’ Several men arrived—doctors, Pullman supposed. The stretcher was lifted up, and the party moved off. Hachilah took Pullman by the arm, and they stepped off briskly in the opposite direction. The Doctor might look forward to seeing this noble-looking old Sinner shrivelled up, like a piece of scorched bread—that was all right, the Doctor spent his life occupied in this way. But *he* was beginning to experience nausea. What was the idea in asking him to assist at this terrible execution? And *why* had Dr Hachilah gripped his arm?

They had taken a short cut; as they moved nearer to the place of fire, down lifts and along corridors, and then a covered gallery out of doors, he availed himself more and more of the Doctor’s support. He remembered how Dante, during his visit to the Infernal regions, frequently availed himself of the motherly care of Virgil, who would at times even pick him up protectively, and nurse him in his bosom. At this point, he decided, Hachilah might play the motherly part. He felt feeble, and indeed drooping, worn out and wanting in that manly will which constituted him a Homeric figure in the eyes of Satters. At one point there was a long piece of obsolete machinery which Hachilah wanted to cross, rather than to walk around. Very well, said Pullman to himself: but for exploits of that kind, he had not the requisite fiery interest in the expedition they were making: he surrendered himself, collapsing into the arms of Hachilah, and making it plain that the passage of the mechanical obstruction was not within the power of so fatigued a man. He was willingly supported by the enthusiastic Doctor, who eventually pulled and pushed him—and once or twice lifted him—over the horrid machinery.

They sank upon the ground together at the other side. Pullman propped himself up against Hachilah, murmuring, 'A stiff pull and a long pull.'

The Doctor produced a flask, detached the metal cup, poured a solid shot, and handed it to his protégé and patient. It was rum, and Pullman swallowed it immediately.

This made a great difference in his attitude. He flung off Hachilah, and asked with a stammer, 'Shall we go?'

In a few minutes it seemed they were standing in front of a circular metal building, almost as large as a gas tank. They found the entrance and, with the help of the rum, faced the great heat within, climbing with muted displays of toughness. They reached the two lines of seats near the roof. Here an icy draught, in the midst of which they sat, made it difficult for them to appreciate what was being enacted in the centre of the building. First, down below, as it were in the well of the circus, was a fiery grill, circular in shape, about forty-five yards in diameter. Red hot, crackling forms, assembled like the figures in an abstract painting, was all one saw, but this gigantic grill was made possible by furnaces underneath. The stoking of these (which Pullman felt he could dimly hear) must have been an almost superhuman task.

The rum enabled Pullman to survey this diabolic contrivance, as if he were not himself flesh and blood. The Doctor looked at him with approval.

'You look cool. Good man!' he smiled. 'Good show!'

But high up, over this grill, extended an aerial metal inverted rail, and cables hung from it almost touching the grill. Pullman saw at once the road that was to be taken by the big German military Sinner. And within a few minutes something like a sled upside-down made its appearance in the roof, at one end of the inverted track. In the inverted iron sled was a strapped down, naked figure—emaciated limbs and torso making the large

bearded head, surmounted by a heavy mass of hair, more marked.

The sled hovered slowly for a little, and then began to glide down towards the bed of fire, swinging slightly upon a heavy cable. It approached slowly, until it was a matter of ten feet from the blazing surface. There it remained. It was probably five minutes before it began gradually to ascend to the other side of the roof.

‘His eyes will have been burnt out of his head,’ Hachilah said, ‘and his lips must have dropped into the fire. I believe I saw the skin dropping.’

Pullman drew back and away from Hachilah. To bring him here to this savage spectacle was one thing, but to expect him to share the reactions of Punishment Officials and doctors of medicine was another. Soon he would be telling him how the dental plates melt almost at once, in the prisoners’ mouths, and other such attractive morsels.

Pullman had none of the sensations he had anticipated. The Doctor’s flask contained rum of a high alcoholic percentage, but all that was not the only cause of his relative detachment. In so large a place, curious mechanical accessories of this atrocious kind emasculated the horror: the darkened atmosphere, the absence of sound (no cry came from the victim) gave it much more the effect of an operation than of an execution. A very odd, upside-down operation.

He remained with his eyes upon the ceiling—a position that made it plain that the delights of the execution were not for him. Would the Doctor have come to see it by himself? No: it was for Pullman, in a sense, that this was happening. The Doctor had taken a great deal of trouble—the visitor was not behaving as was expected of him. He was on the point of bringing his study of the ceiling to an end, when Hachilah seized him by the arm.

‘There he goes! They have dropped him on the fire.

In ten minutes there will be nothing there. The incineration is very rapid.'

Pullman carried his eyes downwards to the red-hot surface, and on it a quite lifeless body lay, aflame a little at the sides.

'In ten minutes the Sinner will be totally destroyed?' Pullman inquired.

Hachilah did not answer, his eyes were greedily fixed upon the slowly dissolving object. Pullman revised his estimate of the unlikelihood of this man coming here *by himself*. It was a spectacle that affected him very deeply.

A new Hachilah was glaring at him in the foreground of his consciousness. He imagined Dr Hachilah at a conference where it was being decided whether to destroy a man by fire or not. He could see him shifting excitedly about on his chair, his fiery eyes feasting upon the living flesh of the man for whom frying seemed practically certain. He could imagine, too, how the victim felt sitting there, and his eyes suddenly resting upon the man-eating eyes of Hachilah. He felt, the length of his spine, and down to the soles of his feet, what the man would feel for whom life was in the balance.

He was electrified by this new disquiet. The 'House of Fire', as it was called, he had not found a stimulating horror. Drugged by the heat of this burning-centre, and by physical fatigue, he had been conscious of the face of his companion very little. He came to his senses—he threw off the paralysis.

He made no movement—he schooled his face not to reveal what had been going on in his mind, or how he had conquered his torpor. On the other hand he did not allow his mind to get to work upon his startling discovery or what bearing it had upon the lord Sammael (such as why was he sent to this particular man). He knew that at any hideous moment he might be talking to this man-eater again, Hachilah must not read in his

eyes that he had detected anything. Pullman must again invite the motherly care of this blood-thirsty Doctor (after the manner of Dante with Virgil). He must act the innocent.

They stood outside the madly-hot building containing the pool of fire (from which the men of the Punishment Service received the kick of kicks, after months of playing with their victims). As between himself and the man-eating Doctor, would the time come for him to be strapped on the upside-down sled? He asked himself that, as they stood together, pausing for a moment to inhale the pleasant atmosphere of every day.

Pullman jumped, as Hachilah took him by the arm and said, 'Now let us go to my office and have a cup of tea.'

He was not able to reply. He allowed himself to be led by the arm, and in silence, to the main road, not far from the entrance to the punishment block, or, colloquially, Dis. They crossed the road, and made their way to the group of buildings where the Doctor's office was situated. There appeared to be some excitement around the door of the hospital, out of which a hooded stretcher was being taken to a waiting ambulance. Hachilah led the way into the next building, and when they reached his office the Doctor flung himself into a big club-chair, waving to Pullman to be seated, and ringing a bell at his side.

'That has not occupied so much time, but I can understand what is a routine for me must have taken it out of you,' Hachilah regarded Pullman in a civilized and amiable way.

'If one is not hardened to such sights they are emotionally exhausting. To see Paolo and Francesca caused Dante to break down. I am justified, I suppose . . .' Pullman said, without finishing.

'My dear fellow,' the Doctor protested. 'You saw a murder and an execution without turning a hair!'

‘Which was the murder?’ Pullman inquired.

‘Oh that was the young woman doctor,’ said Hachilah. ‘I should not think she will recover. A deep stab in the left breast, and so on.’

‘Oh.’ Pullman looked surprised. ‘I did not know that was murder.’

Some tea was brought in. ‘Not the right time of the day,’ said the Doctor apologetically. ‘But tea is a better refresher than anything I know.’

For a few minutes they drank in silence. Then the Doctor spoke.

‘You must come again. I will show you round more thoroughly.’

‘Thank you,’ said the visitor.

‘The lord Sammael likes you, Pullman. He does not wish to impose anything on you. But as you are where Hell is (was how he put it), he thought you might care to have a look. As a writer, he thought that our version of the “Inferno” might interest you.’

‘He was right. I found it tremendously interesting. Please say how grateful I am for being given the opportunity to see—to see your curious display. I thought your Paolo and Francesca was a good critique of Dante.’

Dr Hachilah laughed, evidently pleased. ‘I am glad, Mr Pullman, that you approved of what you call my criticism.’

It seemed to Pullman that Dr Hachilah’s *pleasure* was decisive. That was obviously what he felt, and it could only mean one thing: namely, that he wanted Pullman to tell the lord Sammael that what he had seen interested him, and that it was intelligently contrived by the person entrusted with the job, namely, Dr Hachilah.

It was quite lightheartedly that Pullman went down to the waiting car, accompanied almost obsequiously by the man-eating Doctor.

(X)

THE SITUATION HAD APPEARED CLEARER—if what was said and done was to be treated as normal—might be taken as corresponding to fact—as being simple, and not intricate. His shock at discovering that Hachilah possessed the face of a man-eater was very natural, but after all it was a fact which *need not* have any bearing upon his visit to Dis. What had transpired afterwards, in his office, was of far greater significance.

Upon arriving in their apartment, on an impulse ensuing from his optimism, Pullman, with an air suggestive of some great disclosure, made his way to Satters' bedroom. Satters' bedroom, they now had decided, was the safest place to talk in, and Pullman's immediate move into what had become a conference chamber could only mean that some high confidence was contemplated.

But the moment he found himself confronted with Satters' face, like a frowning potato, furrowed with weeks of scepticism, he saw that it would be no use. Satters was degenerating into something like a suspicious old woman. It was out of the question to attempt to make him understand anything except a stamped and sealed document. He could hear himself saying, 'Doctor Hachilah told me that the lord Sammael liked me very much.' He would be confronted by the blank face of Satters, and a 'well what of it' look. No, there could be nothing of that sort. He really had nothing new to tell him.

So Pullman gave a jocular account of the sufferings of the Sinners, and so closed what was to have been a conference. Satters looked a little puzzled. But it was not the first time that he had had cause to decide that his chief was a very enigmatic person.

As usual Pullman was confronted with the problem of

how to amuse his discontented follower. Mark lent them a child's game called Sizzle-Wizzle (or that was the nearest thing they were able to get to the native word inscribed upon the box). It was *so* childish that it gave Pullman a pain behind the ears, and his nose began to bleed at the end of an hour. Yet, until they left these apartments, should any silence extend for more than ten minutes or so, Satters would spring up, and shout Sizzle-Wizzle. However, this stupefying game was played for the rest of the day. Pullman's morning and nightly prayers rang with the word Sizzle-Wizzle.

On the third day, shortly after Sizzle-Wizzle had begun, Pullman put his hat on and left the house. Satters attempted to go with him, but he ran at top speed down the stairs, shouting, 'Go away. I must be alone. Shall only be ten minutes.' He walked slowly to the main road, where he came face to face with a member of the police force, who tried to have a talk with him, but, failing to do so, attempted to arrest him. Pullman took to flight, the police in pursuit: the latter slowed down because of his arms. Pullman disappeared into the hotel: almost at once the man in pursuit, making a great deal of noise, was about to mount the stairs with aggressive intent (for he had heard Pullman ascending them when he first arrived), but Mark entered. After a great deal of shouting, after Pullman had been fetched down and exhaustively interrogated, the law withdrew with many menaces. Pullman, once more back in their apartment, sank into a chair. Satters regarded him ironically, then he exclaimed sturdily, 'Never mind! Let's have a game of Sizzle-Wizzle.'

They somehow or other got through seven days, when Pullman received a summons to the house of the lord Sammael, about twelve o'clock in the morning. The car shortly afterwards made its appearance, he dragged himself away from Satters, and in at most ten minutes he

was at the lord Sammael's house, being greeted by the master dressed in a most becoming smock. Smiling he led him into the same sitting-room in which the child still lay in the basket.

'All the morning I have been going from farm to farm,' Sammael told him. 'I feel quite bucolic.'

Pullman laughed decorously at the idea of Lucifer examining short-horned cattle and scratching the ear of the deeply-cooing sow.

'For my part,' he said, 'I have been playing Sizzle-Wizzle endlessly.'

'Sizzle-Wizzle?'

'A child's game lent us by Mark. I have a child, you know—a very backward sixteen—who takes a great deal of entertaining.'

'I must really apologize,' and Sammael frowned self-reproachfully. 'For the past week a quite unexpected, unheralded food problem demanded my attention. Farming is not a subject I am very good at. I labour to understand, but agricultural troubles take me twice as long as any other to get to the bottom of.' He got up. 'I am ravenous. Will you have lunch with me—very simple you know, but . . .'

Had this been the Earth, Pullman would have been about to sit down to lunch with the King of the Earth. He who sups with the King of the Earth is on the road to greatly improving his position. But what did anything mean *here*?

However, in the sparkling dining-room, the linen stiff and white, a shining parquet floor, soft white rugs, and a live Englishman as butler in a white drill uniform (of forty odd and properly whiskered), quite altered the outlook. This *was* a serious lunch, in the social sense. The English butler said, 'Would you like *Toast Melba*, sir?' Things began to feel like the Earth—even like the Anglo-Saxon Earth.

And what the lord Sammael shortly was to say confirmed him in the belief that he had reached solid Earth at last.

But first Sammael referred to his visit to Dis. He told him that Dr Hachilah had informed him how they had examined the vignettes. Also he had learned of their subsequent visit to the Fire-House or Incinerator.

Sammael spoke of Hachilah. 'He is not from these parts, as you may have noticed. The people of Miphkad are—how should I say? They are *provincial*—there is something oddly limited about them. Now, Hachilah was born in Europe, even, he studied in England. He arrived here in the usual way; but he is an extremely skilful doctor, and I rather liked him. So we took him on, and he has done very well. He only has one fault; he loses his temper in dealing with a troublesome Sinner. The Doctor told me that you had preferred *his* Paolo and Francesca to that of Dante!'

Pullman could see that Sammael was proud of his prowess, in wittily arranging the Sinners who came under his care.

Consequently Pullman discussed the exhibits he had been shown. He said how sentimental he considered Dante's *lovers-in-the-storm*; and how Hachilah had produced a more realistic pair of divorcés than the Italian—who was, of course, maudlin about the sexual passion anyway. He was almost as well known for his lovesickness as for his infernal journey. And what a face he had!

Sammael laughed a great deal at this point. He had always thought that about Dante's face himself. And as to the cult of Beatrice, they rolled about at the thought of Beatrice.

'There is a very popular academic picture—it is the Anglo-Saxon's visual conception of Dante. It shows Dante—small, black, and intense—encountering Beatrice in the streets of Florence.'

‘Yes,’ Sammael smiled, for he appeared to enjoy discussing Dante. ‘I cannot feel that he was one of the world’s great ones.’

‘I read Dante rather late,’ Pullman continued; ‘when I was able to use my intellect, without interference by the youthful emotions, hero-worship and the rest. No one can question the grandeur of his verse. But the age was uncongenial, and he was his age. He had developed this personal mariolatry. Substituting Beatrice for Mary. Then he has a mother-fixation, as it would be called. He summons Virgil from the dead in order to act on his journey into Hell as his big maternal Nanny. He entrusts himself to Virgil as though he were a rather jumpy little subject. One is frequently surprised to find Dante shrinking up against the mother-poet, Virgil: and in some cases Virgil lifts him up and shelters him in his bosom. I do not suggest he should have moved among the shades with *crânerie* or lack of courteous pity for their misfortune, but he need not have come shrinking among them, never far from his mother’s apron-strings.

‘A thing of minor importance, perhaps; but when he met his fellow Florentines he was not suitably detached, and it was a good thing he had someone there to look after him.—A contemporary Italian explains these things as a result of Dante’s never having had a father. But what a fatherless child misses in such a case is not the protection of the maternal nurse, but the authority of the hero belonging to the extrovert masculine side of life. But since Dante was a mother’s boy one feels that had he had his Mary, she would have had to do a good deal of cuddling and petting of her little man.’

This table-talk of Pullman’s was greatly appreciated by his host, it was plain. And it was not long after this that Sammael made a proposal which revolutionized Pullman’s status, changing his life from a position of suspense, subservience, and, at times, terror, to a privileged existence.

Ever since he had arrived that morning, influences had been reaching him, assuring him that the will-to-good was present in the unseen which was all around him. He was conscious all the time of this great body, surmounted by the wing-carrying shoulders, of something primitive that never left the eyes which had seen the universe in its first days, in fact of all that was elemental about this man, dressed and mannered like himself, yet so dissimilar as to startle one the moment one began to think about it.

But he had the sense, continually, that this great supernatural creature desired contact on the human level. There was an alarming paradox in Sammael's conversing with him as though their training had been the same. He seemed to hold nothing back, his eyes appeared to be throwing open all that was within, which was absurd, but, on the other hand, if a cat had looked at him with a disarming friendliness, Pullman would have accepted the animal at its own valuation. He found himself, in short, lying down with the lion, closing his eyes (perforce) to what reason taught him to see.

Another thing he knew he had to do was to accept any view of things that Sammael wished him to; just as, in driving through the landscape of Hell, he had shut his eyes to the reality. This starched English table-cloth, and the English butler, were things of the same idea. He gladly accepted these accessories of English life as being precisely what he would have expected in Hell.

What, however, had caused him to feel that he was playing his part in a dangerous comedy, began to be dissipated when Sammael had opened his mind to him a little. Sammael's thoughts, indeed, were even more surprising than other circumstances of a purely external kind.

'Go back,' he said, 'go back to the beginning of things. It was a great prejudice against Man which placed me in

the spotlight in those early times.’ Sammael hurled his shoulders round as if he were changing direction in full flight, and he threw up his eyes in the way the Padishah had the habit of doing. ‘To simplify the position, my dear Pullman—from the standpoint of the angels, that small scale, short-lived imitation, Man, was nothing short of a scandal. It was as if he had wanted to insult us. My original attitude regarding Adam and his seed (about which I quarrelled irretrievably with that other angel, known to man as “God”) has now, to say the least, become out of date. I retain to the full my original dislike of Woman—that nastiest innovation of my colleague “God the Father”—the nursery, the procreative side of Man. But it is a long time since the beginning of things: Man is developing. It seems to me that Man is on the eve of modifying his existence. To take only that, he will soon be living much longer: and in extending his life’s span in that way, he would necessarily be making profound changes—for instance, the marriage-machinery would undergo a radical alteration. In the end, in intellect and other things, he might outstrip the angels, who (though for heaven’s sake let this be off the record) are not, on the whole, remarkable for their intelligence—in spite of their great size and of the absurdly long time that they have lived!’

The curtained window of the dining-room had for outlook the lawn of the lord Sammael’s neighbour. At that moment an enormous yellow dog appeared in the middle of the lawn, and then an equally large black dog came round from behind the house beyond the lawn, and sprang at the throat of the yellow dog. The explosive roar of canine battle on such a scale was terrific. Lastly, a very large man came out of the small house, and engaged in the battle. The yellow dog vanished, but the big man had a bad bite on his wrist, and Sammael rushed to the side door.

‘Take that bite to the cold tap, Ben. I will telephone the doctor.’

Next, there was the telephone, outside the dining-room door. After a few laconic sentences, the receiver crashed back into its cradle, and Sammael returned. Ordering the English butler to bring the next course, he discharged a resigned puff, and then laughed towards his guest.

‘I apologize for that interruption, but it was *à propos*, you see. That fellow next door to me is an angel. He has a heart of gold. But his intelligence is about the equal of that big dog. I like both of them. But I could no more carry on a conversation with him on the subject of Dante than I could with his black dog. Now there are a great many angels like Ben. They are nice, like that big dog. In fact, there are very few angels indeed who have a developed intellect. That I regard as very serious. God (let us call him that) is a very intelligent angel. That is an important fact. He is, always has been, exceptionally intelligent. But intelligence is as rare supernaturally as it is naturally. You understand?’

‘Yes, sir. I hope I do.’ Pullman looked very serious indeed. He was in rather an awkward position—as if a man had said to him, for instance, ‘My wife is the dullest fool in this street, and that is saying something. Sometimes she talks such nonsense that I feel my head is turning round.’—Pullman was embarrassed in the same way as a man would be if someone launched out in the way I have just illustrated. It would be impossible to agree with him, however much he might, in fact, do so; the more he went on about her, the more dismayed the other man would become. So it was that Pullman felt, if his host denounced the whole of Angeltown as a lot of morons, he perhaps should protest, ‘Oh I say, sir! . . .’ This would have been the thing to do if he had been speaking to a man. But this was a god.

Pullman began attacking the centre of his face, digging his fingers into his eyes and pulling his nose. Then Sammael followed suit; he rubbed his face in his hands, and, as it was a larger area than Pullman's, he did leave a sort of track all over his splendidly handsome features. Pullman was astonished at this spectacle, at finding himself imitated.

'I must give up epitomizing all these things about myself, my past, which cannot interest you,' and Sammael yawned, as if to express his boredom with the thoughts of anyone who was not interested in himself. Then he shook himself.

'Let me get down to the plan I have been engaged on to settle you and your young friend as comfortably as may be in Angeltown—for you could not live down *there*.' He shrugged in the direction of Matapolis. 'For some time now I have been—yes, literally, collecting men of parts. I have physicists, two historians, a mathematician. On the other side of Angeltown I have built a fairly large house. This is a beginning only—the house stands in a small park and it is quite a nice place. This is the nucleus, all by itself, of a university. You understand that we could not send angels down to that funny little university in Matapolis. They might learn something there, but it would be impossible for them to associate with the sons of the staff at Dis. I have to invent a new university, and it must be done with European professors, not with people like that wretched little man who was Bailiff in Third City.'

He gave a kind of laughing snort, and it was not difficult for Pullman to see what he felt regarding that dignitary.

'I wish I had a small number of angels to act as professors, but unfortunately there are none of them who have ever been taught anything. I need do no more explaining for the moment. Would you like to live in a

quite comfortable flat in the house of which I have spoken? I will take you along there and show it to you. You will receive a salary, a monthly stipend equivalent to one thousand pounds sterling a year, and half that sum for your friend. Placed as you are, you will of course say *yes*. But my car is at the gate; let us go there at once.'

Pullman almost reeled with delight. He said, without any exaggeration, that it sounded divine: it was no use to express his gratitude, but he began to do so, as he followed Sammael out of the dining-room, his view of everything about him transformed; a dense load of misery, beneath which he had been living since his arrival in this place, had been removed with great suddenness. It was literally as much as he could do to talk straight.

IV HAUS EUROPA

(XI)

LEADING HIM OUT of the front door, and, with an airy step, making his way down the paved walk bisecting the grass plot in front of the house, it was, for Pullman, a new personage who swung along in front of him. A very becoming headdress, reminiscent of Highland caps and bonnets, was the first innovation, fixed gallantly among the lord Sammael's flowing black hair; there was the mauve-blue smock, most wonderfully tailored, and there was a short stick in his hand, with which he tapped his leg as he walked, from below the handle of which hung a tasselled cord of hunter green. It was impossible to see in this 'fashionable' figure, from the shining pages of an American magazine, in a cool and immaculately neat colour block, His Majesty the Devil. But this was not all. Before the gate stood a Cadillac—or it was so like that, that it must have been a diabolic imitation. This car was expensively elegant, gaily upholstered in a soft spongy leather, of a delicate egg-blue. Sitting in the billowing leather, gliding along as if upon air, in front a chauffeur designed by Dior, or the equivalent in a masculine *couture*, Pullman said to himself, 'This is the dream of a very snobbish little boy.'—But the great lord of Hell knew what he was doing.

'This is called **דרך מלאכים**. To anglicize it, Derek Malakin, or Angelsway,' the King of Angels told him. 'The whole of this place here is known as Angeltown: and this very wide thoroughfare, going down the centre of it, is Angelsway. I will be your guide.'

The road was indeed abnormally wide. The houses were fairly uniform in size but all were in ultra-modern

design of very different shapes; the predominating colour was a dazzling white, but the roofs, the doors, or the balconies, might be anything at all, provided it was gay enough—a light grey approaching rose, strips of startling blue or green, or such colour as was designed to correspond with the shape. Pullman had never seen such a display of fearless modernity. It was as if Lloyd Wright had died and had in error turned up in Hell, but that his architecture had appealed to the diabolic mind and he had started building a new world to house the angels. The shapes which presented themselves to Pullman's receptive mind were numberless. Some of these houses were like an enormous box with barrels collected on top of it. Others were like bodies of aeroplanes stacked on top of one another; and there were yet others which were like two halves of an egg stood on end and hinged together, with thick pipes (two or three) connecting them with the ground, and a small whole egg lying between them. Some looked like houses standing on their heads, and some looked like boats which had collided.

The angelic householder was everywhere. He appeared in the most unexpected places. He would be seen sliding down a transparent pipe; or he would come down from his roof on a flight of stairs, the front door being beside the chimney pot. They were big swarthy men, the black angels. They all waved to Sammael. There was a number of cars, climbed in and out of by huge men: gardening proceeded, and tennis was everywhere. The small race was there too, in good numbers, with baskets going to market, with hoses turned upon the houses to keep the shining appearance: cleaning or repairing cars, beating rugs. The Angelsway itself was extremely wide and after a mile or two, mounting slightly all the way, they came to a huge sports park, with long Club houses, a miniature lake. This park was circular in shape, and at its periphery was a racing track.

‘Much sport,’ commented Pullman.

‘Too much,’ Sammael responded. ‘But it keeps us all athletic and in good shape. We are essentially a military organization.’

‘But who have you to fight?’ inquired Pullman.

‘Who can say? Thirty thousand picked men are a good thing to have.’

Pullman did not yet know how freely he might speak. But, after an interval, he said modestly, ‘On Earth the muscular strength of Man decreases in importance. If a General has ten brigades of guards, he knows that it is the number and quality of the machine, not the man, that really matters.’

Sammael looked at him.

‘We will have to attend to the machines, I have no love for the machine. But . . .’

Another mile or two, and they reached a large enclosed market. There was a big parking space for country carts, and city traffic. All this traffic used a side road. Pullman could see great heaps of fruit and vegetables for these hungry giants, so many thousands. He did not wish to ask, but he thought that it must have been rather over a mile beyond the markets before they reached the confines of Angeltown. The journey had been gently hilly, but now it seemed the road flattened out. The car turned off to the left. It was wooded: but soon they turned off again, this time to the right. Sammael told him this was the park. It was not very far before the house came into sight: it was a large private house, at every floor surrounded completely by balconies.

As they alighted a small man came down the steps which led to the front door. Sammael greeted him in a very friendly way.

‘This is Mr Henry Meissner, an American historian,’ Sammael announced to Pullman.

Mr Meissner was a German-American: Pullman found,

when he got near to him, that he was the same size as himself. Everybody here, in contrast to the giant race (accepted as the norm), was naturally thought of as small.

Socially, Pullman could not divest himself of a provincial stiffness. Sammael noticed, with amusement, that he bore himself a little stiffly and arrogantly with other Earth-men.

There were altogether eight flats, all occupied. It was a house of four storeys, and the flat reserved for Satters and himself was on the third floor, to the left of the front door. They went up to it at once in a self-operating lift. He was enchanted with the beautiful peasant-furniture, the rich rugs, the brand-new bedclothes, the bookshelves, desks; an American kitchen, fully stocked with everything for cooking, with piles of plates; and he even noticed a refrigerator, and a vacuum cleaner, and (very important) a hot and cold shower. He was overjoyed. To be removed from Earth, given no status, living perilously from hand-to-mouth, had been a fearful strain. Here, he felt, was a resting-place perhaps for a long time: a far longer time that he had been offered or had any prospect of enjoying in Third City. To know how to thank is the last thing a man knows, if ever. The ruling class of England knew how to thank in all situations; and today a very well-educated Frenchman would possess such techniques of course. But Pullman belonged to the thankless majority. His eyes had a suggestion of moisture as he turned towards the lord Sammael, and he said, 'How can I thank you? I am very deeply indebted to you, sir.'

On the return journey Sammael told him a little more about Angeltown and its inhabitants. He explained the reason for the width of the roads; at the side of the great settlement was a sort of parade ground, or assembly place for the angels. This was one hundred miles in diameter. They had had a great conference, about a quarter of a

century before, and had decided to live ordinary man-sized lives; here Angeltown military efficiency had to be sacrificed.

‘When we wish to resume our angelic stature, the space, one hundred miles in diameter, for thirty thousand members is absurdly small. Consequently we are obliged to assemble one thousand at a time. These abnormally wide roads were built in order to accommodate the prodigious feet of angels, when they reassume the full angelic stature. When my natural size,’ the lord Sammael smilingly explained, ‘my hand is so enormous that I could pick up a half-dozen cars like this.’

‘Which size do you prefer to be?’ inquired Pullman.

‘Well, it is not only a question of *size*, as you may understand—or you may not. Anyway, it is to become another being when we resume the angelic form. It is not merely that we are a hundred times as big, we become another creature—with its appropriate thoughts, sensations. When, for instance, we assemble once a week, we fly away into the sky, many miles above the ground (we can do that). Last Wednesday I flew off by myself, covering about a thousand miles. I felt and thought differently from what I do now. All the others agree that they become entirely different people—though of course, most of them do not reason about it.—More and more I personally feel that we shall have to choose, in the end, which we are going to be: a man-sized being, or an angel-sized being. And I know which size I would vote for. The man-size is the one of my choice. This is a most revolutionary idea: a permanent change to human stature might (though I have no means of verifying this) modify many things, such as the length of our lives. That would mean that as a race we should gradually die out. How some of my brother angels would like that idea I cannot say. Then you see to what such a change might

lead: namely, the introduction of the female into the picture. Wherever you have the human scale you must perhaps have women: simply in order to provide for man's continuance.'

'I wonder,' interjected Pullman.

'That is one of the things that has to be investigated. From this conversation you will see that I am at a very critical juncture. I am quite willing, if not to believe, at least to consider whether the day of the Angel is past. Man (with renewed longevity and other modifications) may now be a preferable form of being. If I call a conference of angels and advance this theory, they may, in the mass, be so incensed with me that they will destroy me.' The lord Sammael laughed uproariously. All the time, while he had been speaking, he had been answering the greetings of fellow angels, to left and to right.

'Would it not perhaps be better, sir, to soften them up first by involving them more deeply in human modes. Here they are already getting used to a life in no way different from the kind of life lived by film-stars at Hollywood. Then you could begin by sounding out your closest friends. It would seem, from what you say, sir, that caution and diplomacy are called for.'

'I can see that you are like the wily Ulysses,' Sammael laughingly remarked.

'I should not like to see my great patron executed as an advocate of Humanism. Only consider what my position would be like.'

The lord Sammael laughed almost boisterously, and slapped Pullman lightly on the thigh. 'I can see that you will be a Machiavellian counsellor. But you do see, my friend, how all these plans, and all these feelings of mine have some connection with the house in which I have just installed you. It is all part of the same pattern.'

They were now approaching the lord Sammael's house, and a car was at the door with which he was most

emotionally familiar. It was the automobile which had always fetched him on his terrifying visits to Dis. He transferred to that sinister vehicle, he waved in return to Sammael's gay salute.

(XII)

THE CAR TOOK HIM, the chauffeur as automatic as ever, to the apartment house of Mark. He did not spend long there; just long enough to give a hearty handshake to Mark, explain what had occurred, pack his few things, and bear away the grudgingly satisfied Satters—who with great difficulty was prevented from carrying off the Sizzle-Wizzle box.

They now collected, at the lord Sammael's, the young man lent them to act as house-boy. He spoke English very well and appeared to be a sensible fellow. Proceeding down Angelsway, the sight of all the enormous dark men, the big, loudly barking dogs, and still more the amazing houses, impressed Satters deeply; and, as they passed through the sports-park, the shouts, the bangs, and a glimpse of these monsters with their whirling tennis-rackets, shooting balls up and down at one another at super-human speed, caused him to say, 'Oh boy, can we play some tennis, do you think, Pulley?'

As regards the flat, when they reached it, Satters allowed himself to display a half suspicious gratification.

A note had been handed to Pullman en route. Now he opened it, sitting in an unspeakably comfortable chair. He learned that Borp had lived all his life in Third City. Sammael proposed to lend him Borp until they could find an English or French house-boy of their own. Also Sammael informed him that one of the senior inhabitants of Haus Europa (as he had named it) would pay them a short visit of welcome. His name was Dr Heinrich Schlank.

Pullman and Satters, as though at the end of some tremendously strenuous day's work, sat silent, as if

drained of all vitality. There was a knock on the door leading to the kitchen, and Borp appeared with a tray.

‘Here is a cup of tea for you two young gentlemen,’ he said.

It was the best tea they had had since they had died.

At a quarter to six the knock foreshadowed by the lord Sammael occurred, and the physicist, Dr Schlank, made his appearance. It was a formal welcoming call. His English was a little halting, so Pullman, who had lived for five years in Basle, told him, in German, that he could speak that language if he found it easier, and Schlank at once availed himself of this invitation. Satters received a good deal of attention in broken English, for, like everyone else, Dr Schlank supposed Satters to be the homosexual appendage of the world-famous author.

Dr Heinrich Schlank was slightly taller and much heavier than Pullman. His silhouette flatly contradicted his name. He was not a man capable of social relaxation, and not exactly the man to select to welcome newcomers, and Pullman was a stilted man, so it might have been anything but an expansive meeting.

With Schlank it seemed as if the atmosphere were a cave, within which he usually dwelt, and out of which he came in encountering another person. The face was rather tight, the texture too much like a fish to be quite agreeable. His grey eyes were very cold, but, when he lit up his face socially with a smile, it was even insinuating, unusually pleasant. It was, perhaps, negative pleasantness because there was in it nothing anti-human, not because of the presence of anything pro-human.

As a sociologist, Pullman’s interests were all human, and opposite material to that of the physicist. He was a highly analytical historian of men and women, and a critic of human action. He had been a great student of Freud and Jung. He was acquainted with the work of

Dr Schlank, which he admired. So the meeting was harmonious.

Dr Schlank recognized that Pullman was a very intelligent man. Pullman liked physicists.

The other people living in the house were as follows. To start with, there was Dr Meissner. He occupied a garden-apartment at the back. Then there was the Rumanian mathematician. Dr Schlank was sceptical about Dr Maniu.

‘What kind of mathematician is he? I do not know. I have never seen his mathematics. I must wait until he shows me some.’

So Maniu was probably a mistake of Sammael’s. The two historians were, first, the American Dr Woodward, a routine teacher of American History, who had written a number of books for college use; second, a young Italian, Antonio Mateozzi. He had murdered his wife, which, of course, had recommended him to the lord Sammael. He had committed suicide afterwards, which brought him rapidly to the Haus Europa. Mateozzi had written a number of articles and essays, and one book on *Caesars through the Ages*. He objected very strongly to Caesars unhistorically, for this was to ignore the time factor. Pullman said that Mateozzi would have assassinated Mussolini if he had not killed his wife.

Of the other two inhabitants, there was Pavel Horovitz, a Pole, who had lived half his life in the U.S. Dr Schlank said he was a good bio-chemist, but extraordinarily conceited. The remaining inhabitant of Haus Europa was an English art-historian, as it is now euphemistically called. He had been knighted, for he had been a very rich man. His small red face displeased Pullman. His history of the Italian Renaissance was, he felt sure, stuck together rather than written: stuck together from a mass of opinions put out by other men. This purely art authority approached him with patronage, and was re-

ceived with a disdainful reserve. The art-historian left Pullman with an expression as though he had smelled a bad smell.

Sir Aubrey Carter was the only inmate of Haus Europa that Pullman would rather not have had on the *palier*. The only one he took seriously was Dr Heinrich Schlank. Among them there was no possible friend.

The market was about a mile away: there were also a number of shops. They asked Borp if he would mind their accompanying him to market. They explained the difficulties in connection with taking a walk. He saw how that might be but did not think that in Angeltown they would be interfered with. He had no car, so they walked with him to the market-place. To give Borp a face, all that is necessary to say is that his original countenance had been replaced by a smile of some magnitude, but which one felt concealed nothing unsuitable. He had a lot to say about Third City, and Satters discussed, as one having inside information, the whole district of Fifth Piazza.

At last they reached the market-place. Almost immediately a huge angel asked Borp who they were—but quite genially. On learning that they were English, he addressed them in that language.

‘I learn English,’ he said smiling. ‘You understand I teach myself.’

Borp explained the difficulties experienced by them in trying to take a walk. After a little it was arranged that the stranger should take them to a book-shop. Borp explained to Pullman that the lord Sammael had bought and stocked this large store. The angel was listening, and he interrupted to say, ‘Yes. Yes. Sammael. He make shop.’

It was arranged that Borp would come to the shop as soon as his marketing was done.

The angel wrote on a piece of paper KOKABIEL, pointing to himself.

‘Your name?’ Pullman inquired.

‘My name,’ he answered.

The book-shop was a very large one, full of angel customers. Kokabiel met several friends there, and he introduced them to Pullman. One of them spoke English with a certain fluency. His name was Gatiel. He and Kokabiel discussed *Hamlet* and *Timon*. They seemed very quick, but as yet understood very little. The main difficulty was the kind of life lived by the characters in the books—the Earth-life.

The books were classified in languages, and the English section was the largest. Two assistants, both of whom spoke excellent English, were attached exclusively to this section.

Pullman was greatly embarrassed when Satters came up to him, pointing behind him.

‘I say, Pulley, look! They have *two* of your books here!’

In spite of a ‘shut up!’ the assistant had heard. He spoke to the other assistant, and they consulted. Then one of them came up to Pullman.

‘Excuse me, sir, are you Mr Pullman?’

He was at the moment talking to Gatiel. So that was that; his identity was revealed. Upon the arrival of Borp they all went outside the book-shop. With their house-boy as intermediary, it was explained to the angel more advanced in his English studies where they lived.

Also their house-boy informed the two angels of the part played by the lord Sammael in the founding of Haus Europa. After a little more talk, Gatiel asked if they might visit them at Haus Europa. Pullman said he would be very glad if they would. It was arranged that the two should come at four-thirty the following day.

Strolling back, Borp had something to say about angels in general. Theoretically, it was a perfect economic democracy, it appeared: or, as Borp explained it, all possessed exactly the same income—except, of course,

Sammael, and others who acted as officers of one sort or another. The lord Sammael was 'The Chief, like', but had a large office, with hundreds of clerks, was the military leader, and many other things. The houses—in short Angeltown—had been built in the past thirty or forty years, upon the orders of the Committee of Angels, the body which ruled this community. This committee, under the chairmanship of the lord Sammael, sat every week, in Angel Haus, at the other end of the town. 'And those angels have judges, too,' concluded Borp with some pomp. He evidently regarded them as a queer tribe of giants, who had funny ways; but he respected them. He felt that he was, racially, half-way between Pullman and an angel.

The next day, the angels were punctual. These two vast creatures, reduced to big-man size, moved rather like bears. Pullman now had an opportunity of examining the average angel. Facially they differed considerably. Kobabiel, the one who spoke English less well, had a somewhat heavier face. The other, Gatiel, possessed an oval, with an expression of great gentleness. Olive skinned and with ink-black hair, six inches shorter he might have been a Persian, or would have passed for a very dark Neapolitan, no doubt:—would have passed, unless closely examined, and, more especially, unless looked at in the eyes. A single glance from their eyes would have sufficed to show that they were something entirely different from anything that could be found in Europe or Asia.

The extreme disparity of the angel life in contrast to the human life, was responsible for shaping all the expression-making lineaments in a surprisingly different way. A man who marries and is given in marriage, who buys and sells—who calls his home his castle, all that kind of thing, directs the formation of the face, is responsible for the expression it assumes—just as the 'married man'

is popularly thought to be very easy to spot. It was the *absence* of all that would normally facilitate such an identification that was so startling about these supernatural men. These were the faces of children who had never lived with men and women—but who had lived in the clouds, since the world began. It was when they quickly looked up, after their minds had been elsewhere, that one detected the tremendous innocence.

Gatiel had brought a copy of *Ivanhoe* with him. He read a little aloud, at first listened to by Kokabiel with an admirable concentration. Gatiel read surprisingly well. Then came a period during which Gatiel asked for help regarding the subject matter of the book. One inquiry was connected with the French patronymics of many of the characters. Pullman explained how England had been invaded by the Norman French, about a thousand years ago. He cleared up other matters of this kind. He found himself able to converse with Gatiel fairly easily: the angel knew a considerable number of words, was quick in applying his knowledge.

Meanwhile Kokabiel had become deep in conversation with Satters. They sat upon a settee together; and what first drew Pullman's attention was the following dialogue.

'Don't. You tickle. You mustn't tickle, you know.'

Kokabiel's hand was fumbling about with Satters' knee.

'What is tickle?' asked Kokabiel.

Satters proceeded to explore, on tickling bent, in the neighbourhood of Kokabiel's armpit. Suddenly the angel started, and gave a cry of amused recognition.

'That is tickle,' Satters explained, with some glee.

'Tickle,' Kokabiel repeated.

'I tickle! See?' said Satters as he put his hand inside Kokabiel's jacket, Kokabiel laughing and pushing his hand away. 'You tickle,' Satters continued his lesson, and seizing one of Kokabiel's hands, dragged it down to his knee.

Next, with a cry of 'tickle!' Kokabiel put his arms around Satters, and began attempting to locate ticklish spots.

'Here. You jolly well know what tickle means,' Satters complained, wriggling and coughing with laughter. He gave a shriek, as Kokabiel pulled off his slippers, and started to tickle the soles of his feet.

'I tickle. I tickle!' roared Kokabiel.

'Yes, you do!' responded Satters breathlessly, as they tumbled about on the settee. 'I punch. I punch!'

He hit Kokabiel twice in the chest. There were two thuds, as if a large barrel had been struck.

Kokabiel bodily lifted Satters off the settee into the air. Two vast hands held something like a dynamic toy, all arms and legs in convulsive movement. Satters' voice could be heard from the midst of the kicking toy-man, 'Just to show how strong you are, big brute! Let me down, or I'll kick you in the teeth. Do you hear!'

Gatiel, who could understand the meaning of these threatening words, sprang up, and saying, 'Excuse me. Satters, I take you. Come to me!' he snatched Satters out of Kokabiel's enormous hands, and set him down upon a chair.

Frowning towards Kokabiel, Satters clamoured aggressively, 'You be careful, you big tough, or you'll get more than you expect.'

Pullman shouted at him angrily, however.

'Satters! What the devil do you think you are doing, making this disgusting fuss. I always thought you were sportsmanlike, whatever else you may be. He was only playing with you, you little cissy.'

'Playing! Do you call that *playing*, Pulley!'

'Oh I see, Satters,' Pullman admonished him. 'You are a spoilt darling, are you? I shall warn them not to play with you. You can't stand anything but the gentlest handling.'

‘Gentle!’ protested Satters. ‘Did not you see him chuck me up in the air? How would you like to be thrown up in the air?’

‘Poor little pet! Was that man rough with you then! I shall tell them you are only a little schoolboy. It won’t occur again. I shall tell them that you are apt to burst into a flood of tears.’

However, Kokabiel coaxed Satters back into a good humour, and soon Pullman was able to hear a peaceful conversation in progress.

‘Your hears, your hears.’

‘No, stupid. These are my ears.’

‘So you hears with those ears.’

‘I don’t hear with my nose.’

‘You say? The nose hears?’

‘Yes. And I smell with my eyes.’

‘Yes?’ Kokabiel was attempting to smell with his eyes. ‘No. Mid zee mouse.’

‘My mouth smells, when I drink a glass of whisky. But I do not smell with my mouth.’

Kokabiel looked at him as if he had suddenly dropped into Chinese. ‘No, no, no,’ he said reproachfully. ‘I go nowhere. I stand still.’

‘Nonsense, Koko. You sit, you do not stand.’

Whether Koko was learning English or not, Pullman felt that Satters was amusing himself.

While Pullman was listening to this, he was providing Gatiel with a key to life in Norman England. Then the angel read a little, applying what Pullman had told him.

They were working peacefully along in this way, the decorum of the party not disturbed by the toy-firebrand, Satters, when the doors opened, and the lord Sammael appeared. Satters was luxuriating in the joys of teaching and shouting at Koko.

‘You fathead, open your mouth! Watch me!’

The two angels sprang up, seeming to flatten them-

selves against the wall, hanging their heads, and keeping their eyes on the ground. Pullman had risen, only Satters remained seated.

‘Please do not let me disturb you,’ Sammael chanted. ‘An English lesson is in progress I can see . . . You have lost no time, Pullman.’

The lord Sammael had left the door, and had moved into the centre of the room. He was in riding kit, of the greatest but rather dago elegance.

‘I went to the market, sir, yesterday, and this gentleman offered to show me the book-shop. There I met Mr Gatiel . . .’

Pullman indicated the angel of that name, but they already knew one another: the lord Sammael went up to the angel, who was frozen with respect, addressing him in angel tongue.

Pullman, observing this encounter, was astonished at the face of the angel as it was lifted to the great archangel, who was speaking to him tenderly, holding one of his hands in his.

Gatiel stood there, like an enormous child, bathing the other’s face from his large eyes with an indescribable radiation of love. It was not veneration but love, though more than veneration was there as well. His eyes feasted upon the features of the great one, his lips moving all the time very slightly, as if in prayer. Such golden innocence, never contaminated by the smallest fraction of criticism, Pullman had never seen. In his divinity reading he remembered how the lord Sammael, or more commonly Sataniel, at a later date, had invariably been accompanied in Heaven by a large escort of angels. This personal following would have eyes of this kind, illuminating their leader with the passion of their love. And then he thought how he had framed a picture in his mind, only some days before, of God commissioning Sataniel to break down the loyalty of Job. Knowing Satan’s hatred of man, God

knew that this would be carried out with efficiency. He had had a picture of Sammael surrounded by his higher angels, contriving miseries for Job. Incontinence, suggested by one, another suggesting that seeds might be introduced into Job's blood, so that, if he cut his finger, the seeds in contact with the air should develop into malignant spirits.

But meanwhile, with a parting caress, the lord Sammael went across the room to where Kokabiel stood: and the same thing happened as with Gatiel, allowing for the difference in nature, for Kokabiel was a rougher and sterner being altogether. Nevertheless, the same uncritical allegiance, the same surrender of the personality in loving abandon, was displayed by him as well. And Pullman could see in the face of Sammael the same love streaming out to meet the lesser angel.

After this ceremony, for it could not be called anything but that, they all relaxed, as it were, and the lord Sammael, speaking in English, said to Pullman, 'Well, this is wonderful. Our school, our university, has already begun.'

He looked around, but Satters had stolen outside on to the balcony, and was now invisible. 'I see,' he said with a smile, 'that one of the teachers has disappeared. But meanwhile everything appeared to be in full swing when I entered. What book is it that you were reading out of, Gatiel?'

'We read *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott,' Gatiel answered timidly, and so the conversation was pursued for a few minutes, Sammael pointing to the empty shelves and telling Pullman that the shelves must be filled with books. He seemed to be very delighted at what he had found and when he left very shortly, and Pullman accompanied him downstairs to the door, he said, 'We must meet and seriously discuss the question of starting a school. Only the administration of course, my dear

Pullman, would concern you. We can easily find English teachers.'

A groom, even more elegant than Sammael himself, was holding the horses. They mounted, and with a gay wave of the hand, Sammael rode away, several gardeners, Pullman supposed they were, gazing after him with admiration.

'My lord Sammael knows his own business very well, I am sure,' reflected Pullman as he returned to the lift. When he reached the flat, Pullman found the two angels speaking excitedly. Their eyes were still blazing, and their voices rivalled one another in sweetness; though Pullman thought that Gatiel's was so abnormally sweet that he put Kokabiel's in the shade. When they were speaking ordinarily their voices were quite different, and not more musical than those of men. Then Gatiel began speaking in English.

'How beautiful, how good, the great lord Sammael is. Oh, how good he is!'

'Beautiful. Good. Good. Good,' Kokabiel repeated fervently.

'I have never seen him near before. I was not quite, but almost struck dead. I was breathless. I thought I should die!' Gatiel's voice seemed short of breath, and after his last remark he tightly pressed his hands together, threw up his eyes, and affected to be experiencing the approaches of death.

Kokabiel, intent upon outdoing Gatiel, called out piteously, 'I died, Kokabiel died. You awakened—you made me live!'

'Oh, Kokabiel, I beg you to forgive. How ever can you forgive? You found yourself in the blue heaven—oh miserable me!' Gatiel struck himself heavy blows upon the chest, and then struck his face.

Kokabiel was so impressed with his own (self-induced) misfortune, that he threw himself down upon the floor.

At this point Satters came in from the balcony, and stood staring at the two self-stricken angels.

‘Does old Koko feel rotten; Pulley, is Koko ill?’

Pullman put his finger on his lips, and whispered, ‘Kokabiel died. Do be quiet.’

‘Have you got bats in the belfry, Pulley?’ the intruder growled. After a moment, he asked, with a stronger and more aggressive voice, ‘Or is old Koko up to his tricks again?’

Satters was just about to aim a good hard kick at the stricken form of Kokabiel sobbing noisily—who however was crying over and over to himself ‘The blue heaven, the blue heaven’ far too loudly to have become aware of the presence of Satters. But Gatiel, who was by no means so overcome with grief, and was far more quick to understand English, realized what was happening, and rushed towards Satters, calling breathlessly, ‘Sir, sir, I say goodbye. I must say goodbye! You have been tremendous-ally kind. I and my friend are going!’

He forced Satters back towards the window, as he overwhelmed him with verbosity. Next he flung himself upon Kokabiel, in a paroxysm of compassion, but gently rolling him towards the door. At that, Pullman flung himself down in his turn: he was directly behind Gatiel, calling to him urgently:

‘Gatiel—Gatiel! You do not have to do that! I will not allow Satters to misbehave himself. Gatiel, I implore you!’

‘What are all you silly fools on the floor for?’ Satters responded to this. ‘Here, take that, Pullman.’

And Pullman received on his own bottom what, in the first instance, had been destined for Kokabiel. He sprang up and rushed at Satters.

‘You nitwit,’ he roared. ‘We shall have to part company if you cannot learn to behave.’

Gripping Satters firmly by the arm, he hustled him out of the room and pushed him into his bedroom.

‘Stop there, sir, until these visitors have gone, or out you go. Understand!’

Locking the door between the living-room and the rest of the flat, Pullman hurried back to his angel guests, who were standing muttering together.

With a downcast appearance, Gatiel turned to Pullman, and deeply apologized for having been the cause of this scene. He said that both he and his friend hoped that they might be forgiven.

Pullman stopped him, assuring him that it was *he* who must do all the apologizing. That Satters was only sixteen years old; that he was a schoolboy, only an excessively badly-behaved one.

‘All his values are schoolboy values,’ he explained. ‘You are fortunate, you have no children, you do not understand what I am talking about.’

Gatiel assured him that they *did* understand. Kokabiel wept again. The two angels left in a very emotional state of contrition, and Pullman attempted to save the day by laughter, which only, however, had the effect of frightening the angelic visitors—who refused to go down in the lift. Suddenly, in a thunderous stampede, they rushed down the stairs.

Back in the flat, Pullman released Satters, who followed him into the living-room, very sullen, but so far silent.

Now they were sitting opposite one another, and to judge from the expression on Satters’ face it was up to Pullman to make amends, but he, Satters, was not going to make it easy for him.

On the other hand, Pullman had a rather different view of the situation. He got to work without any preliminary.

‘Talking to you, Satterthwaite, is rather like trying to hold a conversation with a not very large but extremely quarrelsome dog.’ (Satters eyed him reproachfully but

contented himself with smacking his lips after having licked them.) 'It is that sort of thing, only to talk to a dog would be considerably easier. Listen. I am sure that the lord Sammael will find some work for you. For the moment, you must accept anything he offers you: later on something may turn up more to your taste. But you cannot sit around here—kicking people who come to visit me, sulking when you are reprov'd, and simply wasting my time, and everybody else's.'

Satters frowned upon this feeble attempt to frighten him. He interpreted what was happening in that way, and considered the stuff about work being found for him as so much bluff: and he was right.

Satters' head could but be described (as was almost always the case) as a reddish potato, which had been kneaded and scraped into the human form. He sat there, his head slightly on one side, keeping a dull, frowning, sceptical eye fixed upon Pullman's face. 'What's he going to be up to next?' the dumb potato said: and Pullman mournfully studied this semi-human creature which was forever attached to him—though he realized that he himself was merely another kind of rather superior potato.

During an ensuing period of dull suspense, their lunch was brought in by the smile in the kitchen. So Mr Pullman and Mr Satterthwaite sat down and devoured their lunch in silence—the lack of speech in no way interfering with Satters' appetite.

(XIII)

FOR THE REST OF THAT DAY Pullman left his domestic Caliban to his own devices. In the meantime he had plenty to occupy his mind. The pressures produced by life in a supernatural world never relaxed. He connected his semi-miraculous delivery from terror with his prayerful appeals to God. Here he was at last in safety, apparently, settled in Haus Europa. This had been the action of Satan; yet he did not offer his thanks, in prayer, to Satan, but to his great opposite. This dilemma caused him a distress which he found it difficult to deal with.

What, on Earth, he would have named superstition, was now afflicting him; in an access of what men would call superstition he had applied to God for help. But his prayers had become entangled with unremitting services to Satan, on pleasing whom he was now bound to rely, and superstition was rampant. Should he discontinue his prayers, it would be notified in Heaven that the customary prayerful stream was not arriving. Perhaps an angel would be dispatched to find out what was the reason for the discontinuance; and if this angel were caught, by the vigilant police service, then he might find himself arrested, and transferred from Haus Europa to Dis.

These childish conflicts (as on Earth they would be called) were very real for this unfortunate man, severed from mankind, torn away from his earthly life, and finding himself in a nightmarish existence, where the supernatural was the real, and where he had had to go back to his childhood to deal with a death-life full of traps.

A good instance of the difficulty he had, in one sense, prepared for himself, was this; Sammael had spoken of sending a message, or declaration to God. Supposing he

should ask him to help him to compose this message. This document might be extremely offensive. But without any such horrifying contingency as that he had just imagined, any degree of constant co-operation with Satan would place him permanently in the red.

It had, in the first place, been because of a sparrow, then of a live angel (the Padishah), and then because of a delegation from Hell—whose stench was still in his nostrils—and so on, and so forth, that he had reviewed his earthly scepticism, and here he was, praying on the one hand as if he were back in childhood, and paying court to the devil on the other. A double and contradictory manœuvre.—So, clearly he should not have accepted the Bailiff's advances in Third City: and clearly it was now much too late to think of that.

The next morning the telephone rang about ten o'clock. Borp urgently announced the lord Sammael. Pullman's heart reacted to this summons by freezing into immobility for a moment, and the next moment, when he was answering the summons, his legs were so numb that he made his way with difficulty across the room, to answer the call. The telephone was situated in the hall round which lay the bedroom, bathroom and lavatory.

Sammael was waiting to speak to him, not to say that he had intercepted his message to God, and that the Police were on their way to arrest him, but to apologize for disturbing him, and seeming always to be making calls upon his time, but this was really rather important. He would have come to see Pullman, but he felt it might be difficult for him to isolate himself from his companion; for what they would be speaking about, seclusion would be necessary.—Since it might be a little late, when they had finished, would he have lunch with him afterwards? Quite simple, as before.—A car would come for him at eleven.

It was obvious that Sammael had been informed of the

drawbacks of Satters. And it was just as well that he should hear from someone else what the position was as regards his obstreperous housemate.

The car was punctual, and, being a quick-moving automobile, he soon found himself in the 'Haus Sammael', as he mentally catalogued it.

It was in quite a different office, this time, that the interview took place. It was in the office buildings at the back of the residence: though it was equally, if not more, private than any place in the domicile. This was, in fact, another house, rigidly sealed off from the premises at the back. Not even the room reserved for his most confidential secretary was located in this small, white, secret building, where his most personal safe was concealed, as everybody knew, though no one knew where.

The room into which Pullman was led was spotlessly clean and scrupulously luxurious—a puritanic luxury, one might say.—The lord Sammael hurried in, apologizing for being a little late.

That *The Wardrobe of Satan* would be a highly interesting subject of study, it had occurred to Pullman, as he was mounting to his flat after leaving the beautifully dressed cavalier, who had just ridden away followed by his groom. As Sammael now entered the room, Pullman's mind was turned in the same direction, for at present he was dressed in the soberest fashion: it reminded this observer of an early nineteenth-century romantic rather than a cleric. Or, to compromise this, how he was dressed recalled one of the rather deliberately clerical disguises of a great nineteenth-century romantic, perhaps Baudelaire—though the clerical face possessed by the author of the *Fleurs du Mal* Sammael could lay no claim to, and his great height was another factor which gave a different direction to the picture.

That there was an element of theatricality in Sammael was unquestionable: yet this great personage was not a

theatrical personality, he was far too real to suggest the actor—and far too much *one thing*. It was more as a politician that he was careful to ‘dress the part’, when he was assuming a part. If he took great care to impress his simple-hearted angelic following in a way that he felt it was necessary to impress them, it was for no trivial reason. His ostentatious Cadillac, his dazzling chauffeur, were things in contradiction to his *taste*, Pullman was convinced of that. The most fundamental thing about Sammael was his puritanism, taking with it, in his case, an intellectual seriousness. But this astute politician no doubt knew that the Puritan was not a popular fellow. Consequently he affected a gayer, a more ostentatious allure than was natural to him. It was as if Cromwell had introduced some lace into his costume, and purchased a gold-headed cane. When, a little later, Pullman got to know Dr Schlank better, he unfolded this analysis of their common patron, and Schlank was in entire agreement with him—except that Schlank suggested that there was a duality here, and that wordly avatars were not disagreeable to him. He sat a horse so well, he was so handsome, he looked so young, and had always enjoyed a position of authority, that when, for his own purpose, he dressed himself beautifully, mounted a horse, and was naturally accompanied by a groom, he must have felt a zest in that masquerade.

But Pullman sprang up, upon the entrance of this much more severe version of the lord Sammael than he had up till then been shown. Sammael came immediately to the point of this meeting, and to Pullman’s dismay it concerned, of all things, the communication which Sammael was proposing to address to God. He leaned heavily upon the arm of the chair, and would not have raised his eyes for anything short of an injunction. Obviously his thoughts were read. The magical powers of this monster before him (for it was monstrous, not

human, to wield such powers as those) were such that he was able, five, ten, or perhaps five hundred miles away to be present to his thoughts, as if they had been in telephonic communication. Was he listening in at that very moment to his thinking? If so he would have Mister Eavesdropper know that the exercise of powers of that kind was not conducive to amity, and he could say a great deal more than that.

Pullman continued to converse with Sammael, a little as if he had been blindfolded and strapped to the chair—though, as a matter of fact, he took a very slight part in the conversation.

‘I am afraid I am very often indiscreet,’ Sammael announced; ‘and I forget how much I have told you, perhaps in the hearing of my butler. If I have spoken of these things before please stop me. The subject is one which will be the better understood if I preface it with an historical note. It is to do with His Majesty in Heaven. I agreed, a long time ago, to administer tortures—for it amounted to that—to the men and women who had failed to keep his commandments. Some of this code of what he called *sin*, quite a lot, I considered fatuous. I resented being offered a job of that kind, but I accepted nevertheless. I had no love for the nasty little animals he proposed to send me, and I hoped I might make him unpopular by the style of punishment I proposed to inflict. In the latter assumption I was incorrect. My prowess merely made man “love” God all the more (in the jargon of religion), for fear that the diabolical department should think up some awful torment for them if they were found wanting in “love”.

‘Let me observe in passing that this idiotic use of the word “love” was the result of treating men and women (1) on the assumption that they were stupider than they were, and (2) as if they were angels dwelling in Heaven and not remote creatures, living a long way away on

Earth.—Really of course the whole business of “worship” was carried on as if Christianity were a Matrimonial Agency: God was the beautiful Bride, for whom poor little Man was supposed to develop a consuming love at a distance—it being the business of the priests to continue to keep pumping love into the client, and tirelessly demonstrating how beautiful (and good) God was. Then *fear* was imparted too: you just *had* to love God or else . . . That is where I came in—I kept the *fear* up to the correct pitch. I—“the Devil”—was as black as God was white, until I became the most terrifying monster in the Universe. I was supplied with horns, with animal extremities and so on, at the least: as Asmodeus I developed; and in Apocalypse I became a most loathsome dragon of enormous size. And if I am given a bunch of heads, I am lucky if I get off with three. Pullman, do you follow the details of my life story?”

‘Oh yes, sir,’ Pullman answered with a smile, looking up for a second and a half. ‘And enormously interesting it is.’

‘You think so? Well, often I have complained to God (shall we call him): have asked him how *he* would like it if I encouraged people everywhere to think of him as a fish—a great and very intelligent fish, who preferred the watery medium: and how all his little “worshippers” would survive (if they were so fortunate as to survive) as fish? How would he like it if I put that about? No one has ever seen him, have they?—Well, God always answers in the same way. He objects that it was my own fault—that it was I who had chosen the rôle of Devil. At first glance that might seem an accurate account of how the Devil came to be. But after a little analysis it is easy to show that this is quite incorrect.’

The room was walled with books from floor to ceiling, and at this point Sammael took down a heavy black book, and placed it on the table at his side.

‘About my own origin or that of the angels there is no question. Here is what is said about angels by your greatest encyclopædic authority in matters of divinity. If you will look at this you will see that what I say is correct.’

Sammael placed the large book open on Pullman’s knees, and pointed to a marked passage. Pullman proceeded to read:

‘In the writing P. (Priest’s Code) no mention is made of angels. Like the existence of God, the existence of angels is presupposed in O.T., not asserted. They are not said to have been created, rather they are alluded to as existing prior to the creation of the Earth (Job 38; Gen. 69; cf. 322, 117). When they appear, it is in human form: they are called “men” . . . in N.T. they are called spirit . . . When they appear they speak, walk, touch men, take hold of them by the hand and also eat with them.’

Pullman replaced the book on the table beside which they were sitting, and then, smiling, Sammael continued what he had been saying:

‘So you see, Pullman, I have, in some form or other, existed since the beginning of the world—since before, according to Christianity, God began his creating. That disposes of a mistake which I often hear repeated among my Sinners, namely, that I was created by God.’

‘That is a very interesting point, sir. I do not know what my Catholic divinity would say on the subject, but I do not suppose that they would contradict this Encyclopædia.’

‘No,’ said Sammael, ‘I am pre-Genesis, whether in Rome, Canterbury, or Geneva. But, as far as the created earth is concerned, my origins are Mazdean, or shall we say Persian. The language which I, and all other angels, first spoke, proto-Iranian. Now, in speaking to a Christian I must tread warily, but the Jewish God (and subsequently the Christian God) came from Iran, too. The language we spoke when we first knew one another was

Iranian: when the Hebrew selected God, his new God learned Hebrew: and that subsequently was the language we spoke—with a strong Persian accent. I have had no purpose in saying all this—I have no diabolic desires to debunk God—except to demonstrate how it came about that Christianity has a Counter-God, as it were, an Anti-Christ, a Devil. The fact is that the Iranian dualism is at the bottom of God's mind. There was from the first a hankering after an Ahriman—a desire to have “His Darkness”—to use Byron's expression—to balance “His Brightness”. There was no one in sight who was a suitable opposite of sufficient weight, impressively hideous, out of which to make an Ahriman. And then I appeared, with my historical opposition to Man. He installed me—a most unsuitable personality, a “Son of the Morning” and all the rest of it—as his official Opponent, his Ahriman. To conceal my objectionable beauty, a monstrous myth was built up by his publicity agents. And so it is that every Sinner confronted by me as the Devil is looking for my horns and tail. He believes that I am disguised for the occasion—that I am up to one of my tricks, and so on. It has happened—once or twice only, but the effect is invariable—I have gone down to the Punishment Centre in riding dress—with top-boots, and what do you call it?—hunting-crop. The Sinners are electrified. The clubman-Sinner will cheer up, he will think that one gentleman will not be hard on the sins of another. The beautiful female Sinner prepares to charm me—and she cheers up too. But without any fancy dress I am, as far as looks are concerned, a paradoxical Asmodeus.

“The Jewish Religion is, of course, very parochial compared with the Iranian. So its derivatives, Christianity and Mohammedanism, are mainly mythological (indeed, often homely), whereas Iranian thought, in comparison, is conceptual. Iranian divinity certainly had geographic

roots, but Mazda is not a national God in the way that Yahweh was . . .’

Sammael was silent, and in this brief pause, in a part of his mind which he believed inaccessible to the thought-reader before him, Pullman allowed a few observations to form, such as these. Were these two Iranian titans, one an angel, the other an unattached gentleman, supposed to meet in the mists of the early world? On what basis did they form an association? But at this point Sammael continued his discourse.

‘This piece of history in which I have been indulging may be summarized as follows. Into an essentially tribal, “chosen people” religion, a phoney cosmic dualism has been introduced, in which I play a ridiculous part. I am where I am as a result of a disagreement with your God, not because I am a malignant promoter of disorder, or because I was born bad. There are plenty of people who are by nature evil, but I am not one of those. Therefore, in the Christian system, I am miscast and, naturally, a weakness has ensued from that.—Now, at this late date I am not going to suggest that some more suitable personality should be found. Do not think that. I have provided you with a little background. As you may be able to imagine, it is not possible for me to consult with anyone here—either one of the few educated angels or with one of the more intelligent townspeople. So I consult with you! Very eccentric—but I can imagine a Roman Emperor choosing some learned captive with whom to talk over something concerning the affairs of state, because his was a neutral mind, rather than some Roman senator or statesman—I have used the expression *neutral*; but that I daresay is inappropriate when applied to you—on earth a Catholic.’

This long discourse had interested Pullman extremely: but also he realized almost at once that it had no connection with *him*—as he had been so conceited as to fear:

Sammael was unquestionably too preoccupied with his own affairs to have any time left to worry about him. Evidently he was going to be the recipient of a major confidence—simply because he was a stranger, and unable to communicate with any native of these regions, or with any angel either. Surely he was the most isolated being in the Universe. He prepared himself to listen. But he saw that some kind of an answer had to be found to this sudden question.

‘I may accurately be described as a neutral,’ Pullman agreed. ‘Historically, I am a Christian. But I did not, for the major part of my life, practise my religion, and I died an agnostic. However, I should add that a great abstraction called God, as a matter of inheritance, is natural for me to value—without examining very carefully what it is. That would be a *parochial* matter, as you call it. My parish being Ireland, I would be more willing to discuss my God than I would to be objective about St. Patrick.’

Sammael received this answer good-humouredly. ‘Well, I am not going to talk about St. Patrick or anything as personal as that,’ he said, laughing. ‘And I am not going to say anything impolite about your God, or your ex-God: he is my great friend. Over two thousand years ago we had a somewhat violent dispute; but we have been on perfectly civilized terms in the meanwhile—if we write, it is “My dear old So-and-So”, or the equivalent. And I have after all worked for him ever since. I have played the villain for him, a part he cannot do without—or so he believes.’ Sammael leant a little towards his ‘counsellor’. ‘No—this is the point—I wish to cease to be his Devil. It is my idea to send him a missive notifying him of my intention.’

There was a long silence. Then Pullman, feeling that he was expected to say something, shook his head, and spoke.

‘As you do me the great honour, sir, to take me into

your confidence,' Pullman said, with great gravity, 'I presume you wish me to occupy the rôle, for the moment, of "counsellor", and, unworthy as I am of such a position, I will, nevertheless, do my best to answer you.'

'Thank you, Pullman,' Sammael smiled, 'that is what I wish you to do.'

'Should you resign your post as the "Evil One", would this make things very difficult for the Allhighest?'

'Oh yes.'

'What do you suppose Heaven will do?'

'To try and persuade me to change my mind would be the first step.'

'Now, sir, should you decline to change your mind, and leave the Christian God without a Christian Devil, what do you think would be the next move? Would He take any action against you?'

'You mean coerce me?' Sammael asked.

Pullman raised his shoulders and assumed embarrassment. 'Since I am quite ignorant of all the factors involved, it would be very presumptuous of me to say what is passing through my mind.'

Sammael shook his head. 'Proceed, Pullman.'

'Well, sir, I think of retaliation; claiming this outfit here as His property . . .'

'He could not do that.'

'I suppose,' objected Pullman, 'that He *could* do anything. What I think it is necessary to envisage is His coming here, and attempting persuasion on the spot.'

Sammael's huge shoulders and tossing head participated in an expressive negative. 'That would be very difficult,' he said. 'To move large forces across such immense distances is very difficult. And he is a long way away. No. That, I think, may be ruled out.'

'Hannibal crossed the Alps,' Pullman said, smiling.

'That was nothing,' laughed Sammael. 'You may take it from me that this is not a possibility.'

Pullman realized the intensesness of the absurdity of himself, a mere man, and a dead man at that, sitting here and discussing with one of the two halves of the Meta-physical World the other half, in this way. He was now on a familiar footing with the Truth of Truth, with the True; and what was most ludicrous, Truth sought his advice! Oh well, what was the use of looking at what was happening at that angle? This was the Arch-Enemy of a Personal God. So there was nothing amazing in his being so personal.

Pullman looked up carefully, hoping that Sammael had not been reading his thoughts—no, all was well. He, and his new friend, Satan, were in the same position as before. He had better go ahead on that basis.

‘Direct attack being out of the question,’ Pullman proceeded, ‘is there any other way in which you can be injured by your great Antagonist?’

‘I can think of nothing that would matter. He of course would denounce me as a much blacker devil than even he had suspected. Everyone who still believes in God would cross himself, and say “what a monster!” But I could bear that, I think.’

‘Then,’ said Pullman, ‘there really is nothing to consult about?’

Sammael laughed. ‘Wait a moment! There is another matter, quite independent of what we have just been talking about, which I should like to talk over with you. It is connected with the future of the angel community.’

‘It would interest me very much, sir.’ Pullman displayed great attentiveness. He was devoutly thankful that Heaven was to be discussed no more.

‘My story begins,’ Sammael observed, ‘with the fact, Pullman, of my position here; I am accepted Leader of the angels in Angeltown. There are in this cultivated area where we live perhaps two hundred thousand angels beside the thirty thousand here. More than a hundred

thousand of these come to our rallies, and continue to live as angels, and for these I am Leader. You understand? We are all assembling tomorrow—most of the day. You had better stop at home—but you can watch us being angels from your front window.’

‘I shall do so,’ Pullman assured him.

‘But there are about sixty or seventy thousand who do *not* live as angels: who do not come to rallies here, or have angel-rallies of their own. A certain proportion of these outcast angels have married local women; about half, I think; and of course, they grow in numbers. Some have as many as twenty children. The males are usually very big chaps. A team of these children-of-angels came here a few years ago; they were defeated by our boys, but they were very good athletes.’

Sammael handed Pullman a photograph of about a dozen young men, extremely robust-looking, and with faces such as one met with in Angeltown. ‘You see? And a hundred years hence there will be a horde of these half-castes, male and female.’

‘Their attitude, their loyalty to you would naturally be questionable. Their fathers too are disaffected?’ Pullman inquired.

‘On the whole, not. But you see the kind of situation we are confronted with here.’

A silence of some minutes ensued. Then Pullman spoke.

‘I have—superficially of course—absorbed these facts. I see, roughly, what these things mean.’

‘God has an elaborate secret service down here (I never know who is a spy). But he is informed of all that occurs here. He reproached me for the poor discipline, very bitterly.’

‘What did you say to that?’

‘I told him to mind his own business.’ Sammael laughed. ‘But I might have said that I am not an old

autocrat as he is. Apart from that, however, I was moving in the same direction, here in Angeltown, myself. And soon I shall introduce Woman into my colony here, as well. This is a great secret, so remember, do not speak of this to anyone.'

'You may depend, sir, on my treating anything you say as a matter of confidence.'

'Thank you, Pullman. And so let me proceed at once to one of the things you have to know, if you are to advise me in the matter of this communication.—It is my purpose to propose to the Angeltown colony that they abandon their angel status, because it is out of date. We should then have no military organization, of the kind we have at present (aimed only at an adequate defence on angelic lines). I shall propose that we organize another type of military power. The regiments of police are at present trained as infantry. These should be converted into the nucleus of an army. There I should come to the point: I will show how our colony of thirty thousand angels, become thirty thousand *men*, would have quite different ideas of how to pass their time. They would not want to idle away the time. *How* they were going to spend their lives would have to be thought out at once. And then I should have to turn to the future. I should point out, for instance, that a large number of our fellow-angels, already twice as many as those living in Angeltown,—are producing families—and in fifty years will have greatly outnumbered us. And so, you see, I shall, step by step, arrive at the question of *women*. All this will be a shock. It will be so revolutionary, that there will be at first, of course, a great deal of opposition. But I think I shall be able to push it through fairly rapidly. And then you see, Pullman, one would have to envisage a situation—if most of our angels take wives—in which thirty thousand patriarchs, who have lived for thousands of years, will find themselves in the midst of swarms of

people who have just come into the world, and, my dear counsellor, the question of *Government* will have to be decided. We have no system of government in the earthly sense, for the problems of how to govern or how to be governed have not been present. Who should lead, and who follow, was all decided in the distant past. But very soon now such matters will have to be reconsidered. We shall need a constitution. You do appreciate, my dear Pullman, how many things there are to bear in mind—for everything is related to everything else.'

'I understand very well the way in which those questions must be argued out,' Pullman said, 'if you are proposing to make the changes you have outlined.'

'Very well, very well.' Sammael nodded amiably, recognizing his listener's attentiveness with satisfaction. 'You see, Pullman, it is perfectly evident that, apart from anything else, we cannot build up a society of men, while we have in the middle of us a huge slaughter-house like Dis—like Hell.'

The lord Sammael threw himself back in his chair, and Pullman and he looked at one another for a moment, and then Pullman exclaimed, 'Now, at this point let us stop. This is where we have to organize things a little, make a pattern—what do you say, sir?'

'Excellent. Where do you propose to begin?'

'First, you have a great deal to do, which is certain to take far more time than you anticipate. You are not used to time, sir. You have never had to deal with time; at least, time has never been something of critical importance with you. What now you have to do, is to accustom yourself to take time seriously, to think in terms of time. If you do not master time, time will master you.'

'Do not be so minatory, my dear Pullman. I shall always be able to keep time in its place. But I realize time's importance. Thank you. Thank you all the same, Pullman. You have some very bright ideas, for which I

am most grateful. You must never be afraid of offending me. I am above offence.'

'Yes, sir, I fully understand that also. If you were not so great, I should not be able to talk to you like this. If I were not so little, you would not feel so much at home with me.'

Sammael guffawed at this.

'You are a bright midget, thank God.' He shook with laughter.

'Well, sir, let us get back to business. Allow me to say, sir, the last thing you should do is to think of communicating with Heaven. Since the secret service organization in Heaven is so efficient, let them find out for themselves what is taking shape down here. Now, sir, what do you possess, on your side, by way of an information bureau? Is there a reliable secret service throughout the angel community—here, and in the other two places—those who are ahead of you in increasing the population, and the still angelic neighbours? May I venture to ask if you are well represented in Heaven? How about your colleagues here ruling Angeltown? Have you got a little man beneath their beds or behind their dining-room curtains? And Heaven? Have you made it worth the while of White Angels to bring you news immediately of any fresh move on the part of the Allhighest? There should be an informant at His breakfast table—a listener-in at His counsels. Clearly all this is the A B C of such a struggle. Oh, sir, your power is so great that I am sure you are very careless. May I suggest that you do not go into action or speak a word regarding these plans of yours, until you have a dictaphone installed in all their private houses? And even then, do not go baldheaded at the matter. A bit at a time. And broach nothing yourself—get your best friend to put out a little feeler here, and another feeler there. Do not move yourself until you know precisely what to expect. And, lastly, soften things

up before you begin operations: let your angels pass another ten or twenty years as men before you ask them to be men altogether. Have several teams of athletes born twenty to twenty-five years ago over here, to play with angel teams. Have copies of *Esquire* subscribed for the public reading-room. Collect some women—some good lookers, down at Dis. Hide them up somewhere, busy learning angel talk. Have some good-looking girls drafted from other towns and brought over. Have a cut-and-dried plan about the method henceforth. Foresee every difficulty. Think out carefully for at least a hundred years where government buildings should be erected. Study the Napoleon Code, and such things. (Read Blackstone, for instance.) Then draw up your own laws. Get your adult university for angels under way. The lectures there will help a great deal.—Meanwhile keep Dis going full blast. Start up some new department, to put spies off the scent.’

Sammael had listened attentively, but a broad smile had begun to spread across his face. At this point he held up his hand, and addressed his ‘counsellor’ in the following way.

‘You think of me, my dear sir, as a King of the Cannibal Isles. You must remember that mine has been a life of intrigue for longer than I can remember.’

‘Since you took me into your confidence, quite deliberately, of course, *not* as a master of intrigue, and a legendary Prince of Subtleties . . .’

‘Spare my blushes,’ Sammael cried. ‘Say no more. But believe it or not, mine is quite a simple angel-mind. I am always amazed at the tortuous nature of the European diplomat.’

‘Well, sir, I ventured to presume that you were so simple-hearted as not to have dictaphones placed in suitable positions in the homes of those angels who share with you the government of Angeltown, nor to have

spies in every corner of this remarkable community you have created here.'

Sammael's eyes were amused, and he slowly shook his head. 'You are right in all that you assume. But'—he rose to his feet—'let us have a break in this long confabulation. Let us have lunch . . . and while we are doing that, we must, of course, speak of other things. The butler remains in the room.'

'Yes, sir, of course.'

On the threshold of the dining-room they met the English butler. His whiskers were there, Pullman felt sure, at his master's request. The man greeted him personally, and as soon as he was seated at the table he asked him if he would like *Toast Melba*.

'What is Melba?' Sammael inquired, smiling at what he regarded as a tribal delicacy.

'Melba was the Flagstad of the day before yesterday.' Seeing that Flagstad rang no bell, he added, 'An Australian opera star, Edwardian.'

'How extraordinary,' was the host's comment, as he broke the curling cauterized bread. 'So she is remembered.'

'Remembered by means of something as two-dimensional as she was three-dimensional.' And Pullman, in the air, drew a flamboyant *embonpoint*.

'She left only her silhouette,' observed Sammael, 'a curling wave. But what other singer has left her signature upon our tables!'

'It must have been the French who liked her curling bosom, and set the wave rolling down the ages.' Pullman laughed.

'How long will it continue to roll?' asked Sammael.

'As long as there are English butlers in Hell,' replied Pullman, looking at his compatriot.

'Ah yes. All things end in the whiskers of a functionary,' Sammael intoned.

‘Should Hell not become too hot for him.’ Pullman thought he would give another twist to it.

‘Can anything be too hot for an Englishman?’ asked Sammael.

‘The English are not, however, what they were.’ And Pullman felt that he had come to the end of the coil. But Sammael added, ‘As long, then, as there are butlers in Hades with enough of the stiffness of the Thin Red Line to achieve a pure *Toast Melba*.’

‘I did not make it, sir,’ remarked, with typical modesty, the lord Sammael’s butler.

A roar of laughter broke from Sammael and his guest.

‘I fear that we can go no farther,’ Pullman remarked.

‘It would be unseemly to do so,’ said Sammael with finality.

They found themselves alone, and they spoke of the industrious angels, whose ambition it was to learn English.

‘They are rather uncommon,’ Sammael told him.

‘There were about two dozen customers in the bookshop,’ said Pullman. ‘I hope you underrate the numbers. However, if you collected fifty for a University of Adult Education that would be all I should expect—out of thirty thousand,’ Pullman added with a smile.

‘That is too cynical.’ Sammael seemed depressed. ‘Once we get started, we should have five hundred.’

‘You might,’ said Pullman, ‘you might get a number of triflers. But you should remember that there is *no purpose*. There are thousands of years of indolence behind them. I do not say *indolence* carpingly; I consider indolence, under certain circumstances, a glorious thing.’

‘I understand—I understand.’

‘Thank you, sir. In a European university, you see, they work hard in order to equip themselves for a career; to be a lawyer, a politician, a journalist, or some other form of writer, a teacher, an engineer, a priest, a philosopher. They have to secure degrees, such as Master of

Arts—diplomas, to enable them to get themselves well placed in the various professions. These are practical inducements to study. But to create a university, would you not be obliged first to create professions, such as those represented in the above list? So, sir, your first task in building a university for angels would be to invent an inducement to persuade these idlers to work at book learning. That is a worthy problem . . . again, sir, let me emphasize that the term *idler* is not offensive in any way. A European Chancellor of a university would regard an angel as an “idler”; that is because he regards the acquisition of learning as a necessary prerequisite to the acquisition of power.’

‘My dear young man,’ Sammael laughed, ‘please do not apologize. I understand entirely what you are saying. You are explaining very clearly what you wish me to understand, and I am your most willing and grateful audience.’

‘Thank you, thank you, sir, for being so attentive and understanding.’

Sammael nodded twice. He allowed his mind to go on a flight, while Pullman waited patiently. But Sammael’s mind returned.

‘I shall have to give some thought to this,’ Sammael said.

‘There are many things to which thought has to be given. For instance, a nucleus of intelligent society must be created *socially*—quite apart from universities. A club should be founded. Are there any intelligent angels? And, another question, what is the social structure of Angeltown? Is there any social hierarchy, are there any “sets”? Are there any groups of “friends”? Is there a “highbrow” and a “lowbrow” society? Is there anyone competent to discuss the culture of Greece or of China? Mark, at whose house I lodged, speaks French fluently. Is there any society *elsewhere*—not in Angel-

town?—I ask these questions—I venture to do so—because they are facts it is necessary to know, if culture is to be built up in Angeltown.’

The lord Sammael smiled, as he devoured the whipped cream of a delicious sweet. The cream possessed the flavour of something like Maraschino, Pullman delicately consumed the same scented substance.

‘You have discharged a number of questions at me, Pullman, which you did not intend that I should answer. They were not questions in other words, but a catalogue of things which a man, placed as you are, would have to know before he could discuss things cultural. There is no cultural basis here whatever. There are a few men—who are angels—to whom I could introduce you, who can speak either English or French, with whom you could speak as freely as you do with me. Next, another point. There is no equivalent here of wealth (which provides social status in America) or birth (which provides social status, apart from wealth, in England). I am the equivalent of Stalin in Russia or of the President in the United States; or the Prince in Monaco, or of Peron in the Argentine Republic: but, as you realize, there is no equivalent between the supernatural and the natural. I am just the Devil—*et voilà!*’

They both laughed: the Devil boisterously, Pullman discreetly.

‘I think I am aspiring to perform the impossible—as though Stalin suddenly aspired to establish a *Sans-Souci* or as if the Canadians determined to be at once as imperialistic and as cultivated as Louis XIV of France, or as if Brazil attempted to turn itself into nineteenth-century England.’

‘If a lily-of-the-valley aspired to develop into a bougainvilia? That is a very despairing picture of the transformation which you have in mind, sir,’ Pullman deprecated.

‘Well,’ Sammael concluded, ‘we have time and to spare to provide all the answers for you to all your queries. Let us turn to your personal requirements. Are you perfectly comfortable with your young friend in your present quarters? Is your young friend comfortable?’

Pullman thought that this would be a good opportunity to throw a little light on Satters.

‘The young Anglo-Saxon barbarian who lives with me is an obligation.’ Pullman shook his head. ‘Sharing my life, this very young man is responsible for a misunderstanding. A homosexual attachment is attributed to me. People cannot see any other reason for the presence of this young idiot. But these suppositions have no foundation in fact.’ Then Pullman briefly outlined how he and Satters had come to meet in the camp outside Third City, and he recognized him at once as his former fag. Having explained what a ‘fag’ was he said how he had acted as a protector to this young gentleman ever since. Sammael was much entertained at the narrative of Satters’ contact with the angels, his misbehaviour, and how eventually Pullman was compelled to lock him up in the bedroom.

‘It is worse than having an obstreperous old wife!’ Sammael exclaimed. ‘Why do you not beat him? I have never heard of such an incubus. Wives behave in that way, but the law protects the female bully.’

‘Ah, well,’ Pullman sighed. ‘There is a reason for this odd companion. Satters must be regarded as a domestic animal of whom I am kind of fond.’

‘You should not cohabit with an animal, my dear Pullman.’

Pullman laughed good-naturedly, and shortly afterwards the lunch ended. Then they returned to the office. ‘This is my very private office; this is where I do my thinking—any very careful thinking. And this, Pullman, is where I suggest that the discussion, begun today, may

be methodically continued. I am in entire agreement with what you advise regarding the necessity of caution.'

Pullman smiled once more, as he thought of himself instructing the Prince of Darkness in guile. 'It is your nature to be fearless in everything, I surmise. I speak as a man, who is obliged to cultivate caution. His teaching is to place the foot gently first, to tap the ground, to find out if it is firm. The foot of the Red Indian is the ideal for man, the noiseless tread. I am not so silly as to propose methods of that kind for your Excellency. But, of course, in consulting me, I must always speak as a man, and recommend strategy and the stealthy advance. What you are preparing should explode among men and angels. There should be no hint of your intentions before you are completely ready to defend what you have in mind. What I feel, sir, is that this is a new departure entirely, that your future will be altogether different from your past; and therefore, you must develop new techniques.'

'That is very just, Pullman. I am proposing a great revolution in everything about me. My position will be altering all the time. You, with your Red Indian techniques, are just the thing that is needed. But Man does not have to look two or three hundred years ahead as we do. He knows that he will be dead. It is quite different with me. I must prepare for these new generations of men, the descendants of angels, who, in two hundred years, will have overrun everything here. Here am I, turning myself into a man, transforming myself from the supernatural into the natural. In proposing to my fellow angels to change themselves from angels into men I am planning a liquefaction, as it were, of those titanic immortal units—their immortality will dissolve into mortality, their vast individual shapes will be cut up into thousands of facsimiles of themselves. There would be everywhere a swarming of ephemeral units in place of a world of larger and more stable things.'

‘Yes, sir. There is lethargy in that vast stability. You prefer to sacrifice individuality for the mass mind of man, a thousand minds, each possessing the freshness and creativeness of a momentary existence—accumulating in itself the knowledge of millions. You are proposing a Human Age.’

The lord Sammael, smiling, held up a finger. ‘That,’ he said, ‘is the philosophy of the swarming of mankind in its historic, its unmodified form. I think that Man will choose for himself a life-span, five or ten times as long as that of Plato or Newton. I am aiming myself at a compromise between the angelic stability and the human mercurialism.—But you have corrected my momentary revulsion at the idea of the *liquefaction* of my fellow-giants contemplated by me. You have answered my qualms. *Life* is not so important, is it?’

‘I enjoy, myself,’ Pullman answered, ‘a kind of immortality, but the speck of brilliant light which is life to man is acceptable on the terms of a great creation. Man’s mind is horrified by immortality, where immortality represents an interminable animal survival. You describe, sir, one of your stupider angels as living for ten or twenty thousand years without any speculation, or intellectual stir of any kind—not more than is known to a healthy child of six or seven. Immortality on those terms is frightening. In other words, the immortal is only justified when one sees *to what* he gives perpetuity. I desire a limited perpetuity for the Newtons and the Plancks, and the human effort is, at present, directed to giving it them. If you could surrender to them a little of your immortality, that would be wonderful. A superb Human Age could be built upon a suitable planet, where all the high activities could blossom. Your own ambitions, as you explain them to me, are going out to join the human ambitions. That is how I see it.’

‘For the humanity of your imagination, Pullman, I

should have the utmost respect. Even as it is, if I had to change skins with somebody, I would rather it should be with a Newton or an Einstein than with the average angel.'

'I am glad to hear you say that, sir. Since you allow me to speak openly, let me say that I cannot regard the power exercised by the superhuman as any more admirable than power in the hands of a human being. A tyrant is always a tyrant, whether he lives for ever, or only lives for the human span.'

'You are very right, Pullman.' Sammael spoke emphatically. 'The bossiness of a certain person, known to both of us, produces in me the same sensations that absolute power does in the human. But let us now, my friend, turn our thoughts in the direction of that subject which was the main purpose of this meeting. It was in order to discuss the form of a communication I had intended to address to the Christian God that I asked you to come and see me. Let us devote ourselves to the general problem of God.'

'Yes, sir. If you think that the problem of God can be satisfactorily disposed of in a day.'

The eyes of Sammael flashed, smiling over at the down-cast eyes of his 'counsellor'.

'Was it the Jesuits who trained you, Pullman?' Sammael asked, laughing. 'I think you will find that tomorrow, or whenever we next meet, we shall have more important subjects than God to deal with.'

'Actually what it appeared necessary for me to say, sir, could be packed into a few minutes, I daresay. It seemed most important that you should never be explicit: for what advantage is there in divulging to that Great Person what you propose to do?'

'Well, I wished that he should discontinue the despatch to me of streams of Sinners. He must make other arrangements.'

'A little conversation has shown, however, that the

more Sinners he sends the better: for what you require is the physicist, the mathematician, the engineer, and these you can only obtain as Sinners. Also the better-looking women are going to come in very handy to provide the raw material for your plans. Indeed, sir, I suggest *all* women under forty should be held up and directed to some other centre—not to Dis. Even if it were not for these two very important considerations, it would be highly inadvisable to announce that you will be severing all connections between God and yourself, as to resign your position as Devil would be to do.—If you will allow me to say so, sir, that great person I call God should not be underestimated in your plans. He would not come here, you think, and set up another devil in your place. But . . .’

There was a pause. Then Sammael said quietly, ‘I understand the possibilities of interstellar communication better than you do, and I have told you that there is no danger of his undertaking so difficult an expedition. Continue, my friend.’

‘Forgive my questions, but does the unfortunate obloquy of “Devil” rest squarely upon *your* shoulders, sir, or is that shared by the other leaders of the angel community? Are these leaders completely loyal to you—are you powerfully and solidly supported? Or do you stand in splendid isolation?’

‘The fact that I consult you, Pullman, demonstrates the extent to which I stand alone. I do not take into my confidence other angels. I act alone. None of my colleagues are men of great ambition. I have never found them untrustworthy. My leadership has never been challenged.’

‘Thank you, sir, and forgive me for inquiring into these matters of power as if you were a man. However, I suppose whoever is isolated has the same type of problem to contend with—whether man or God.’

Sammael laughed. 'If you have your way you will turn Hell into a Balkan State.'

'The larger the State, the more secret agents it employs,' Pullman replied with a smile.

'I think the human, in contrast with the divine, are great intriguers,' said Sammael. 'One of my colleagues in Angeltown would be tremendously surprised if he discovered that his house-boy was my spy, or I, on my side, would be even more amazed if I found that my English butler was in *his* pay. But as a result of these conversations I shall develop suspicions. I shall keep my weather-eye open.'

'I have been turning over in my mind what protection you should have. Your nobility of mind, and also your long immunity from attack, today need an up-to-date system of defence. I think you should have an air-patrol armed and on the look-out for angel visitors, which would have orders ruthlessly to pursue the intruder. The thing to observe would then be the colleague who noisily protests at this unusual precaution.'

'Very well. One shall be posted tonight.'

'The patrol should be of three or four trustworthy angels nightly. You will know if the patrol should be posted in daylight. It would, I suppose, be a new service. Ten men at least would be required. The messengers might come to earth outside the town. All roads should be patrolled day and night. This would involve a motorcycle unit of the police. You could perhaps have its headquarters set up near your offices.'

'Yes.'

'It is most important to identify any untrustworthy person. *Any* stranger should be arrested. Any obvious angel walking along the road anywhere outside the city should be put under guard. It would have to be an intelligent officer. A suspect could be handcuffed and carried in a sidecar to Headquarters here, where a

lock-up would be provided—windowless, with irons riveted in the floor.’

‘That would be for suspect angels!’ Sammael laughed.

‘Yes, sir. There would be no flying away if I had the construction of it,’ Pullman assured him. ‘Now, in answering colleagues regarding these new services, you would carefully concoct the likeliest story. If anyone is untrustworthy he must not be made uneasy. If he is an influential man he will be certain to betray himself by his protests at these new services. In which case some means should be taken to watch him, and find out who his friends are. There are other ways in which you should be protected. But let us see if anything turns up in connection with these precautionary services. By the way, the individuals of these services should be armed, and empowered to arrest anyone (while on duty, or off duty) who approaches them and attempts to secure information from them about their duties. Any such suspect should be carefully screened, and his mode of life investigated. Finally, I suggest that these patrols should move about in pairs—two men are stronger than three.’

Sammael was rapidly taking notes. Pullman felt sure that these services would be organized.

‘Remember that, when the sea is dragged for one kind of specimen of little-known fish, often specimens of an even rarer kind are discovered. You may observe goings-on of the most unusual sort, even if you do not secure evidence of the kind you seek. But let us see.’

Pullman waited while Sammael continued writing. At last the latter looked up.

‘I have thought of another service I will organize. I feel sure that this strange fishing of yours will turn up some very odd fish.’

‘The more traps that are set the better,’ Pullman asserted. ‘It may be found that Heaven is more interested than you think. But it is most important to know if

there are Heavenly adherents here.—Then it will be necessary to extract from the person in question what it is that especially interests the Heavenly Power. You might find out if Heaven has any interests in Dis.’

‘I thought of that. I have a note about that.’ Sammael pointed to his notes.

‘Unless I am wrong, Heaven will very rapidly learn of these new precautions. You may then receive a communication from your Old Friend!’

This conversation continued till nearly five o’clock, when Sammael rang for his car, and Pullman was driven back to Haus Europa.

(XIV)

ABOUT TEN O'CLOCK the next morning thousands of giants began springing up all over Angeltown, and then hurried away on to an assembly ground outside the town. Without straining the neck up, Pullman found nothing could be seen but enormous legs: and when you did peer upwards into the sky it was a bottom that you saw, not a head. It was only at a distance of a mile or two that the full body came into view, and the monstrous faces could be seen without too much difficulty.

When two or three thousand of them had collected outside the town, at a signal they spread their wings and began flying up into the air, headed by the lord Sammael. They soon became a flying mass, which got smaller, and eventually disappeared altogether.

This went on all day until the late afternoon; at a signal, two or three thousand of them making a monstrous appearance, hurrying to the assembly place, and flying away. So, for the inhabitants of the Haus Europa, the day was spent indoors, Satters, of course, remaining with his nose glued to the window, and Pullman spending a good deal of time there, attempting to catch an angel in the act of growing from man-size up to the terrific height of a fully-grown angel. At last he was satisfied: he witnessed the transformation act. It was of magical suddenness. In a few moments a man-sized figure, standing in the middle of the enormous thoroughfare of Angeltown, shot up into the air, acquiring the measureless bulk which was not a natural phenomenon but a purely supernatural one.

These towering mirages were as solid as the seed of six-foot-three was solid from which they grew. But neither possessed the material objective validity of the

Earth-born. The titan angels were vessels containing millions of gallons of blood; but it was faery blood. Pullman realized all this, without being able to explain quite what this meant. He only had one means of understanding, which was his own body; and scrutinizing that told him very little.—Perhaps, when the Cinema is wholly three-dimensional, projecting giant figures existing in our own dimension, the resultant persons may resemble a little bit, he reflected, these vast creatures he was looking at. But where the projectors were, and what was the nature of the hidden figures working them, was another matter.

However he knew that he was living in a non-natural universe (as if he had been one of the solid-looking figures in a three-dimensional cinema): and here, as he stood looking out of this window, was the most startling evidence of the sort of cosmos in which he lived.

Satters was so fascinated by these goings-on that it was as much as he could do to tear himself away from the window, and have his lunch or his tea. What was even more exciting was when the flights began to return. Often two or three thousand huge bodies were attempting to land at the same time that two or three thousand more were just about to take off. But they had done this so often that the timing was wonderful. Complicated as it was, there were no accidents. The most that happened was that there were sometimes great numbers of angels in flight above the assembly place, waiting for a new batch to get away, and sliding down on their heels.

Many more conversations took place between the lord Sammael and Pullman, until Pullman became an unofficial Counsellor. His most recent recommendations were not only listened to with approval, but were put into effect with surprising rapidity. Patrols, by road and also aerial, were organized at once. During the first

twenty-four hours of their watch the results were surprising and of great importance. The haul of agents, arriving by air, and picked up very shortly afterwards upon the roads approaching Angeltown, was continued nightly and also daily. The places of confinement had to be considerably extended, and eventually a building to house them all appeared.

A member of the governing body of Angeltown, one of Sammael's earliest and oldest friends, was implicated. It was proved beyond any doubt (there were the angel-messengers from Heaven to bear witness) who was engaged in conspiring with God against the lord Sammael. But the defection of Arakamba, more than that of any other, provided a really great shock for Sammael! This prominent angel was eventually tried and convicted. Sammael pleaded for him. The sentence which was the nearest thing with immortals to death was avoided; he was merely banished. 'If you find Heaven more to your taste, you may fly there,' were the words of his judges. There was a second angel, Jonquil, of high standing, who was proved to be in communication with God. His case was a different one altogether, and he was forgiven. But all those minor angels, proved to be in the same undercover service as Culprit No. 1, were arrested and expelled.

The Governors of Birapolis and several towns or big villages beyond it, agreed to have similar patrols, and at once a number of people, of one sort or another, were rounded up. There were several angels from Heaven in that net. In Birapolis a man was found living who by his accent was recognized as an angel from Heaven. All these events triumphantly vindicated Pullman as a Counsellor. The nature of the intrigue revealed angered Sammael very much, and made him pursue his plans with greater concentration than before. He did not pass on to Pullman in any detail the nature of the conspiracy which led to the banishment of his old associate, but it

had been the intention of the conspirators, Pullman gathered, to relegate Sammael more completely and utterly to the rôle of Devil, the Director of Dis, and to deny him a leading position in Angeltown. No angels, except Sammael, had taken any part in the punishment of Sinners, or only in the very early days. It was of course Arakamba who was to supersede him as President of the Council of the ruling body in Angeltown. This had been a plot against him promoted by the divinity. These discoveries made Sammael more implacable in everything. He was now more determined than ever to wind up Hell—but not before his defensive arrangements were complete.

A fully-fledged Secret Service came into being. Offices were built not far from the Headquarters of the patrols, and of the Agents or Political Police. Pullman was responsible for the appointment of the Bailiff as head of all these services. Pullman had insisted that the Bailiff was the most dishonest man he knew, and admirably suited to administer a system of espionage and counter-espionage. The Bailiff eventually organized and co-ordinated all the secret services from his office in the new building.

When the ex-Bailiff had been carried out of the lord Sammael's front door, leaving his dental plate in the hand of one of his captors, everything seemed lost. An impartial observer of the exit of this little man from Sammael's house would have predicted that he was also making his exit from life.

He was duly tried in one of the courts of the Punishment Service, and assigned a cell in the toughest part of Dis. As an object of general envy, as the legendary pasha of Third City, he was treated with more than usual brutality. Almost at once he had his nose cut off, and his eyebrows plucked out. The staff in his part of Dis were preparing some exemplary torture for him, but, in the nick of time, his mother Madame Heracopoulos visited

the lord Sammael. As a rule Sammael declined to see any woman, young or old, who desired an interview. But this old woman was a different matter. Her husband had been the Governor of Dis: Sammael had had a long association with this extremely ruthless individual, for whom he had a warm spot in his heart. So he agreed immediately to receive a visit from the widow of his great inquisitor.

As he saw this ghastly phantom enter his office, swaddled in the deepest black, filmy-eyed and tottering, as near sexless as it is possible to be, the little warm spot in his heart glowed dimly. He rose, and with deep respect saw that this archaic symbol was comfortably seated, and asked her, with great politeness, how she fared. When, a little later, she referred to the terrible situation in which her son found himself, another of the little spots with which his heart was peppered produced the effect of a particle of ice in a vital centre. But the warm spot was so much larger than this little speck of ice, that it proved a counter-influence, able to suppress entirely the very cold spot (but ineffective because so small), given off by the Bailiff.

When the old lady left the lord Sammael she had secured a complete pardon for her son. The little elephant duly arrived at his ancestral home, and was immediately placed in the hands of a plastic-surgeon of the highest repute. Within a surprisingly short time he possessed a new nose, quite as good as that he had lost: and, what was perhaps still more of a surgical feat, new eyebrows began to sprout almost at once upon his desiccated forehead. So when he was called upon to assume the directorship of this new, vastly important, and extremely congenial service, he was on the way to becoming as good a man as ever he had been. He looked a little odd at first, to the more observant of his staff: but gradually all trace of the plastic rehabilitation disappeared,

and his eyebrows had never been a very important part of his face, since they always were reared so high above his eyes that they tended to be lost in his constantly furrowed brow.

So there he was, Nato Heracopoulos, Director, placed over all the secret services, as soon as this building was ready, in the midst of a swarm of secretaries, informers, thugs and so forth. One day when this large establishment and the services controlled by it were in full swing, Pullman paid his old friend a visit.

The Bailiff flung himself at Pullman and threw his arms around his neck.

‘My little Poolman—saviour of my flea-bitten old hide—God bless you. And how are you this morning? Come to see your poor old uncle at his rat’s work? I am already the terror of all the whisperers and cellar-plotters for five hundred miles. I have been offered golden wings and high office near the Emperor, if I would go and live in Heaven. Angels and messengers swarm in here daily from Yahweh’s Messenger Office in Heaven.—My patrols give them a lift. My answer is always the same; I tell them that I prefer rat-catching in Hell to blowing bubbles in Heaven.’

At the other end of Angeltown, meanwhile, the Adult University was under way, about sixty angels steadily attending the lectures. The Director was, of course, Pullman. Its lecture-rooms were necessarily chaotic, one providing the most elementary French or English class, another, in a confusion of tongues, attempting to communicate a little information about physics, or politics, or Earth-history, or ethnology. Of some political use,

culturally it could not make much headway. Pullman realized that the angel language must be learned, and in six months he could make himself understood, in twelve months he could converse.

In that time he also had become a friend of Dr Schlank. They saw each other daily, always speaking in German. If there was anything about which he felt he would like to consult with some person of objective mind, it was Schlank he went to. There was no one else. They relaxed together, frequently dining, and after that singing German songs, and comparing earthly experiences.

For Satters a congenial occupation had been found. There was an English-speaking gardener in the small park at the back of Haus Europa. This man consented to use Satters as a kind of apprentice. Whatever Satters was told to do he invariably did the opposite, if he could find an opposite. But he received a small sum of money and he was as happy as a sand-boy. It made him more arrogant and overbearing, but he was away all day, and in the evening he slept quite a lot.

Pullman's religious revival was not in any way checked as a consequence of the sort of counsel he was providing Sammael with, all of great use to his Satanic Majesty. His communings with God, indeed his prayerful dependence upon his patron's great enemy, increased. His way of accounting for his days, spent with His Majesty the Devil, was to say that he was, in reality, spying out the weakness of this evil personage. Every night he informed God of what he had done during the daytime. He was never quite certain as to the reality of a prayer, or if it could find its way into ears for which it was not intended.

It was about one year and three months after the beginning of his almost daily consultation with Pullman, that Sammael attended the weekly meeting of the governing body of Angeltown, and made his revolutionary proposal: namely, that the angel status of the Angel-

towners and the other angel communities in those regions was out of date, and that, without abandoning altogether angel status, they should transform themselves into something like Man, attempting to combine the advantages of both.

Led by one of the friends of Arakamba, the banished angel, there was a party of reactionaries who showed violent opposition.

Sammael met this dissent smilingly. In day-long debate he deployed all his reasons: and some of the points he made, about their position in a hundred years hence, when they would begin to be outnumbered by men of angel origin, but not titans, elicited a great deal of applause. By the time the debate closed for the day Sammael had a majority at his back which far outnumbered the reactionary group. More than thirty thousand pamphlets had been printed, and a copy was distributed the same day to all the Angeltowners, and offices were opened every mile or so in the inhabited areas—propaganda centres for the Sammael proposals. The closing, before long, of Dis was foretold. Was it not a barbarous survival? The angel community was destined for great things. With their supernatural advantages they would go far, if they abandoned their age-old lethargy and launched out into a new life. Had they not already made a beginning? Was not the building of Angeltown a big step in the right, the forward-looking direction? Did any angel or any man in Angeltown want to go back a century or two, when they lived like primitive titans, etc., etc., etc.

There were demonstrations that night in favour of Sammael's plan in the more popular districts of Angeltown. The next day the Fifth Police Regiment, the crack regiment (in which Mark had acted as messenger and cook), paraded with two bands. The bands remained, and there was dancing in Angelsway.

Sammael was in consultation with Pullman, and the latter proposed a Fiesta.

‘Declare a holiday in two weeks’ time,’ Pullman advised. ‘No. Better in one month. That will give me more time . . . call an emergency meeting of the governing body at once, at which your large majority will assure a victory. This Council Meeting will decree the transformation of certain points in the town, in preparation for the Fiesta. At the Sports Circle illuminated fountains must play; there must be places for bands. Confetti, masks, postiche noses, moustaches, fancy caps, etc., must immediately be manufactured. The sale of these and other things will help pay for the expense of the Fiesta.’

The business rushed forward, day by day, to its climax. Parking space was marked out for cars and buses arriving from Birapolis and the places beyond it.

BRING YOUR WIVES
AND GIRLS

was printed on the backs of the invitation cards, which were distributed all over the country.

Pullman worked day and night. A car was put at his disposal. He wrote handbills and inflammatory *brochures*.

‘You must put everything fearlessly into this, sir!’ he exclaimed. ‘This is your first highly popular move.’

The trump card, of course, was WOMAN. All the young ladies from the non-angelic township were rounded up and for a long time now Sammael had been collecting belles.

He had got together literally hundreds of women, quite a fair percentage of goodlookers. Pullman had been down, and examined all these women. As they would have to remain there together for some time, he organized their quarters. A capable man was put in charge, and a staff appointed—a catering staff, among other things, was practically complete. By-laws were drawn up, guaran-

teeing the women a tolerable life. A small police force was detailed for service at this centre. Properly fed, and with interesting recreations provided for them, a dress-making unit established, and other similar things, this colony began to turn out a high average of attractive women.

In discussing this new factor, and the excellent body of women that they were getting together, Sammael and Pullman looked into the future.

‘Fire off the Girls—Discharge the Girls—and see the results!’ was Pullman’s pasquinaderie.

‘How about appearing with a woman, sir, yourself!’ Pullman insinuated.

Entering into the spirit of the Fiesta, Sammael decided to do just this.

A young American octaroon of surpassing beauty was chosen. ‘Naturally,’ said the bridegroom-to-be to Pullman, ‘there will be no *actual* marriage. It will only look well in the car with me. To marry a negress would be unthinkable. But this girl, with a white hibiscus in her oily raven hair, is just the thing for the occasion. We will dance the rumba together.’

‘That is the idea!’ Pullman applauded. ‘It will be terrific.’

As the day approached Sammael received visits from leading angels, from as far as five hundred miles away. They wished to discuss this extraordinary move with the Devil, whom they had always regarded as a diehard reactionary. The majority left Sammael convinced revolutionaries.

‘As once before, and as always, Sammael is profoundly right,’ one of them was heard to say, as he got into his car. These words, in large type, Pullman had printed upon a propaganda sheet, over the visiting angel’s well-known name, and distributed everywhere.

‘Why, Pullman, you limb of the Devil, I see your

finger everywhere!' blustered the Bailiff. 'If you had worked for me as you are working now for Sammael, we should still be in Third City!'

The protests of the reactionary angels sounded ante-diluvian, when they sometimes bobbed up, with arm-chair arguments, in the midst of this irresistible flood of popular enthusiasm.

Pullman, as may be imagined, spent a great deal of time in the technical details of the coming grand display. He had not only a car, but an excellent chauffeur. In it they toured from one end of the angel community to the other. He arranged for truckfuls of women to be brought from the revolutionary angel settlements, where already there were a great many girls, half-angel and half-human. These girls were all of them interviewed by agents of his and it was explained to them—in, of course, a guarded way—what was expected of them. They were told that many of the angels in Angeltown were desirous of marrying; that they had fine houses and, often, certain resources, and what better could a girl do than look them over. This would be her opportunity.

Then there were lorries put aside for display purposes, by Pullman and others, for he had a sizable staff—all angel-speaking naturally. Merely to indicate the kind of thing that was being engineered, there were band wagons, so-called floats, juggernauts of flowers, and so forth.

A brigade of young men was recruited from among those young fellows, of half-angel, half-human parentage, of athletic interests. They were dressed in white cotton garments, with whitened faces and large black patches, with a white rimless hat, with a pompom at its apex, strapped beneath the chin. These bands of young men were armed with short sticks to which large elongated bladders were attached by a stout cord. This was a rough Pierrot uniform. Their function was to tour Angeltown, full of good-humoured laughter, delivering light taps on

the head with their bladders. They were advised especially to look out for angels armed in the same way, and engage in comic duels. Thousands of these bladders were being manufactured, and would be sold throughout Angeltown on the day preceding the Fiesta.

Factories were busy in the big manufacturing town, making masks, postiche noses, and all the machinery of carnival. Thousands of little musical instruments, productive of a great deal of noise, clappers, squirts, and every contrivance for arming the masqueraders with harmless but entertaining devices for contacting one another, were being turned out. Every sort of disguise was provided, from animal heads, of which there were a great assortment, to grimacing human faces. With these went a variety of objects for producing snorts and squeals, growls and howls, and other noises. Pullman had a rehearsal, a week beforehand, and he was well satisfied with his preparations. He reported to Sammael all that was being done, and was much complimented by his master upon his zeal in giving shape to the coming Fiesta. With Schlank, who came from Munich, he discussed the Munich Carnival or Fasching, comparing it with what happened at Cologne, a city in which Pullman had experienced a carnival. 'I do not see quite how these great lumps of men,' so said Pullman, 'can ever be made to fling themselves about, in a carnivalesque manner.' But Schlank disagreed. 'No,' he told his friend. 'No, no, you will find that these giants will behave like kittens. Bang them on the head with a bladder, and they will go mad with delight. Tickle their necks with one of your "Ladies' Tiddlers", and they will skip and squeal like two-year-olds. It will be a revelation for you! These enormous men are great big babies. The only thing is that there is a danger: these powerful animals may become too hysterical, they may go berserk in their playfulness.'

Pullman was thoughtful at this point. 'I have millions of police,' he told Schlank.

Schlank shook his head. 'One angel is worth a hundred human policemen, my dear Pullman. The strength, the physical strength, of an angel is terrifying. You must not tickle them *too much*. You are going to have a problem there. The Fiesta may turn into a riot. Are the police armed?'

Pullman nodded.

'If I were you I would only arm a select, very intelligent, inner circle of police. This would be an ultimate reserve, in case things went very wrong. There is such a thing as the bad angel. He is a great nuisance, but the other angels know how to deal with him. Beware the bad angel, my dear Pullman.'

Pullman looked very grave. 'Schlank, you terrify me. I shall have to talk to Sammael about the bad angel.'

'Do not quote *me*,' Schlank pointed at himself.

'Put your mind at rest, my dear. I should not dream of quoting you. Our conversations are a strictly private matter (in German).'

The next morning Pullman was seeing Sammael, and during their talk he expressed himself as greatly alarmed by the problem of the 'bad angel'.

'You mean the drunken angel, or the angel when drunk?' said Sammael.

'No, sir. I am assuming that most angels, when intoxicated, know how to behave themselves. By "bad angel" I mean that small percentage of the criminal or violent to be found in any community.'

'I do not think, Pullman, that there are enough angels of that type to constitute a problem. The police will supply you with all protection that is required.'

'I did not think that the human police would be a match for angelic disorder.'

Sammael laughed good-humouredly. 'The bullets of

the Fifth Regiment of Police will be quite able to cope with any angelic rascality.'

The 'pooh-poohing' of this subject by Sammael did not relieve Pullman's anxiety. Alcohol would be very abundant, and he felt that the Prince of Darkness did not at all appreciate the position of a human individual surrounded by thousands of creatures much larger than himself, deprived of all checks, and, among them, some vicious and malevolent. He felt that, by his universal activity, he had, to some extent, made himself responsible for the Fiesta; and he did not feel that bullets were any solution of angelic criminality and limitless alcohol. Eventually he persuaded Sammael to recruit a small body of angels, to supply them with uniforms, and to arm them. All the human police patrolling Angeltown during the Fiesta were provided with shrill whistles, to be used in case of trouble. The angelic police squad was to remain stationed at the centre of the city; and a high-powered truck was placed at their disposal. These steps taken, Pullman's mind was at ease.

As, sometimes, Pullman would sit above the little park with Schlank, a wine-dinner having filled them both with a student's exuberance, 'Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome' would ring out, the giant stars shining down inquiringly in their faces. Pullman had taught his German friend the words, and, their eyes dancing, they would, line by line, half say it, half sing it to one another:

'da spiegelt sich in den Well'n,
mit seinen grossen Dome
das grosse heilige Köln;

.
es schweben Blumen und Englein,
um unsere liebe Frau,
die Augen, die Lippen, die Wänglein,
die gleichen der Liebsten genau.'

But even on such occasions Pullman's mind remained, in its ultimate recesses, unquiet, although most harassments had been satisfactorily dealt with. He could not drive away the sense of sin which he experienced, as aider and abettor of his Diabolic Majesty. He was so familiar with Sammael that it was very difficult to think of him as the traditional enemy of his one-time God, with whom he was now carrying on a clandestine flirtation. What would this *Almächtiger* divinity think of him if he could know (as of course he might) of Pullman's counsellings of Satan. Often he dreaded some such awareness. Counsels of his, dozens of them, had been taken up and put into operation, by his disreputable Master. How would all that look in his personal dossier upon the Day of Judgement? As butlers sometimes did, in announcing an honoured guest, there would be a dreadful unction, perhaps, in the tones of the angel recording his feats. No, Pullman was anything but comfortable; and he often would whisper to Schlank his misgivings about his rôle in this community, and confess how frightened he was at times.

V FIESTA

(XV)

ON THE MORNING of the Fiesta the sun was not very high in the sky when the festivities began. The first sign that this was no ordinary day was the monster cracker exploding in the middle of the city, followed by the discharge of a thousand rockets, fanning outwards in all directions and bursting far up in the sky with a scarlet incandescence, which shed a bright red glow throughout the city, looking like the reflection of the flames of a great conflagration. In five or ten minutes the bombardment was renewed, but this time it was not a concentrated scarlet effulgence, but a rain of rockets of all colours, which ended with a dull bang. Then four bands, of the noisiest brass, and each with its big contingent of drums, started to march outwards from the centre to East, West, North and South. Like Frederick the Great's drummers, sent to beat an 'Out-of-Bed' outside the bedrooms of all the members of the household, these ear-splitting bands were designed as a waker, to bring all the angels out of their slumber. The Fifth Regiment of Police was encamped outside the city, and its two bands entered Angelsway at opposite ends, and with a martial frenzy began to march towards the centre. Once there, they maintained an uproar for the next hour or so.

The entire city was soon out of doors. Vans with loudspeakers moved in all directions, a voice of great volume bellowing at the just-wakened, and not-yet-breakfasted citizenry; 'A jolly morning to you, my children! A joking, jolly, a jittercracking day to you!'

After ten minutes or so of jittercracking, half the

angels went back to bed. The other half shouted, 'Is *that* jittercracking' and put the morning kettle on to boil, and when the boil had come, sat down to a jittercracking breakfast, the police bands going on with their jittercracking music.

On the roof of Haus Europa Pullman cracked his hands together, for he felt that the Fiesta had gone off with a jittercrack, not to say a bang. Schlank entered the room, exclaiming 'Congratulations!' and he cracked his friend on the back. But Satters, seeing this, landed such a jittercrack on Schlank's back that he regretted his incautious exuberance.

Not so long after this, thousands of visitors arriving from the neighbouring city and beyond, in huge brakes, began streaming into Angeltown. Several of the sports centres had been transformed into dancing places, and already dance music sounded there, inviting the newcomers to a tango or a rumba. Hundreds of men and women were soon rolling or stalking round; and when Pullman arrived in his official car he found all the bands controlling the movements of a good number of strangers to the city. Having moved around to assure himself that the catering services were functioning as they should, he told his chauffeur to drive him from one end to the other of Angelsway, to inspect the troupes of dancers which he had organized. Five young Spanish women were the first he met with. Two of these squinted, but the other three were quite attractive. Their sins had been forgiven, on the understanding that they would dance at the Fiesta. Spanish national costumes had been rapidly made ready. Two young athletes also were found who were trained for a Spanish act, and they stamped and struck attitudes most satisfactorily. Three young bandsmen provided a very Spanish noise, one wielding an instrument similar to a guitar. The women paraded up and down, swaying their hips and whirling their castanets.

A considerable audience had already collected on the sidewalks. A few hundred yards farther on came a group of little French men and women. They discovered folk-voices of average quality. Costumes approximating to those of the French seventeenth century embellished them; the girls looked as innocent as the Spanish dancers looked the reverse—all they had to do was to look innocent and to sing in child voices. Instead of the barbaric assault of drums and castanets, here, with the supposed French couples, was the tender pipe of the *bergère* and the sentimental tenor of the shepherd-lad or the young 'prentice or mariner.

The idea of these groups had been Pullman's. The next group he met with on this tour of inspection was a mixed Irish and Scottish troupe of dancers and singers suitably dressed. 'We are the Boys of Wexford,' they bravely sang; meanwhile a piper marched in a wide circle a few yards farther on, producing a never-ceasing, tuneless drone. This musician was an object of great interest; Pullman noticed one angel busily writing, as well as drawing, in a little book.

The creator of all these specimens of national musical energy pressed forward in his car, remaining a few minutes near each group in turn. He heard the Swiss group yodel, he mentally applauded the Germans, garish and bony-kneed, who poured out a stream of melodies, some of them great favourites with Schlank. He was really astonished at the success of the Greeks, who had little stiff skirts and white gaitered legs, bristling with knives; they danced, and sang at the same time with a tinkly sweetness. The music of the Magyars, to which these nationals danced with a reckless savagery, whirling their arms above their heads, was able to impress all the angels in the neighbourhood. Lastly came the cowboys, who sang toughly and sentimentally, of the corral, of the Sierra, and of their breaking hearts. The firearms

and spectacular knives they all carried appeared to daunt the angelic spectators. Pullman shouted, 'Don't shoot, boys!', but one of them misinterpreted (perhaps wilfully) this order. He drew a gun and blazed away in the air. All the angels vanished with miraculous speed. The various local colours were paraded, and stuck out against the abstraction of the angel nature. Meanwhile woman, attractively dressed, insinuated herself into the heart of Angeltown.

Pullman was conscious of a general uproar—bands and fireworks and the roaring of the huge angels, a jitter-cracking scene in short. He looked up, and the sky was full of gorgeous kites; horsemen rode past with a large stiff sheet grasped in their hands, which they stopped to read in a stentorian voice periodically—announcing the events of the day.

EVENTS.

Noon. Massed Bands.

1 p.m. Gala Lunch.

2.30 Tennis Championship.

3.30 Water Polo at Pool. Sports Centre.

Sporting Events at Sports Centre.

5.0 Presentation Prizes in Angels' Hall.

Prizes to be distributed by President (the lord Sammael).

6.0 Dancing begins. The Markets Gala Floor.

7.0 Dinner served, in Gala Hall, and in the Booths A B C and D.

9.0 Dance opened at Markets Floor by Lord President.

The climax was at midnight, with the Massed Musical Celebration of the *fiançailles* of the lord Sammael.

Followed at 12.50:

Kermess—Angelsway.

The picturesque horsemen, after 'crying' this programme, scattered a printed sheet in great numbers; this was freely distributed at stands in various conspicuous places.

Before leaving that morning to see that all the troupes were playing their parts, Pullman had a chat with Dr Schlauk.

Just before he left he delivered himself as follows.

'I am confident of the success of this Fiesta. The only thing I do not feel certain about is the response of these titans to the lure of the women who are being scattered among them. Sammael, the leading tempter (although he will not go through with it himself), will dance the rumba with his supposed fiancée. That lady will roll her hips in the most inflammatory way. But what has to be proved is whether the angels' genitals, extinct for so many thousands of years, are not extinct for good. I feel very doubtful, myself, whether there is a spark of life left. Except that things *will*, in the end, function, as evidenced by the number of married angels, three or four hundred miles away, I have no statistics as to how long it takes to ignite this rusty machine.'

'Go on with you! Angeltown is full of lusty young fellows—it will be instantaneous, you will see!' shouted Schlauk, stamping about lustily to help Pullman understand the jittercracking lustiness of the angels.

Sammael had made Pullman a necessary present when the little car was pushed one day in front of Haus Europa. He learned to drive it in a few weeks, though half the time he had his chauffeur at the wheel in sheer brashness. Now, as they began to drive up Angelsway, he stopped the car outside a house from which came the sound of choral singing. It was the Angeltown choir, which was

to compete that afternoon for a money-prize; and as he listened to the stately chant he thought how staggering the effects would be in a large London church, perhaps Westminster Cathedral, if it possessed such a choir as this, which was thunderous, of tremendous weight, and of perfect beauty. He prayed that they might win the prize. Reluctantly he proceeded, and, just beyond the market, pathetically weak after the choir music, rose the wail of a Scottish pipe. However, the group from which it came was so gallant and gay that visually he considered it a great success. He called out a few words in Erse, and received a response from an authentic Irishman they had unearthed, a very poor specimen, just about to die for the most unsuitable sin. He had lost an ear, but he began to sing 'Sweet Molly Malone' as if he had two ears. On this second excursion of Pullman's he found that his car had to force its way through a thick stream of sightseers, and the early thickening of the pedestrian streams by floats, bandwagons and juggernauts of shouting beauties. He left it to his chauffeur to guide them, while he sat in the back. Everywhere he observed angels chattering and shouting, discharging crackers and flying kites, joining in the choruses of the songs of the various troupes, and of angel choristers who had begun touring from house to house. At last, beyond where the orange and silver fountains were splashing, Pullman reached a large crowd of giant angels, all attempting to sing a *Habañera*; and there, strutting up and down, like a marionette, compared with this gigantic audience, was a brilliantly handsome Spanish woman; she raised the castanets, and, to the rolling and hammering of the instruments, began a slow dance, in which the ability of the centre of her body to simulate the slowly heaving motion of the most professional love, drew the solemn attention of the audience. Pullman waited for the *dénouement*. A big fellow in black tights, and black

silken Spanish hat, with a strap beneath the tip of the chin, stamped and assumed attitudes reminiscent of the dancers of Badajos or of Valencia, rigid and awkward-looking, ritualistic. The girl intensified the act, in front of the stiff and stamping black monster, until in the wildest manner she ended the dance, stomach forward and quivering, eyes closed. Then, at a swaying gait, she retired to her stool.

Most of the angels stood with mouths open as usual, and eyes half closed. They greeted the final scene with an enormous and rather terrifying shout. Pullman saw some of them watching the girl swaying back to her stool. He observed the expression of these very carefully; at last he saw one pass his tongue around his upper lip. He interpreted this as a satisfactory sign.

A military band approached, playing 'Ich hat'n Kamerad'. Angelsway was so wide that there would have been room for two more bands to have fitted in between the Spanish troupe and the military. On a visit to a second French troupe (for Pullman had duplicated the troupes, and, in some cases, triplicated), he found 'Au clair de la lune' being wonderfully well warbled; this was like holding up a wax vesta in the blazing sun of jitter-crackery in excelsis. He next made a wide sweep until he reached the limits of the town, and found everywhere swarms of people moving in to what was structurally the centre of the communal life. He stopped before Sammael's house, and a servant ran out to meet him. 'The lord Sammael left this note for you, sir.'

He opened the envelope, and found that it contained an invitation to lunch with Sammael at one o'clock at the Gala Luncheon, Table A 1. Pullman now returned to Haus Europa.

Satters was at the flat, but preparing to go down to the young gardener with whom he worked. They were

going up to the Sports Centre together to watch the tennis, water polo and other sporting events. Pullman warned him against boisterous behaviour, but Satters' response was that he knew how to behave as well as any of *his* friends. He was going to have a 'Gala' lunch—he hoped that *he* (Pullman) would behave *himself*.

Pullman went in to have a drink with Schlank. That good man was not going out till the evening. 'Then I shall walk up to the Market Dances, and dance with an angel if I see one I know.'

Pullman gave a brief report of the response of the angel spectators at a most inflammatory dance performed by a woman.

'A large crowd studied her stylistic demonstration of the sexual act with rapt attention, one angel was seen to lick his lip.'

'It will soon be the new sport of the playboys of Angeltown, I wager you,' laughed Schlank. 'We have about a thousand women, or perhaps a few hundred more. But there are thirty thousand angels to supply with brides.'

Pullman pretended to tear his hair. However, Schlank rejected the meaning of this dumb show.

'You will find, Pullman, that this original thousand will grow by leaps and bounds. You will soon have ten, then twenty, then thirty thousand. You will find it amazing the way in which women multiply.'

'Optimist!'

'You will see.'

'We have, after all, only Sinners to draw on. What will result from the love transports of animated corpses and angels I do not know; but to build up a body of effective women must take a long time.'

'Well, Pullman, you old pessimist, animated corpses as we are, we have a fair amount of life in us, don't you

think?' The great physicist squeezed Pullman's hand, and stamped loudly on the floor.

At the Gala Lunch Pullman thought he had never been present at a more dazzling spectacle. It took place in a very large marquee, open on two sides, with buzzing ventilation fans circulating the air, and successfully moderating the afternoon temperature. Most of the men were dressed in a substance resembling white drill. There were masses of flowers everywhere, the waiters were jacketed in scarlet, and an orchestra, in a pale blue uniform, played an unaggressive pianissimo accompaniment to the lunch, upon a dais at one extremity of the marquee. There were a certain number of women present—wives and daughters of notables in the lower town and those accompanying some representative angels from the distant township where the angelic emancipators lived. There was a numerous contingent from Birapolis—all open-minded, and preparing to take wives themselves.

The fiancée of the lord Sammael was beside him at his left hand at lunch, and Pullman was placed beyond her. To the right of Sammael was a visitor angel from the manufacturing centre, this angel being a big factory owner. He was reported to be the richest member of the angel community—next to Sammael of course.

Pullman was struck by the uniformity of the large oval angel heads, all the way round the tables (of which there were fifteen); all with round open mouths, and the enormous black eyes.

The 'fiancée' was dressed with full feminine éclat, a gown of silver lamé, a pink and white flower in her dense black hair. She was a tall girl, a mate for an angel. Her face had nothing of the coarseness of the negro, her eyes were like glistening black stones, which it seemed possible to stroke, as she fixed their gaze upon a point a little beneath her. She spoke an American of

the softest, agreeably slow without degenerating into a drawl.

She and Sammael were playing splendidly together; great beauty as she was, she was able to do so. She melted—she basked; the great fiancé touched her glass with his: as she drank she gazed luxuriously at him over the effervescing liquid. What was going to happen afterwards? Sammael had given a little thought to that when he was having a discussion one day with Pullman. He said that he supposed he would have to have her shot, in say about a month. ‘Oh no, sir,’ Pullman had protested. ‘People would bring it up against you. Remember that women have a different status now. Also, you must not make it too obvious that you were fooling them.’ But Sammael had answered that he would say that he was haunted by the thought of her dreadful crimes (she had murdered three women).

‘Ah, James, what are you thinking about?’ she asked. (Today she called Pullman James; before many hours had passed it would be Jim.)

‘Nothing very much,’ Pullman answered. ‘Nothing very much, except how beautiful you are.’

‘Am I, James? Tell me, can you speak this language?’

‘I speak it a little.’

‘What do these people say about me, James?’

‘If you could understand it you would not be unflattered.’

‘What kind of things do they say?’

‘The men say that you are beautiful, the women say you have eyes like a snake.’

‘Which one, James?’ she inquired, fixing her eye upon a young woman on the other side of the table.

Pullman, seeing this, hastened to say that it was no one at this table.

‘If Sammael were so foolish as to convert this into an authentic *fiançailles*,’ said Pullman to himself, ‘he would

have his arms full, not to say his hands. But he will have her shot. It is quite certain that a bullet (no doubt at Dis) will spare Sammael the boring entanglements implied in this beauteous but outrageously jealous personality.' For Sammael was as cold as ice in his response to this femininity.

There were speeches, the first a dazzling oration by Sammael. How tremendously good-looking he was, as he stood there dominating his fellow angels by his combination of legendary beauty and matchless intelligence—yet how false, thought Pullman. This was merely a defiance of God. In Sammael's heart there was no great purpose, but the old, cold pride. He was resolved to explode the supernatural, ultimately to make an end of God. He wished to bring Heaven crashing down. He was now arranging for the contamination of the angel nature—for the destruction of something which had endured since the beginning of time. He was going to mix it up with the pettiness and corruption of mankind. He had built for it, in Angeltown, a sort of comic Hollywood. Now he was forcing upon it woman—with all her sexishness, her nursery-mind, her vulgarity. Pullman, as he sat there watching this indestructible, triumphant, Number One Beauty, was smitten with a revelation. To save his skin, he had been actively assisting at the annihilation of the Divine.

In Third City, he had slid into the pit dug for him, as it were, by the Bailiff—in a cigarette-blessed amnesia, haunted by that faint stink which had always assailed his nostrils in the reception hall of the Bailiff, whose parties always contained intruders from Hell, and of which he was reminded by a subtle effluvium at present reaching him from one of the ladies of the Dis big-wigs sitting on his left. At this moment his eyes rested upon the Bailiff himself, at the next table, he had not noticed him before. The Bailiff was looking at him. As their eyes

met the Gay Monster winked. He lowered his eyes. He felt sure that the Gay Monster, the little elephant, had read his thoughts—his face must have betrayed at that moment, at last, the eruption, the revelation, taking place in his mind.

But Sammael had sat down and a violent applause had detonated all round Pullman. Since it was not he who was being applauded, Pullman almost jumped up in the air and began to clap, and to clap, and to clap—until he realized that he *alone* was clapping. He stopped. Everyone was looking at him.

‘Oh, James, you are wound up aren’t you?’ the indolent voice was ironically murmuring. ‘What was it wound you up like that, James?’

Sammael was smiling at him, from behind his indolent fiancée.

‘I’m sorry I made a fool of myself, sir. But I went on thinking of what you had said in your wonderful speech, sir, and I had not noticed that the applause had ceased.’

‘I am glad you approved of what I said, Pullman. We must have a talk afterwards.’

What did he want to talk to him about? Had *he* read his thoughts as well? Pullman was back again—in the company of his terrors, of the first weeks of his stay in this place. It took him some minutes to shake this off.

‘James, you are the most thoughtful of men,’ came the voice. ‘You look as if you had . . .’

Evidently her fiancé is neglecting her, so it is up to me, thought Pullman.

From then until the end of lunch he did his best to amuse her. She rewarded him by calling him Jim. ‘That was a crack coming from you, Jim: makes me feel, Jim, that you’re more awake than you look.’ It had hardly been a ‘crack’ but she had drunk several glasses of the wine of the country, and she was prepared to laugh at anything. Then, she hoped to make her fiancé

jealous, to show him and other people how high-spirited she was. When lunch was over Sammael was so much in demand that he asked Pullman to look after his 'fiancée', until he could escape. Pullman said they would be at the fountain, just outside the marquee.

As they strolled out into the sunlight, Pullman chatted pleasantly. 'Your fiancé is one of the busiest men you could find anywhere. He has started a new policy, very revolutionary, and everybody is very excited. They all want to know how it is going to affect him—or her. He is going to find it difficult to get away.'

'That may be so,' she said slowly, 'but his being a fiancé does not seem to agitate him very much. They say that he is a woman-hater down at Dis. I am wondering . . . ?'

'Well, you must not do that,' Pullman told her. 'He fell in love with you in the middle of a crisis.'

'*In love!* Say, Jim, have you ever been in love?'

'No, not really,' he said.

'Then it's no use asking you.'

'What?' asked Pullman.

'Oh nothing,' she said. 'You wouldn't know what love looked like, then.'

'I am not an expert about love. But I think I know what you mean. Well, Sammael is a terribly shy man. To make an exhibition of himself is the kind of thing he fears.'

'Oh yeah.'

'All these people are watching him expectantly,' said Pullman. 'Watching, whispering.'

'They'll have to do a lot of watching, Jim, to catch his hand clutching mine under the tablecloth, or to catch a furtive glance out of the corner of his eye . . .'

'Sammael is a great gentleman . . .'

'Is that what you call it. Say, if no one was looking, would he steal a kiss?'

Pullman was, of course, quite sure that he wouldn't, but that, in the first place, he would never be alone.

'I can only make one answer to that: namely, that *any* man would do it.'

'You are a diplomat, Jim,' she said.

At that moment, unexpectedly, the dashing Highland bonnet of the fiancé appeared.

'How I got away, don't ask me. I literally tore myself from the wife of the face-surgeon in chief. What was going to become of plastic-surgeons, she would like to know. And she had seven children . . . I told her that so great a technician would always be in an enviable position.'

They were moving towards the car, fairly quickly. But a woman seized him by the arm. A few moments later he caught up with Pullman and his fiancée.

'Same question,' he said. 'I shall not be able to appear in public . . .'

The fiancée forced her way in between Pullman and Sammael and very firmly took the latter by the arm.

'And while you're in my company, Sam, you will have to touch me occasionally.' And she walked very close indeed to the 'great gentleman'.

Sammael beamed all over his face, stroked her hand upon his arm—Pullman believed for a moment that he was going to take her in his arms. 'My *darling*. And to think that all these beastly women keep me from you!' As all three got into the automobile he very ostentatiously held her around the shoulders, and kissed her at the corner of the mouth, just clear of the lipstick. 'I hope no one is looking.'

'Ha ha ha!' Pullman supplied the necessary laugh—the very necessary laugh, he felt.

The car was open, and they drove away amid cheers and waving hands.

‘Is it not wonderful!’ Sammael exclaimed brilliantly, thrillingly.

‘Isn’t it just wonderful,’ acknowledged the fiancée. The ironic ring was noticed by Sammael. (‘You will be lucky,’ thought Pullman, looking towards the lovely octaroon, ‘if you get off with a firing squad.’) But the lord Sammael squeezed the necessary hand, and was squeezed warmly in return, and there can be no irony in so warm a squeeze.

‘How lovely you are,’ the fiancé cried, looking into Pullman’s eyes as he said it.

Near the centre of Angelsway they were held up by a cheering crowd. Sammael stood up in the car, under a shower of confetti and roses. He waved and kissed his hands, shouting greetings.

He dragged up his fiancée, who stood at his side beneath a downpour of flakes of coloured paper, which filled her ears, clung all over her face, penetrated her hair, and left deposits inside the neckline of her frock.

She was holding loads of flowers which were thrust at her (thrusts which were sometimes slightly indecent, Pullman believed). And then, with gestures of an extravagant ardour, Sammael took her in his arms and kissed her on the cheek, as near as possible to the mouth.

‘Kiss me! Kiss me!’ he hissed.

The ‘fiancée’ threw her arms around his neck and imprinted a big carmine, Max Factor kiss all over his mouth.

The cheers were hysterical. There were men and women at the side of the car, locked in burning embraces. Pullman saw many angels embracing one another—either from want of a woman or homosexually, Pullman did not know. Suddenly Pullman was embraced by a rather good-looking town girl, held up, to allow her to do this, by an angel.

This scene continued for rather too long. The crowd

grew: it began to seem unlikely that they would ever be able to escape.

However, three or four of the angels constituted themselves crowd-breakers, and the car slowly followed them until there was much less pressure and it could advance by itself. All the way they were slowed down by demonstrations, and Sammael never ceased to smile, to kiss his fiancée on the cheek, to stand up and to sit down, while Pullman baled out the confetti. There was an unbreakable blockage, from side to side of Angelsway, when they reached the Spanish dancers. The car retreated—as far as the last crossroad, and passed around the block, and it did not take them long to reach Sammael's house. They all went inside, shook out the confetti, and washed their hands. Then, in a very tender voice the fiancé said to the fiancée, 'I am sure you must be terribly tired, darling, aren't you?'

The woman violently protested that her freshness was unimpaired—that *she* didn't want a rest: but he would not hear of it. 'You could lie down upstairs. No. No! Better not do that. They would be sure to say that we had gone to bed already. Come along—I will take you to your hotel.'

She had to be practically carried to the car, her protests rising to a shriek.

'Jim! Can't you stop him? He wants to put me to bed.'

But Pullman answered, 'This is going on all night. You *must* rest.'

Her 'hotel' turned out to be Mark's lodging-house. Mark took over from Sammael, and the last Pullman saw of the fiancée was a bitter struggle at the front door, in which Mark was attempting to force her through it from behind.

The lord Sammael, as they were driving away, drew air into his lungs and blew it out expressively.

'*What* a female!' cried the exasperated fiancé. 'I must

have her shot at once—once this farce is over. Woman, in the raw, is an embarrassment. I marvel that men do not lose their reason who have to *live* with those fantastic bellowing babies.’ He blew again. ‘I want to see the tennis, Pullman—or Jim, as she calls you! Will you come along?’

Nothing that had occurred since the lunch had done anything to lessen the acuity of the mental revolution which had occurred during Sammael’s speech. The fiancée filled him with horror. But what was Sammael doing but imposing this horror (more or less) upon fellow-angels, while refusing genuinely to take on a woman himself. What could have been more disgusting than those public kissings and squeezings, the scattering of the fingertip kisses among the crowds, with whom he was so popular? He was a ‘great gentleman’, yes, compared with the Bailiff: and this acted as a camouflage—but what he *did* was even more sinister. Pullman accepted the invitation to accompany him to the Tennis Tournament, nevertheless. He could not stop seeing Sammael, and live. Besides, the spectacle of this titanic tennis interested him.

The tennis was so fast and fierce that it was quite a different game from what is seen at Wimbledon. The rackets were larger, the balls slightly larger and considerably heavier. Players were not infrequently seriously injured.—The Singles Champion of Angeltown defeated the star of the great manufacturing city. First the star was disposed of, a ball discharged with almost the speed of light hitting the back of his head, and causing a concussion. The weaker player who took his place was easily defeated.

The lord Sammael was photographed arm-in-arm with the Champion. They then hurried to the water-polo. There Sammael was photographed arm-in-arm with the Champion, in this case, an angel from the same district

as the injured tennis player. He was the Captain; his team was festooned behind the principals in the photograph.

After the water-polo Pullman returned to the Haus Europa, where he fell asleep immediately.

At five he was awakened by Borp, who brought the tea into the bedroom.

‘You must be tired, sir,’ he remarked. ‘I saw you, sir, in the car with the lord Sammael and his fiancée.’

‘Ah,’ said Pullman. ‘What did the crowd say about it all?’

‘They are very enthusiastic, sir, very enthusiastic. She is a beautiful lady, is she not? But there were some who said that they did not believe that she loved him, sir, or that he really seemed to love *her*. Excuse me, sir, I only repeat what some said. There was *one* man—a surgeons’ aid from Dis, sir, an old friend of mine—said that she was a murderess.’

‘A murderess?’ said Pullman frowning.

Borp lowered his voice. ‘I should not have repeated this, sir, but the friend I met was wondering whether the lord Sammael knew.’

Pullman stared, in silence, at his house-boy, while he thought: ‘What a divinely simple way out for the fiancé! “I discovered that she was a murderess.” ’

Pullman remained on the bed to drink his tea. The rumour would spread like wild fire. What steps should he take? Then he sprang up impulsively and rushed into the kitchen.

‘Borp! The lord Sammael must know about this.’

‘That’s what I thought, sir.’

He ran dramatically to the telephone: he rang Sammael’s office, and he experienced an unpleasant shock to hear his patron’s deep and excited voice at the other end.

Speaking in German, in a tremulous voice, Pullman said: ‘You know my house-boy, Borp, he has just told

me something terrible—terrible. When he was in the crowd, after seeing you in your car, an old friend who works at Dis told him that . . .’

‘I know, Pullman—it was reported to me a half-hour ago. That is why I am at present in my office. Listen, Pullman. Punishment Police are, I hope, *now* at Mark’s. An ambulance will follow. The police have orders to dope her at once—we don’t want her caterwauling everywhere. She will be taken to a cell of the Secret Service and held *incommunicado*. She will not be shot. The Secret Service will dispose of her. S.S. Agents are looking for the Department Head involved. He was at the lunch. Of course he should have informed me. He—and others too—must be punished—in the most absolute way. Pullman, will you come up here—by a side street: goodbye—I must telephone Mark.’

‘Shall I ever escape from the importunities of this man!’ Pullman put his hand over his forehead. Then he slowly took his hand off again, and dropped it to his side. ‘What a dirty little *ham* I am,’ he whispered. ‘Gratuitously putting on an act to shield my boss. Am I paid for this?’

Borp had been standing at the door of the kitchen all the time; always in the corner of Pullman’s eye. He was, of course, greatly excited by this scandal in high places, and was much impressed by Pullman’s performance.

‘Borp,’ Pullman said at last, ‘the lord Sammael knows. He heard half an hour ago. He has already acted. I should not tell you. But the murderess has been arrested, and other people too. The lord Sammael *was not informed*. It is terrible.’

And Pullman took his hat and in a moment was gone. Borp, his mouth open, stood looking at the door through which his impetuous master had disappeared.

Pullman had not got very far on his way to Sammael when he heard something remarkably like firing, over

to the leftward of Angelsway, in a direction little known to him. Then he encountered a crowd-pressure, and two angels were shouting, 'A battle—a big battle!'

His chauffeur turned the car round towards the centre of disturbance. The first thing he came upon was a large placard up against a tree. In giant letters he read:

DOWN WITH THE
JITTERCRACKING
ICONOCLAST

Beside it, a steel-helmeted group of the Fifth Regiment of Police, their bayoneted rifles slung over their shoulders, or held at the ready, stood guard over a larger but disreputable group of bandaged men. The London handcuff is discreet and of a modest proportion; but these prisoners had at their wrists spectacular steel manacles.

Pullman and his chauffeur pressed on. Soon they came to a street across which stood two armoured police trucks, about a hundred yards down from the point at which they were crossing it. Against the truck-sides was a rattle of bullets, and, in the distance, a corresponding rattle of machine-gun fire. There was also an unfamiliar sound in the air; it was the whistle of bullets. Up the side street were some officers; one smoked a cigarette, as they talked beneath the trees. Pullman stopped his car beside them. He learned that a 'sort of revolution' was apparently occurring.

'We have them held,' said one of the officers. 'It is just over there.' He pointed up the street across which the police trucks had been stationed. 'There are not many of them—perhaps a couple of hundred. Our five police regiments are massing around them. We have them held. The artillery of the Fifth Police Regiment is bombarding a house, which is, we think, their headquarters. We will soon have knocked it to pieces.'

‘Good,’ said Pullman. ‘Does the lord Sammael know? I am just on my way to him.’

‘Yes, the lord Sammael knows. He was under fire a few moments ago . . . He was not hit.’

‘Thank you, sir.’ He told the chauffeur to get to Sammael’s house as rapidly as possible, and, as they reached the first turning, they heard the fire from the howitzers of the Fifth Police Regiment, and the rattle of machine-guns. They took the opposite road to this, and all the way along found groups of angels standing outside their houses, still holding on to kites, or with coloured bladders in their hands, listening to the fire of the artillery. A little further, excited crowds were gathered at the cross-roads, and then they met trucks full of steel-helmeted police hurrying to the scene of action.

Near Sammael’s house Pullman found his great patron in consultation with Zoë, or the little elephant—who wore a steel helmet and had a martial look. Pullman drew up and left his car.

‘Well, sir!’ he exclaimed, ‘what is all this?’

‘It is a rascal called Lorter Bobrag. He has always been in touch with Heaven; we have had him down as a miscreant, as a confirmed mischief-maker, for a long time. This fellow has collected a hundred or two of the easily led; he has armed them, and obviously other people are interested. There is capital, a little bit of money, behind it. We shall soon have them all under lock and key, except those who are dead.’

‘You were under fire, sir? Some police officers, met with just behind the firing line, told me about it.’

Sammael pointed to a gash in his jacket. ‘They sent a couple of thugs up here. Our police chased them.’

The ex-Bailiff moved off briskly, strutting a little. He was leading his private army of detectives and Secret Service men, in two or three trucks, down to the disturbed area, with hundreds of manacles in one of the

trucks. With him, in his car, were two private secretaries (both steel helmeted), each with his ledger under his arm, and a pistol at his belt. Blasting at their horns, this flotilla of bravos departed.

About a hundred armed police were stationed before Sammael's house. Inside there were more police. At last Sammael and his visitor reached the most secret of his studies. When Sammael had taken his seat, and Pullman his, the former rang for a servant, and summoned persons who had been awaiting his instructions. Two confidential agents of the Bailiff's service entered.

They stood in front of the lord Sammael without speaking.

'You are armed?' Sammael asked. 'Good! Go to his house, knock, and when he comes to the door, kill him.'

'If his wife is there?'

'Kill her too. They have long tongues.'

The two agents left the room. These agents had been carefully picked by the Bailiff, and it was certain that, if the condemned man was there, he would die.

Sammael turned hectically to Pullman, who had never seen him like this before. It was as if he had been drinking heavily. His face was pale and he was swollen beneath the eyes. He was, however, complete master of himself. He had been very much disturbed, most recently, of course, by the ugly comedy of the 'revolt'. The agony of rage had distorted his face.

'Pullman, it is all over Angeltown—"Sammael's wife-to-be is a murderess". They also say she is a negress.' He sat staring at his visitor.

'I wish I had brought Borp here. Other spectators—the majority who had not yet heard about the rumours from Dis—said that your fiancée did not love you, and that you did not seem to love her.'

After about a minute's silence, Sammael said, 'That does not help, does it? Except that they might say that

I had felt that there was something the matter with her . . .’

‘Exactly!’

‘However can I save myself from disgrace? The point is that they say I knew that she was a murderess. *That* is what matters.’

‘You exaggerate the *eventual* effect. A booklet must be written, in which the true story must be set down. I think it might be as well to preface it by saying that the real truth was this beautiful girl was not someone with whom you had fallen in love, but that you ardently desired to participate in these revolutionary festivities, although you had not had time really to know any woman, and chose her only as the most beautiful woman available.

‘As to *knowing* that she was a triple-murderess, that *of course* you did not know. Dr Petrus may have believed that he told you that, but in fact Petrus never told you that. There were a number of women being inspected on that occasion, and their sins were specified. But there was some confusion, and the lord Sammael believed that she had blasphemed (which he did not look upon as a very serious sin). He was amazed and horrified when the truth was brought to his notice. . . .’

‘Pullman,’ interrupted Sammael; ‘a fact of great importance. There was a room at Dis in which all *dossiers* as well as the photographs were filed. On this occasion, as always, Petrus and myself were alone together all the time. The clerks in his office no doubt heard from the First Clerk the rumours which they broadcast. They had no first-hand knowledge of what occurred. No doubt Petrus said to his First Clerk, “The lord Sammael has picked a triple murderess to be his fiancée. What do you think of that?”’

‘Oh,’ Pullman said, with great satisfaction. ‘That, sir, is a very momentous fact. I should of course put that in

next. Then comes the question of what is going to happen to Petrus. I suggest that I say, at this point: "As to the guilt or otherwise of Petrus, that was left in the hands of the Judge So-and-So. He sifted and resifted the evidence."'

'And found him guilty?'

'Yes, sir. And found him guilty. The good judge of men can hardly be wrong. In this case all the abominable suffering caused to the lord Sammael was the work of the sensation-loving Petrus. Such would be the bare outline.'

Sammael's mind was greatly eased, to judge from his face.

'My dear fellow,' he said, 'that could not be better, it is splendid. I would be grateful if you would write that out as soon as you are free to do so, I will have it translated immediately. That is very kind. Thank you, Pullman.' Sammael looked at his watch. 'The First Clerk, by the way, should be dead by this time. The two agents you saw . . .'

Pullman bowed his head, showing that he had registered the demise of the First Clerk.

As more agents were entering, Pullman paused on his way out, and returned for a moment to Sammael. He had remembered something which he thought ought to be said: it took the form of a halting question. 'I have been visited, sir, with a rather odd fancy. I wondered—forgive me if this sounds idiotic—I wondered whether the octaroon ought not to have a successor?'

'My dear fellow, she has a successor. A princess.' Sammael gazed into Pullman's eyes, rather as if he had scored a point. Pullman smiled broadly, said 'Congratulations,' and left, passing out between groups of police. Their numbers had increased.

He returned by the outside road. Smoke was still hanging in the sky at the opposite side of the city, though gunfire no longer was heard. In a quarter of an hour he was once more at home. Borp flew out of the kitchen,

hoping that he might receive the latest news. But his master merely looked surprised to see him. Borp slowly returned into the kitchen, very disappointed because rumours of the battle had reached him.

Lying down upon the sofa, Pullman attempted to surrender himself to his relaxed body. The results were so satisfactory that in a few minutes he was asleep.

It was seven o'clock when the telephone rang. 'Again!' he muttered, as he moved over to the instrument which he snatched off its rocker. There was silence, but almost at once a Third City English voice announced—'the interrogation of Petrus is beginning'—at the offices, of course, of the Secret Service. Okay, he would be there.

There were two Patrol Police, rifles held under their arms, outside the door. Pullman entered the office, in time to hear the familiar voice of the Bailiff reciting, 'Gracchus Petrus, you were a good man once, it is a pity that you allowed your mind to be conquered by the sensational. A great pity. But this latest example of it has led to your making so scandalous a mistake as to attribute to the lord Sammael knowledge that was not his. You spread abroad the baseless rumour that he was aware all the time that his fiancée was a triple murderess. Fie, Petrus, it is not possible for you to survive. Gracchus Petrus, in my judgement, the only manner in which you can atone is death.'

And as he said this the Bailiff lifted a long black seal, and stamped it down upon a piece of paper before him. The shorthand writer stopped writing. A large rough man holding a revolver in his right hand approached Petrus.

'Petrus, follow me,' he said. Petrus, shivering, followed the man into a further apartment. Once inside the door, he seized him by the hair and stuck the muzzle of the revolver in his throat. He fired twice.

Petrus lay upon the floor. Those present (the offices were quite empty of staff), namely the lord Sammael, the Bailiff, Pullman, and an S.S. clerk, went into the further room. The Bailiff produced a stiletto about a foot long, no thicker than a largish knitting needle. They all knew what it was for, except Pullman. Petrus's jacket was pulled back, and Sammael inserted the point of the stiletto in the neighbourhood of the heart, and drove it home in the apparently dead body. Pullman understood; this ritual reminded him of the insertion of a straw into a cake or pudding to see if it is cooked. In the present case what was used to do the testing with was left in the body.

The lord Sammael walked out of the room. Then he took his hat, and saying, 'Well, that is that,' he and the others who had followed him now left the S.S. premises, the police outside saluting, and walked away. Sammael and the Bailiff moved towards the former's house and Pullman accompanied them. When they reached the gate, Pullman was obliged to continue in their company; the lord Sammael led them into the small sitting-room, in which, usually, the child lay in the basket; he rang for drinks. A white-coated domestic appeared, and soon returned with cocktails.

'You have settled down wonderfully, Zoë, in your new appointment!'

'Oh, sir, I am as much at home as a duck is on the surface of a lake. I refrained from saying *a swan* . . .'

'You did wrong,' smiled Sammael. 'I think you are more like a swan than a duck, in that majestic white robe.'

The Bailiff had not removed his judicial robe—the old love of finery, Pullman reflected.

'It is my view,' he said, 'that a man who is so ill-advised as—to go no further—to do what Petrus did—to go wagging his tongue to his clerks, is a public danger. He

could not *serve* in any capacity. A loose-tongued man is best out of the way.'

'Is it likely that I would affiance myself to a negress who was a triple murderess?—Is it possible?' Sammael burst out, as though he had been thinking to himself. 'Yet that man Petrus has known me for years.'

'We must settle, sir, about tonight. Everywhere you go you must be accompanied by at least twenty picked men, of my special Presidential Guard.'

'I shall do as you require.'

'Thank you, sir. And may I remind you to be armed yourself!'

The little elephant seemed anxious to talk about all aspects of his work; and, as Sammael appeared interested, it looked as if that might take up some time. Pullman saw his opportunity, and begged to be excused. He was warmly thanked for his services by both these monsters, and withdrew in the blackest of moods.

When he was once more in his own quarters, Borp rushed out of the kitchen. Pullman waved him furiously away, and he slunk back quickly into the kitchen.

'That damned fellow will never let me alone. Entirely my own fault, however. I act a part for him, he naturally expects me to go on with my clowning. Still.'

Pullman crossed the room, and flung himself into the largest, easiest chair, dead-beat. He stared at the floor. 'What brutes all these people are,' he said to himself. 'Cesare Borgia knew that they were human beings he was killing. No. It is nonsense to compare Sammael with Cesare Borgia. He and the little elephant derive no pleasure whatever from killing Petrus. It would be untrue to say that these people are cruel. They are not cruel. It is only cruel if you realize that the people you are injuring or destroying have feelings. There is no sense at all of the other person *feeling*: these people are devoid of that sensation. They do not recognize feelings

in others. They accept no equality with Petrus, any more than would a Roman Emperor regard an Asiatic captive slave as human.'

Pullman petulantly dismissed these observations as futile. All that is so of course, but it isn't worth saying. God *values* man: that is the important thing to remember. It is this valuing that is so extraordinary. There are men who only value *power*. This is absurd, because power destroys value. Value can only exist with multiplicity. The only value for Sammael is solipsistic. I, Pullman, am acting in a valueless vacuum called Sammael. He looked at his apartment. It was a momentary resting place in a vacuum.

With a perfunctory knock, Dr Schlank entered. 'The sky is full of fireworks,' he said. 'Pullman, did you not hear the reports?' Pullman had dimly heard the reports, but had not connected them with the festivities—with the Fiesta in a vacuum. He went to the other side of the house, the kitchen window being the best vantage point from which to observe the fireworks. Stars were bursting with a hideous smacking report. There were baskets of flowers exploding softly, not much higher up than the trees. There was a large flaming wheel. Pullman could hear the chanting of the angels from a number of directions at once. There were many other sounds as well, and minor fireworks, sparkling and crackling all over Angeltown.

He returned to the living-room, and said to Schlank, 'Do you think you live in a vacuum?'

'No,' Schlank answered. 'There is no such thing as a vacuum.'

'Ah yes, nature abhors,' said Pullman. 'But this is not nature.'

'No?' replied Schlank. 'Have you had supper? If not, have a bite, and come for a walk with me?'

Pullman did not wish to be alone; and if he stopped

here another five minutes the telephone would ring again, and he would be summoned to come and look at the princess. So he made a sandwich standing at the refrigerator, and in a quarter of an hour he went out with Schlank.

Two hours later the two friends were sitting near a basin full of reckless fountains, but their splashing was only an inconvenience if you were sitting on the farther side. The splashing was mingled with the strains of an orchestra. Schlank liked the disorderly leaping of the water, and Pullman humoured him. There were perhaps a dozen terraces of tables and chairs, and thousands of people were seated there drinking coffee, or wine or brandy, while thousands more promenaded. The two friends had had several glasses of wine.

The orchestra oozed out Chaminade and Rubinstein.

‘What selections!’ said Schlank.

‘They have orders to provide the kind of swoony slush appropriate when sexual emotions are uppermost.’

‘Ah yes—I had forgotten.’

Three angels passed, intoxicated, but the middle one most so; he was contained, so to speak, by the two on either side of him who, with shamefaced smiles, rolled inwards. He in the centre had an exquisite, open-eyed, heavenly blossoming mouth.

Two women, stepping mincingly, avoided the trio. An elderly man, following the two women, coughed censoriously, for the benefit of the mincing blondes. But a single angel came just behind him and coughed very coarsely. Then came three angels again, but sober, self-conscious, like polar bears dressed up.

Pullman quoted Baudelaire—‘“Ses ailes de géant l’empêchent de marcher.” These rustics of Heaven, how divinely clumsy they are. They cannot forget the wings that are not there upon their backs.’

Schlank grunted.

‘Why do they go about in threes?’ Pullman wondered.

‘That,’ declared Schlank, ‘is in order to avoid two. A bad number.’

‘I do not think it is anything to do with numbers, two is the number of the civilized; three is the barbarians’ choice. Or it may be for safety too. Are there any gangs here?’

‘Gangs?’ reflected Schlank. ‘The angel is very brutal. It is their thousands of years of militarism.’

‘Yes. Is the lord Sammael respected by all of them, treated as a military chief?’

‘It is my belief,’ Schlank answered, ‘that he is practically worshipped. On their flights they all follow him automatically. Like birds you know.’

‘Speak of the Devil,’ muttered Pullman in his own language.

He saw Sammael approaching, a stately, dark young woman walking at his side, her hand within his arm. He was being very ‘gay cavalierish’, waving his right hand, laughing with the utmost grace, bending down devotedly—an elegant comedy, in short.

Dr Schlank, crying ‘Here is the lord Sammael,’ sprang to his feet.

Pullman, as if just apprised of the presence of his great patron, sprang up too. Both raised their hats, Pullman sweeping his off in the most courtly way, and both held their hats in their hands.

‘The Princess Cecilia Romanoff, my fiancée,’ announced the lord Sammael.

Both Schlank and Pullman bowed low, their hats clutched against their stomachs, Schlank’s eye never leaving the Princess’s face.

French was the language of the Princess. She had so modest and beautiful a face that Pullman felt sure she had had her bottom well booted by the police on the road to Dis.

Dr Schlank was flattered to learn that the Princess was familiar with his 'Theorie'. He flushed and bowed with great violence.

'We are going to watch the dancing, where a floor has been laid down at the Markets,' Sammael told them. 'Will you two gentlemen accompany us?'

Schlank bowed with almost hysterical violence, expressing at the same time his pleasure at the privilege of being in the company of the Princess.

They went there in Sammael's Cadillac. As soon as they had taken their place upon a dais, where there were only a few chairs and tables reserved for especially honoured guests, the band stopped, and began playing the ceremonial hymn in honour of the lord Sammael. Everyone present stood up, at the end of it everyone roared out some formula of acclaim; at which Sammael sprang up and kissed his hands with fervent grace.

Pullman was sitting beside the Princess, and as he looked at her he hoped that her fiancé would not kill *her* as soon as her presence proved an embarrassment. Her large dark eyes seemed to look out at the world with an expression which was, at once, frightened and curious—as if she feared it terribly, but was not indifferent to it. They spoke of Paris, with which Pullman was very familiar, but not the parts of the city best known to her. However, she knew the Ile Saint Louis, and that was where Pullman had lived. She then asked if Monsieur Schlank's 'Theorie' superseded Einstein's 'Theorie'.

'Ah, you must ask Dr Schlank about that.'

'Oh, "Doctor". Is he a Doctor? No, I would not dare to ask him,' she replied, with a visible increase of nervousness. 'He bowed so fiercely. Is he a very terrifying man, or is it only the forbidding character of German etiquette, only that? They seem to wish to knock you over with their chests.'

'It is nothing but his fierce bowing, I see, it is only

that. He is only alarming when he plunges into mathematics.'

Sammael, who had been listening to what they had been saying, turned to Schlank and said, 'The Princess thinks you are a very frightening man . . .'

'I? I?' cried Schlank, terribly delighted.

The frightened look in the eyes of the Princess was deepening and she glanced towards Schlank.

'To lessen the Princess's terror of me,' he said, 'please tell Her Royal Highness that . . . tell her how respectful but abject an admirer I am of her great beauty.'

Sammael translated this speech and after a colloquy with his fiancée he turned to Schlank, and said, 'The Princess replied that what I told her only increased her misgivings.'

Dr Schlank frowned. He said, 'The word *respectful* in my message guarantees that my admiration is padlocked in my heart, mounted guard over by an iron discipline.'

After another exchange between his fiancée and himself, Sammael informed the Doctor that the Princess had observed that men were never so dangerous as when they were *respectful*.

'I give up,' said Schlank, with a gesture of surrender, 'as, out of my own mouth, I have proved myself a wolf, if it would remove any uneasiness in the mind of the Princess, I would leave.'

A short conversation occurred between Sammael and his fiancée. Pullman, to his astonishment, heard the Princess persist, that *yes*, it would be far better if Dr Schlank left at once. 'If he does not, I shall.' And she rose in her chair, and had to be persuaded to reseat herself. Sammael, as astonished as Pullman, reasoned with her. But with increasing firmness, not to say hysterical obstinacy, she insisted that his presence was very disagreeable to her.

Pullman said to Sammael, 'As a matter of fact, Schlank and I have a date, and in a few minutes we should be obliged to leave you.'

He rose and said to Schlank, 'Well, we are late already, so I have told the lord Sammael that we are going.'

Dr Schlank rose silently, his eyes fixed upon the Princess. He bowed from the waist, and they left. They had not taken many steps when there was a scream behind them. They stopped and turned back, but the lord Sammael waved them away.

When they were out of earshot, Pullman said to his friend, who was extremely disturbed: 'I am afraid that this time the lord Sammael has picked a lunatic, or at least a case of advanced hysteria.'

'You think so?' Schlank seemed relieved.

'Yes. I thought she was very slightly odd from the first.'

'What will the lord Sammael do?' asked Schlank.

'Shoot her, I expect, like the other one.'

Schlank looked at him inquiringly. 'Has that occurred already?'

They were some distance now from Sammael and his Romanoff. They turned round and saw him leading her to his car.

Pullman and his dejected friend strolled back towards the fountains, and, as Schlank suggested, reoccupied the table so recently vacated. There they remained until just after midnight. The official hour for the commencement of the Kermess was twelve-thirty. They had decided to return home at about this time, as an angel Kermess might not be very peaceable, Schlank counselled.

The orchestra was packing up, a charabanc waited to transport the instrumentalists away to their quarters. The strollers and sitters were dispersing. Many had cars, especially the non-angelic and the female section.

They were soon in Angelsway, where, slightly dismayed, they found the Kermess was already in progress.

Choral groups went drifting past, chanting something like plain-song, or early modal music from, say, the Hebrides. 'One would say a perversion of the Christ-child's Lullaby,' Pullman commented.

As he heard the term 'Christchild' the 'Schlafendes Jesuskind' appeared to come into Schlank's mind. He softly sang a few bars, and then stopped.

Everyone was a little drunk. All these huge figures lurched along, and here and there was a woman among two or three giants, looking particularly small and precarious.

Then they passed a cross-street, and a short distance up something was occurring. A group of six angels was there, and one was, quite visibly, in the act of possessing a little female figure.

'The Kermess has begun in earnest,' muttered Pullman.

'Your doubt about the sexual rustiness of the angels is dissipated, however,' was Schlank's comment.

'You know your angel better than I do.'

They came upon a crowd of people around a house. There was a loud battering upon the door, and there was a chorus of disagreeable menacing shouts.

'Quite likely,' said Schlank, 'they will take this opportunity of lynching unpopular angels.'

Two or three of the angels began to break in a door.

'They gang up, do they?' Pullman asked.

'They are the most inveterate gangers-up. It accounts for many things here.'

'For timidity, for instance?'

Schlank nodded.

They were approaching a wildly moving circle of dancers which almost stretched from side to side of the street. Two extremely long pipes produced considerable noise, of a piercing, howling complaint.

They got successfully past this whirling circle, only

to be met by a second, even more wildly tumbling one. To pass it they were now obliged to traverse the lawn of one of the houses.

‘I hope we meet no more living wheels,’ said Pullman.

‘I too,’ Schlank agreed. ‘The force of their wheels is terrific.’

But they walked for some time with nothing more dynamic than chains of drunks which stretched across the sidewalk, and forced them to take to the road. The nearest drunks in these chains made faces at them, and shouted what were probably insults. Pullman said, ‘I feel a midget,’ and Schlank said, ‘I feel like a mouse in the midst of very large rats.’

But they were now not very far from home. Then, in the centre of a crowd of people rapidly approaching them, there were angry voices, abnormally loud and fierce. Once more they had to trespass upon the beautifully cut lawn, as they met this swarm, and then the swarm stopped and as it were opened, a hollow appearing in the middle. An extremely large angel was attacking a smaller one. He had his hands up, in the scratching position, as had his adversary.

They sprang at one another, scratching faces. This did not continue long. The smaller one’s countenance was ploughed up, in some places his skin torn away. One eye appeared about to drop out. Suddenly he was seized by the larger one, dragged towards the ground, and the big angel bent over him and was busy with his hands. Both his eyes were gouged out, as Pullman and his friend saw quite well, for they saw the eyes flying through the air. The crowd saw it too: they raised a deep and prolonged ‘Oh’ sound in violent protest. The gouger stood up, and looking around furiously, as he crouched in the centre of this bellowing crowd, he took hold of the nearest angel—again, one considerably smaller than himself, and dragged him towards the ground, to repeat

his gouging upon this second victim. But with a deep howl, from two sides, the pack hurled themselves on him. There was a brief struggle: they all got to their feet again, except the particularly large angel. He lay, toes upwards, the handle of a long knife sticking up expressively, above the region of the heart; a nail had been hammered into each of his eyes.

Pullman and Schlank hurried away from the corpse, as did everybody else.

‘A very good example of the action of the gang.’ Schlank spoke a little breathlessly. ‘You can’t do that, I mean what that big chap did. In every collection of people, there is one or more gangs. The gang will revenge itself upon whoever injures a member: I knew what would happen the moment I saw the eyes spurt out. He was drunk, or he would not have done that.’

‘It might be called a democracy by gangs,’ Pullman observed.

They both continued to walk fast. As they left Angels-way they looked back. The vast street was empty, except for a vulture circling around where the corpse was. He may have been suspicious of the shining handle of the dagger, sculptured to represent a serpent rampant.

(XVI)

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, before breakfast, the telephone rang. It was of course Sammael. Could Pullman come and see him at once. It was always *at once*. He would give him breakfast.

When Pullman reached the lord Sammael's, as he was entering the special office the tray with his breakfast arrived at the same time, an honest English face above it (which had acquired, however, a slight look of dishonesty because of the whiskers); and an honest British voice wished him a decent good-morning. A few minutes later, as he was pouring out his first cup of coffee, Sammael strode in, looking exceedingly grave, an expression which did not suit him.

'I will begin at once,' he said as he sat down. 'My second fiancée is insane, as no doubt you guessed. When she was brought here yesterday evening I thought she was very eccentric, but attributed that to the strange circumstances, and perhaps to inherited fear, natural in a member of the Romanoff family. She greeted me: "Vous êtes le Diable? Bon. Je hais Dieu." That was nothing. But in a hundred ways she astonished me. Her antipathy for poor Dr Schlank was the climax. I returned her to her hotel, contacted your friend Zoë . . . you still think of him, of course, as the Bailiff, don't you? I set him to work. He is a miracle worker. Within one hour he had unearthed this. She was the inmate of a state Asylum near Paris. Her name is Ernestine Schumann. It was her belief that she was a Romanoff, she could not be cured of this unfortunate obsession. An attempt on her part to shoot the Russian Ambassador, in Paris, led to the discovery of her dementia, and, of course, her detention. She was quite unfit for ordinary imprisonment, and was lodged in the State Criminal Alienation Centre.'

‘How did she get here, under the name and title of Princess Cecilia Romanoff?’ Pullman drank his coffee, awaiting the answer.—He knew that the next question was the critical one.

‘Such accidents do occasionally occur. But as a rule the mistake is immediately apparent. What is shocking is how she came to be passed on to me as an authentic princess.’

‘Ah yes, that requires some sifting.’

‘No, Pullman. That already has been done by the Secret Service. The elimination of Petrus was so abrupt, as also of the First Clerk, that the department was thrown into confusion. Actually, Petrus himself ought to have noticed how eccentric she was—he, ultimately, was to blame.—She is now in the hands of an expert in female alienation, a private doctor who has a small clinic out in the country. . . . So far so good. But what on earth is to be done about the publicity regarding this I do not know. I am at my wits’ end, frankly.’

He looked appealingly to Pullman.

The rôle that Pullman had assumed demanded a god-like promptitude in producing an answer. There must be no shadow of a pause suggestive of the rational process—of the brain grinding round and working out its answer. There must be nothing like that; there must be, as it were, a flash, and a fully grown answer is born.

At first sight the present difficulty bore so close a resemblance to the last, that it could only be treated in the same way. The same questions had to be asked, and when it had been confirmed that there was no unexpected element, the solution must be a repetition of the means employed to dispose of the octaroon. Pullman did his best to disguise the fact that he was saying, ‘Same Prescription as before.’ But the monotony depressed him, and he hoped it would not depress his patron. Anyhow, attempting to give the impression that he was a man

competent, with the same cool brain, to handle any conceivable situation, he put a few questions.

‘Is it possible to suppress completely,’ asked Pullman, ‘the fact that she was an impostor as well as mad?’

‘Let us turn to your old friend.’ Sammael took up the telephone, and asked for a number. He was just beginning to say something, when the telephone rang. It was the Bailiff, who was already at his office. After talking for four or five minutes, Sammael replaced the receiver. ‘It seems to him,’ he said, ‘that the public would not be interested . . .’

‘Which is not the point,’ said Pullman.

‘He thinks he should be able to stop that up. But there is the danger of a leakage from Dis. Short of wholesale executions, he thinks nothing can be guaranteed regarding that.’

‘All right. Why couldn’t he say,’ said Pullman, smiling, ‘that to stop it was impossible . . . Well, that disposes of the possibility of reporting your prostration, your deep grief, at the sudden collapse of the Princess Cecilia Romanoff. If they know that she is not the Princess, that cannot be done. You couldn’t feel that way about a criminal lunatic.’

‘Evidently,’ said Sammael.

‘Well, let us think of the next best line.’

Pullman paused for one minute, then he said, ‘The *best* thing would be for the beautiful girl to die at the alienist’s. Then you could be grief-stricken. There are a thousand ways of being beautiful. Ernestine possesses one of those ways. You could truthfully say that you had never met a more beautiful girl. Emphasize it a fraction, “she was the *most* beautiful.” All your sorrow is due to *beauty*—Romanoff descent fades into the background. You are simply a wolf. The most beautiful girl in the world is apparently yours to devour; she is snatched away.’

Sammael stood up.

‘Shall we walk around to the Secret Service Office?’

Pullman rose, Sammael picked up the telephone. In a few minutes they started off. On the way Pullman offered a suggestion.

‘Perhaps the best way would be for her to be transported in a secret service car . . . to consult another alienist at the General Hospital. *En route* she dies.’

‘I will propose that to Zoë.’ Pullman noted that the ex-Bailiff was already an affectionate diminutive, and later he noticed that Sammael was ‘Sam’.

The little elephant was in his office. He was there separated from the remainder of the office by a waiting-room. This was empty, and the door that led into it was locked on the inside by the Bailiff.

‘We are henceforth alone,’ he said.

Pullman and Sammael sat opposite the little Czar of the Secret Service. It did not take Sammael very long to explain the situation. They spoke in the language native to both of them, and it was not until they had quite finished that Zoë turned to Pullman and said, ‘That will be quite simple. She will die of a cerebral haemorrhage. That is the quickest and surest, and is most in keeping with her cerebral condition. Congratulations, my dear Pullman, on your plan—it is masterly.’

Pullman bowed, as if he had received a decoration. Now he was accepted as a master by these ruthless desperadoes.

It was agreed that the car transporting the girl should pick up a physician employed by the Secret Service. They would take the longest way back down to the town. By the time they reached the hospital she would be dead (for when she ceased to breathe they would not take her back to the alienist). The corpse would remain at the hospital, and be incinerated in the usual way. The lord Sammael himself would inform the alienist of the death of his patient.

‘Well,’ said Pullman, ‘that is all nicely arranged.’

‘I think it is,’ echoed the chief of the Secret Service and Security Police.

Pullman and Sammael walked back to the latter’s house. Unless he could be of any service, Pullman said, he would return at once to the Haus Europa, and think over what publicity would be desirable.

Ernestine was dispatched according to the Pullman Plan, and was duly cremated. The ‘Romanoff affair’ ended with a small literary work composed by Pullman (printed anonymously), named ‘Woman-Hater Loses His True Love’.

The next affair for which Pullman was called in was a message from the Deity. It warned the lord Sammael not to proceed with his plans to close down Hades. Secondly, it reproached him, with the utmost severity, for the humanization of the angel population. ‘This is, up to date, your greatest sin.’

Pullman took very little part in answering this. He advised conciliation, whereas Sammael was truculent, and sent a defiant reply.

The rat-tat of machine-gun bullets suddenly competing with the jittercrackery imagined by Pullman had raised questions in his mind to which he had never sought an answer. Just before they parted company, one day, Pullman surprised his patron by the following remarks: ‘That was a queer episode, that so-called “revolt”, sir. We have never had time to discuss it, otherwise I should have asked you, sir, to explain what lay behind it, and, more important, what it portended.’

‘I don’t quite understand what you want to know, Pullman.’ Sammael looked genuinely puzzled.

‘When first we came upon this unusual disturbance, a large placard, stood on end by the side of the road, attracted our attention. On it were the words, “Down with the Jittercracking Iconoclast.” I have thought about this

quite a little,' Pullman said, emphatically. 'I wondered what this meant, sir? Was it a reflection of disputes in the body of the committee ruling the city? I do not wish to be inquisitive; but if there is no objection to my . . .'

'Of course not, Pullman. You were correct in your supposition. There has been a storm brewing for some time in the debates carried on in that committee. The usual word employed by those in opposition is "Iconoclast". I am of course precisely that—which makes it rather difficult to repudiate. As image-breaker I have, to my account—and exceedingly to my credit—a towering pile of fragments representing the destruction of what I regard as false idols. Furthermore, most certainly I have jittercracked them. What the devil was I expected to do?'

Sammael lay back in his chair, shaking with laughter.

He found the expression 'what the devil' irresistibly funny.

Pullman shared with him these spasms of jitter-cracking amusement. But he then returned to the subject which Sammael was covering up with explosions of mirth.

'If your Excellency would not mind informing me of the exact position—what is your standing in this committee? Are you the unquestionable master, or is there a majority against your revolutionary proposals? I hear that a couple of hundred dissidents were shot after the so-called battle. Did that comprise most of your bitterest opponents?'

The lord Sammael stretched, and yawned. He was gaining time to consider what his reply should be.

'N-n-no—no, Pullman, I wish they *had* all been shot. There are too many of them. But they are not able to do much harm. We can leave that question for the time being.'

'Thank you, sir. I see exactly. Heavenly plots, I

imagine. Great naughtiness on the part of the All-highest.'

'Beautifully phrased!' Sammael shook appreciatively.

'Next, sir, let us take up the question of pursuing, with frenzy, the good results issuing from the Fiesta. It is my suggestion that the initiative regarding Woman should be developed without any delay. For instance, a form should be prepared, very carefully, be printed, and despatched to every citizen in Angeltown. Its purpose would be to ascertain the number of angels desiring wives. They would be asked to fill in the form, and return it to the office handling this matter. Over a hundred already have wives, and as many as eight thousand have sent in their names as desirous of acquiring a mate.'

Sammael nodded approvingly. Pullman then proceeded to inform his patron of the following facts. These applicants for wives displayed great zeal. Even, up in the top corner of many of their appeals, a rough drawing of the male sexual organ appeared. This was understood as a token of urgency. It was learned that, of those already possessed of wives, in many cases the latter were loaned out to friends. One man was murdered who had refused to give up the woman lent him by his neighbour.

Sammael showed as much enthusiasm as ever for the initiative of Pullman, and asked him to give his personal attention to all matters connected with what he called 'a jittercracking Post-Fiesta'. This was what Pullman wanted, and he undertook immediately a series of tasks all belonging to the furtherance of this great scheme. A kind of matrimonial agency was set up not far from the Haus Europa. The inhabitants of Angelsway became used to seeing buses full of smiling women passing their doors. Increasing crowds of angels gathered at the matrimonial agency; the staff had to be considerably augmented. A half-dozen armed police were posted there as well, as fights were not infrequent.

The Slave Market, as Pullman called it, was a source of amusement to those dwelling in the Haus Europa. At length the Haus itself contributed to the matrimonial desire.

The Rumanian mathematician put his name down, and a few days later he returned with a buxom Saxon wench. After Dr Schlank had seen her, he said to Pullman, 'This house will soon be full of Germans. Then we shall have to change its name. It will then be Haus Germania.'

While this was going forward so satisfactorily, the lord Sammael began reducing the staff of the Punishment Centre. In doing this very gradually, it was possible to find other jobs for them. Meanwhile their salary was continued.

A hospital for angels was projected, the site chosen, and the building soon would start. The medical staff at Dis would find employment (of a less dramatic order, it is true) in this institution, or elsewhere.

Then, although this was not publicized yet, industries were planned where some angels, if they wished, could find employment. The structure of the future society was now being worked out by a committee appointed by the ruling body of Angeltown. Every day also consultations took place between Sammael and Pullman. A small library was assembled for the use of members of the committee. Reference books at this juncture seemed appropriate. Pullman suggested that a specially trained body of angels should form a kind of permanent governing class—into which could be brought, as time went on, the most brilliant of the offspring of angels. A definitely aristocratic structure was without difficulty agreed upon.

But all these goings on were apparently reported in Heaven, for really furious communications began to reach Sammael from on High. These were answered with mounting truculence. And then, they were no longer answered at all.

VI WHITE ANGEL

(XVII)

THEN ONE DAY A LETTER was thrust beneath Pullman's door. He was out at the time, but when he returned home Borp handed it to him; he said that a 'White Angel' had left it, he had seen one going down the stairs immediately after the letter had been delivered. 'White Angel' was what the messengers from Heaven were generally called, because of the white garment that they wore, and the whiteness, or pallor, of their faces. And so when Pullman heard this he went very white himself, and, sitting down, perspiration began to form on his forehead.

The letter itself, which he opened with trembling hands, was on a sheet of plain white paper, just as were those he had been shown by Sammael, reaching him by heavenly messenger. It was headed:

TO JAMES PULLMAN.

The report of your activities has reached us in Heaven. We know everything, there is no more to know. Prepare for the punishment you have called down upon yourself, follower of the Evil One.

Pullman's response to that message was to bury his face in his hands, weeping bitterly. For a short time he did nothing but weep, and lightly bang his head against the chair. Then he began to pray.

He addressed his prayers to God directly. 'Oh God of unlimited mercy and of marvellous kindness; as you understand, forgive: forgive all the hideous misdemeanours of your very wicked servant, sinning quite

knowingly, but unable to resist the attraction of Evil, from his first contact with the so-called Bailiff, association with whom led him directly into the dreadful shadow of Satan. Lord God forgive! Would you trouble to crush the worm that crawls at the foot of your old Enemy?"

Pullman bowed his head, the tears running down his cheeks. He followed his formal prayer by a silent one of the utmost abasement. He then, watched by Borp with amazement, rose unsteadily to his feet, picked up the letter, and thrust it into his pocket. Then he rushed across the room, encountering Borp with a cry, passed him and entered his bedroom. He returned to the door, and called to his servant, 'Let no one in. Say to anyone that I am out.' Then he laid himself down on the bed, covered himself up, and attempted to control his shivering body. There was nothing to do now but to prepare for his just punishment. He could do nothing all that day. To do nothing was the best preliminary to extinction. The telephone was not answered, and at last it ceased to ring. Sammael, that cursed monster of smoothness and deceit, he would not speak to unless he must. He could not escape him for long, he knew; there was no *physical* escape.

The hours passed on, abjectly awaiting a further 'White Angel', bearer of another heavenly message. He would confront the terrible white-faced emissary and interrogate him. At every step on the landing outside he shook and sweated. But the dreaded messenger did not reappear.

Schlank thrust his head into the room. 'Wie gehts?'

'Schlecht,' answered Pullman. 'Feeling really very rotten . . . got a belly-ache. When I feel myself again I will come in.'

Schlank stood and looked hard at him for a minute or two more. Then he gave his head a toss and quickly shut the door.

Eventually Pullman became more alarmed by the non-appearance of this celestial messenger than he would have been by a larger, whiter, more physically threatening intruder.

The next day the telephone bell began to ring early. Borp's orders were not to touch the instrument. At length, at about eleven o'clock, Pullman walked quickly over to it, wrenched the receiver out of the place where it was cradled, and said harshly, 'Yes, what is it?'

The voice of Sammael immediately answered him. 'It is Sammael.'

Pullman was electrified by this name, handed him softly, with all kinds of meanings in it. He took hold of himself, stiffened out of a relaxed position.

'Ah, sir, so it was you ringing me? I am afraid I have not been very well.'

'I am sorry to hear that. What has been the matter?'

Pullman made a very great effort to rearrange his mind in order to have this interview.

'This is difficult.'

'Oh.'

'You are involved, sir. You know what is meant by the expression "White Angel"?''

Sammael's voice at once became mocking. 'Yes, Pullman, I know what that means, I know perfectly what has been the nature of your illness.' A burst of unexpected mirth came rattling out of the telephone. 'Pullman! You are funny, very funny, do you know. A message reached you from on High—and you are frightened! You desert your old friend who loves you. You do not answer the telephone. Oh, oh, what a strange character. I thought you were as brave as a lion, but you are just a little man after all! Pullman—Pullman—Pullman!'

But the 'little man' was indignant. 'I wish, sir, that you were able to place yourself, in imagination, in my shoes. The lion is physically a large and redoubtable

animal; it is easy for the lion to be brave; who would not be brave if he were a lion!’

A roar, resembling that of a lion, but coloured with laughter, came back over the telephone.

‘Yes, sir, allow me to say that you have roared your laughter in the face of God for at least five or six thousand years.’

Sammael’s voice dropped into a quiet key. ‘But we should not be bickering, Pullman—that is absurd. To have the eye of Heaven fixed on you is understandably terrifying. By the way, Zoë’s motor-police have picked up, a couple of hours ago, a “White Angel”—on his way to you; we have him locked up. He is heavily chained—do you remember, Pullman, how you advised that precaution? Well, there you are. I cannot, with words, lift the terror from your heart . . . but there is absolutely nothing whatever to be terrified about. I would tell you if there were—and would tell you what steps to take to avoid any evil consequences. But if I send an armed guard down to the Haus Europa, will you, under that protection, come and visit me? Or are you afraid to take that risk. God may be peeping out of the sky, of course.’

‘I may as well take my life in my hands, sir—if this can be called life.’

‘Tut tut, Pullman, do not sneer at it; it is, after all, not so bad, the Haus Europa. I have contrived a life for you, in the midst of death . . . almost within sight of Hell. Come, come, you must not be so fastidious!’

Pullman had heard a sound in Sammael’s voice which brought the sweat to his forehead again. ‘I understand you, sir. I will come at once.’

There was a soft laugh, just reaching him in the telephone.

‘Good. I await you.’

After those covert threats Pullman would never feel

so comfortable with Satan again. Satan's threats were more immediate than God's. All he could hope for was a little respite, moving gingerly, with constant alarms, between the 'White Angel' and the lord of Hell.

(XVIII)

PULLMAN FOUND HIS CHAUFFEUR leaning against the automobile. He sprang to attention; Pullman signed him that he was going to drive himself. He took the quietest and quickest road. As he reached the end of the first block, he only averted a collision with a truck, moving at a great speed, with a presence of mind that he could hardly credit himself with, in reviewing what had happened afterwards. He must for the moment have been someone else. He looked into the face of the chauffeur, and found the blood had left it, and the eyes were almost starting from the head.

‘Congratulate me on my driving,’ he said.

‘How did you do it, sir? That I am alive is a miracle!’

Had that truck been trying to murder him? When they reached the lord Sammael’s house, Pullman dismissed the chauffeur for the day: ‘You look ill. Go home at once, at once.’ He walked firmly up the usual path to the usual door.

Sammael was in his very private study. Pullman was introduced into the room; then found himself almost pressed up against Sammael, whose smiling face was a few inches away from his.

‘It has taken a long time, Pullman, to unearth you. I wondered, at one time, whether we should ever meet again.’

‘I wondered too—I have been scared half out of my life.’

‘I know, Pullman! I realized everything that was happening. But I did not reach you any quicker for that reason. It was very long-winded for your poor friend; hour after hour I was telephoning you! I knew you were there, and would not answer me. I knew *why* you would

not answer me. But what could I do? . . . But let us wrap this up and forget it. It was due to a quite natural incapacity on your part to withstand the terror produced when you received a visit from a White Angel . . . It would be a waste of time to discuss that, or, better, I will refer to it a little later. Let us go now back to where we were before the arrival of the white messenger.'

'Very well, sir.'

From the standpoint of his master, Pullman looked extremely unpromising. He had sat down in the chair in which he usually placed himself, and at once was invaded by the darkest possible thoughts, representing to him vividly the step he was taking in again entering this house, and again proceeding to go into consultation with this greatest of enemy spirits, this embodiment of Evil, this traditional Enemy of God. The hours during which he had sat trembling, in expectation of the arrival of another white messenger from Heaven, made a solid background of demoralization, a condition from which he had not recovered, pressing in upon him from just behind. He understood what he was asked to do; namely, to resume his talks at the point at which he had left off. But he found himself unable to break up or disperse the encasement of hysterical sensations which hemmed him in, and refused to allow his mind to function properly. Therefore, he looked, as he felt, extremely ill. Sammael thought that he would wait a certain time, in the hope that he would recover. If he did not recover, he would give it up, and go to one of the many points in Angel-town where his presence was awaited. He rang a bell. An attendant appeared, and he asked him to bring two martinis as quickly as possible.

'Let us have a cocktail, Pullman, and see if we can cheer up. Meanwhile, you know, of course, that I receive messages from the same great source as yourself. They do not alarm me so much as they do you. But of course I

realize that this mounting fury on High, with all those steps I am taking continually to remould this city, that the *last step* will not be a threatening letter. I am aware that a more concrete manifestation must be expected.'

'I believe, sir, that I foretold some such course of events.'

'Yes, Pullman, but you foretold some *successful* concrete reprisal. There is a great difference between what I am saying, what I am predicting, and what you predicted.'

Pullman was silent. The prediction, such as it was, of Sammael had added fuel to his sensational burden of imagination. Up till then he had thought of nothing concrete which was larger, or more horrifying, than a White Angel. Now something impalpably vaster than that presented itself to his fancy. But he made a grandiose effort.

'If the lord Sammael,' Pullman said, 'would be so kind as to tell me if anything new has occurred, concerning the transformation of Angeltown into a new type of community?'

Sammael's face was very powerfully tensed.

'Pullman, we are making wonderful headway. Your friend Zoë tells me that the number of angels living in Angeltown with women, as man and wife, is approximately twenty thousand.'

'That is surprisingly good, I think,' Pullman asserted. An attendant entered, and Pullman received from him a brimming cocktail glass. He drank half of it at once; he replaced it upon the corner of the desk. The figures of the little elephant communicated to him by Sammael were very satisfying, but they had imprinted themselves upon Pullman's mind with an impact as unemotional as if Sammael had said 'My cook has bought twenty cats, as there is an infestation of mice,' or 'Twenty blackbirds

are to be baked in a pie . . . in the somewhere . . . at some time.'

His dark mood took command. He did not mind if twenty thousand bloody angels took to themselves twenty thousand bloody wives, or did any other bloody thing, that was certainly that. He picked up the cocktail glass and emptied it. It might have been water, for all the kick it had. Sammael seemed to understand perfectly. He rose, went over to Pullman smiling, put his hand on his shoulder, and said, 'Pullman, you are out of sorts. Go home, my dear fellow. You will find you will be better in a week or two. Let us come together then.'

Pullman's idiotic condition was invaded by a warm sensation of affectionate thankfulness. He pressed Sammael's hand, and held it.

'I am unable to express my great gratitude, sir. You are magnificent. If the White Angels pay me visits, I shall tell them that.'

'Do, do, Pullman, say just that. It would have a most salutary effect.'

Sammael burst into a laugh, swelling with good-natured mockery.

Pullman stepped out of the house with even more firmness than he had stepped into it. He nodded broodingly to the police guard, and walked down to his car. As he drove rather recklessly down a side-street, passing numbers of angels, his new manner of thought persisted. Glancing at these large, long, open-mouthed faces he thought, 'Immortal morons—*heilige Toren*—undergraduate minds—rusticated for ever because of their "counter-idolatry".' And he pursued his scurrilous imagery. Before he reached home he saw that he could not go on like that if he was to live satisfactorily with these people. However much he feared God, he must practise fearing them also. Let him thank his stars that the Devil smiled on him. Do not let him unlearn his

terror and horror of the first days in the proximity of Hell.

The weeks passed in, first of all, a continuous emotional see-saw, succeeded by a return to what he termed normality. At length he exhausted himself with his fear; and he began to believe that the White Angel was either an accident, or else only one of the thousands of warnings which were discharged indiscriminately from Heaven every day. He never saw anything remotely resembling a White Angel. He did not know that the Bailiff had motor-car mounted police circling the Haus Europa, morning and night. This was not a result of instructions from Sammael; but Sammael had spoken to him about the threatened decay of the spirit of Pullman, and the little elephant thought of the latter as an ally and valuable friend. He did not at all want to see Pullman disappear. For his own purposes he placed the guard around his house—to make quite sure that no White Angels reached it: he had a half-dozen in his pen, all of them with pressure-letters directed to Pullman.

Finally, however, the heavenly messengers found a very simple way of outwitting the police who circled the Haus Europa. One of them landed, after a direct flight, upon the roof. Returning to the Haus Europa after several hours spent at the Sports Centre, Pullman opened the door of his flat and discovered a tall white figure engaged in fixing something upon his wall. It was one of the dreaded angels. As he entered the room the heavenly messenger stepped back from the wall, and began gliding towards the windows. The creature did not move very quickly; indeed it was with a strange somnambulatory lassitude that this White Angel propelled himself towards a likely exit. Pullman's energy was as great as the angel's was small; so small, indeed, as to appear to suffer from a debility which invaded all his muscles and caused him to drag himself along. Now the more galvanic of these

two rushed to the window, reaching it before the intruder, locking it and removing the key. Charged as he was with will, Pullman shrank from the pallid, inhuman being, whose face glared empty and was as incapable of fear as of anything else.

That creature of a mysterious flesh showed no signs of alarm. This was not a frightened bird, attempting to escape from a room into which it had blundered, but the bearer of a terrible message, who did not wish for any contact with this evil man.

This in no way nonplussed visitor, beginning to glide as heavily as before, turned doorwards. Pullman with a typical aptitude for action shot ahead of the bemused agent of Heaven. He stood squarely back to the door.

‘Pullman, I am your prisoner?’ demanded the White Angel, in a startling voice, perfectly corresponding with the personality out of which it came. It asked awkwardly what the tall white mechanical creature wanted to know, without any emotion. But the elongated colourless mask, with the glaring eyes, expressed as much emotion as the voice sounded totally drained of it.

‘I hope I do not embarrass you,’ replied Pullman. ‘As you entered my flat during my absence, naturally I would like to exchange a few words with you. Who are you?’

‘You know where I come from, Pullman,’ was the angel’s answer.

Pullman shuddered, and gazed back into the terrible face, as if he were facing an executioner. ‘Who then do these messages come from?’ he demanded. ‘Not from God Himself?’

‘He for whom I act interprets the mighty thoughts of Another, about whom you speak.’

The angel pointed to the message he had pinned to the wall. It read:

‘On earth, gifted with cleverness, you were full of

wickedness. You died, Pullman, as you had lived, without seeking the mediation of a priest. You believe that you can reproduce upon the plane of eternal life your life on Earth. But you will meet with your fate before the sun sets—prepare to be expelled from the so-called Haus Europa, and to find yourself in eternal damnation.’

Pullman flung himself down on the floor, tears bursting from his eyes, his hands clasped in an attitude of supplication.

It was, of course, Pullman’s intention that the angel, when he got back to Heaven, would report how very distressed was the sinner that he had visited. But when Pullman made an end of his prostration and rose to his feet, the angel was no longer there. He had slipped away at the first opportunity. He took no interest in the private theatricals of this very wicked man, and all he said, on returning to Heaven, was that the beastly sinner had chased him round the room, and seemed disposed to lock him up.

Pullman read through, a second time, the threatening missive, sank down upon a chair, and gave himself up to tears once more. These deadly words affected him more than any earlier heavenly proceedings against him. The sinister face of the winged immortal doubled the effect of the written threat.

He did not want his man to read it, so Pullman tore down the paper pinned up by the angel, and thrust it into his pocket. He began turning over in his mind what the angel had said. The message had been composed by some inferior, or at least not by God. This, oddly enough, supplied him with the wherewithal for hope. How his mind worked was to attribute great importance to the statement *It was not God*. The writing on the wall had not the signature of *God*. It was not a first-class document. Would God have okayed it? He must get an appeal through to God in person. Sammael must not be informed

of this, not only because he was a smart alec but because he would in any case be the last person to help him get in touch with God. It would be through a White Angel, most probably, that he could obtain the necessary information, the low-down. Not the kind of angel the last one was. They were most likely as various as any other species.

Pullman had a great deal of confidence in personal contact; if God only *knew* him, all would be well. He would not think like a bureaucrat (and Heaven no doubt was full of little bureaucrats). Pullman's experience of intercourse with the Devil had helped him to imagine an interview with God—the Devil's historic antagonist.

Pullman had developed an unshakable confidence that he would, by some means, establish a direct personal liaison with God. The belief took possession of him so firmly that, whatever message might reach him, he would no longer tremble at these threats. He would say to himself 'that is only a subordinate, a heavenly bureaucrat, sending me these bloodcurdling missives'. Soon he would be in touch with the great Lord of All Things.

Intelligence of these events as far as they were known to him, Pullman did not share with anybody. Schlank and he began their evening meals again. They sang their German songs. 'O Strassburg, O Strassburg, du wunderschöne Stadt', or 'Wir sind die Könige der Welt', found again the rugged vocalists which their composers had had in mind. 'O Strassburg' was a great favourite with

Pullman, who heartily enjoyed the soldatesque words:

Darinnen liegt begraben so mannicher Soldat.
So mancher, so schöner, so braver Soldat,
der Vater und lieb Mutter so bold verlassen hat.

In his student days in Köln, Strassburg had always attracted him, more than any other neighbouring city, because of its physical beauty. A favourite of both of them was 'Wir sind die Könige der Welt'—a lovely drinking song, the sentiments ringing out as gladly up and down the English vocal chords as they did throughout the German. Schlank made an incredible amount of noise during these performances. Satters heard them from his bed, however distantly, and frowned in slumbrous reproach.

Satters' life, moving upon the primitive plane, encountered one figure playing an outstanding rôle. It so happened that one of the gardeners had a son of about Satters' age. They got to know each other with the usual rapidity of their time of life. Satters obtained the game of Sizzle-Wizzle (unknown to Pullman), and they played together an unbelievable amount of Sizzle-Wizzle. This game was a discovery for Bric'dor. When he was free he helped Satters in the park. On two occasions also they had a fight. Satters knocked him down, and afterwards sat on him both times. He was very well pleased with him, because he did not resent defeat; he neither kicked, nor used a knife. Often in the evenings this boy would come up to the flat, and they would play some game, or construct something, such as a full-rigged ship, a cigarette holder, or one of the instruments of torture used at Dis. Satters, further, out of a large piece of paper, made a Union Jack. When he was told that Matapolis had no flag he was very scornful, which was the cause of the first fight. The second fight was caused by Bric'dor

showing Satters how to work the instrument of torture. So he got along all right in spite of Pullman's neglect, and was carving out a quite independent life of his own, where it was possible to give expression to his feelings without constant interference.

(XIX)

IT WAS ABOUT FOUR MONTHS after the Fiesta, and Satters was so proud of the Japanese peony (more or less) which he was growing, that Pullman agreed, after breakfast, to go with him into the park to admire it. Satters had placed it in a miniature glass-house at the farther side of the park. It was just over half a mile across, where everything was still upside down—hardly a park yet. At the highest point of this unfinished strip Satters had established his large glass-covered box, in which the peony grew.

‘Why not bring this box up and grow your peony upon our verandah?’ Pullman asked him. ‘There is plenty of sun there.’

Satters grunted. He only wanted to hear about the peony—how beautiful it was, how clever was Satters to be responsible for so much beauty. Wonderful Satters. Pullman went down on one knee, and stared through the glass at the peony. It seemed to him miraculously beautiful. It came from the Far-East of the Earth. There physical beauty was understood. The European believed he had evolved spiritual beauty of a high order—but did the spiritual product ever come up to this physical perfection?

A heavy hum in the air attracted Pullman’s attention, it was a very unusual vibration. He looked up and saw the entire sky blotted out by a solid mass of angels—individually quite small, they were some distance away. There was something resembling the transparent about this filmy host, in the main very light, with pale blue, and crimson, and dark elongated smudges, also transparent. They were so densely packed that there must have been millions of them. There, towards the top, was a

small rather whiter figure: it was the core of the composition, for it was extraordinarily *composed*, this aerial army, reminiscent of the Paradiso of Tintoretto; or better still, of a pastiche of Tintoretto painted by El Greco.

It was then he realized that this was not a parade of angels from the manufacturing town and so on, there were far too many. These were literally millions of glittering points, the swords and armaments of the soldiers of Heaven. *That was God he was looking at, it must actually be He, so intensely bright, and more. Oh it must be He.* As this realization came to him, and it came with the force of a very high wind, without moving from his position he shook intensely from head to foot. The core of him, the inner being, which normally extended for the full length, shrank and shrivelled. It was as if a small animal was rushing up and down inside him, looking for a place to conceal itself.

Automatically he lowered the other knee, as if he were kneeling in prayer; and he actually began to pray, not looking any longer, however, at the small white figure which he recognized so far away as the mysterious personality into whose incredible ears his prayers somehow found their way.

And then he heard a deep cry, appearing to be almost overhead. As he turned his head a little, he saw the lord Sammael, as he had often seen him before, in his giantly prolongation, still recognizable in all his dazzling handsomeness, a mile and a quarter above the earth. His head was turned over his shoulder, wide-jawed, summoning the angelic citizens. His tremendous sword was visible, the steel flashing like lightning, as he shifted it about. The deep voice roared continually. Pullman looked back at the picture in the sky. It was a little nearer he thought, a little nearer to that familiar giant shouting over Angeltown, frantic no doubt at what he saw. A multitude of

thoughts burst like a bomb in Pullman's mind, like the proverbial simultaneous picture of his life which crashes in the mind of a drowning man. His public school, summoned by his fag Satters, collided with the palace of the Bailiff in Third City, his writer's fame seemed to be locked up in Mark's hostel, there was a piercing experience of his youth tangled up with the angel giants by whom he was surrounded. Surrounded he was, for he caught sight of thousands of them; the dark angels were gathering with their flashing swords and their enormous power. A tremor had been induced in the earth by the immense thronging of celestial bodies in the impending atmosphere. But Pullman became aware, suddenly, of a thudding. Satters had turned to gaze above his head, and Pullman followed suit. A look of horror came into his face, for the cause of the thudding was immediately apparent. Giant angel figures were rushing along in their direction. Their enormous swords were dazzling flashes a half mile up in the stark air. It was the muster of Sammael's angels, and one of them was almost overhead. Pullman and Satters instinctively sprang apart; and at that very moment an enormous sandalled foot, the size of a German farm-cart, crashed down between them. The glass case and the peony vanished beneath this awful tread, and when the angel's foot rose and swept onward there was nothing left but a crushed handful of glass and a meaningless mash of vegetation.

Satters was at a certain distance, his head was whirling about, as he stared at the sky. All the bright colours had excited him like a basket of flowers—it was funny, but he took it, like everything else in a funny existence, as quite natural, as he had the cataclysmic foot which stamped out peonies. Now rushing giants were everywhere. He flung himself recklessly into a pit where the earth had been dug up; it was dry and crumbly earth,



and, his two hands scratching wildly, he hollowed out for himself a hole to hide in.

Pullman, too, saw the imminence of other of these converging titans. He wildly attempted to reach the Haus Europa, in a leaping stride. The great foot had hurled him down, and when he rose he was dazed but full of terror. As he leapt he prayed. In an unmanageable frenzy of fear he flew along. Before he reached the house a giant passed him, not more than fifteen yards behind, and his heart hammered as the wind of this passage smote him. More frightened than he had ever been in his life, uncertain as to whether the monster had passed him before or behind, the sweat flooding his back, he reached the house. Watched by the astonished Borp he flung himself into the room and sank into a chair panting and coughing noisily. The servant softly closed the door. His master's exhaustion was so great that Borp for some time stood muzzled before him. At last he unburdened himself. 'I have a message from a secretary of the lord Sammael. As soon as he has driven off the enemy hordes . . .' but he got no further.

'Shut up, Borp,' his master shouted. 'I refuse to listen to that nonsense. I want to receive no more of those messages from the Overlord of Hell. The Lord of Hosts, the God of Gods, has arrived. It is for your salvation that you must beseech Him.' Thereupon Pullman prostrated himself, and began praying, his face to the ground. Borp withdrew.

Pullman rose, and found himself alone. But through the window he saw a bright cloud, like the advance across the sky of an insect mass. It was the Heavenly Army surrounding the position of Angeltown and the house which was now his residence. He shivered, he knelt down beside a massive chair, and began a prayer to God, tears in his eyes.

The light blazed outside. An ocean of light seemed to

have settled down around the lair of the lord Sammael—who, Pullman thought, would use that telephone no more. But prophecies affecting the lord Sammael applied also to him. And now he drew himself up upon the arm-chair and began thinking about his partisanship, regarding the Human Age in contrast to the Divine Age. At that moment he knew that he should never have assisted at the humanization of the Divine—because he was now in the divine element.

While he was developing a plan of conduct for a mind turning towards the Divine, the flat door burst open and two huge White Angels rushed into the room. He had only time to note that they were quite different from the White Angels who so far had paid him visits, that they were very tall, at least six inches above six foot, from their helmets downwards reminiscent of Roman soldiery, clanking as they walked with a profusion of armament. Their faces had the dazzling pallor of all those belonging to the Heavenly service; both had large grey eyes, the expression of which was not unfriendly, though they had the knitted intensity that came down in a line between the brows. But this was a momentary appraisal. For the first thing he knew was that these two figures had sprung at him, and lifted him bodily out of the chair. There was a harsh whisper in his ear. 'No harm will come to you.' Pullman had in his nostrils a smell of leather and of polished brass. He fell into a kind of unconsciousness. With a great sound of martial clanking, and with the thudding of their feet, he was borne quickly out of the room. He thought of nothing except God, a thought both felicitous and partaking of the muscular nature of this forced transport. As he passed through the door he could hear the telephone ringing, and Borp's voice as he answered it. He imagined his servant saying, 'Mr Pullman is being carried away by two of God's soldiers.'

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