

DENIS SAURAT

Death and the Dreamer

WITH



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DEATH AND THE DREAMER

1

Peasant Fears

2

The Heart's Nightmares

3

The Life-time of Christ

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High Dreams

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The Bomb

A Preliminary Note

Every detail in this book is true; some slight modifications only have been found necessary in order to avoid embarrassment to persons now living; but only in Part III; and only circumstances of no importance philosophically have been altered. Dreams, transmissions of thought, predictions and similar phenomena have been reported exactly as they occurred; only personal details have been sometimes changed. The dates given are in every case correct. This series of tales is thus in fact a narrative of the inner development of one man. After *Part I : Peasant Fears*, in which the problems are set, in *Part II : The Heart's Nightmares*, it is seen that it is through fear that souls communicate.

Part III, The Life-time of Christ, shows the deliverance from fear; and therefore from time and space.

Time past and Time future revolve round Christ, and in *Part IV, High Dreams*, the man conquers both. Yet all this is but a preparation to that moment on Earth when, in physical calamity, and in the maximum of pain (The Bomb *Part V*) fear is truly overcome, though only for a moment.

It is difficult to conceive of the strange arrangement of things in time. A bomb that fell in London in 1944 has backward repercussions in the vision of a gigantic insect in 1942, in the death of a peasant in 1936, in the dreams of a child in 1900, in a tale from Plutarch in the ancient world. All leads to the seismic shock of 1939-1945, and also to the shocks still to come, implicit in the past.

But we understand only after the event, in spite of the innumerable pointers of destiny; for the whole world holds together from the inside, but we place ourselves outside to look at it.

PART 1: PEASANT FEARS

Characters

THE FATHER, born in 1865, at 1'Ayrolle, a hamlet of ten houses in the eastern part of the Pyrenees (Ariege). Came to T—, a small town of 3,000 inhabitants, amongst the hills of the Ardennes, in 1896, owing to his wife inheriting a small property there. Died at T— in 1936.

THE MOTHER, born at 1'Ayrolle in 1868, came to T— in 1896.

THE AUNT (from whom the property came): aunt of the Mother, died in 1896.

THE DAUGHTER, born at T— in 1897, died during the German occupation in 1915.

THE SON, born at Toulouse in 1890, himself has a son and daughters.

The Scene

AT T—, in 1936, during the week following the death of the Father.

Throughout the colloquy between the mother and the son, the question in debate is whether the father still exists, and what sort of existence may still be his; the question for the son is how we come by our ideas of death.

The Closing of the Eyes

THE MOTHER : All country folk know, if the dying close their eyes themselves, and you don't have to do it for them, it means they are at peace.

When they keep their eyes open, that means they're not happy, and they'll come and fetch someone to keep them company.

That's why it's best to close their eyes as soon as they die, before they know it. Then they do not come back.

But I—I wanted him to come back for me—I wanted to go with him: and now he has closed his eyes himself. He loved me too much; he never wanted me hurt: forbade me even to go out into the yard when it was cold.

Oh, come back and fetch me. I'll be so good to you, better than ever I was.

You never left me before; don't, don't leave me now here alone. We have been together all the way, how can I go on now; however shall I be able to die without you: there's that last bit to travel, how can I face it alone. You have been with me always, you ought to have waited for me; oh, come back and take me with you!

But no, I know he won't come: he loved me too much on earth.

Cats

(The Father is laid out on the bed ready for the coffin and the last vigil.)

THE MOTHER: We must be careful to keep the windows well shut. If we don't the cats will come in. That's why I never could endure cats.

If you're not careful, when the dead are alone, the cats come and eat their faces: it's just fresh meat to them.

They caught the cat at it in Toulouse, and they killed her and put her in the coffin with the body.

Touching the Dead

THE MOTHER (to the Son): You must let your daughter see him dead: else he might come and look for her. The mountain folk, they bring the children and make them touch the dead body, so that he shan't come and look for them. But there— that's their stupidity. You mustn't touch the dead, because where you do, the flesh turns black.

It's enough if the children see them, to show that they love them, that they're not afraid of them; and then the dead are satisfied. The dead don't like you to be afraid of them.

But of course she must go to the cemetery, or he might come back for her.

Quarrels

THE MOTHER (to the Son): The children used to think we were quarrelling about this, that, or the other. Little they knew!

While the mouth speaks this or that, it is the heart that rages. It is the heart that kills you.

We were both unhappy, because our daughter was dead and you had gone.

Then each would accuse the other of anything, to make the other suffer. When one suffers, one always wants to make the other suffer, and the more miserable one is, the more one wants him to suffer too.

And, you know, the wicked things you say, they hurt you more than they hurt the other.

Poor man, how miserable I made him with my wicked tongue! I deserved it cut out, my wicked tongue.

And he too, sulky and revengeful, he would say anything he could think of in revenge at me. Poor man, he would call me puto, and well he knew that it wasn't true, and it hurt him more than me. It rather amused me to hear him say that, but it made him unhappy—because he knew it was not true—he was trying to make me angry.

And then I'd say to him, 'Now you're sulking,' and he'd stop sulking. And I'd say 'You hot-head,' but I was the hot-head really.

Insults

THE MOTHER: You know so-and-so, she too has lost her husband, and also from a stroke. Nearly dead, he was, and they made him swallow some medicine, and he rallied and cried out: 'You filth, oh you bitch, you've poisoned me!'

She: Oh, you still speak! And I thought you were dead: oh swear at me as much as you will, I'm so happy; insult me as much as you like.

A Swine of a Heart

THE MOTHER : A swine of a heart I've got, to hold out still, and I was hoping it would break: and it is his that broke.

Cicero

THE MOTHER: Oh, I have sung him the four catarinas, time and time again!

THE SON : Why, what is that, the four catarinas ?

THE MOTHER: That's what they say in the countryside when one has been swearing at someone. That one sang him the four catarinas.

THE SON (to himself): The four Catiline orations of Cicero. Even now, after nearly two thousand years, they are still proverbial among the Pyrenees. And one sings them, too; the intonation of the Latin still haunts the ear of the peasants of Gaul.

Politeness

THE MOTHER: You know, so-and-so, before he croaked— Or rather, passed away—since he never did me any harm, I shouldn't say croaked—one ought to be polite to those who've never done one any harm. ...

THE MOTHER (to the Grandson): Take this money and go and get some bread; it's gone up a penny. Everything's going up, nothing goes down. It's only your poor grandfather who's going down.

Thieves and Murderers

THE MOTHER : So-and-so—I don't think he's thief enough to be called a thief; he might take a chicken or an apple, but he wouldn't steal a cow or a tree.

Another: You know, he's a thief and has killed a man; but he's good at heart; he's never really wronged anyone; you know, there's a difference.

Calamities

THE MOTHER: I am the one for calamities; nothing else is worth taking notice of. Whenever things went successfully— well—there it was, I thought no more about it.

Happiness is nothing, really.

Esquicha la vido—Wear and tear. Wear it away, tear it away. That is all there is to life.

The Father's Illness

THE MOTHER: How dirty things had got in that little front room, and how we longed to be in clean things!

Of course, we had kept all the best linen to die in.

At least we wanted those who laid us out to find us clean.

I said to him: 'Will you have the strength to go as far as the end of the passage?'

'Aye, you'll help me a bit and I'll lean against the wall.'

And so we went along together, though I was as ill as he was, without a light, in the pitch dark, right along the passage: for I wanted to put him in the big room at the back, nice and clean. Poor thing, he fell down, and I put myself forward and he fell on me, and we lay there minutes without moving, dead-like, in the dark.

Presently I got my courage back.

'Are you dead?'

'No,' he said.

Then I took heart again. If he hadn't answered, I'd have lain there and died of sheer wretchedness, there under him: but to hear him say No gave me courage a little, and I stirred myself and drew my body from under him very gently so as not to hurt him.

After that, I got him on his feet more or less, and we went on, and he fell three or four times more. What a relief it was when I got him settled in the good bed, in the big back room, and when I'd lit the stove and settled myself in the good arm-chair. And then, in the morning, towards three o'clock, he had the stroke.

Jealousy

THE MOTHER: That anyone else should have put anything to his mouth, I could never have borne it.

Nor that anyone should touch him.

The doctor, of course, I had to let him, but the others, no, I couldn't have borne it.

Doctors don't count.

In my Aunt's Days

THE MOTHER : In the days when my aunt was alive, I used to go into Belgium to buy the bread because it was a halfpenny cheaper in Belgium. It took two hours to go and two hours to come back. And my aunt made me walk it barefoot, for otherwise it would have used up more than a halfpennyworth of shoe-leather, so she said.

(To the Son): She used to tell me that with one walnut you had enough nourishment for four days.

A quarter of a walnut a day, she would say, is plenty to nourish a child of your age.

She was a clever woman, my aunt: she had been a midwife: she didn't know how to read or write, but her husband was a ranger and had taught her a little.

But she was very clever: they had given her medals for vaccination, she had vaccinated so many people in these parts. But I, I was afraid that with only a quarter of a walnut a day your bowels might grow too small, and so I fed you well; and I gave you a penny a day to go and buy yourself a brioche. And the baker, he came to me and said, 'Do you know, Madam, that your little boy is stealing money from you? Every day he comes to me to buy a brioche.' The fool, he had never heard of a thing like that. As if I would have let myself be robbed of money. Still, it was honest of him to come and tell me.

The War in Spain

MY AUNT, she had married a ranger, on the Spanish frontier; that was a good situation he had.

But one day, when there was a war in Spain, as there is to-day, her man, who was armed, arrested ten Spaniards, and they were, armed and they were trying to pass over into Spain to go and fight the other Spaniards.

But these men, they hadn't dared to kill him, because he was French. So he had arrested them and led them to the guard-house, and all of them were put in prison.

Then his chiefs, in the Government, thought it over, and they saw that if they left this ranger there, one day they would find him dead with a knife in his stomach because Spaniards always remember and always get their man, and they know how to use their knives.

So these Government people, they thought where could they send him away from Spain as far as possible. And they found him a job as ranger on the frontier of Belgium, where there aren't any Spaniards.

That is how we came to be here; because when the aunt was a widow, and alone, she sent for me to take care of her. And the King of Spain, he gave him a medal for it; it's still up in the loft, in a box, with a paper about it that he had framed. You can find it there, if you like.

The Pyrenees in the Nineteenth Century

THE MOTHER (to the Son): You know, when I was little, no one up in the mountains had ever seen white bread, nor wine. The first man who ever had a barrel of wine brought up was the postman, who lived on the road half-way up to the village, and had a bicycle. But much use it was to him, his bicycle, for coming up the mountain!

Every woman there baked the bread herself: and good black bread it was, very nourishing, very hard, and it kept a long time.

They took the wool of the sheep to Serres, when they had spun it at home; there was a factory there, where they made cloth. You gave them so much of the wool and out of the rest they made you a piece of cloth: and then the women made trousers and coats for the men, and skirts and bodices for themselves: the men knew how to make wooden clogs, and we lived that way. What did we have to eat?

Chiefly potatoes, cabbage and beans: and we would kill a pig or a goose, and that lasted a long time. The salted fat made good soup—and the flesh we cured; we made good soup of it all mixed together, potatoes, cabbage and pork. Carrots, chervil, leeks—we knew nothing of those; those are not mountain plants.

But we had plenty of fruit in season, apples and nuts which do you good and can be kept.

And then, of course, we had cows; all the milk you wanted; and they made good fresh cheese, as much as you would wish for; and how the children loved it!

We used to go to the market at Foix, that was half a day's walk: there we sold eggs, chickens and milk, sometimes a pig or a cow that we had to spare: then we came back again at night.

Sometimes we brought back a lot of money. We hid it in the houses; five-franc pieces and pieces of gold. Everybody had money.

But no one ever spent it. They kept it for later on, in case anything should happen.

If you wanted to buy land, for instance. Sometimes one wanted some land of a neighbour's.

But there was no need to buy land. The mountain belonged to us. Whoever wanted to make himself a field, he would choose a good place, cut down the trees, pull up the roots, and then he would work the land: or he would sow grass seed and make a meadow.

A young man who had nothing, because his parents were poor or he had too many brothers—he would go and make himself a field and would get married, and then they would fetch the mason to direct them, and everyone would help to build the house.

So there was land for everybody, and we used to say to idlers: '*Agez pos poou que terra te manquo !*' ('Don't be afraid; you'll not run short of land!')

Calamities

THE MOTHER: My mother-in-law—no woman ever had a mother-in-law like mine.

She made me cover my face with a cloth when I was giving the breast to the baby, so that it shouldn't get to know me: and I wasn't allowed to speak while I was near it.

You see, I had to go and work with the men. The child would have cried when I was away if it had loved me, so it mustn't be allowed to love me or even to know me.

And then they let it catch cold, and it died when it was seven months old.

Snakes - and a Camel

THE MOTHER: When I was young they sent me to Ax-les-Thermes, and there the roads were black with snakes: but you were taught not to be afraid of them: you took care to tread on their heads, and then they coiled round your ankle and died. But you had to make no mistake. If you trod on their tails, then they bit you.

Still, that wasn't very dangerous. There were doctors all over the town, and they had little knives ready in their pockets; and they would cut out that bit of flesh, and you didn't die. My father, when he was young, was a miner in Spain, over towards Barcelona. Once he saw, he told us, a snake as thick as a tree and as long as a house. On the road! And then an animal came along, a huge thing with a big hump, you know, what they call a camel. A man was leading it with a rope. And when the camel saw the snake, it jumped on it with all four feet. A camel is bigger than a horse, and heavier, because of the hump. And it just trampled the snake to death, on the spot. The men were helpless; they simply did not know what to do about it.

The Law

THE MOTHER: Once, I had come back from Toulouse with five hundred francs that we had saved, he and I, penny by penny; and in the middle of the night I heard my mother outside my window, crying fit to break her heart.

'What's the matter, Mother?'

'Ah, my poor girl, that I should have to die. I've a law-suit with the family of that swine, your father, who married me when I was fifteen and he was penniless—and now they've gone to law with me and I've got to pay five hundred francs. I shall have to sell land to find them, those five hundred francs. And I don't want to sell the land.

'I'd rather kill myself; I'm going to throw myself in the river. I haven't five hundred francs and I don't want to sell the land. I'll throw myself into the river.'

Then I cried too: to kill oneself for five hundred francs. I didn't want it to be said that my mother killed herself for five hundred francs, and I having the money all the time.

So I gave her the five hundred francs that we had scraped together halfpenny by halfpenny, my man and I.

And he, poor man, never said a word to me about it. He loved me too much.

Incompatibles

THE SON (to *himself*): Many a time, there is no possible compromise.

To the father and mother, it seems that the children have abandoned them. To the children, that is normal and necessary. It is even the result of the father's and the mother's love for the children.

What the mother calls 'your father's glory'—his ambition. No common point of view between the generations. Nor between France and Germany, or between France and England. The rational position imagined by intellectuals does not exist. Even the theory of it cannot be definitely thought out. In practice, force decides—or cunning. The intellectual is thinking in a vacuum; his rational idea corresponds to no reality. Reality is less rational than intelligence. Problems exist that are without solutions, a situation which the intellectual cannot understand. Thus, these two people could not come to an understanding with their children: no ground existed for such an understanding.

They could not agree between themselves, because of the father's 'glory,' which made him continually do things that the mother could not approve—such as sending the son or daughter far away from them, to school. The mother gave in, because it is the man who takes decisions on behalf of the world without and of necessity: but in her heart she did not yield, she blamed the father for all their misfortunes, which would not have happened if the children had been kept at home.

Incompatibles – the Cure

THE CURE: The Good God was obliged to issue a commandment that children should love their parents. It is not natural for children to love their parents. But the Good God pronounced no commandment that parents should love their children; no commandment was needed. It is natural; it is an instinct. That is why parents and children can never agree.

The Dead

THE MOTHER: A man went out one night to relieve himself. His wife had been dead three days. In our villages, you know, there are no closets, you go outside, and at night you are afraid. You take a child with you, or a dog, or even the donkey, any living thing that keeps you company.

Because, at bottom, it's the dead you are afraid of in the dark. So that anything living, even a donkey, is a protection. But this man wasn't afraid; and he loved his wife very much. So he was weeping, all crumpled up in the dark. And weeping, he prayed, saying softly to the dead woman: 'Come, oh come back to me.'

And all at once he heard a great shout a long way off: it was the voice of his dead wife, and she shouted: 'Arribi!' That's our word for 'I'm coming.'

He stopped, he listened, and he heard it again, nearer: 'Arribi!'

All at once he was seized with a mad fear; he pulled up his trousers and began to run towards the house; behind him someone was running faster and faster, and he got to the door just in time, shut the door, drew the bolt and collapsed as if dead, just inside the door.

He came to himself the next morning, and there was the mark of a hand on the door, as if it had been branded on with fire.

All the village saw it.

The Dead: Terror, Disgust, Hope

THE SON (to himself): The greatest bother to easily frightened peasants, and especially to their women folk, is the fact that their peasant modesty compels them to relieve themselves out of doors at night; and the fear of the dark is the fear of the dead. Whence arise strange associations: those whose love is stronger than their fear go and seek the dead at the usual places at midnight. Just there they feel is the best chance of seeing them again.

And their love is often stronger than their fear. Malinowski tells how the Trobrianders of the Pacific dig up the dead father after several weeks, open the decomposing leg and suck the marrow of the tibia, to their own great disgust and sometimes to their hurt.

In the great terror lies the great hope.

THE MOTHER: Your sister—how many times have I not run in the middle of the night to the bottom of the garden. I, who never dared to go there alone. It seemed to me that I should just catch her there, that I might see her again.

But always it seemed to me that she had just gone, that next time I should catch her.

Or I would run at midnight to the cemetery to see if she came there. There was a German post on the way there, and the Germans, they thought I was mad.

Then a German soldier would come with me with his gun and his bayonet fixed, and we both looked through the cemetery railings, and I would call to her. But she never came.

The Three Days of the Illness

THE MOTHER: We had made such plans for being happy in our old age.

But the Good God, He made another plan, and He was quicker than we were. It lasted three days, His plan.

Calamities: The War

MOTHER: They were looking for gold. The German adjutant, he put a revolver to my forehead. I made a grab at that revolver and sent it right along the flag-stones of the path into the middle of the garden.

'Madam, you're mad,' he said to me.

'Yes, I am; but if I wasn't, you'd make me go mad.'

But I knew his revolver wasn't loaded: it was forbidden them to have bullets in their revolvers when searching houses.

Not that I cared, anyway. My daughter was dead; I wanted him to kill me.

The War: The German Corporal

The mother tells the story

The Corporal : You'll do as I tell you.

I : No, I will not.

He : I shall make you.

/ : Then it's a fight, and when two fight, you never know which will be killed.

He : But you've no weapons.

/ : You've stolen my revolver, thieves that you are, but you've left the best weapon of all—and here it is. (I pulled out the axe from behind the door and held it under his nose.)

And your pistol, it isn't loaded, I know that you're not allowed to have it loaded. Off with you. You've got a good-looking head, but I'll make it into two heads if you don't go. Get out! And he got out. So they had me up for a court martial; and then I said to the commandant:

Aren't you ashamed to come here and make war on old women. Go to the front; there you'll find your equals who'll know how to deal with you.

He : Madame, you must submit. The country is conquered.

/ : No, sir, it isn't conquered; it is invaded but not conquered. You found no one here to defend it. But they are defending it down there, at the front. When you have beaten them the country will be conquered, but not before. Then why are you here ? Go and fight with the armed men, and leave us alone. We are miserable enough already.

And they gave me eight days in prison.

The Court Martial

THE MOTHER: And I told them:

'Your corporal, I know that sort. In our country too there are blackguards who sleep under the bridges in Paris. 'You have rounded up all the blackguards of Germany and brought them here to rob and bully. The honest men of Germany wouldn't take on that kind of job.

'The honest ones of the Germans are at the front, they're fighting honestly against their equals; they don't make war on old women.

'And your corporal, if he comes to my house again, or I find him in my way, I'll make him into two, your good-looking blackguard; there'll be two good-looking blackguards for you then.

'You can kill me if you like, that'll do me a great service, for I'm too unhappy to live and I cannot kill myself; I've tried to, but I can't; my daughter is dead.' And I began to rave like a mad woman.

But they only gave me eight days in prison: and when I came out, the corporal had gone.

The Hidden Revolver

THE MOTHER: You know, the Germans, they were not bad. They used to look at you with their round, intelligent eyes, and it wasn't wise to try and fool them. The soldiers were just like us—they used to help us against the swine at the Kommandantur, whom they looked upon as just slackers with soft jobs.

When I had one of them in the house, a soldier from the front, he helped me against the police. They hated the military police as much as we did.

He had his mess-tin full of black coffee on the table: and he said to me:—'Madame, a search again. If you've anything to hide, give it me!' Once he put ten gold pieces in the coffee in his mess-tin; the police were looking everywhere for gold.

But that was forbidden them, to touch anything that belonged to a soldier. The soldier, he said to me:—'Do not worry, Madame, if he touches my mess-tin, that swine from the Kommandantur, I'll knock him down: and, you know, all my comrades will back me; don't you worry.'

The German soldiers billeted on us, they stood by us.

And when they found your father's revolver, by good luck there weren't any cartridges in it, but they took your father away. Fortunately, we had a soldier billeted on us then, and when your father had gone with the police, the soldier said to me:—

'Madame, trust me, and we'll get him out of this; but they are coming again. Now, you've got some cartridges. If they find the cartridges he will be shot, or sent to a concentration camp at least. Trust me, madame; show me the cartridges. I'll save him for you.'

I looked at him, and saw that he was honest, so I showed him where the cartridges were, in a hole under a heap of wood in the old tool-shed. He took them and pulled out the lead with a pair of pliers and

threw the powder into the well, and the lead—there was a fire in the stove, so he threw the bullets in and piled on wood till they were melted, and you couldn't see what they had been. Then he put the copper cases in his pocket, and at night went out and threw them in the pond. The police found nothing. Ten times they looked into that hole where the cartridges had been.

The War: Rape

THE MOTHER: And once, there was a German soldier who had raped a girl on the Belgian frontier; and all the other soldiers set upon him. They shut him up in a room in the estaminet, all privates; there wasn't even a corporal; and stretched him naked on the table, and all the soldiers filed past him with their belts off, and each one gave him three blows with the belt as hard as ever they could. After that, the girls were left alone.

The War: The Young Lieutenant

THE SON (to the Mother): I knew a young Breton lieutenant, who might be about nineteen, in command of his section, and they had taken some prisoners—a hundred or so. Presently the Germans came back, and were about to take the lot. Then the boy sent two of his men towards the rear with ten of the German prisoners to try to save them, but he couldn't spare more than two men.

As soon as they were gone, he said to his soldiers, 'Kill all the Germans; all of us here are going to be killed.' So they killed all the other Germans excepting only the ten who had gone away with the two Frenchmen. And the Germans attacked.

Soon the Germans had either killed or taken all of them, even the two Frenchmen and their ten prisoners, and that was how the whole thing came out. If he had not tried to save those ten, he wouldn't have been found out. And by then, his own leg had been carried off by a shell exploding. The German officer said to him: After what you've done, you don't expect us to nurse you, do you? So he had him put into a shell-hole, to let him bleed to death. Then those Germans continued their advance, and some others came by who knew nothing of what had happened. They found the French officer not yet dead in his shell-hole, and dressed his wound and had him taken away. But the report of the first German officer followed him up, and they court-martialled him, that little Breton lieutenant with one leg missing—they had tended him well, without favour though, like a soldier, not like an officer. And the court martial gave judgment in his favour: it was no fault for a soldier to do what he had done: he had even saved ten. Later on, they exchanged him through Switzerland.

Reincarnation

THE MOTHER: In the countryside they have a saying: — Efan perdut al cap de 1'an efan rebengut.

A child that dies returns at the end of a year. That's why you were called after your brother who died the year before

Dreams and Reincarnations

THE MOTHER (to the Son): When your daughter came into the world, I knew it. I dreamt a dream, at the very same time, and woke with a loud cry that woke up your father, and we looked at the clock: you could ask him about it, only he's dead. And then you wrote and you told us the time, and it was the same.

It was my own daughter, your sister who died, who came in my dream and said to me:—

'Mother, you don't want any more children, and I want to come back into the world because I have been unhappy, and now I want to be happy.

'Mother, if you wanted me I would come back, but you don't want any more children; you've been too unhappy in your children.

'So now I am going to go into the body of a strange woman, my brother's wife, and I'll be his daughter since I can't be yours. But I don't want to do it unless you give me permission. Tell me quickly, there's only a few minutes left; if you say no, the child will come dead; if you say yes, it will be me and it will live; and I want to live, I want to be happy. O speak quickly!'

Then I shouted Go! Go! so loudly that I woke your father and awoke myself.

And then you wrote to say she was born at that very time, and she came with the cord wound tightly round her neck, but the doctor saw it directly and slipped his finger under and unwound it. But for that the child would have suffocated.

If I had not shouted 'Go!' it would have been too late.

Dreams of the Son in Childhood

Dreams frequently repeated from about 8 years of age onwards, ceasing towards 11 years of age



The Mountain

A MOUNTAIN, neither precipitous nor rocky, but which one climbs slowly for a very long time. Who is this 'one'? Not I especially, but I can feel this 'one' climbing. A long convex curve, fairly regular in form. The air grows more and more invigorating, colder and colder. More rarefied but more pure. Anguish: can one continue the climb? There is no physical discomfort; on the contrary, a sense of well-being and of strength; the higher one mounts the closer to the ground one clings, on all fours, although there are no precipices or even any rocks; only grass, rather sparse and short, then snow, and then bare rock, but above all wind, wind blowing more and more powerfully. It is against the wind that one is advancing, and one comes to a very slightly descending slope before again facing the great ascending curve; no cause for disappointment; one knew this beforehand.

The wind is stronger and stronger. One climbs for hours certainly, perhaps for years.

One reaches the summit of the curve, and there one feels the terror of a vast precipice, overlooking a whole continent, millions of feet below: one is clinging to the summit of the curve, flat on the stomach. There is no immediate danger; the precipice is far enough off, beyond a decline of not too steep a curve. The terror is in the imagination rather than fear or danger of a fall. That is to the left.

To the right the mountain descends in a curve, but slightly, for some hundred feet only; then another mountain rises powerfully, separated from the first by a saddle some hundred feet from the first summit; the saddle on one side must abut on the precipice, and on the other descend towards an invisible but inevitable plain.

One seems to have reached the limit of one's strength, the force of the wind is at its maximum; yet one descends slowly to the saddle; then climbs again on the other side to the height already attained, and there one is seized with a deeply blissful resolution to renounce all, to risk all, and one proceeds up the new slope with triumphant pride. Or perhaps, instead of the saddle between the two mountains,

there is nothing. Not an empty space into which one might fall, but just nothing. It depends upon the resolution of the climber, whether he can pass to the second slope. There is no obstacle but the wind, and the wind is not dangerous: powerful as it is, it threatens neither to carry one away nor overthrow one: it only measures the strength of one's advance.

The climber goes over to the second slope, across this nothing, which is not a precipice nor a possible fall: which is nothing but a change of plane, involving no risk but only a decision to be taken.

Upon the second summit—pride.

Sometimes beings, totally unknown, rare and different from the climber, are met upon the second slope. One is wholly at their mercy. They are not menacing: welcoming rather, and are related to a race which peoples the continent at the foot of the precipice to the left. They come from there, and send back messengers thither.

Sometimes one goes back again all the way to the base of the first mountain, to seek other beings one wants; then one comes again in a few hours, leading them to the inhabitants of the second mountain, after having persuaded the newcomers that the gap of nothingness can be passed.

The Sphere

A SPHERE, mathematically perfect and polished, moving by its own force in a straight course through a space apparently unlimited, in a milky light.

Then there appears, above, below, to right and to left, certain limits: a feeling of joy, as of a beginning of achievement. Slowly these limits join to form a sort of vast funnel narrowing very gradually, into which the sphere proceeds with joy, still surrounded by very ample space.

Then the sides come nearer together, gradually, irresistibly: joy mounts higher, and anxiety develops simultaneously and, as it were, parallel with it, without any shocks. It is seen that the funnel will necessarily become too narrow, and what then ? But the rate of diminution is slow, the fatal moment very far off. The light decreases, still milky but darkening. The movement goes on, the joy and the fear growing in proportion as the sides come together: it goes on thus for hours, for life-times, eternally.

At last the maximum is reached. The funnel has narrowed at last to the exact measure of the sphere: both anguish and pleasure are at their maximum.

An eternal moment: the sphere and the limits are one. The funnel is a cylinder identical with the sphere. Then, deliverance. The sphere has not passed through, but it is not crushed.

Movement continues in the same direction, in the same light. The sphere is clothed with the canal, and an infinite relief appears in the system thus constituted. Fear ends. Joy spreads itself in a kind of gentle explosion, flowing away in every direction.

Peace. The light vanishes, but is not replaced by darkness. Possibly the walls have yielded. Perhaps the sphere is adapting itself to the narrowing of the canal. But rather, the whole is transferred into a different world, in which the opposition between the sphere and the

walls no longer exists. Perhaps not exactly into another world but into an atmosphere of tranquil pleasure.

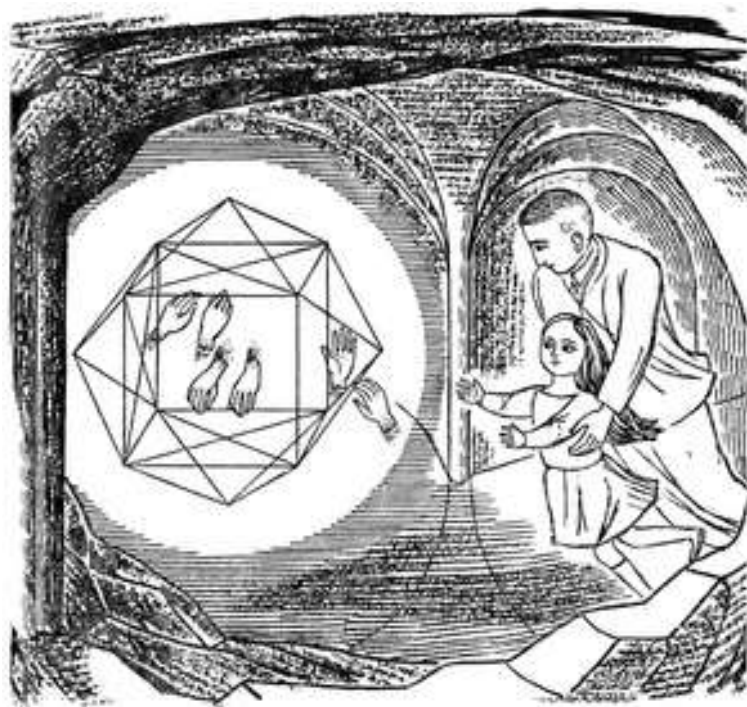
The anguish of knowing what is about to happen gives place to the desire, of knowing what has happened, and then fear is resolved in endless tranquillity.



The Stairway

I AM mounting a stairway without a baluster against the inside of the wall of a round tower. The stairway is fairly wide; no feeling of fear; no danger; I can hug the wall and leave between myself and the void a very great length, laterally, on each stair. Dark: but light enough to guide oneself without apprehension. I mount fairly fast, and easily, without loss of breath. The breadth of the stairway lessens; but still no feeling of fear. The well of the stairway is getting deeper and deeper, my feet are nearer and nearer to the abyss as the stairway narrows. Still no feeling of fear.

The stairway ends abruptly, with a last step just wide enough for me to stand upon; no feeling of danger. Looking attentively in front of me, I see that the stairway goes on, on the other side of a void, at four or five lengths of the body, as though a landing four or five times the length of a man had once been there, or perhaps a now non-existent room; the stairs recommencing from the further side. Looking along the wall still more carefully, I see several stones jutting out here and there from the wall, below the level upon which I stand, without apparent order, but at first descending slightly and then reascending; others, irregularly, at my level. I stretch out a foot to the first of these lower stones; it is firm and will easily bear my weight. With the hand I reach for another stone higher up; and feel firm, not even too closely cramped against the wall. I see that, steadying myself by holding to the stones above and passing from one to the other of the stones below, I can get over to the stairway opposite. No fear. No uneasiness even. The decision once taken is carried out without difficulty; and, after several minutes of concentrated duration, at once very long—eternal—and normal, I reach the first step, very wide and comfortable, of the continuing stairway. Once up there, I look back at the void and the space just traversed. I am seized with fear, retrospectively. How was I able to do that? And with profound joy to have done it, for the question of returning does not arise, I go forward, trembling with fear and joy, easily to mount the stairway up to the summit of the tower, where everything is resolved.



The Countess: the Little Girl

Dreamt by the Son at forty years of age, once only

THE COUNTESS used to disappear from time to time. In the country, she was suspected of some unknown and evil work; one day she is followed by the dreamer.

She is tracked into a very deep and narrow hole: the dreamer, in a state of anguish, but without difficulty, follows her, descending into a perfectly vertical shaft.

At last, at the bottom of the pit, a world of light: in a lofty cave, illumined by its own atmosphere only, peace emanates from everything. Numerous inhabitants, all happy. Here the Countess is carrying on an admirable work, not specified but perfect. The dreamer has lost sight of her since his entry into the narrow pit, and on his arrival below, in his ecstasy, he sees her no more, does not even hear of her: she is too great a lady; he is only an anonymous spectator. All around him is agitation, organization, a reception. A little girl, whom he remembers having seen above in the terrestrial world, appears in the midst of strangers. This little girl had no existence in the former part of the dream: she only appears here, but awakens a very confident feeling in the dreamer that he has seen her before and knows her very well. She is very shy and walks awkwardly with mechanical movements as though she were made of wood. He calls to her and caresses her; she seems pleased, loses her shyness, improves in her walk. Her gestures become easier. She is very dear to him, and he is very happy.

The Guide

Dreamt by the Son at forty-five years of age, once only

A WELL-LIT cavern; the dreamer and a friend are descending a wide passage, obstructed by great stones and rubbish, earth, shingle, sand. They are seeking a way out. A feeling of compulsion, of the necessity of the search, its success being doubtful but possible. Somewhat distantly appears, very distinctly, a human form, enveloped in robes, and at first motionless. The dreamer and his friend continue to descend and approach this figure, without any emotion. They perceive at last that the figure is on the other side of an open space from which several passages radiate in different directions, some ascending and others descending.

The figure is a little way onward in one of the ascending passages, and is already at a higher level, so that in order to reach it one must scale a block of stone, in shape like the step of a stairway but higher than a man. A feeling that this is the guide to follow. Certitude.

The two companions address themselves to the climbing of this high boulder, each aiding the other. Reaching its summit, they see the figure has meanwhile gone higher up, into a passage now obscure, and is holding a lamp: turned towards them, awaiting them. They continue to go on and up, with great and growing difficulties. The figure always waits for them a little further on, but never allows them to approach it. Consultation between the two companions: Is the guide friendly or inimical? Is he leading us to disaster? Then, suddenly, their joint decision: It matters not; catastrophe is the same thing as success, we must follow. Immense happiness at this decision. The figure allows them to approach nearer: they feel it to be benevolent in the midst of a danger which is terrible but without importance. Acceptance of death, death being triumph. All three closer together, the guide still veiled, continue to scale the boulders and to ascend the passage, and all three are happy.



The Life Beyond

Dialogue. The Son, the Mother

THE MOTHER: Then, what do you believe, yourself? That he is in heaven? That he is here? Where is he? THE SON: I believe that something remains. Each time his eyes became clear again, he was the same, and spoke in his usual way, he understood everything; right to the end the whole of him was present.

THE MOTHER: Where is it? Where is he now, then?

THE SON: That is what one calls God. In your mind there remains always everything you have ever seen. You may remember it more or less, but it is always there. If nothing remained, you would have no mind.

THE MOTHER : I know; I remember everything always. THE SON: Well, God is that which remembers all things. I believe that all we have been, from birth until death, is preserved entire and living in the clear mind of God. And when you die, you will find again all that you have known of him since the beginning. God remembers everything, and when one is dead one is God.

THE MOTHER: Then you do not believe that he is going on existing, all unhappy, somewhere else ?

THE SON: No, he is in God, all of him present together in God's mind, all that he has done or thought from his birth to his death. After his death it is no longer he, it is God. THE MOTHER: I understand. You find again all you ever were. All the evil, too, so that is hell. The happiness that you have known and find again—that is heaven. But what if you have forgiven one another?

THE SON: That counts at the moment of forgiveness and after: and it softens the memory of evil. THE MOTHER: Yes, it must be that something remains: and therefore everything must remain; for God, at our birth, makes something happen, someone to be, where

there was nothing before: it is much easier for him to preserve something that already is. He preserves everything. And of necessity there must be the Good God, otherwise there would be nothing. If there remained nothing, there would never be or have been anything. Since there is something, there is God, who has made everything and preserves everything for ever.

The End of Fear

THE MOTHER (two days after the Father's death): And to think that now I feel no more fear of the dead! I, who all my life was afraid of them in the dark! And my poor daughter; I was so frightened of her, though I longed above all to see her again and ran everywhere I could think of at midnight to find her wherever I thought she might be! I was near to dying of fear as I ran, yet I wanted so much to see her that I galloped in spite of the fear—and even it was the fear that made me gallop, And now I walk about everywhere in the middle of the night and no longer feel any fear at all of the dead. Because he—he protected me, always.

I have now a protector among the dead. A powerful protector. Now I shall get on better, there's no looking after him of a night any more. He no longer needs me, he is just rotting away. It is strange! Now I want to live. I thought to myself I was sure to die because I didn't want to live: and now it seems to me that I want to live.

Death—you know, that is what nobody wants. THE SON (to himself): Without that ending, they would not have known how much they loved one another, neither she nor he. Now they have known it perfectly. The presence of death has caused them to gather together all their strength, and they were not frightened, they triumphed over death in themselves, their strength proved greater than their fear of death. The Mother confronted the approaching death with all her forces, without knowing at first that it was death, but right to the end without hesitation or any doubt of her own powers. Moreover, their

love revealed itself as stronger than their innumerable hatreds for each other.

Without suffering and death, one learns nothing. We should not know the difference between the visions of the intellect and the facts.

Only those ideas are acceptable that hold through suffering and death.

When the intellect intervenes, the idea is finished. Intelligence consists in halting at the brink of the ditch one has to jump.

Indeed, logically, when one comes to an empty space, one ought to halt.

But life is that which leaps.

Intelligence is cowardice.

The one quality is courage: one attains to truth, as to life, by courage only. Courage to see all the risk, and jump.



PART II THE HEARTS NIGHTMARES

I: The dead Father has to be looked after

THE FATHER'S death was in November, 1936.

On February the 7th, 1937, at about 5 a.m., the son had a dream of a very exceptional quality: he was beginning to know about dreams.

The dead father was, with the mother and the son, in the kitchen of their house. But the father was only as big as a child of three; his head just reached the height of the table. He was dressed in a small semi-military uniform, such as could still be bought in those days to amuse children.

On his face there was an expression of absolute indifference.

There he was, holding himself up perfectly straight, motionless, not one feeling legible on his stiffened face, quite small, three feet high. He was dead, and he had come to stand at the family table; not as a dead man who comes partly alive in order to revisit his own, but as a dead being, become small, impassible, indifferent, non-existent truly. Dead.

The mother and the son looked at him, without any kind of fear, with love, with concern. What could they do for him? He had not come either to threaten or demand or beg. He was there; nothing more. Quite small, though well proportioned as a man, not as a child; three feet high; dead; indifferent. Those precise points penetrated clearly into the understanding both of mother and son.

Looking at him with great attention, they became aware, nearly at once, of another strange thing: dead though he was, indifferent though he was, the left-hand side of his body was strong, full of

substance, proportioned as in life. This was apparent on the left-hand side of his face, on his left hand, and even under the stiff cloth of his uniform, well filled on that side. But the right side of him, on the contrary, was dry, parchment-like, nearly scale-like, and so wasted that the skin seemed stuck on the plain bones. This could be seen on the right part of his face; his right hand; and the small uniform, so well filled on the left, was half empty on the right, as though hanging on a skeleton.

But the small dead man did not move; did not look even. He was there, standing by the table, waiting, with a sort of eternal quality in his waiting, in his presence. All at once, the mother stood up and said: But he is very ill; he must be looked after, immediately.

Then she bent down, took hold of him, who remained small and docile in the grown-up motherly arms, and carried him on to a bed in the next room. There was a fire in there. The son understood what was to be done, and started rubbing the dried-up side up and down with a piece of flannel, white and thick, that somehow he found in his hand. Then, in one instant, the dream was over; the son woke up feeling neither horror nor fear, but in amazement. For a few seconds, he went over all the details, registering them in his memory, and then he went to sleep again, to awake at his usual hour.

II: The Father is cured

TWO DAYS later, at the same hour, at the same place, three hundred miles from the village where the mother was, in London, the father came into a second dream. Again in the kitchen, dressed as the first time, but quite cured. The same height, that of a three-year-old, the same indifference, as though eternal. There he was. The mother and the son were looking at him with deep affection, trying to understand, ready for anything.

The small uniform was equally well filled on the right as on the left. The flesh on the face was homogeneous on both sides. The flesh could not be called healthy since it was dead; that could be clearly seen. But it was no longer dried up and shrunken anywhere. It covered the bones to the normal thickness of living flesh on a living skeleton—again, the proportions of a man, not of a child.

Mother and son felt happy. They had healed the little dead man and now there he was, perfectly indifferent, but perfectly sound in his death. No gratitude, no feeling whatever could be read on his face. There he was. All was well.

Once again the son awoke; then, after a few instants, went to sleep again, to awake again, still amazed, at his usual hour.

III: The Stranger comes to kill the Father

DECEMBER THE seventh, 1938. The foregoing summer the son had taken his family to spend two months in the village, to look after the mother, whose health was not very good, cheer her up, let her have the children for a while. Then had come the separation, as every year: the old woman alone in her house for the hard winter of North Eastern France; the son at his work in London: the mother refused with the utmost determination to come and live with the family. On that morning—December the 7th—long before the late dawn, the son had yet a stranger dream. The two parallel dreams of the father, first curiously ill though dead, then cured though dead, had been repeated several times, the cure dream following the disintegration dream within two or three days. But this was a completely different dream. A perfectly unknown stranger had installed himself in the kitchen. A rather large man, in good health, fairly young. He was talking, in a friendly way, to the mother and the son, putting to them this extraordinary proposal that they were to kill the father when the father came back. The father was out, alive and well, this dream being placed in a period previous to that of the earlier dreams. The mother and the son felt no surprise and were inclined to agree. This murder seemed to be the obvious solution to some otherwise insoluble problem. What problem? That was not apparent in the dream: but the problem was there, and so well known that there was no need to be conscious of what it was. Then the father came back. He was in a gay mood, pleased to be home again, strong and quiet. The stranger was introduced, and after some conversation about insignificant matters, he said to the father: Could you lend me your pocket-knife ?

Adding some explanation that was not perceived in the dream, but of this kind: A small stone has got into the sole of my shoe, I want to prise it out.

The father took his knife from his pocket, opened it. He was particularly careful of that knife, which he sharpened regularly, as he used it to kill and skin rabbits.

He held out the opened knife, the bright blade reflecting the light, and the stranger put out his hand to take it. The mother was now behind the stranger, who was standing up, and the son was behind the father. At the moment when the knife was going to change hands, the mother all at once threw her arms round the stranger, pinning his arms to his body, and, simultaneously, the son pulled back the father's arm to prevent him from giving the knife into the stranger's hand; and the mother and the son cried out together—He wants to kill you! Then the whole scene disappeared. This dream was not repeated.



IV: The Steeple

ON THE 23rd of February, 1939, this series of dreams culminated in a final tableau which explained the series. The village church was clearly seen. An enormous church built on the ordinary rather ugly scheme of ordinary village churches in this region.

The steeple was very high, built up as a very elongated pyramid on a large square tower, against one of whose blank walls the children used to play ball: no boy, or man, could send a ball up high enough to reach beyond the tower wall to the base of the pyramid.

That morning the village was empty. The solitary church dominated the village and the dream.

Yet, above the cross that surmounted the steeple, above the golden cock that stood on the cross, as on most village spires, something quite unusual was happening.

A few yards above the cock, the small dead child-sized body of the father, as seen in the early dreams two years before, was revolving slowly in the air, on its longitudinal axis. The dreamer could see it plainly, and felt with some satisfaction that the little dead body was undamaged: the right-hand side and the left-hand side "were clearly seen in turn and both were sound. This lasted for quite a long while, and registered deeply in the mind of the dreamer. No feeling whatsoever went with it. Then the dreamer woke up, and in his waking consciousness came up at once a sentence that was habitual to his mother, and which he had never heard anyone else use. And that sentence was the key of the vision.

Embouya boula. Embouya boula al desus del cloche de la gleiso. Envoyer voler. Envoyer voler au dessus du clocher de l'église. Send him flying. Flying above the spire of the church. Except that 'boula' in the Pyrenees dialect the mother used has a double meaning, to fly, and to roll.

To send someone flying means, of course, to get rid of them; to be so completely indifferent to them that you send them away at full speed. And as in this village the mother lived opposite the church, the maximum of indifference was to her to send some one flying not only on the ground, but into the air, high above the church, higher than the children at play could ever send their ball: higher even than the cock on the cross of the steeple.

And now the dead father had been sent flying thus high; flying and revolving above the cock. Who had sent him flying?

The son, of course. The mother, from three hundred miles away, was accusing the son of absolute indifference. Indifference to what?

To the father? The father was dead; the mother knew too well that the son was not indifferent to the dead father. In her mind the relationship father-son was sacred, far more sacred than the relationship mother-son—she was from the oldest race in France, from the mountain race of the Pyrenees, where the male ancestral worship is the basis of life, as with the Romans. Then the whole explanation jumped into the light. That was not the father dead already, who had died again, though only a second half-death, in the early dreams. That was not the father whom a stranger had tried to kill. That was not the father that had been sent flying in total indifference.

The father was dead already, and safe, indifferent. The mother was the subject of the visions. Then the working out of the vision was easy. The son had noted the dates of the nightmares. On his next visit to the mother, he got hold of the doctor's bills, and found that in each case, on seven different occasions, the dates of the nightmares were the dates of the heart attacks which periodically brought the mother—as she thought—to death's door, but from which she recovered after two or three days.

When she was in good health she was determined not to go and live with her son, wishing to remain quite independent. But in the anguish of the attack, she sent out an appeal for help. Only she felt:

he will not come. What am I—a woman—a mere mother—not much, in the Pyrenees, down a thousand generations for whom life had been very hard. However much he cherishes his mother in his heart, a man has other duties: his work, his children. But no duty is above the duty to one's father: that causes one to put aside all other duties. Therefore send out the appeal that the father is in need, and the son will come. He had come when the father had died. He would come again.

But the son, receiving the message, knew that the father was dead. Therefore he did not receive a vision of the dying father, but distorted it into a vision of the father dead already, and indifferent, but yet in a strange way in danger again, and needing him.

The son's nightmares were compounded of the mother's message—not exactly a lie, but rather a wishful: 'for his father he would come'—with the son's knowledge that the father was dead. Yet deeper down the son knew better, and he helped: in his helping action, in spite of his *prima facie* uselessness, since the father was dead, he came to the rescue of the mother really, under the double distortions: the distortion of the mother's need put on to the father; the second distortion of the son's knowledge, partly, but only partly, correcting the mother's picture by adding to it the fact that the father was dead; yet acting on the spirit of the appeal, and giving help. This had happened seven times: communication indubitable. What about the stranger who wanted to kill the father? The son discovered that on the date of that vision, during a heart attack, a new doctor, some *locum tenens*, had come in; the mother had refused to trust this stranger, feeling: he will kill me. The image transmitted to the son had shown this feeling and refusal transferred on the father again. Mother and son had stopped the stranger—from killing the father?—no, from doctoring the scared mother. But this time the mother had felt she could get cured by herself, and the son, taken unawares, had transferred the appeal on to the living father, since the appeal was not that he should come but merely a refusal to have the doctor; and

the son was not necessary for that; therefore he did not have to register the protest that the father was dead already.

The final vision was simple: the mother had now reached the end of her forces, and was accusing the son of total indifference —hence the image of the father revolving above the cock on the spire.

Therefore only one thing remained: to fetch her, willing or not, and bring her to London to be properly looked after. This was done; and the nightmares ceased.

PART III: THE LIFE-TIME OF CHRIST

I: The Old Canon

THIS MAN was an old theologian, a canon to a cathedral in a small town in Northern France. He had never published any books, or even spoken much; his life had been one of contemplation more than of study even. He had no hair left at all. What impressed me most about him was the very dark green colouring of his skin, as though he had been a bronze of untold antiquity just unearthed. He should have been a priest in some long-drowned temple. Not a high priest—a man in the second rank not quite in the centre either, but a little on the left, in high ceremonial functions, when the Supreme Sacrifice was being celebrated. He was very kind to me and explained to me very kindly that he could not expect a man like me to understand anything at all. But he noticed in me a certain capacity to listen, and tried to give me a little light. Also he was freer with me, both because of my lack of understanding and because of my total lack of connection with anybody he knew. This is what he said—it is quite certain that he will never read it; he reads nothing now and will soon be dead:— People believe that the world was created so many years before Christ. They used to say 4000 B.C. Now they say much more. Some even put the date so far back that they prefer to say that the world has never been created. That is all nonsense. The world was created exactly nine months before the birth of Jesus-Christ. At the very moment of the Virgin Conception of Christ in the Very Holy Virgin Mary. People think that there is a period before Christ and a period after Christ. That is all nonsense. Everything was created in that instant nine months before the birth of Christ.

Of course, after that, things had to be put in order: first of all the Very Holy Virgin, so that mankind could be organised round the Word.

The Very Holy Virgin is, if you wish to speak historically—always a false way of speaking, mind you— the first created human being.

You people think that time is something that unrolls itself, beginning at count one, then becomes two, three, four, and so on. That is stupid.

Time begins nine months B.C. And it ends there too. But it makes, so to speak, a lot of noise in all directions: backwards, forwards, all round. That makes you believe that the Jews, the

Egyptians, the nummulites, the nebulae, came B.C., that the Roman Emperors, the Kings of France, the Spanish war, came after Christ. Not at all. If you bang a gong, the sound flows in all directions; it does not come from the left, enter the gong, and then flow on to the right.

Thus Creation spread before, after, around Christ, and around every moment of B.C. and every moment of A.D. Can you understand that ?

Everything was in that instant, and everything was unfolded into all possible directions so that you might see it: so that God might see it, in all its details. And it is going on unfolding now: Creation is spreading, ever spreading, into the past as into the future, into space, ever, for ever.

But of course you cannot be expected to understand that. Long studies are necessary, and much goodwill and real right behaviour over ages; and also the love of God is necessary to understand all that.

I can see that you do not understand Jesus-Christ. But it does not matter: you will remember, you have a good memory, and perhaps some day you may understand, by God's grace.

For instance, the Virgin Birth. That seems incomprehensible to you: you do not see that the Virgin Birth is present everywhere. Yet, when it happens very far from where you are, you admit of it. You admit that once upon a time, in a non-organic milieu, something

organic was formed. An amoeba, or what? Don't you see that that is the Virgin Birth? Out of nothing, something. Out of death, life.

You even go so far as to say that something intervened, some cosmic radiation, something like that: the Holy Spirit, what? You cannot do without the Virgin Birth. Only you feel that if you make it so small that only a microscope can discover it, it will not be noticed: you smuggle it in.

But an error can be put under an optical instrument and magnified or diminished one million times, and remain the same error, logically. But you have not been taught logic. Therefore you swallow without a tremor the Virgin Birth of the ameba but not that of Jesus-Christ. It is the same thing: small or large, life must come into the world from somewhere. And where from, if not from God ?

But you stupid people, you want God to begin with a mini-mum; you think that God is very feeble, so you give him a small job to do at first: an atom, an ameba, a very small thing. Then you think that he will grow up, this God of yours: then he can tackle a worm perhaps, then make a fish, and then a man, when he is grown up at last, your God. when he has learnt his trade properly.

You fools. Can you not see that God, because he is God, he creates, all at once, the maximum. You are making a mistake: the ameba is not the Creator, God Almighty is the Creator. The ameba needs a small job. But God creates, splendidly, Perfection: Jesus-Christ, the World, the Logos, which comprehends the whole world. Perfect. That is God. Time flows out of Christ.

You are trying to insert Christ into time: so you fail, of course. Think of the prophets: they astonish you, those prophets. Don't you understand? Christ was there; Christ is here; the prophets came after Christ, flowing backwards in time from

Christ. Of course they could not understand. Did not Moses tell you that he saw the hinder parts of God? They could see only the back of Christ—the darkness behind him. They were highly excited, but not very clear-sighted. Surely. That is why they were placed before Christ,

as you put it. Also they tell you that man was made in the image of God; how could you understand that? You believed that somewhere round 4000 B.C. there lived a sort of Huge Man called Godr who had made a much smaller man in his image. Not at all. Man was made in the image of Jesus-Christ.

Well, you think it out: you will understand in the end that there is only one thing in the world: Jesus-Christ, and all our deformations of Jesus-Christ, of his Will.

Suffering—evil in the world: that disturbs you profoundly because you have not understood that this was the suffering of Christ radiating everywhere. The suffering he took upon himself in order to create the world, so that you might have souls. And as soon as you have to bear the smallest particle of that suffering, you howl.

And despair. Christ's despair, when he believed that God had forsaken him. He had made himself a man to that point, to that lowest point that he had to believe himself forsaken of the Father: for in that belief is all sin. So he cried: Why? and he died. Of course. What would it have mattered to him to die and to suffer knowing all the time that he was God ? That was too easy. That would not have been Creation: he had to take on all sin and all suffering, and descend so low as to be cut off from the Father altogether—and yet in that state to say: Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. He had to withdraw entirely from his godhead to create the world, he had to give himself up, in order to create sinners, evil, men, the world. Otherwise, he would have remained God, God only—there would have been no world, no souls, no men.

All the despair of mankind, from end to end of the ages, what is it ever but the re-echoing down the courses of time of this despair of Jesus. Man also, did he always know, that God the Father is there, what merit would man have in his work, in his suffering? How would man prove to God that he loves Him? It would be merely man's interest to love God, were man sure that God exists. One can only love truly a God whom one does not know for sure to exist. One can love truly only the God that does not exist.

Do you understand that? For those who know that God exists, there is no merit. Their labour is worth nothing, does not help God. But when man decides to risk it, not to demand that God should exist, then man's work, then man's love are real, then man helps God, then man adds to God. Then man is free to love God.

The ignorant, the sinners, the downcast: of them is love. Look at me. I am of no use. I am not free to love or not to love God: I know too much.

It is better for men not to know all that; therefore, their ignorance is a blessing of God. It is the ignorance of Jesus on the cross, at the last moment: thus is the world created— Thus the old man went away, apparently perfectly happy in his uselessness. He had his reward. He had no contempt in his heart for me: he envied me my ignorance. I had the impression that he was going back to his subaquean temple. And yet he was absolutely French.

II: The High Official

THE CONCEPTION of Christ as being at the Centre of time implies a capacity in time itself to unfold backwards, since Christ appears to us to have lived sometime from about 0 A.D. to 33 A.D. From the birth or conception or incarnation of Christ to the beginning of the world time flows backwards; from Christ to us it flows forward.

But this is only appearance. In fact we are only conscious of our present time, from which we project our hopes and desires into the future, and our memories and desires into the past. About the future we do not as a rule worry overmuch—although in another sense it is the only thing we worry about. We do not worry about the future in this sense that we plan for it, and take action with a view to shape it, but we generally do not hold that it exists already and that by worrying we could know about it in the present. We hold on the contrary that we can know our past, as far back as the years of infancy. But if Christ is our centre, we must be able to remember at least as far back as Christ. So some men and women have images of past lives, or of past scenes of their lives, accompanied by the feeling that these images are memories in as true a sense as our memories of this life.

Each soul is a drop of Christ's blood, thrown out into the body, out of the living heart; it is first an arterial drop within the chest, then it becomes, say, a drop within the upper arm; then it gets into the lower arm; then past the wrist and the knuckles into the capillaries, where it is as small a drop as it can be; and it changes colour all the time, and the red drop emerges dark red, then blue, then nearly black, through the veins into the heart again. Say that this drop knows itself each time it goes across a moving articulation in its rapid course; say that, for instance, the two motions, of the blood and of the articulation, produce consciousness and memory; then the drop at the first knuckle will remember the drop at the elbow, or the drop at the shoulder, as far back as the drop from the heart.

So the soul can remember this or that back to Christ the centre. But what of the flow backwards ?

They say—it is a curious thing that we know of history before Christ with some precision about as far before as we are far after. We know now some 2000 years B.C. fairly precisely; back from that we guess—even as we guess our future from our present. Our knowledge of B.C. is only our knowledge of A.D. flung back into an absence of Christ. Thus Plato, in 400 B.C., is only Augustine in 400 A.D., but Augustine without Christ. Thus the absolute Pharaohs of Egypt or despots of Mesopotamia are, in the absence of Christ, the present or coming dictators of Europe after Christ. Thus Mahomet 600 after Christ is, in the Christless world, Zoroaster 600 before Christ. And so on. They say then that a man can see images of himself in different lives as far back as the Centre Christ and then other images of himself in the Christless world behind Christ. And what they say of time they say of space. We think that Christ came in a small planet of a small sun of a small galaxy—because we, being in a small corner of the spiritual world, can only see Christ that way. From an odd corner, sideways, out of a hole in an inconsiderable part of the Universe. As we might see the Sun out of a queer hole—yet the Sun is also there. That drop of Christ's blood, the soul, when it reaches the black part of the heart after its journey outward, is expelled again inward this time, into the lungs, to contact with the outer limit, the air, which, by a terrible paradox, seems to be only really inside us, out of the Sun, out of Christ. There it gets purified mysteriously, and is brought back to the heart, and goes again through another cycle to the external limbs. Thus the ancient image of Christ as the Greater Man is justified both ways, in time and in space.

So they say.

But what do they see? How do they see themselves in other lives, back to Christ, and then away back on the other side of life, into the Christless world into where, however, Christ descended during those dark three days in the grave?— This man who spoke to me was a French official who had been brought up in the North of France but

from Southern extraction. He was over fifty, very calm and in a highly responsible position. He said to me—One day I woke up singing a song in words I did not understand. I have no ear for music and cannot remember or reproduce a tune. While the tune was so fresh in me that I could feel it, I did my best and sang, or rather delineated it to a daughter of mine who is musical and who put it down. It was a very rapid, very lively tune; much more rapid than the tunes of to-day, and I was singing the song to a lady in the South of France. The words were:

E quand la luno briho a reire

Ande te veire

Din lis els

and the last two lines varied in each stanza, and became, for instance,

Ande nous veire

Din lis els

The words were all easy to interpret, except the queer sounds brihoareire, and to any accustomed to the French of the South, translated: And when the moon brihoareire, to look at thee, in the eyes—to look at me, in the eyes—to look at each other—in the eyes. But the word brihoareire I could not make sense out of, nor could anyone around me. So I wrote to a friend who lives in Provence and asked him to investigate. And he wrote back and said: the word does not exist now, and I never heard it used; but I discovered by looking into the singers of old in the Provencal that it has existed; in the XVth century it was used to mean again, and your song means—and when the moon will shine again, I shall look at thee in the eyes; —thou shalt look at me—in the eyes; and so on. So yours can only be some love song that you were singing to some quick guitar tune in the XVth century.—

Then my official friend said—another time, I woke up in the act of escaping from a great danger. Three officers, armed and dressed as in the XVIth century, were looking for me, to arrest or kill me, in a great hall in a large castle in the South of France. And while they were looking their Prince, Henry of Beam and Navarre, young, came into the hall and asked by whose orders they were there, and for what purpose. And they answered and told him. And I was hiding in the embrasure of a high window behind the Prince, and the Prince knew it. And he said to them: It is because of that woman he is courting. I cancel your order. I shall see to the matter myself. And they went away after saluting.—

And he said—another time, a good bit later, I found myself on a large cart, in the midst of a public square. The cart was stationary and horseless. A brazier was burning on it, in a gridiron basket made roughly in the form of a seat. I was compelled to sit on it. It was not red hot, but burnt me atrociously, so that with a sort of explosion the pain threw me several feet away. But I had to come back to the torture, and, with a force of will that astonished me, I seized the hot iron with my hands and forced myself to sit on it.— And he said:—look at the palms of my hands. In this life, I still carry the marks of the burns.—Dark deep scars were visible in lines under the skin in the palm of his hands.— And he said: thus I know that I have lived and loved and suffered during the religious wars of the XVIth century, and that my memory and my flesh still reproduce the marks of that time.

This man interested me; and remembering the bronze-faced canon, and his views, I tried to find whether pre-Christian visions were obtainable here. So I asked about more ancient lives, and, my enquiries being honest, they were answered.— Once, said he, I was riding steadily, not violently, but for a long period, through an endless forest. I know the forest well and have seen it several times. There were not exactly any roads in it, but clear ways between the trees, covered with sward: sometimes I could see, say, two or three hundred yards each side of me; sometimes only ten or twenty yards; but the runway was continuous, and my horse kept a steady speed on the

fairly short grass. I was dressed in the Gaul way, with a sort of trousers and a sort of blouse, and armed with a rather long sword. But I was on no fighting expedition. I was anxious to get on to the end of my journey, which lasted days, with rests at night in solitary huts or small villages in the woods. At the end of this journey, I was seated in a village, with many others, round a huge tree-trunk that had been planed down as a sort of table, and we were drinking.

By me was the king that I had come to seek. He was a young man of twenty or so, dressed in what was, for us, an unusual way: in a blue coat with wide sleeves and blue trousers. He was living in this village in hiding, and the villagers were accustomed to him and friendly, but did not know who he was. I had come to tell him that his enemies were mustering six to ten thousand horsemen in the forests to the South through which I had come; but our own people had gathered some eight hundred faithful men—what was left of his dispersed army; enough for a break through to him if necessary, at least, so we hoped. Now all at once, an old man of sixty, looking exactly like the king, but with an old face, and dressed exactly like the king, in this unusual blue suit, came and sat down in our group. The villagers noticed at once the extraordinary resemblance—and began to talk and whisper at it. I was quite unable to account for this individual and his resemblance to the king. So was the king. At once I took a decision. Were I to say who we were, probably the villagers would be loyal to us, but they were too few to be any use. Now the event would be talked over all over the country, from one village to another, whether I proclaimed the presence of the king, or whether I did not, since this meeting had amazed all witnesses, and we were an inquisitive people and a talkative one, and an incident, like this one, which could not properly be explained, aroused talk in concentric and expanding circles through the forests. Many would see a portent in it, as in a birth of twins. The only thing to do was to leave the village and trust to our horses to outrun the rumour, and get through the gathering enemy. Otherwise, pretty soon, the tale of something unusual would get to the enemy chiefs, who would investigate, on the chance of

learning anything. And any investigation by these clever and resolute people would lead to the capture of the king. Thus went my thoughts; the king was very docile, as I was known to him and came accredited from the chiefs of his little band. So I planned the journey back, carrying in my head a rough map of the country and choosing the less dangerous ways. As soon as the king was back, higher people than me would take over responsibilities. So we started, back along a central avenue, on each side of which the well-built, large huts were disposed in parallel ellipsoid curves. I can see them now.— Now this tale was so clear, and the man so sure of himself, yet not explaining what he did not know, that I was moved to ask him:

—How do you know that this was before Christ? And I obtained the extraordinary answer:

—It felt before Christ; a sort of cold feeling, unconnected with the atmosphere; a cold moral feeling, with a draw and a longing in it.—

So I said: But how do you know this was you? Seeing a man does not mean that you are a man. Even feeling inside a man does not mean that you are him.—

He answered me: True. I have also had telepathic experiences seeing what happened very far from where I was, and it happened to others, not to me. But this was me. I know because there is a connection of cause to effect, down to me, between events of that time and events of this present life of mine: mistakes to be cleared up, evaded responsibilities to be faced, knowledge to be gathered, rhythm to be completed.—I pressed him in vain. He admitted that there was a woman in it: the woman of the song, other women, and there had been murder done, and accidents, in several lives; and the settlement was yet to come: that torture on the cart-brazier was only a part of it. The turning-point, he said, because by then the love and the knowledge of Christ had been stronger in him than the love and the knowledge of women.

He was a married man, and had several children; and he was a very good official in an important position; and he had much suffering to

bear in this present life. But he understood why, in detail, in each case, knowing the connection with past errors and crimes, and accepting the suffering, offering it to Christ to be made into love. Thus he bore a little of the cross of Christ, and helped, in his way, to create the world.— Now we are crucifying Christ, and it has to be borne. Some of us, all who want to, are helping Christ to bear his cross. My son is being killed. But the salvation and the love are in Christ, and in us also. Thus is the perfect world created: to produce love.

Love is produced by suffering when accepted and offered to Christ. And also there are many pleasures on the way, along-side of the suffering.—

Thus I left him to his destinies. Like the old canon, he was an intensely lonely man, living only with Christ.

III: The Anti-clerical Peasant

THIS MAN was a peasant of 48 years of age—an irrelevant fact which I happened to be told—living three hundred miles from the home of his parents, though not as a peasant. He had taken up another profession. His father was dead and he was on very bad terms with his mother. He had a wife and four children. He was not particularly educated, but he had read a little.

Most of his knowledge, however, came to him from *La Depeche de Toulouse*, an excellent journal, with a fairly high standard of culture, and fiercely anti-clerical. The cures, and all priests of all religions, were to this man pure impostors and thieves. He had a vague belief in God, on condition that God should remain carefully inactive, but set no store at all by Jesus-Christ. In the best *Depeche de Toulouse* style, he held Jesus-Christ to have been a man rather above the ordinary, but not worthy to hold a candle to the leader-writer of the *Depeche*. Nevertheless, he had some respect for Jesus, largely because Jesus had, somehow and anyhow, become famous—perhaps nearly as famous as Victor Hugo. And celebrity is something one respects. Such were the religious feelings of this man, a sturdy, sincere and thoroughly reliable man, who would have scorned telling a lie unless he could make some money by doing so. His mother was well over seventy, living more than three hundred miles away in a big village, completely alone in what was, to them, a fairly large house: say, some eight rooms on two floors. Prosperous people. This is the tale that this man told me:

'One night I woke up shouting: Mother, there is Jesus-Christ—Man, Il y a Jesus-Christ. And I saw floating before me in the air, my mother's face, dreadfully distorted by an expression of unbearable anguish. Her eyes were squinting inwards in a terrifying inhuman way. She had a rope round her neck, and with feeble hands was trying as hard as she could to twist it so as to strangle herself.

'She heard my shout: there is Jesus-Christ! 'I heard it at the same time, coming from me. It meant that in life you must never give up;

that, however unhappy you may be, yet there is a divine power ever ready to help and restore you. All you have to do is to trust it, and it will give you happiness. Therefore I wanted my mother to desist from her insane attempt to commit suicide and trust to Jesus-Christ, who would heal her despair.

'She understood this at the same moment as I understood it, and left off twisting that horrible rope; her eyes righted themselves; an expression of calm first, then of happiness, spread over her face. The whole thing ended in perfect quiet joy. 'Now I did not in the least believe in Jesus-Christ,' my man added, 'so why should I have shouted that ? Also I had not given a thought to my mother and her miseries' for weeks past. So I put the matter out of my mind and never bothered about the matter at all. Yet I remembered it, of course; one cannot forget a thing like that altogether.

'Four months later, I was in Paris and met my son there. 'He had been to see his grandmother recently, as we do occasionally, one or other of the family, to keep an eye on her. He told me that several nights before there had been an epidemic of suicides in the village; five or six people had killed themselves in various ways. Having prepared me thus far, my son added that his grandmother had attempted to commit suicide by strangling herself with a rope, that in fact she even now went about with a bit of rope in her pocket, threatening the neighbours that she would do it yet. But my son thought that now the danger was over and besides the neighbours were keeping an eye on her—and the epidemic of suicides was ended. His view was that her courage had failed her at the last, and that she had been too scared to try again. 'All this nevertheless upset me pretty considerably, as of course in spite of quarrels I have a deep affection for my mother, so I went to see her and convinced myself that her mood had now changed and that her grievances were not much more than subjects of talks with her village friends. Also the neighbours assured me that she would be all right and that they were watching her and would let me know of any returning symptoms. She was not told of these consultations and remained unaware that I had

been apprised of her attempt. I made sure that the time of the attempt coincided with that of my nightmare and shout.' Now I saw that this man was not really worried about his mother—but that he was really worried about his shout of Jesus-Christ. He looked upon himself as a sort of traitor to the convictions of a lifetime of anti-clericalism. His experience of having seen something a few hundred miles away did not disturb him at all; he took it as an event that had happened, and had to be accepted like that. He really did not feel anything extra-ordinary about it. What to me was the amazing part of his experience—a perfectly clear and witness-proof case of full-blooded telepathy—left him unconcerned. But he was half ashamed and half afraid of his cry about Jesus-Christ, and could not understand his own reaction at all.

So I asked him if his parents were religious. He was quite sure that neither his father nor his mother had at all believed in Jesus-Christ. He explained to me that they came from a village in the Pyrenees, which he named, and which I happened to know, in which people had never been religious. The church in the valley was too far from them; the village in the mountain was too far for the priest. In fact, as I knew, they were a pretty set of sturdy savages, very decent in their way of living, and kindly as a rule. Their village was just too far from civilisation. If that was so now, it must have been worse in the past. These people had never been converted properly to Christianity at all. The Third Republic forced them to send their children to school, and I should not be surprised if it were found a fact that many of < them, later in life, heard first of Jesus-Christ through the attacks made on him by the Depeche de Toulouse. The Third Republic having taught them how to read and how to vote, saw to it that the Depeche reached them so that they should vote properly. So I failed to trace any heredity that could have handed on to this man any deep knowledge of Jesus-Christ, any unconscious reliance on him. This son of the mountains was clear of Jesus-Christ, both consciously and unconsciously, and after all my questioning, I remained as astonished at his tale as he obviously was himself.

So I came back to the telepathy and asked had he ever come across other similar cases or experienced any himself. This did not interest him. He said that was all superstition, and he did not believe in it. This puzzled me considerably, since the experience he had related had been fully witnessed by several persons, being, in fact, part of events of public notoriety. How could he say he did not believe in it, since it had happened to himself? He could not make himself quite clear. First of all, he said, of course it had happened; but that did not matter; he had taken no notice of it at all. Many illiterate peasants had experiences of that sort, and that was well known; but no one took any notice of those happenings at all—that was the proper way to behave. If not, you would soon be going dotty. For instance, he knew another man who, like himself, was living away from his parents, and who had a bad nightmare every time his mother, miles and miles away, had a heart attack. The old lady had had heart attacks for years. So her son would have been driven mad, had he taken any notice. He just got used to his nightmares and left it at that: his mother was well looked after anyway. That was all superstition, and all educated people just laughed at it. To prove what nonsense it all was, he told me another story: a friend of his, whose father was dead, had had a most impressive dream, that this father had fallen down on the road outside their house and broken his leg. In the morning, the man told his wife and neighbours, and it seemed so absurd to them, a dead man breaking his leg. Then, the next day, they heard that it was the man's father-in-law who had broken his leg, being very old, on getting out of bed. And the old man died, too, pneumonia having intervened. Now what was the good of all that? You could not rely upon it at all—things happening to one person were put on to another, it was all a great mixup. It was all sheer superstition, not to be encouraged.

The words he used 'not to be encouraged' gave me a clue. The man did not deny the facts. When he said he did not believe in it, he did not mean such facts did not occur: he knew they did, and everybody knew they did. But first of all, he was not at all frightened:

the facts seemed to him natural, since they happened every day. In fact, they were so natural that they were not important. The old women of the countryside, for instance, always knew when their daughters were being confined, and how the baby fared. Very nice for them, but what did it matter? The thing was largely connected with women: his old mother had appeared to him; it was his friend's wife's father who had broken his leg. Mostly also, with that exception perhaps, the thing was connected with old women. Even the old women were not frightened at silly things like that.

Then he knew that no educated persons believed in 'things like that.' Just think of what *La Depeche de Toulouse* would say to a tale like his. They might even print it, as an example of peasant stupidity. He was beginning to feel sorry he had told me. Trivial happenings, not to be encouraged. He did not believe in them. They might occur as often as they liked, they were to be put aside, a subject for the chatter of old women. Not to be encouraged. Why had he told me? Because of the intervention of Jesus-Christ.

That worried him. Why should he, he, of all men, have brought Jesus-Christ into it? He did not believe in Jesus-Christ; and no one in his family ever had believed in anything. I was left wondering. It seemed to me that some ancient wisdom, greater than any we have to-day, had become blurred and lost. This man's intellect could not cope with the facts, therefore with a quiet and effective force of will he put the facts aside. But I felt that in him lived still, in spite of himself, some in-herited ability to see things as we no longer see them. And all the peasantry round him had first been taught by the priests to discard their ancient intuitions; and then they had been taught by the anti-clericals of the Third Republic to discard the priests. Their newly acquired ignorance they thought was enlightenment. So they left the most vital experiences to the chatter of old women. This man had actually seen Jesus-Christ, and he had refused to believe it. This man had actually had an experience which shattered the whole science of to-day, and he just refused to take any notice of it. And a whole nation of dumb peasants all round was just in the same state.

The things of the spirit were sinking into a bog, and only a few bubbles occasionally appeared to reveal the tragedy beneath the surface.

Then I remembered the dark-faced old priest, and the official who knew of the circulation of the Holy Blood. They came from this people, and they knew and kept up the ancient intuitions. The Spirit was not dead yet; but each man could only hold so much of it—very little as a rule—and even then mostly each man refused to accept it. Mostly they could no longer see the direct act of God interfering into the zone of human existence. And yet some still did see it.

IV: The Negro and the Bishop

A BLACK man—not so black, either, more like ivory that is not very white—came to sell me ivory curios. He said he made them himself. All my friends told me this was not likely; but then some of them saw him and said he probably did—he was not a Hausa, he was not a trader; he was willing to do work on instructions received. The work never quite tallied with the instructions received. He came to see me several times, although I bought very little from him. The English authorities had allowed me to take ten pounds in all out of England. The ivory man did not seem to mind, and Masamba, my head boy, stated once at breakfast that the ivory man was a great friend of his, and very wise. This was on the Congo river, in 1941. One day the ivory man was introduced by Masamba while I was having breakfast. He showed me some ebony busts, of which I bought two for a very fair daughter I have, who adores black things. They were really hideous, according to all our standards, but wonderfully realistic, and perhaps great art, as great art goes nowadays. He said that one was male and one female. I could not tell. So I asked which was which. Masamba was shocked at my stupidity, but enlightened me (he thought) by saying: 'Of course the pretty one is the female.' I looked, and looked again, and said: 'Oh! of course.' But yet I could not tell which: to me their hideousness was perfect in both cases, and it would have seemed invidious to distinguish between them. So I left it at that, hoping my daughter would know. One day Masamba said to me: 'The ivory man has had a dream about you, a dream connected with ivory. He does not dare to tell you about it. But I think perhaps it would interest you.' I thought this was a dodge to sell me more ivory, but Masamba said no; business was over now, and the ivory man was very wise. Besides, would I look at him—he was not really a black man. He came from another race altogether; not a white race, either.

I suggested had he a Chinese strain? For I had noticed some Mongolian features about, even among villagers. But Masamba said no: the ivory man belonged to a much older and wiser race, connected with ivory and dreams—not black, not white, not yellow,

but very wise. A little tired of Masamba's wisdom, I said, all right, let him come.

He came, then, as a visitor, and I asked him to sit down. This was apparently a breach of etiquette, for he said he would be 'shamed'—'honteux' was his word. In the end, on Masamba explaining my good faith, the ivory man sat on the floor, and Masamba remained standing. Sitting on the floor is not sitting down. They both spoke atrocious French, but understandable once you got used to it. Points were made perfectly clear really. So what he said, translated and simplified and put in order, came to this. He, in a dream, had seen me. I was profoundly asleep. Several thousand years asleep, he said.

Here I interrupted him, for the first of many times. 'What does it mean, several thousand years asleep? Had I been asleep for several thousand years?'

'No,' he said, 'but in sleep you can go to a great distance; if you sleep deeply your spirit can travel several thousand miles or many thousand years; it is the same.'

Therefore I had been asleep to a depth of several thousand years. Now in that sleep some very ancient spirits had come to visit me. I interrupted again. Did that mean that this happened several thousand years ago? I thought I had had a brain-wave. No, he said patiently. It happened now. So I was baffled and listened again.

The ancient spirits were white on black. They belonged to his race. What did that mean, white on black? Here he unexpectedly produced from some pocket two pieces of ivory sculpture stuck on pieces of dark brown wood, not ebony. So I thought: After all, this is business. But he surprised me again, and I could see Masamba was grinning. The ivory man said: 'These are now yours. The spirits give them to you, you must not offer to pay me for them.' So I was baffled again. Now it seems that these spirits, ivory white on black, came quite near to me; just to have a good look at me, and make a pact with me.

What pact? He did not know, and waved my interruptions aside somewhat impatiently, but not impertinently. I had had a good look at them too, and they had floated away again, one by one, changing their faces as they drifted off. That was very important, their faces had changed in outline, while I was watching them receding, but always they were ivory white on black, like the sculptures.

I was not frightened—I was profoundly astonished, because I had never, even in my deepest sleep, seen spirits as old, and I had made a pact with them. As each one went by I had said, in French: 'Ave Maria, Je vous salue Marie.' That was the pact. I am not known, even to myself, as a particularly devout Christian. So I asked the ivory man: 'Why should I say Ave Maria to ivory spirits? Was I praying to them? or to be protected from them? How is that a pact?' He said: 'Now what I say was not in the dream. It is only what I say. But I know about dreams.' Masamba chimed in again: 'He knows about dreams. He is very wise. He is very old.' And Masamba grinned. The ivory man did not seem to be particularly old. Thirty or so, I would have said. However, I did not raise the point, but said: 'Go on, tell me.' So the ivory man said: 'The pact was this. You are a great white.' (I learnt later that *un grand blanc* means a white man from France, a man who is superior to the whites in Africa, such as a minister, an inspector, a metropolitan official higher in the hierarchy than colonials.) 'You must teach Christianity to the ancient spirits, who were here before the negroes.' 'How?' said I.

'By teaching it to the negroes; then the ancient spirits can see it in the minds of the negroes, and learn.' 'How is that a pact?' I said. 'What do I get?'

'In exchange the ancient spirits and the negroes of to-day will help you against your enemies. They will fight for de Gaulle. They came from many thousand years to look into your mind to see what Christianity was; to see if they wanted it. So you said Ave Maria to them. So they saw that it was good. So they made this pact with you. That is why their faces changed as they went away. Christianity will change them.'

Here Masamba grinned again, and interrupted again and said: 'I told you so; he is very wise; he is very old.'

Masamba was grinning practically all the time. I came to think this was his natural state, and not an expression of opinion. When by chance he was serious, that must have been an expression of opinion.

Still this matter disturbed me. 'How do you know,' I asked the ivory man, 'that I accepted this pact?'

'Because you said Ave Maria,' he said, and I could get no further in that direction.

So I asked him: 'Of course, you are a Christian? Who taught you?' He answered: 'No one, I have always been a Christian. I know more about Christ than the bishop with his long beard. I found it out by myself, in my dreams, as I found out about you.' Of course this was irresistible, so I said: 'What do you know of Christ that the bishop does not know?' So he told me only too willingly.

'I met a man at the foot of a big waterfall.' 'Where?' I said.

'In a dream,' he said. 'This man was on a horse. So was I. We waited a long while, and then we jumped into the pool at the foot of the waterfall. Then we were two fishes, with big round heads and small tails, like two tears that drop, only made of light. So we got out of the water, but underneath the water, under the earth, in the light. Then there were many hundreds, or thousands, of others. But we fell faster and passed them all. Then we saw the tops of trees, like a forest from a high mountain. But we fell through them, and they had no stems. Between the tops and the roots there was nothing but light, a cloud of light. Then we passed the roots and went through the earth, and the earth became rock, but we went on. Then the rocks became coloured like the rainbow, and we were going down through the rainbow. Then we saw that the rainbow was the head of God, who was sitting in the centre of the world. God was sitting, very sad. Christ was dead, and His body, all clothed in white and very stiff and straight, was stretched across God's knees. Then all at once we saw the dead stiff Christ begin to turn from left to right on God's knees,

like a gate swinging. And it banged against something that we could not see, that stopped it, and, like a gate that will not shut, it banged three or four times, and then swung back again as it was at first. Then all was quiet and the time of the Resurrection came. The Christ sat up slowly and beautifully by the right hand of God, and God was glad, and God disappeared—there was only Christ, sitting in the centre of the world with the rainbow round His head. He held the Cross in His right hand. On the Cross was the image of Christ suffering.

'Suddenly a wild beast, a leopard or a panther, sprang at the Christ on the Cross, and tore it down. It was terrible. The body came down, only the nails held it by the feet. Some terrible people came and took it away, and skinned the leopard and nailed his skin on the cross and worshipped the leopard. All the time the Christ was sitting on the throne in the centre of the world, with the rainbow round His head, looking on unmoved while all this was going on on the Cross He was holding in His right hand. Then some good people came, with a ladder. They took off the leopard's skin, with pincers, pulling out the nails, standing on the top of the ladder. Then they nailed a white lamb's skin on the Cross, where the leopard's skin had been worshipped by the bad men. Then Christ was pleased. But all the time He was sitting in the centre of the world, with the rainbow round His head, holding the Cross in His right hand, taking notice of what men did with the Cross, but doing nothing.

'So the other man and I, who had been together at the waterfall, were very happy.

'Now do you think the bishop knows all this?' said the ivory man. And I had to admit that I believed the bishop did not.

Masamba was still grinning. He had won. Then the ivory man added, as an afterthought: 'While the Christ was trying to sit up to take His place at the right hand of God, there came out of His body several little Christs, all white and stiff, that went away floating in the air to all parts of the world. Those are all the wrong religions of the world. Perhaps the bishop has one of them. And the Christ hanging

stiff and dead like a gate on the wrong side, that was another wrong religion, too.'

Masamba no longer grinned. I did not dare to grin myself. I never saw that ivory man again, except perhaps in my dreams. I brought back as very precious objects the two pieces of ivory stuck on black wood. They are two faces—and here again I cannot tell which is male and which is female.

I never dared to ask Masamba. I never dared to tell the bishop, either. So now I hope he will read this book.

V: The Professor

THIS MAN was a University Professor in a small town in the South of France. I knew him intimately; he liked me and trusted me enough to try and teach me something. By career he was a philologist of world-wide repute in his intellectual circle, having proved that there was a common layer of vocabulary, mostly in the nouns of numerals, between the Semitic and the Indo-European languages. He belonged to the Third Order of the Franciscans, and really he was a saint. Students never went to his lectures when they could possibly help it. He was well over fifty when he told me of the nine visions, which had come to him over many years.

I

First there is a threshold. You pass over into an abstract world. There remains only a line: a straight line, immutable, perfectly serene, holding the whole of consciousness. Above rhythm and desire, the will subsists, holding intellect and feeling, willing also the turmoil and violence of desire and action—all things exist only in so far as they are thus willed, participating in the straight line. The smallest things are as important as the greatest. Motion ceases. The fear of cessation ceases.

II

Desire rises, reaches a climax, collapses. Then it rises again to a new climax, and another collapse. In time it reaches a high level line, coinciding for a while with the abstract line of the first vision. But again it collapses, and so on for ever.

III

I woke up at dawn. There was an impossible light over the mind and the spirit, a great calm. Something in me was saying: look at things from a sufficient height. Physically, I could see everything—but all details had disappeared—and everything was detail. There was no content to the vision. Perfect trust.

These are the first three visions: the abstract visions of God. Here the Buddhists stop. But then comes a second threshold: on to the concrete visions of God: the three middle visions.

IV

God takes his pleasure in creatures that suffer and sin and are ignorant of him. How could we prove to him that we love him— how could we really love him—had we not to go through suffering and death to reach him ?

He beckons to us: a slight sign; we are not forced to obey: we are free.

We must go, even if we think that perhaps God will not be there.

'My God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Christ was at the meeting place, and found God was not.

Thus woman gives herself to man: not knowing what will happen, casting all upon the future. Shall God have less honour than man has from woman?

We must give up to him even our hopes, not knowing whether he will give them back to us.

But for death, suffering, ignorance, God would have no joy of us": of our springing towards him.

Those who know can give God no joy: except perhaps by complete submission. But those who do not know that God exists and yet rush towards God: they give joy. Those who do more than they are forced to do. Those that bear suffering, not knowing of any reward to come: those transform suffering into love.

Happy those who have not seen, and believed. Happy those who have not believed and yet endured. Those who, not knowing of God, have yet willed him to be— have risked their existence so that God should be, not knowing of the result.

V

Again I woke up at dawn, and my soul was spread out before me, stretching as far as God, divided into many zones. I could not see

them all, rather I could touch them, through an extended kind of sense of touch.

First a zone of forgetfulness, difficult to cross on awakening, or on coming back. This, once broken, allows memory to flow. On going to sleep you cross it; on coming back it closes behind you, or misshapes your memories, gradually blurring them, or cutting them out like a door shutting.

Then a zone of sexual images, where dwells Lilith.

Then a zone of all the petty troubles of the day, small affairs, small illnesses, and the permanent illness behind. All the many demons of Babylonia and Egypt.

Then a zone of the body: the great physiological functions, calm, powerful, in repose—beyond the illness zone. The Gods of classical Greece.

Then a zone of memory in the body, of this our life, in every detail, but at once merging into a zone of memory of other lives in the flesh, of memory of numerous reincarnations. The soul, stretching into the past, also comprehends space. Then a zone of joy and suffering mixed in equilibrium, as in the Passion of Christ, beyond the world.

Then a zone of judgment and of decisions, beyond existence. Then a zone of abstract calm.

Then the Father. But then you wake up. Christ is the Only One who possesses all the zones.

The man added, speaking of this vision—when I had it, I did not believe in Christ, any more than in the Babylonian gods. I saw them, but I did not believe in them. I did not believe really even in God: only in the abstract God, the Buddhist being, of the first three visions.

VI

Again one day, later, I woke up at dawn, in a state of complete certainty, looking at the vision. In my moment of waking, it was simultaneous, I saw it all in one instant. But, being awake, it took me half an hour to look at all the parts of it, which were fading away

against my will. Then I fell asleep again and on waking, remembered I had had a vision, but very little else. On concentrating, a sentence came back to me: 'all the details related of Jesus are divine.' Leading up from that, I recalled the vision till I had it in my memory as complete as I had been able to catch it. This is what I found, in fragments: —the perfect soul ceases, except in the keeping of the memory of God.

—God is the only one who suffers, who loves, who feels; we think we do, but we are only effective parts of him doing it;

—Why does God undergo all this? to take his pleasure with the souls of the saints, of those who trusted him through ignorance and suffering; who abandoned their selves to love him without hope of any reward, just for the love at the moment of loving, even were eternity to be empty, or tormented. —reincarnation: God cannot be reached by us in one life; we are too imperfect; we are of no use to God as we are; many more lives must reshape us, form us to his liking, through much suffering, through much love, through many deaths. We only learn through death: nothing else really impresses our memory. So we must die many times, until we know all we have to know to be of any use—and we must also learn to die in joy. —God is a God of details; of every detail he is aware; in every detail he is active. In politics, in wars, in psychology—this is evident, childish even; the contrary would be unconceivable. —All details that are related of the life of Christ are divine. The man added, speaking of this vision: even now I did not believe that Christ was God. I simply looked upon Him as a Man glorified, perhaps by God, but more likely by Mankind. Yet, I saw all this, not believing. Only it impressed itself—with difficulty—on my memory. I did not understand until later; I did not accept until later still. I am a very obdurate mind. Yet I had passed by this time, through these experiences, from the vision of the abstract to the vision of the concrete God: the God that dwells in details as well as in the whole. The God of the Jews and the Mahommedans. From the God or no God of the Buddhists, who are still much further outwards. My mind had seen further than that, but

had only accepted that. Christ I had seen but refused; but I had been unwillingly carried as far as accepting God, no longer only as an abstract power, but as a concrete personality.

Such were the three middle visions: of the concrete God. The last three brought me to the personal human God: Christ dragged me reluctant, but powerless to resist, on to the last vision. In this there was a great blessing for me: I can now always remember that all was done against my will, against my protesting mind, in spite of my absence of conscious feelings. Therefore I am sure that I have had nothing to do with this; I have not wished or manufactured it. I have been the victim of objective perception. As a witness I am unimpeachable: I was steadily resisting with all my powers. Now I need not say merely that I believe or hope; I can say that I know.

VII

Now I saw the truth of the Virgin Birth. This is the most difficult of all to explain decently, because it is a physiological thing. But I had long observed in my flesh that desire unrelieved, and kept tense in the flesh for a long time, transformed itself into ideas and visions. It was not the cause of the visions, but it was the physical instrument that carried the spirit to the vision. Now I saw that the desire of the world, unsatisfied because of the Virginity, was the vehicle on which Christ could come into flesh. Just as sexual desire unappeased creates ideas, the sexual desire of the world, concentrated but not satisfied in the Virgin, created Christ: God made flesh.

I knew that this vision was true: it was not a mere idea, because the fear of death was upon me when I had it. Without death and the fear of death we could not be sure of the truth of any idea. But with death and the fear of death we are sure of the truth: only the truth resists death and the fear of death. The man added, speaking of this vision: now I gave in. I told my mind to be quiet and cease from troubling, that this was a fact and that I had seen it. This is perhaps the only little bit of merit I may claim.

But later, in the last vision, I found that this vision was true, but seen by me upside down: in this also is a proof, because the error made sincerely by the witness proves the reality of the event which the witness has not quite understood, and therefore has not invented. My error was this: that it was not the desire of the world in the Virgin that created Christ, but the other way: it was Christ incarnating in the Virgin that created the desire of the world.

In this vision I also saw that the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection were the same thing: the passing from nothingness to the maximum of life, the creative act of God, who explodes into the Maximum in one instant, out of all time. And God must create the maximum spontaneously: the Incarnation and the Resurrection are two phases of creation seen by us separately; and they are linked by the Passion, the Suffering and the Death; and the three, Incarnation, Passion, Death, are the same thing: the Creative Act. This I saw then, and accept, but did not understand. I came to understanding only with the last vision of all.

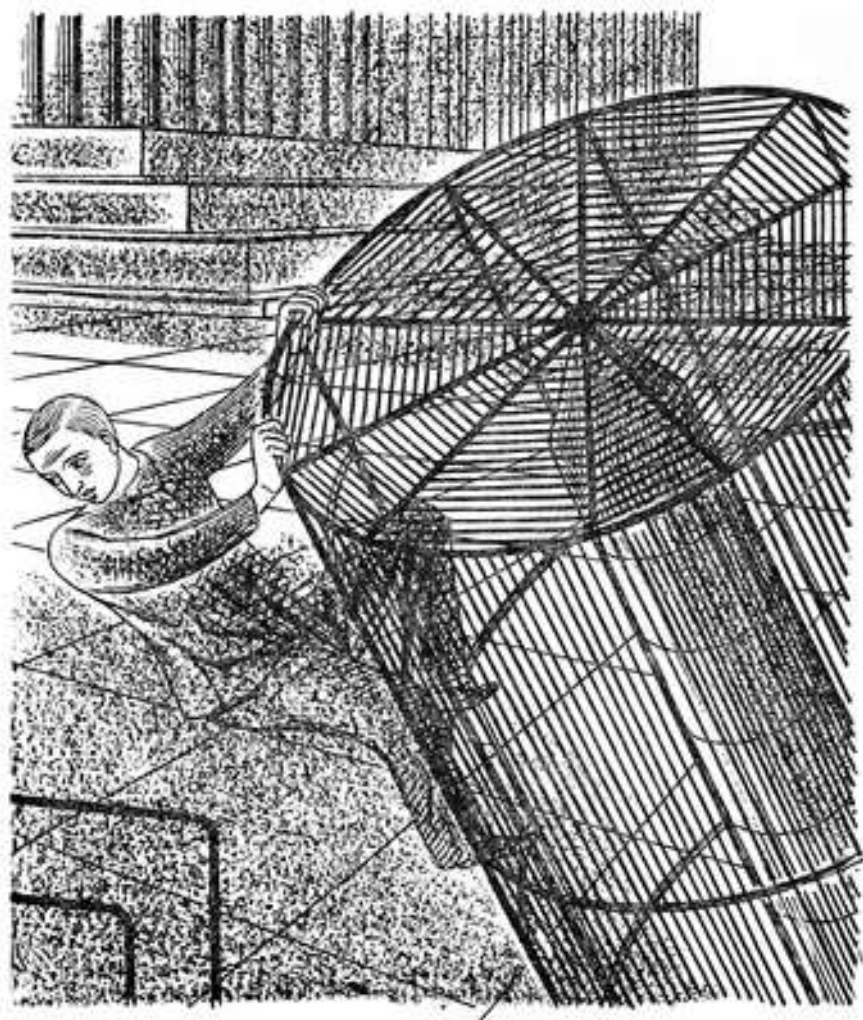
VIII

Then one night I woke up and I was saying out aloud: Yes, Lord, for eternity.

I had seen Christ, and pledged myself to him, and waked up in time to hear myself take the pledge. Awake, I could not see the Christ, but he was there, in the darkness of my sleep, separated only by the thinness of that instant; and I had been given the privilege to hear my pledge as Christ received it.

IX

Here, I, the author, interrupted the man, and told him: I know; the old canon has told me: It is Jesus, the Christ, that creates the world.



VI: The Old King

THEN I went back to my high official, who, surely, must have been that Nicodemus who talked with the Lord in the night, and who was told: You must be born again. A secret he did not understand then as the holy text proves, but which he had now interpreted, in the ancient spirit of his people as a veiled reference to reincarnation, since the Masters of Israel, the Cabalists, taught reincarnation, and Jesus expressed legitimate surprise that one of them should not know of it.

Anyway, he was the most amenable to reason, in a crowd where reason was very much at a discount: treated, in fact, as a servant that is made to do the necessary house work while the masters have visions.

I wanted to question him about suffering, many hints having come my way so far, but not enough. But he started again on reincarnation, his favourite topic. I led him to mine in due time. He said: This happened in Phrygia.

I was holding a young girl's hand, and running. We were on the platform in front of a Greek temple of the usual style, columns with a triangular front on. We ran a few yards straight ahead. We did not know the place at all. Suddenly the girl let go of my hand and ran on alone, while I stopped one moment; she jumped one step on to a slightly lower level and ran straight on. She was very short-sighted, although beautiful and strong. Some ten yards further out there was a sheer drop of forty feet, the temple having been built on a very high masoned platform, no doubt to make it safe from armed assault on that side. The girl did not realise the position, and thought she had in front of her just one step like the one she had just jumped. So she hurled herself joy-fully into a shattered death.

Why I had stopped when she let go of my hand I did not know. I realised the calamity at once, and started running along the temple front to my right, to find an issue to the ground level, and there was only a queer structure apparently made of bronze, rising to some twenty feet. It consisted of a series of circles some ten feet in

diameter, a few feet one above the other, and held by upright bronze ladders, of which only one was accessible from my side.

Thinking that this was some unusual way out, invented again to protect the temple, I climbed the ladder, hoping to come down to the ground on the other side. But as I came to the top, some mechanism was set in motion by my weight, and the whole structure, with me on top, started oscillating from back to front, relatively to the temple front. As it inclined towards the temple side, I perceived that at its lowest angle it came within reach of two rails so placed, vertically and horizontally, that the second could be seized if the first was missed. Then one could slide down to the ground. There was no other way out. But I also perceived that this led inside the temple grounds and that a very high wall separated them from the outside and the place where the girl now lay dead and mangled.

So I remained on the oscillating tower, in extreme agony, and the vision went out.

Now do not tell me this was a feat of my imagination: I should then have to tell you that you are talking nonsense. I can tell, having had much more experience than you of the ways of the imagination, that this was just a plain memory of a distant past. Imagination does not work that way at all. A man with experience of the spirit can tell the feel of a vision, as clearly as you can tell a photograph of a real scene from a made-up drawing. Listen further. One year later I was reading in Plutarch a chapter I had never read or had in my hands or house before. Do you know the story of Kamma, a Gallic princess in a temple in Asia Minor, during the three-century-long adventure of the Gauls in what came to be called Galatia ?

Kamma's husband, Sinotus, was killed by his overlord, Sinorix, who wanted Kamma. The Princess, known by her munificence to the local temple of Diana, became one of the head-priestesses there, finding sanctuary. But her relatives, and even the temple people, pressed her to give in. Sinorix had only sinned through love of her. In due time, she gave in, and, before the altar of Diana, wed Sinorix, giving him a poisoned cup of which she first drank a little less than half. So he died

first, and she died laughing on hearing that he was dead. They had put him into a litter to take him home, and he died oscillating.

As I read this, from the opening sentence I knew that this was the key to my vision. In our following reincarnation we had paid for this—for Kamma was not innocent of love for Sinorix, a thing Plutarch did not know. So the accident was Kamma having to kill herself again, unwillingly this time, and to be separated from her lover—who was again left oscillating.

After reading a few sentences of Plutarch, I knew the end, put the book aside, and worked out the end of that story from my own memory. Then I read on, and I was right.

Probably the murder of Sinotus took place round 200 B.C., and the accident to re-born Kamnia and me some 70 B.C. during the Mithridates wars, which crushed the Gaul power, Kamma and I, running from the enemy through an unknown and deserted temple, came upon our fate.

Thus repetition and completion are interwoven, leading on to higher planes of the spirit. For I may as well tell you that this was worked out further by the lady of the song in the XVIth century, when her lover escaped the law only for a later torture, as I have related to you. And also the conclusion, as I hope, is being reached in our present calamities.

The vision was, in fact, on the 2jth of December, 1938, had I but known it, and there are those who would have known it, a prophecy of this war of 1940 and of the ending of it, seen two years before it happened.

The rhythm of some private calamities I have undergone awoke the memory of that rhythm of that private calamity to Kamma and me long ago; and the vision came back to memory because the calamity to the Gauls at the time of the Mithridates wars was also on the same rhythm as the calamity to France now, and, magnified, on the same rhythm as the Kamma episode. Private and national catastrophe ran similarly: the confident rush of a beautiful short-sighted being, the

jump into the abyss, the terrifically quick shattering, the unavailing efforts of the friend, who, having hesitated too long, wishing to help, is left oscillating in the air, powerless.

Even thus were England and France brought to their fate. But there will be other reincarnations. I do not see how intelligent people can face the world if they do not know that. Stupid people can, though.

Also perhaps Kamma was not dead, only broken. I do not know. He said: Read the New Testament. Everything is there. If you read it carefully, keeping your own destiny in mind, you will find yourself in it. John says that all the world could not contain the books that would relate what Christ said. Of course not: since even all future worlds are implied in the New Testament. For instance, you were one of those two disciples that went to fetch the colt on which Christ was to ride to triumph and to death. Perhaps I was the other, and that is why we are now talking, as we talked then, on the way. Remember my dream of the hidden king: I was on a similar job then. Fetching the young king was the same thing as fetching the young ass. But you, an author of books, are the leader of the donkey that is to carry Christ. The donkey did not know Christ, but carried him; so your books: books of ignorance, of course, but they carry Christ. You only lead them.

You suggest I was Nicodemus—It might be that he was that second disciple.

What did I do during the Passion ?

Remember that all men are at the Passion; all men help to crucify Christ, actively, passively, or in sympathy with Christ. All the traitors of the world, all the officials of the world, all the saints of the world. You and I, we were there with the others. This trick we have in talking of time is so deceptive. We are there, now. Our real life is that eternal drama, which radiates action, suffering and love throughout the world. What we think we are now, or have been in other lives, that is only a series of deformations that, dreamerlike, we inflict again and again on our true version of ourselves: we call that going down the

ages. Like a man who might be hungry in his sleep, and dream successively that he is a cat chasing a mouse, or a lover wooing a girl or a soldier killing his foe, or a tiger eating a man, and so on. Really, he is only a hungry man asleep and dreaming, as he finds when he wakes up.

When we wake up, we are round Christ in the New Testament. Why Christ suffered all that ? Take and eat, this is my flesh. Try and see this: suffering and joy are the same thing seen from different sides, like B.C. and A.D. Remember that in the animal species maternal love comes only to the females that bear their young in pain. The others do not care. Woman is the female that suffers most and loves most.

But God suffers the maximum and loves the maximum. Creating the world means that God separates suffering from joy, in himself: thus he has the Incarnation, the utmost joy of God, and the Resurrection, the utmost triumph—but he also has the Passion, the utter desolation of absolute suffering. All men, all creatures, are fragments of both God's suffering and God's joy, liberated to do their own will. Their birth out of God is the Crucifixion: the suffering of Birthgiving by God. Inasmuch as we are born, we must then participate in both the Suffering and the Joy. Only in our own selfishness—without which we could not exist—we try and separate the two, so as to avoid the suffering and have only the joy.

Hence our many lives. Whenever we can, we reject the suffering of our birth into another life. But we must meet it some time. Because only when we meet it, at first most unwillingly, then after many times with understanding; when we have died first in suffering or in terror many times, then in peace several times, then in joy at last, then we are fit company for God. We have again transformed the suffering into love: into the love of God, into the love of our neighbours. We have reached again the equilibrium of all the forces—for a time.

That is why also we do not know too much: if all men knew all this, then their sufferings would be transformed only into selfishness : who would not suffer a little for an eternity of bliss ? Suffering and sacrifice

would be hypocrisy. God would find no love in mankind: no love from mankind, no love for mankind. He would not have created the world. He would not be God. That is why knowledge is given only to those who have in the past, in many past lives, suffered and died in ignorance but with all the force of their goodwill. Those reap knowledge and joy: for they have added to God's creation. From their suffering they have made love.

That is why it is of no use to tell this to mankind: they will not believe it, because they cannot believe it; it is not attuned to the present state of their destiny. Men do not learn through their minds, but only through their many joys, many sufferings, many deaths. Men learn only when they have been shaped by life and death into receptivity. But one by one they will learn, and realise their identity with Christ, reaching his heart, being purified, and then starting again on another round, willingly, to help Christ to bear his cross, to help Jesus to create more worlds, into space, into the past, into the future: eternally widening the divine circulation through all the possible degrees of ignorance and suffering and gradual enlightenment and bliss: which are all four found mixed in everything. But ever Jesus, the Man who came to earth, and had a Virgin for a mother, is the pulsating Centre, in his Death of which are our many deaths, in his Resurrection, of which are our many resurrections. Since the fragments of the One must be the Many.

VII: The Enemy

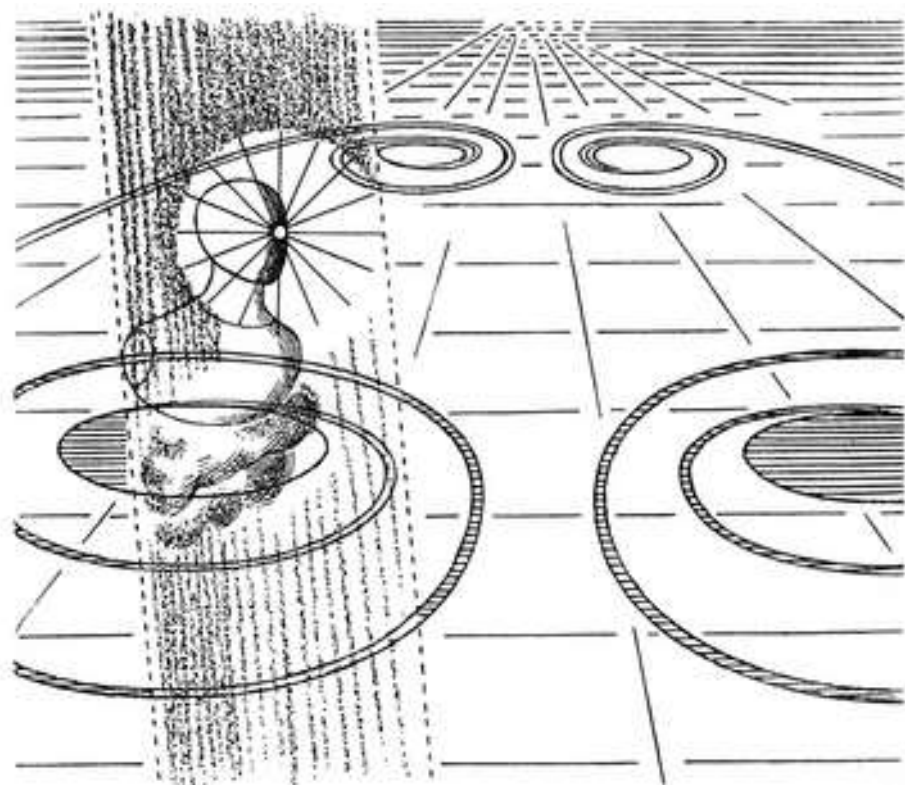
I MET yet another man. This one was in England, though French. He was deeply religious and submissive and full of good will. He was lying down resting on a low bed. Suddenly he leaned on his right side, and he saw on the carpeted floor, two feet away from his own face, a small man about the size of a human fist, nearly naked, yet harnessed with a precise panoply of war, like a huge insect surrounded by tentacles. This small man had in him a concentrated power that gave his flesh a redoubtable density, as though it were a jelly of dynamite.

He took no notice at all of my friend, who had all his time—all time—to stare at him. There was no aggressiveness. The tremendous spirit was not in action—not towards my friend anyway—no hostility; he was just about his lawful occasions, doing nothing special.

But my friend felt, and knew: this was the spirit of anger, the profound force of cruelty, which could be released in explosion, and immediately fill the heart, fill the world, and wreck it. If it were given power and occasion. Where was the power? In the human heart. My friend felt, and knew: were he to accept this, which was projected from his own heart, anger—then the terrible little power would occupy him entirely. Were other men to accept also, then a. God, one of the terrible gods of the heathen, one of the terrible devils of the Christians, would be unleashed out of nothingness, out of the black force of many human hearts. Thus the old gods had been created: Marduk and Osiris, and Shiva: created to be seen, to be felt, to be followed, to be obeyed, to be broken by. War, love, greed, pride, the seven deadly ones. He had seen anger. No doubt the others were near, ready to spring into existence, into physical existence as well as spiritual, were they given the power and the occasion. They were the powers in man that separate him from God.

They were the torturers of Christ, necessary also to the Creation of the World. What was to be done? through the centuries. My friend leant over, and opened his heart, and offered hospitality to the evil spirit, into his own heart; putting aside fear, he offered love; and the

evil little spirit, instead of growing and exploding, dissolved and went back into the human heart he had come from, and all his dreadful force was mingled into the great force of Christ flowing through the heart, and made it even greater.



PART IV: HIGH DREAMS

1: The Old Man and the Marble Forms

A STONE hut by the roadside in the middle of a forest. The hut was rather large, twenty feet by twenty-five; the stones were roughly squared, more or less cemented, solid but primitive. The weak point was the door; the boards were disjointed and half rotted, and just held together. Really the door did not close; any strong blow from the outside would open it.

Past the door, on the road, an unending German convoy was going by. Spring, 1942. Cars, light tanks, armoured cars, artillery of all kinds, lorryfull after lorryfull of infantry, everything imagination has contrived.

The man who lived in the hut was looking on, watching the procession. His heart was quiet and full of courage, but he could do nothing but stay there and watch. That was much as it was. He knew that behind him, behind the trees and bushes, a bow-man from the olden times was in hiding, a kind of English outlaw from Robin Hood's following who, occasionally, from cover, pierced through with an arrow one of the German soldiers that sat on the back seat of some vehicle. The Germans had no time to stop and hunt for him.

This lasted for a long time; so long as to seem permanent. At last—this was expected—in the column there appeared a peasant's cart, drawn by a mule, keeping pace without much difficulty with the slow tanks and lorries.

An old man dressed in a marshal's uniform was sitting on the front seat, driving. The small two-wheeled cart was loaded with odd pieces of furniture: a table, a plank bed, a small cupboard, two chairs; a poor man's furniture, that can be taken away on a cart to escape from an invasion. On the back seat, a little girl, ten or twelve years old, very

pretty, dressed as a peasant child, but warmly, was sitting rather comfortably, looking back to-wards the end of the convoy; apparently waiting for something, not even anxious or startled.

The man in the hut looked at them for a long time; on the straight road, he could keep them in sight for a long reach. The man thought: I hope the bowman will not shoot at those. But nothing happened.

The bowman, somehow, had got into the hut; not through the door; perhaps through some hole at the back. He said nothing but sat in a corner. Both men were thinking: the little girl will not be shot at. Even the Germans on the following vehicles had seemed to look at her with some sympathy, as a rather tired bull might look at a sheep at the other end of his meadow. Then, all at once, a huge horseman stopped outside the hut. The German column had disappeared. The gigantic and menacing soldier got off his colossal horse, stood at the open door—which hardly hung on its hinges—and looked into the hut, as though wondering: 'What can I do with this ?' The man in the hut went forward to meet the horseman, and meet what was to happen. Then, all at once again, the huge horseman was, apparently, obliterated. A ray of dark purple light, of which each particle was vibrating with an intensity that could just still be perceived, although on the verge of non-perception, came down between the horseman and the man of the hut. The horseman was no longer seen.

The man said: 'I am ready.'

The purple ray was practically vertical, but not quite, leaning perhaps a foot towards the right at the top of its visibility, the base touching the beaten earthen floor of the hut.

As soon as the man said: 'I am ready,' the base of the purple ray lifted itself from the floor, then left the hut, the forest, the Earth, the solar system, the Milky Way, the world—at least this world.

The man of the hut went with the purple ray.

The colossal horseman went on looking into the hut, which now appeared empty, as he could not see the English bowman, who had

not moved from his corner, from where he could have shot the horseman through the heart, his arrow being ready on the bowstring.

But the man in the ray had long ceased to see them. An empty interval.

Then the man was looking at a completely non-human landscape; non-cosmic even. The man himself was now quite small, nearly non-existent, yet eternal: he was now one of the vibrating particles of the purple ray, which, naturally, he could not now see. He was looking at some great parallel lines curved in an inconceivably elegant form, running, not out of sight, but as far as the man could see, and then curving back, perfectly defined, never lost sight of, coming back in simple arabesques, curving inward, ending inside their own orbits in enormous commas and marks of interrogation.

The man could see that the interval between the parallel lines was not empty, but formed from a white hard substance, of which on the earth white marble is a figuration within human comprehension. His enraptured mind followed the immense marble roads that curved with grace and power as far as his perception went, without useless complications, curving back just at the limit of perception, coming back into the centre of the vision, on to the perfect circle which ends the interrogation mark. A huge system of marble roads stretched thus to the right, another to the left, the two immense curves facing inward to each other, bound, though not touching, through the harmonious proportions of the whole.

Then the Man-Particle of purple light saw, gradually, that this marble was a living and vibrating substance. Without in any way interfering with their perfect alignment, the great marble roads were vibrating, rather slowly, with grace and majesty, in harmony; like sounds on earth vibrate harmoniously within an orchestral symphony in which everything is in order and in motion.

The man was just looking on.

From the purple ray that he could not see because he was a part of it, through a sort of pressure that came from the whole ray, the

thought was forming upon him, very clearly and unavoidably transmitted and forced upon him:

—these are worlds that are achieving existence and consciousness; their vibrating is the beginning of their self-consciousness as worlds; one must be very high to see this; few beings have ever seen it; the soul must be completely away from the body to see this.

2: *The Pyramid*

THE YOUNG man—eighteen?—was standing on a rather narrow platform that stretched at some length right and left, then turning away at right angles—say, twenty yards from where he was.

In front of him, a rather long and narrow table, at which three women were sitting watching him. Behind them, the inclined side of a pyramid rising to a hundred feet or more, quite smooth, although the angles he could see, to the right and to the left, were somewhat blunted by the passing of years—or of centuries. A small door behind the women.

Before taking a good look at the women, the young man cast a glance downward, right and left, and saw that they were nearly at the top of a huge pyramid, of which the slopes spread below him, in big stone steps of three feet in height, going down perhaps for five hundred yards to an immense plain, visible but indistinct.

He brought his eyes and his attention back to the three women sitting in front of him; with a mixture of severity and sympathy they were considering his case. The woman at the centre was perhaps fifty; not fifty as a woman who has lived fifty times twelve months since she was born as a baby girl, but a woman who had always been, and would always be, fifty. She was, in her way, beautiful, without a trace of degradation or heaviness; the flesh was full, the curves harmonious and nowhere excessive; a tall woman, it could be seen even when she was sitting. Her eyes seemed to reflect all there was to see; not penetrating, rather receiving; a half-smile on her face: half severity, half sympathy.

On her left sat a woman who inclined more to sympathy. On her right, one inclined more to severity, though sympathetic still.

The woman in the middle had the true equilibrium: wisdom coming from experience but tempered by kindness. The woman on the left of the tribunal was the youngest: twenty-five perhaps. Slender but tall, with strong and elegant muscles. Her face was full of hope and enterprise. She was ready to accept the risks of her kindness.

The third woman might be thirty-five. Her kindness was harsher. She was looking into the future to see what the results of present kindness were to be; she held back kindness, as a driver of horses holds back impulsive horses to force them into the proper road at the proper speed.

The young man—eighteen ?—became aware at last (this was the last element in the picture) of a young woman of his own age, or perhaps slightly older, standing next to him, straight and firm, perfect in bodily form but rather plain, though pleasant, of face. In her face could be read a potential wisdom, of which the two elements, severity and kindness, had not yet developed. The face would become beautiful later, if the woman succeeded; or else would fade into calm, joyless old age. The love in the woman had not been freed yet. She was watching both the young man and the tribunal, attentively, but with no expression except of good will.

The sitting was over. Decisions had been taken. The youngest of the women judges stood up, threw a very simple cloak over her shoulders, and came towards the surprised young couple. Then facing outwards, towards the descending slope, the girl took in her right hand the young man's left hand, and both looked at the descent for a moment, by the side of the unexpected com-panion now changed from a judge into a comrade. The other two judges remained sitting, watching in silence; the three young people now had their backs to the table. Then, all at once, the man took a great decision, and, pressing strongly the girl's hand and taking her along as he would a bride, jumped lightly on the step below; and both began jumping from step to step, joyfully, more and more joyfully as they descended. The two women judges, the more severe and the kinder, were smiling now, sitting relaxed, as the young man could see by a last glance over his shoulder, before he lost sight of them at the third jump.

The youngest judge, the enterprising one, was jumping by the side of the young couple, independently but in harmony, evidently joyful too.

Half-way down, the young man, looking below him, became aware that the steps ceased some twenty yards lower down. The slope continued as a plain straight hillside made of some kind of cement.

He understood at once what was to be done, and glanced at the two women; the girl, whose hand he was holding, knew at once; the other had always known. Then, at the last step, taking their slight jump, they inclined the feet forward so as to have the toes slightly downwards and strike the slope with the whole foot, toes, plant and heel, at once, whereas before they had landed on the toes and the first supple joints of the foot, lowering then the heel to the ground before jumping again. Now the surface of the pyramid received the whole foot at once, and it was that surface, made of some sort of elastic substance, which yielded slightly under the foot.

The man looked at the two women again after three or four jumps and received a reassuring smile. Things were going well. But now the length of each jump, which had been determined before by the height and width of each step, was left to the discretion of the leader and the young man calculated each jump, holding his bride by the hand.

The other young woman, at a slight distance, regulated her efforts on theirs, in friendly concord. Thus they reached the bottom of the pyramid. A last effort was then to be made: a kind of ditch of no great depth or no great width ran right along the base, and it was necessary not to jump into it. Necessary but easy. The three took a last jump and landed at last on the firm elastic earth, the earth of the Earth now, that stretched before them infinitely, with slight undulations, covered with short familiar grass.

After a hundred yards or so, the young woman, graciously and gracefully, bowed to the couple to say goodbye, then turned to the north-east, leaving them. They stood looking at her for a few minutes, then turned south, still holding hands, and went joyfully towards the sun.

The young man's last external thought was that the woman-judge, going north-east, would have to go along the face of the pyramid

before she could take her true direction, and therefore go east for a while, or at least east-north-east to the angle. Then he looked at his bride.

3. Children on the Staircase

AN IMMENSE hall, as of a palace, or a prison, or a school. A desert of polished and dangerous marble, black, with white designs.

On the back wall, an immense staircase, four flights separated by long landings; the whole four flights and the three landings all planted against the one interminable wall—out of all proportion or necessity. A long file of children, two by two, or three by three, or even sometimes four by four, holding hands, waiting, the whole length of the hall.

Never has an architect on earth put four flights of stairs, and three long landings, against the same straight wall. Therefore, duplicating this impossible staircase, there was another, zig-zagging upwards so that at the first landing one could go to the right, up to the second floor instead of going on upwards to the left; then on the second floor one could go left again upwards, and so on. But some kink in mathematical space brought it about that the top of the zig-zagging staircase and the top of the longitudinal staircase reached the last floor at the same spot. As though the top of the hall had been folded back upon itself, and the two upper exits, which should have been some eighty yards apart, were actually one.

The children were to go up to the last floor. Why? No one knew.

The stairs had no railings. The children went up and up alongside of a sheer drop that grew deeper with each step; and the children had no protection against a fall. But the brave little things, holding hands by two, or threes, or fours, went up unperturbed, and there were no accidents. At the top they came to a much greater difficulty.

The steps were built at right angles against the wall, so the last step of all abutted on the empty air, touching the last floor only on the right at one point, and even there, twelve inches below the platform. Had a child gone straight on, he would therefore have fallen down the whole height of the four flights. So, when reaching this last step, each child had to turn to the right, and then pass on to the final landing, leaving the abyss on his left. But at this point a wall built on

the last floor abutted just in front of the child. To reach the large platform the child had to reach his foot diagonally across the abyss, and put his left foot on the landing while his right foot was still on the last step of the fantastic staircase, twelve inches lower. Therefore, at one moment, the child had his right foot on the last step of the stairs, his left foot on the landing that was perpendicular to this last step but twelve inches higher, and some thirty or forty yards of empty air between his little legs! Besides, the child had to leave enough room between his left foot and the wall to put down his right foot and so come up on the platform. The slightest mistake in balancing threw the child down. Passing into the higher world was effected by a clever little gymnastic trick: the left foot twelve inches to the left on the edge of the upper floor, the body bending forward on the left leg, then a jerk upwards to put the right foot by the side of the left in the interval between the left foot and the obstructing wall on the right.

But all those merry little souls knew the manoeuvre admirably and, light and careless, each one swung round to the right on the last step, with complete disregard of the abyss on the left, jumped slightly and lightly up and across, on to the top floor. There each one threw himself vivaciously into the upper world and began to run and play with his fellows in the huge free space. No awkwardness, no fear hampered the little things, inured to abysses and death.

For this final point where the last stair touched the upper world and the abyss, was death. Death, which men fear so much; not children, nor animals.

Now, the last six or seven children were reaching this last step; all went across lightly, except the last.

The last child, suddenly, made an astonishing being come out of his small body: a being made up of six black lines: two for legs, one for the body, two for arms, a smaller one for the head. An abstraction of a man made up of black matchsticks: a drawing on a wall by a school-child.

This small schematic and abstract being was extremely agile and took his position in the abysmal angle, one black matchstick of a leg on the last step, the other on the landing, blocking the possibility of a jump, obliging the child to stay on the stairs. Then the child began running to the left, then to the right on the step, as though to dodge the matchstick abstraction. But the thin replica, with exactly the same agility, moved as the child moved, keeping in front of the child, who thus could not even have thrown himself into the abyss.

All at once, the child ceased running; at one of his turns, he had seen that another long line of children was beginning the ascent of the stairs. The child put his back against the wall to watch; the black abstraction made of six black matchsticks kept his stand above the abyss; and both were now looking at the mounting generations.



4. *Elytreans*

THE MAN was watching. His eyes were mounting guard carefully over a large empty space, into which, gradually, came an amazing being.

Three feet high; three feet wide. No thickness that could be assessed from any distance: perhaps one-third of an inch. Five large shells meeting at the centre, like the wing sheaths of an insect—the elytra, meeting on the insect's body. But not in pairs here: five meeting at one centre; no membranes, no insect body, no coherent point. Yet very solidly joined, imbricating at their base. Hard elytra, wing sheaths without wings, without body, or legs, or head; only the nearly fictitious thickness of the tough elytron.

This being came nearer to the man, without apparently using any means of motion, legless, the five elytra remaining motionless. It merely came nearer, with an abstract sort of motion.

It had been ten yards away; now it was five; next, two yards away. It was watching the man. The man was watching it through his two eyes and his brain. The elytorean was watching the man through its hard shining substance—no eyes, no feelers, no legs, no filaments, no body. Watching through its third of an inch thickness, or less, through the elegant curves of its shells, through its ovals one foot wide, one and a half feet long. The man could see very clearly the five shells that somehow were joined in the centre of that being, curved slightly towards the back, rather like immense oyster shells of slight depth only, but black outside as inside.

Black, shining, lacquered. A quality of living substance in the lacquer. Perhaps it was through the lacquer on the shell that this being could feel, see? think? The man could not conceive how, but he knew that the elytorean was observing him with great attention; he felt that he, the man, was as incomprehensible to the elytorean as the elytorean was to a mind carried in a human body.

Suddenly, behind the black lacquer of this being, appeared a large wall of flame; a big vertical square fifteen feet high, from which there

radiated as far as the man a kind of gentle warmth that carried no menace at all.

The elytrean seemed to concentrate in its motionlessness, its hard black thrown into relief against the flame wall; then, all at once, without transition or motion, it was in the fire, as though reintegrated into its own place; the hard lacquered black became transparent, then pink, then red on the flame, then golden, then silvery; the yellow flame also became silvery, and the elytrean dissolved in it, silver into silver; then the whole faded away and disappeared.

The man's eyes were again exercised in vain: there was nothing to be seen within their reach.

Time passed. The man lived, came and went, attended to his work, to his wife and children; then, later, a day came, a moment when he found himself in the same place, perhaps at the same moment when he had seen the elytrean.

As the first time, there was nothing to look at. Then gradually a new being came into the man's field of vision, obviously an elytrean, too, but a completely different one. The first must have gone home, to warn his fellows, caution them, explain that he had seen a man, or at least discovered a man, had been unable to make anything out of him; and then this one had been sent, this second elytrean, better equipped for research.

This one had long legs, some three feet long, very flexible, made up of eight or ten articulated thin pieces each; eight or ten legs: the man was unable to count them, for this one moved quickly. A centre shell, as large as the hand, partly circular, partly oblong or trapezoid, a mixture of several kinds of geometry. The thing remained for one instant motionless in front of the man, and some sort of communication took place.

The man thought: it knows, it perceives less of me than I do of it; it comes to inquire, to inform its fellows; let it proceed.

At that moment of the man's thought, as though it had understood that the man consented, the elytrean, in one jump, was on the

man. Its weight was as nothing. The man did not move, kept his heart, his mind, his body, unperturbed. With infinite delicacy, the long tentacles went over the whole body of the man, most gently over his face, curved to feel the back of his head, went by at one millimetre from the surface of his eyes, penetrated slightly into his ears, without even tickling him, or disturbing him, gliding over his skin under his garments without pulling on one of his hairs, going over the whole topography of his body; curling round his fingers and his toes, pushing an articulate point which he could barely feel between his foot and his shoe under the plant.

The man could feel directly the marvellous sensitiveness and delicacy of this being, who wanted to cause him neither the slightest discomfort nor the slightest displeasure; the man could not but admire the amazing intelligence of the elytreal, far higher than human intelligence, since the elytreal was taking the most minute measurements without in any way offending the terrestrial organism; whereas the man did not dare to move his hand for fear of interfering with some articulation of the great insect. The man thought: It understands my body much better than I can ever understand its body. It has a much better starting-point to understand me than I have to understand it.

Then, with a sort of inter-cosmic courtesy, the elytreal, withdrawing its long legs, stood again in front of the man, stretching its legs to their utmost in all directions, its eight or ten or twelve tentacles—the man was still unable to count them: he felt inferior intellectually. The creature, standing before him on two of its tentacles, radiating in all directions, moved all its articulations, as though to enable the man to understand the working of an elytreal body as it had itself understood the working of the human body.

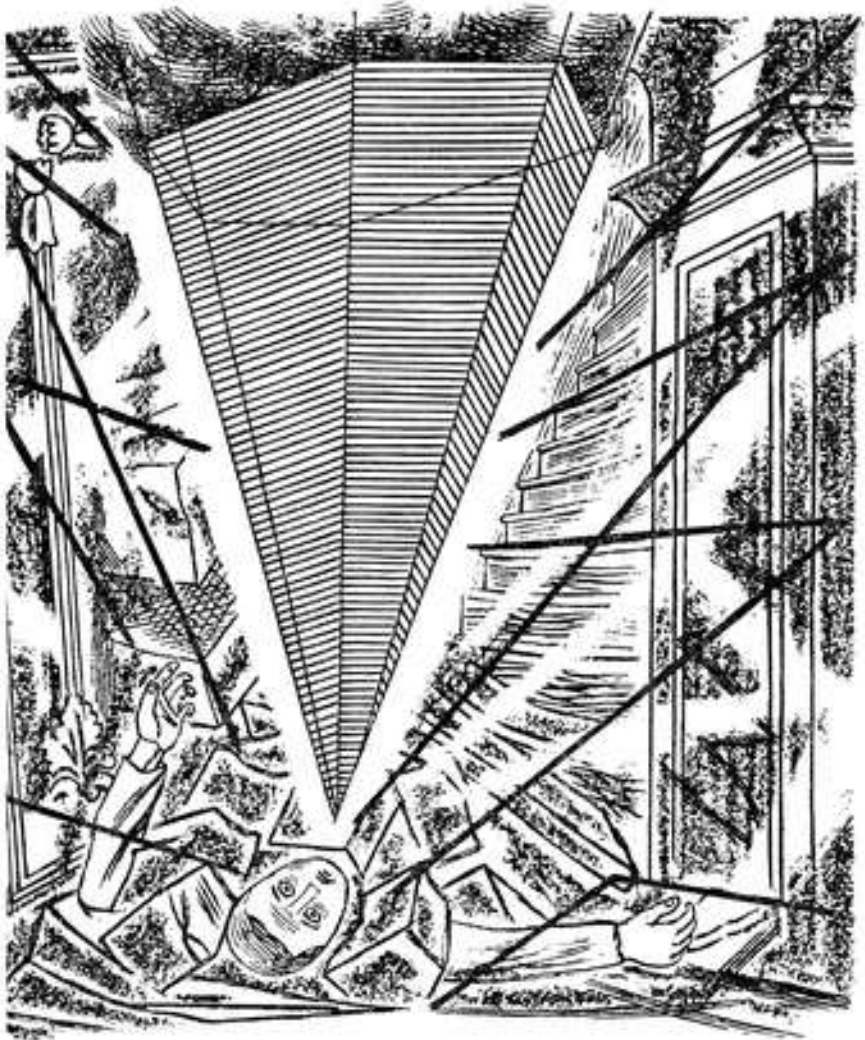
By a kind of supreme salutation, it even raised its two legs from the ground, apparently giving up all means of physical support, and remained suspended in the air; then, all at once, it gathered all its tentacles together at the centre, and disappeared.

But the man was remembering the first elytrea which had neither tentacles nor body, and had disappeared into a wall of flame.

The man could understand nothing of those two, except on the highest spiritual plane: they had come in good will, and he had received them in good will.

So the man felt happy. What better basis could even intellect have found, on which to build an inconceivable future?

PART V. THE BOMB



I: The Bomb

THE FLYING bomb was approaching from the south-east with such a direct and growing intensity of sound that he felt that he was in the due line. So he rose from his chair at his desk near the window, crossed the room, and went and stood in the passage outside, with still a room between him and the street, under an arch of masonry: the architect had said that on the ground floor that was the most protected spot.

With the lightning rapidity of thought, which yet knows itself before it expresses itself, there came into his mind a sentence that was going to be: 'How fortunate that my wife and children are away!' But at the syllable wi ('How fortunate that my wi . .') without even the sound fe realized in the brain, he found he was pulling his leg from under a very heavy stone which had pinned it on to a bed of pulverized plaster. The leg would not come away—yet it did not hurt; it did not feel broken. The stone had pressed it into the pulverized plaster and equalized the supporting surface.

Instantaneously. Between the two moments of time that separate in the brain the sound wi from the sound fe in the word wife, the whole house, instantaneously, had fallen and piled itself on him. His glasses had been taken off his face. He could see and feel that some wood had been pressed at an angle against a wall and his body was under the angle, though his left leg was under the heavy stone. He tried to bring his right arm over—he was lying one-quarter on the left side, and as his hand went to his face he felt and saw blood running from it—but he could not reach the stone.

His breathing was normal. There was no dust.

There was no sound.

Everything had settled soundlessly and dustlessly on to him.

The bomb had exploded in the street some twenty feet from where he stood, and created instantaneously an airless crater into which—soundlessly, since there was no air to vibrate; dustlessly, since there was no air to hold up the particles—the whole house had settled.

So instantaneous was the event that the stone that had smashed to fragments the fourth metacarpal in his hand had been quicker than nerve registration, so he felt no pain whatever. But the wound was filled with pulverized glass.

The house materials had fallen in order of precedence, all at the same speed, since there was no resisting air: first the plaster off the walls and the glass off the windows, then the wood of the floor, then the stones. Yet under the bomb deviation most of the house had fallen diagonally from top north-west to bottom south-east, and he had been carried along with the flow of materials some two yards from under his arch. But the arch had stood, as the architect had said, and saved him from most of the staircase that had come down on it. It was one of the stairs' stone steps that was on his leg. The house had taken the shock of the explosion, and saved him by falling on him, protecting him from the dissolvent power of the bomb, which in bursting pulled on all joints to dissociate all things: stone from stone, air from air, particle of plaster and glass from the next particle of plaster and glass, foot from foreleg, foreleg from leg, leg from hip, arm from shoulder, living cell from living cell. But the stones of the house had broken the pull. Even so it took months before the joints were brought back into proper contacts, and for the rest of his life he felt gingerly about movements of the limbs. This state of suspension in a planet that was no longer the kindly earth where air is a padding to all things, this state of eternal decision of the instant, did not last long enough to interrupt thought or breathing.

The catastrophe had inserted itself between two instants, revealing that our course of time is a jump from summit to summit, leaving, between one moment and the next that we count, a tremendous valley in which anything, any event, however cosmic, had sufficient length to take place. An infinite abyss separates any two instants of ours, and all this had taken place in one of those infinite abysses.

When the air returned and sound returned, the first thing he heard was the rush of many feet on the flagged path of the garden south of

the house. The first feeling that emerged in him was exaltation and pride in being French: those were the French airmen from the buildings across the garden, rushing to help with the semi-instantaneous energy of brave men throwing themselves upon an enemy, into a dangerous battle. For by now the rest of the house was falling normally about, with air and dust and resistance, and the young men were risking their lives coming to rescue him.

The first to arrive shouted out: 'Anyone there? Anyone there?' It took him a second to understand that this was addressed to him. Then he shouted: 'This way! This way! Be careful; don't step on that stone, my leg is under it.' Then they surrounded the heap. They told him later that his bald skull was with the other stones, but half of it was white with powdered plaster and undistinguishable; the other half, however, was bleeding, and the picture of red and plaster gave them a precise spot round which to work. In a moment, shouting 'All right! We understand!' several of them were at the stone, trying to lift it, while another had him under the arms and was pulling him out. The stone slipped their hands once, but did not hurt him in the beneficial plaster, and at their next pull together he was out.

Then a young Hercules gathered him up in his arms and he was carried away to the Infirmary of the French Air Force across the garden. There the doctors took possession.

II: Princess Beatrice

HE SAID to the military surgeon: 'but I don't feel any pain.' The surgeon answered: 'Don't worry about that, you will feel plenty presently.'

There, stretched on the table, while they were injecting various things into him, he made his first discovery about surgeons. Their sharpest and most important weapon, their most protective shield too, is not the keen knife or the swathing aseptic white cloths or mask, but their sense of humour. They are so used to seeing people worry about futile or non-existent things—they are so used to seeing people not worry about essential things—indeed, to seeing people totally unaware of the really important facts—that surgeons see suffering as natural, a joke that can go too far and that has to be stopped at some point. But a joke. 'You will feel plenty presently. Don't worry about that,' this one had said, kindly. Surgeons, thought the man on the table, are not human beings really; they are archangels in training for their future work in the next world, when God will give them the most dreadful things to do to men in order to save men: organize typhoons and earthquakes, and wrecks and volcanic eruptions, and snatch up men's souls out of conflagrations; men's souls that would otherwise refuse to come, being in love with the world. Cruelty and a sense of humour and kindness. But then, they took him away, to a better and bigger hospital. As they took him out of the ambulance on his stretcher, he felt that the supervising matron, being a woman, might take his part, and tried for a last time to escape, and said artfully: 'I do not think there is much wrong with me; you are giving yourselves unnecessary trouble.'

But the matron seemed concerned about something else, and did not say anything, and a minute later, the great surgeon this time, barely casting a glance at the man's head and at his hand, which he took up for a second, just mentioned, as though casually, 'operating theatre,' and passed on. Then the man felt he had done his duty and

protested enough. Let them do what they liked. The responsibility was theirs.

When he woke up again, having been in some enchanted world with white archangels doing things, and chariots that took you about, and no effort whatever required of one, he saw a queer thing: the great surgeon, whom he clearly recognised, though he had not seen him really, was actually skipping about, practically dancing round the bed, a sort of savage gleeful ritual dance, like a Red Indian medicine-man, only very elegant and joyful and clean, and saying fervently: 'Man! but you are a miracle!'

Suddenly, as though a lantern side had come down that instant, the man understood that this was two days later; that this was the second operation, and he remembered that after the first, two days ago—but where had those two days gone?—the same surgeon had said kindly yet teasingly:

'You did not even know when you went to sleep, did you?' He had not. Obviously they had done things to him while he was away.

Now his right forearm was in plaster. A lovely huge semi-gauntlet, as firm as the whole world, went up to nearly his elbow, but the fingers were comfortably curled round a nice roll of plaster in the palm of the hand, and he could move them a little and the surgeon said:

'That's right. Hang on to the plaster in your palm, pull your fingers up on it. In three months you will have the full use of your hand again.'

For the first time he was hit mentally: three months! What was that? The surgeon disappeared, still grinning. He had enjoyed himself. He must be amazingly clever, in some way unknown to the patient, in some other world, where three months did not matter.

He was quite happy. There was no pain—perfect comfort.

Time ceased: there was no effort.

Then pain came. A little pain. A worry rather. Where was it ? His leg ? His left leg ? His head ? His hand perhaps ? Let us consider that hand, in the plaster—lift it a little—no, it was not in the hand, yet the hand was the wounded part.

Then it became clearer. It was in the joints. What was wrong with the joints ? He bent his knees a little in the bed—then moved his hip joints, then his elbows; then he shrugged his shoulders, then he moved his fingers. All that worked. None of it hurt. It did not matter if he moved or not—but all the joints ached, a little, all the time.

He felt very proud. Was this pain? He could bear that. Nothing much. What had the military man said?—Plenty presently ? Perhaps he did not know. How could he? That military man had never been inside a suffering body, he had only looked at suffering bodies from the outside: even when his knife had been deep in somewhere, the military surgeon was still on the other side of things, not in, on the suffering soul's side.

A clear pain; let us consider that pain. No frayed edges, but running straight, like a rivulet of clear water in a rocky bed: a clear distinction between the clear water and the clear rock; the clear running water; the clear immobile rock. The pain flowing freely, easily, the rest of the soul immobile, imperturbed, looking on.

Time had disappeared. There was only the flowing pain, simple, rather beautiful to look at, and the soul looking on.

He went to sleep; he found he could allow this running pain to run on through his sleep, and take no notice of it; the exultant soul taking her rest just in herself, watching over the body, but at peace. The body was at peace in its clean suffering. Or was it the soul that suffered a little and the body that slept ? The two did not seem so distinct now. Was it the next morning? The pain had overflowed its banks, and was spreading over. Perhaps one should not go to sleep, but keep watch.

A nurse was bending over him, asking—How do you feel now ? Urging—Drink this.

He drank something. He was looking at the nurse. He could see the nurse had no sense of humour at all; she was bravely, mechanically pretending she had one, to imitate the surgeons; but she had seen too much; she had been inside the suffering souls, not with the surgeon's knife outside. He went to sleep again.

But now the pain came. Was it the next morning again? or the middle of the night ? What had the military man said? Do not worry about that? about what? why should there be military men? Why should there be wars? He groaned, not at the pain, but at wars. The nurse—or was it another? This was definitely not the next morning, but night. What night?—the nurse was bending over him again, putting a tablet in his mouth—two tablets: urging him—drink this—he drank this. The pain receded. He went to sleep again.

The next morning—was it the next morning?—some morning, anyhow, a morning—he woke up feeling just possible. His joints did ache, but not so much. He looked round. Yet another nurse. Was it another? His glasses had disappeared in that wreckage. It did not matter at all. What was the use of glasses? They were not needed to look at pain. Pain was quite evident without glasses. Now pain was less. But he did not feel proud any more. He looked at the nurse as at an ally —and the two pills. While there were nurses and pills something could still go on—the body? the soul ? He was drowsing off again.

The nurse said kindly: have a cup of tea.

He never drank tea—but he understood that the nurse would never see that; perhaps take such statement as a symptom of delirium—then do something. Better drink the tea, and thank her.

She washed his head gently—there seemed to be a lot of clotted blood; but he was not interested. He could feel he had a beard's growth, but he was not interested. What would his wife say? Perhaps she would understand. He drowsed off again.

The nurse said kindly: have a cup of tea.

Then the nurse said kindly: Would you like to get up? It would be good for you. So his pride came back a little, timidly—he was not so bad as all that.

His joints ached less when he was walking about. So he called on all his neighbours in the ward. They all welcomed him, looked at him with interest.

The one next to him on the left had been in the house next door. There had been four men working in an office on the first floor. Two were killed. This one had an arm broken in many places.

There was a charming man walking about all the time, taking innumerable cups of tea to all those that could not get up. He was the librarian of the cathedral library. A slightly earlier bomb had put one of his eyes out. They were operating on him regularly.

Then there were some strange beings, who had actually not been hit by bombs—they were just ill: an appendicitis, an ulcer of the stomach, and so on. A hernia. Totally irrelevant things. They all were rather apologetic, but what could they do? The day passed. But he formed a league with yet another man whose hand had been smashed in a car accident: they both found they suffered less when walking about, or when at least sitting up. They would not go to bed at night, but sleep a little in armchairs; bed was the place of torture. What would the sister say? But they were not afraid of a mere sister; they were grown men. An industrialist, a professor, a librarian (he sympathized, but you could see he knew better all the time); they would resist.

They went to bed with two pills each; even the librarian seemed to have one. The man with the broken arm gave no trouble.

But then the battle was joined in earnest. Nurse or no nurse, pills or no pills; all that made no difference any more. They put a big hoop under his top bed-clothes so that there should be no pressure on his legs, and there, in the cavern under the hoop, the battle was fought out. On one side, the pain; on the other side, the soul; in the middle,

the body, the battlefield. The body did not feel the pain; the body was the battlefield. The soul could at any time have gone away, abandoned the body, and not felt the pain any more. But the soul did not want to abandon the body. It was necessary to stay there, and fight off the pain.

The pain came in small waves, hit the joints fairly, and then broke, and spread along the bones. The soul could understand the object of that movement: fill the joints with pain, then overflow into the bones, and fill the bones gradually with pain. Each time the evil flux collapsed, a little of it remained along the bone—the joints were full already. The next time, a little more pain accumulated along the bones; the time after still a little more.

The soul took her stand bravely along the bones, covering simultaneously every bone in the body, and driving back the pain as much as it could each time. The pain flew back into the joints, and even there receded under the will-power. But each time a little more staid, glistening, even behind the soul's counter-attack.

The tempo increased—the switch of the waves, back and forth — became quicker. The movement of the soul became a vibration. Then all the bones were in a quiet lake of complete pain. The maximum. Then a flash of lightning came into the soul, the work was done. The bath of pain had washed all the bones clean—clean of disease, clean of broken cells, clean of rubbish. As a dirty object plunged into some powerful chemical, then drawn out white and healthy, the whole skeleton inside the living flesh was clean and strong, emerging. In the flash of lightning, the soul understood that it was herself, the soul, that had been bathing the body in pain. The body did not feel the pain; the work was done, the soul could now withdraw, leave the bones to dry; the battlefield was won.

So, in a flash of lightning, the tremendous cataract of pain opened, rent in two in its maximum effort.

The soul passed through the opening, into an instantaneous world of complete joy. At its maximum, the total pain had become

instantaneously total joy. A cataract of sheer physical pleasure descended, being the other side of the cataract of pain, and the soul had won through. Pain ceased. The body was completely neutral. The soul, in full possession, dominated the world, ceased to be itself. God had stretched his hand and taken it up.

All was perfect.

Four and five and six times, this battle was fought over again. Every time the soul won through into joy.

Then on the tenth day or so after the wounding, God again withdrew himself: the soul was now strong enough to finish the campaign and cure the body.

Later, the man left the Princess Beatrice Hospital, and went to live for two months by the sea with his wife and his children, who had borne much more than he: for at any time he had never been anxious; whereas they had been anxious all the time.