

**WALTER
BESANT**

THE INNER
HOUSE

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PROLOGUE

AT THE ROYAL INSTITUTION

"Professor!" cried the Director, rushing to meet their guest and lecturer as the door was thrown open, and the great man appeared, calm and composed, as if there was nothing more in the wind than an ordinary Scientific Discourse. "You are always welcome, my friend, always welcome" – the two enthusiasts for science wrung hands – "and never more welcome than to-night. Then the great mystery is to be solved at last. The Theatre is crammed with people. What does it mean? You must tell me before you go in."

The Physicist smiled.

"I came to a conviction that I was on the true line five years ago," he said. "It is only within the last six months that I have demonstrated the thing to a certainty. I will tell you, my friend," he whispered, "before we go in."

Then he advanced and shook hands with the President.

"Whatever the importance of your Discovery, Professor," said the President, "we are fully sensible of the honor you have done

us in bringing it before an English audience first of all, and especially before an audience of the Royal Institution."

"Ja, Ja, Herr President. But I give my Discovery to all the world at this same hour. As for myself, I announce it to my very good friends of the Royal Institution. Why not to my other very good friends of the Royal Society? Because it is a thing which belongs to the whole world, and not to scientific men only."

It was in the Library of the Royal Institution. The President and Council of the Institution were gathered together to receive their illustrious lecturer, and every face was touched with interrogation and anxiety. What was this Great Discovery?

For six months there had appeared, from time to time, mysterious telegrams in the papers, all connected with this industrious Professor's laboratory. Nothing definite, nothing certain: it was whispered that a new discovery, soon about to be announced, would entirely change the relations of man to man; of nation to nation. Those who professed to be in the secret suggested that it might alter all governments and abolish all laws. Why they said that I know not, because certainly nobody was admitted to the laboratory, and the Professor had no confidant. This big-headed man, with the enormous bald forehead and the big glasses on his fat nose – it was long and broad as well as fat – kept his own counsel. Yet, in some way, people were perfectly certain that something wonderful was coming. So, when Roger Bacon made his gunpowder, the monks might have whispered to each other, only from the smell which came through the

key-hole, that now the Devil would at last be met upon his own ground. The telegrams were continued with exasperating pertinacity, until over the whole civilized world the eyes of all who loved science were turned upon that modest laboratory in the little University of Ganzweltweisst am Rhein. What was coming from it? One does not go so far as to say that all interest in contemporary business, politics, art, and letters ceased; but it is quite certain that every morning and every evening, when everybody opened his paper, his first thought was to look for news from Ganzweltweisst am Rhein.

But the days passed by, and no news came. This was especially hard on the leader-writers, who were one and all waiting, each man longing to have a cut in with the subject before anybody else got it. But it was good for the people who write letters to the papers, because they had so many opportunities of suggestion and surmise. And so the leader-writers got something to talk about after all. For some suggested that Prof. Schwarzbaum had found out a way to make food artificially, by chemically compounding nitrogens, phosphates, and so forth. And these philosophers built a magnificent Palace of Imagination, in which dwelt a glorified mankind no longer occupied in endless toil for the sake of providing meat and drink for themselves and their families, but all engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, and in Art of all kinds, such as Fiction, Poetry, Painting, Music, Acting, and so forth, getting out of Life such a wealth of emotion, pleasure, and culture as the world had never before imagined.

Others there were who thought that the great Discovery might be a method of instantaneous transmission of matter from place to place; so that, as by the electric wire one can send a message, so by some kind of electric method one could send a human body from any one part of the world to any other in a moment. This suggestion offered a fine field for the imagination; and there was a novel written on this subject which had a great success, until the Discovery itself was announced. Others, again, thought that the new Discovery meant some great and wonderful development of the Destructive Art; so that the whole of an army might be blown into countless fragments by the touch of a button, the discharge of a spring, the fall of a hammer. This took the fancy hugely, and it was pleasant to read the imaginary developments of history as influenced by this Discovery. But it seemed certain that the learned Professor would keep it for the use of his own country. So that there was no longer any room to doubt that, if this was the nature of the Discovery, the whole of the habitable world must inevitably fall under the Teutonic yoke, and an Empire of Armed Peace would set in, the like of which had never before been witnessed upon the globe. On the whole, the prospect was received everywhere, except in France and Russia, with resignation. Even the United States remembered that they had already many millions of Germans among them; and that the new Empire, though it would give certainly all the places to these Germans, would also save them a great many Elections, and therefore a good deal of trouble, and

would relieve the national conscience – long grievously oppressed in this particular – of truckling to the Irish Vote. Dynamiters and anarchists, however, were despondent, and Socialists regarded each other with an ever-deepening gloom. This particular Theory of the great Discovery met, in fact, with universal credence over the whole civilized globe.

From the great man himself there came no sign. Enterprising interviewers failed to get speech with him. Scientific men wrote to him, but got no real information in reply. And the minds of men grew more and more agitated. Some great change was considered certain – but what?

One morning – it was the morning of Thursday, June 20, 1890 – there appeared an advertisement in the papers. By the telegrams it was discovered that a similar advertisement had been published in every great city all over the world. That of the London papers differed from others in one important respect – in this, namely: Professor Schwarzbaum would himself, without any delay, read before a London audience a Paper which should reveal his new Discovery. There was not, however, the least hint in the announcement of the nature of this Discovery.

"Yes," said the Physicist, speaking slowly, "I have given the particulars to my friends over the whole earth; and, as London is still the centre of the world, I resolved that I would myself communicate it to the English."

"But what is it? – what is it?" asked the President.

"The Discovery," the Professor continued, "is to be

announced at the same moment all over the world, so that none of the newspapers shall have an unfair start. It is now close upon nine o'clock by London time. In Paris it is ten minutes past nine; in Berlin it is six minutes before ten; at St. Petersburg it is eleven o'clock; at New York it is four o'clock in the afternoon. Very good. When the clock in your theatre points to nine exactly, at that moment everywhere the same Paper will be read."

In fact, at that moment the clock began to strike. The President led the way to the Theatre, followed by the Council. The Director remained behind with the Lecturer of the evening.

"My friend," said Professor Schwarzbaum, "my subject is nothing less" – he laid his finger upon the Director's arm – "nothing less than 'The Prolongation of the Vital Energy.'"

"What! The Prolongation of the Vital Energy? Do you know what that means?" The Director turned pale. "Are we to understand – "

"Come," said the Professor, "we must not waste the time."

Then the Director, startled and pale, took his German brother by the arm and led him into the Theatre, murmuring, "Prolongation ... Prolongation ... Prolongation ... of the Vital – the Vital – Energy!"

The Theatre was crowded. There was not a vacant seat: there was no more standing room on the stairs; the very doors of the gallery were thronged: the great staircase was thronged with those who could not get in, but waited to get the first news. Nay, outside the Institution, Albemarle Street was crowded with

people waiting to hear what this great thing might be which all the world had waited six months to hear. Within the Theatre, what an audience! For the first time in English history, no respect at all had been paid to rank: the people gathered in the Theatre were all that the great City could boast that was distinguished in science, art, and letters. Those present were the men who moved the world. Among them, naturally, a sprinkling of the men who are born to the best things of the world, and are sometimes told that they help to move it. There were ladies among the company too – ladies well known in scientific and literary circles, with certain great ladies led by curiosity. On the left-hand side of the Theatre, for instance, close to the door, sat two very great ladies, indeed – one of them the Countess of Thordisá, and the other her only daughter, the Lady Mildred Carera. Leaning against the pillar beside them stood a young man of singularly handsome appearance, tall and commanding of stature.

"To you, Dr. Linister," said the Countess, "I suppose everything that the Professor has to tell us will be already well known?"

"That," said Dr. Linister, "would be too much to expect."

"For me," her Ladyship went on delicately, "I love to catch Science on the wing – on the wing – in her lighter moods, when she has something really popular to tell."

Dr. Linister bowed. Then his eyes met those of the beautiful girl sitting below him, and he leaned and whispered,

"I looked for you everywhere last night. You had led me to

understand – "

"We went nowhere, after all. Mamma fancied she had a bad cold."

"Then this evening. May I be quite – quite sure?"

His voice dropped, and his fingers met hers beneath the fan. She drew them away quickly, with a blush.

"Yes," she whispered, "you may find me to-night at Lady Chatterton's or Lady Ingleby's."

From which you can understand that this young Dr. Linister was quite a man in society. He was young, he had already a great reputation for Biological research, he was the only son of a fashionable physician, and he would be very rich. Therefore, in the season, Harry Linister was *of* the season.

On most of the faces present there sat an expression of anxiety, and even fear. What was this new thing? Was the world really going to be turned upside down? And when the West End was so very comfortable and its position so very well assured! But there were a few present who rubbed their hands at the thought of a great upturn of everything. Up with the scum first; when that had been ladled overboard, a new arrangement would be possible, to the advantage of those who rubbed their hands.

When the clock struck nine, a dead silence fell upon the Theatre; not a breath was heard; not a cough; not the rustle of a dress. Their faces were pale with expectancy; their lips were parted; their very breathing seemed arrested.

Then the President and the Council walked in and took their

places.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," said the President shortly, "the learned Professor will himself communicate to you the subject and title of his Paper, and we may be certain beforehand that this subject and matter will adorn the motto of the Society—*Illustrious commoda vitæ.*"

Then Dr. Schwarzbaum stood at the table before them all, and looked round the room. Lady Mildred glanced at the young man, Harry Linister. He was staring at the German like the rest, speechless. She sighed. Women did not in those days like love-making to be forgotten or interrupted by anything, certainly not by science.

The learned German carried a small bundle of papers, which he laid on the table. He carefully and slowly adjusted his spectacles. Then he drew from his pocket a small leather case. Then he looked round the room and smiled. That is to say, his lips were covered with a full beard, so that the sweetness of the smile was mostly lost; but it was observed under and behind the beard. The mere ghost of a smile; yet a benevolent ghost.

The Lecturer began, somewhat in copy-book fashion, to remind his audience that everything in Nature is born, grows slowly to maturity, enjoys a brief period of full force and strength, then decays, and finally dies. The tree of life is first a green sapling, and last a white and leafless trunk. He expatiated at some length on the growth of the young life. He pointed out that methods had been discovered to hinder that growth, turn it

into unnatural forms, even to stop and destroy it altogether. He showed how the body is gradually strengthened in all its parts; he showed, for his unscientific hearers, how the various parts of the structure assume strength. All this was familiar to most of his audience. Next he proceeded to dwell upon the period of full maturity of bodily and mental strength, which, in a man, should last from twenty-five to sixty, and even beyond that time. The decay of the bodily, and even of the mental organs, may have already set in, even when mind and body seem the most vigorous. At this period of the discussion most of the audience were beginning to flag in their attention. Was such a gathering as this assembled only to hear a discussion on the growth and decay of the faculties? But the Director, who knew what was coming, sat bolt upright, expectant. It was strange, the people said afterwards, that no one should have suspected what was coming. There was to be, everybody knew, a great announcement. That was certain. Destruction, Locomotion, Food, Transmission of Thought, Substitution of Speech for Writing – all these things, as has been seen, had been suggested. But no one even guessed the real nature of the Discovery. And now, with the exception of the people who always pretend to have known all along, to have been favored with the Great Man's Confidence, to have guessed the thing from the outset, no one had the least suspicion.

Therefore, when the Professor suddenly stopped short, after a prolix description of wasting power and wearied organs, and held up an admonitory finger, everybody jumped, because now the

Secret was to be divulged. They had come to hear a great Secret.

"What is this Decay?" he asked. "What is it? Why does it begin? What laws regulate it? What check can we place upon it? How can we prevent it? How can we stay its progress? Can Science, which has done so much to make Life happy – which has found out so many things by which Man's brief span is crowded with delightful emotions – can Science do no more? Cannot Science add to these gifts that more precious gift of all – the lengthening of that brief span?"

Here everybody gasped.

"I ask," the speaker went on, "whether Science cannot put off that day which closes the eyes and turns the body into a senseless lump? Consider: we are no sooner arrived at the goal of our ambitions than we have to go away; we are no sooner at the plenitude of our wisdom and knowledge than we have to lay down all that we have learned and go away – nay, we cannot even transmit to others our accumulations of knowledge. They are lost. We are no sooner happy with those we love than we have to leave them. We collect, but cannot enjoy; we inherit – it is but for a day; we learn, but we have no time to use our learning; we love – it is but for an hour; we pass our youth in hope, our manhood in effort, and we die before we are old; we are strong, but our strength passes like a dream; we are beautiful, but our beauty perishes in a single day. Cannot, I ask again – cannot Science prolong the Vital Force, and stay the destroying hand of Decay?"

At this point a wonderful passion seized upon many of the

people present; for some sprang to their feet and lifted hands and shouted, some wept aloud, some clasped each other by the hand; there were lovers among the crowd who fell openly into each other's arms; there were men of learning who hugged imaginary books and looked up with wild eyes; there were girls who smiled, thinking that their beauty might last longer than a day; there were women down whose cheeks rolled the tears of sorrow for their vanished beauty; there were old men who heard and trembled.

One of them spoke – out of all this crowd only one found words. It was an old statesman; an old man eloquent. He rose with shaking limbs.

"Sir," he cried, his voice still sonorous, "give me back my manhood!"

The Professor continued, regardless:

"Suppose," he said, "that Science had found out the way, not to restore what is lost, but to arrest further loss; not to give back what is gone – you might as well try to restore a leg that has been cut off – but to prevent further loss. Consider this for a moment, I pray you. Those who search into Nature's secrets might, if this were done for them, carry on their investigations far beyond any point which had yet been reached; those who cultivate Art might attain to a greater skill of hand and truth of sight than has ever yet been seen; those who study human nature might multiply their observations; those who love might have a longer time for their passion; men who are strong might remain strong; women who are beautiful might remain beautiful – "

"Sir," cried again the old man eloquent, "give me back my manhood!"

The Lecturer made no reply, but went on:

"The rich might have a time – a sensible length of time – in which to enjoy their wealth; the young might remain young, the old might grow no older; the feeble might not become more feeble – all for a prolonged time. As for those whose lives could never become anything but a burden to themselves and to the rest of the world – the crippled, the criminal, the poor, the imbecile, the incompetent, the stupid, and the frivolous – they would live out their allotted lives and die. It would be for the salt of the earth, for the flower of mankind, for the men strong of intellect and endowed above the common herd, that Science would reserve this precious gift."

"Give me back my manhood!" cried again the old man eloquent.

But he was not alone, for they all sprang to their feet together and cried aloud, shrieking, weeping, stretching forth hands, "Give – give – give!" But the Director, who knew that what was asked for would be given, sat silent and self-possessed.

The Speaker motioned them all to sit down again.

"I would not," he said, "limit this great gift to those alone whose intellect leads the world. I would extend it to all who help to make life beautiful and happy; to lovely women" – here the men heaved a sigh so deep, so simultaneous, that it fell upon the ear like the voice of thanksgiving from a Cathedral choir

– "to those who love only the empty show and pleasures and vainglorious of life" – here many smiled, especially of the younger sort – "even to some of those who desire nothing of life but love and song and dalliance and laughter." Again the younger sort smiled, and tried to look as if they had no connection at all with that band. "I would extend this gift, I repeat, to all who can themselves be happy in the sunshine and the light, and to all who can make the happiness of others. Then, again, consider. When you have enjoyed those things for a while; when your life has been prolonged, so that you have enjoyed all that you desire in full measure and running over; when not two or three years have passed, but perhaps two or three centuries, you would then, of your own accord, put aside the aid of Science and suffer your body to fall into the decay which awaits all living matter. Contented and resigned, you would sink into the tomb, not satiated with the joys of life, but satisfied to have had your share. There would be no terror in death, since it would take none but those who could say, 'I have had enough.' That day would surely come to every one. There is nothing – not research and discovery, not the beauty of Nature, not love and pleasure, not art, not flowers and sunshine and perpetual youth – of which we should not in time grow weary. Science cannot alter the Laws of Nature. Of all things there must be an end. But she can prolong; she can avert; she can – Yes, my friends. This is my Discovery; this is my Gift to Humanity; this is the fruit, the outcome of my life; for me this great thing has been reserved. Science can arrest

decay. She can make you live – live on – live for centuries – nay, I know not – why not? – she can, if you foolishly desire it, make you live forever."

Now, when these words were spoken there fell a deep silence upon the crowd. No one spoke; no one looked up; they were awed; they could not realize what it meant that would be given them; they were suddenly relieved of a great terror, the constant dread that lies in man's heart, ever present, though we conceal it – the dread of Death; but they could not, in a moment, understand that it was given.

But the Director sprang to his feet, and grasped his brother physicist by the hand.

"Of all the sons of Science," he said, solemnly, "thou shalt be proclaimed the first and best."

The assembly heard these words, but made no sign. There was no applause – not a murmur, not a voice. They were stricken dumb with wonder and with awe. They were going to live – to live on – to live for centuries, nay, why not? – to live forever!

"You all know," the Professor continued, "how at a dinner a single glass of champagne revives the spirits, looses the tongue, and brings activity to the brain. The guests were weary; they were in decay; the Champagne arrests that decay. My discovery is of another kind of Champagne, which acts with a more lasting effect. It strengthens the nerves, hardens the muscles, quickens the blood, and brings activity to the digestion. With new strength of the body returns new strength to the mind; mind and body are

one." He paused a moment. Then he gave the leather case into the hands of the Director. "This is my gift, I say. I give to my brother full particulars and the history of the invention. I seek no profit for myself. It is your own. This day a new epoch begins for humanity. We shall not die, but live. Accident, fire, lightning, may kill us. Against these things we cannot guard. But old age shall no more fall upon us; decay shall no more rob us of our life and strength; and death shall be voluntary. This is a great change. I know not if I have done aright. That is for you to determine. See that you use this gift aright."

Then, before the people had understood the last words, the speaker stepped out of the Theatre and was gone.

But the Director of the Royal Institution stood in his place, and in his hand was the leather case containing the Gift of Life.

The Countess of Thordisá, who had been asleep throughout the lecture, woke up when it was finished.

"How deeply interesting!" she sighed. "This it is, to catch Science on the wing." Then she looked round. "Mildred, dear," she said, "has Dr. Linister gone to find the carriage? Dear me! what a commotion! And at the Royal Institution, of all places in the world!"

"I think, Mamma," said Lady Mildred, coldly, "that we had better get some one else to find the carriage. Dr. Linister is over there. He is better engaged."

He was; he was among his brother physicists; they were eagerly asking questions and crowding round the Director. And

the Theatre seemed filled with mad people, who surged and crowded and pushed.

"Come, Mamma," said Lady Mildred, pale, but with a red spot on either cheek, "we will leave them to fight it out."

Science had beaten love. She did not meet Harry Linister again that night. And when they met again, long years afterwards, he passed her by with eyes that showed he had clean forgotten her existence, unaltered though she was in face and form.

CHAPTER I

THE SUPPER-BELL

When the big bell in the Tower of the House of Life struck the hour of seven, the other bells began to chime as they had done every day at this hour for I know not how many years. Very likely in the Library, where we still keep a great collection of perfectly useless books, there is preserved some History which may speak of these Bells, and of the builders of the House. When these chimes began, the swifts and jackdaws which live in the Tower began to fly about with a great show of hurry, as if there was barely time for supper, though, as it was yet only the month of July, the sun would not be setting for an hour or more.

We have long since ceased to preach to the people, otherwise we might make them learn a great deal from the animal world. They live, for instance, from day to day; not only are their lives miserably short, but they are always hungry, always fighting, always quarrelling, always fierce in their loves and their jealousies. Watching the swifts, for instance, which we may do nearly all day long, we ought to congratulate ourselves on our own leisurely order, the adequate provision for food made by the Wisdom of the College, the assurance of preservation also established by that Wisdom, and our freedom from haste and anxiety, as from the emotions of love, hatred, jealousy, and

rivalry. But the time has gone by for that kind of exhortation.

Thus, our people, who at this hour crowded the great Square, showed in their faces, their attitudes, and their movements, the calm that reigned in their souls. Some were lying on the grass; some were sitting on the benches; some were strolling. They were for the most part alone; if not alone – because habit often survives when the original cause of the habit is gone – then in pairs.

In the old unhappy days there would have been restless activity – a hurrying to and fro; there would have been laughter and talking – everybody would have been talking; there would have been young men eagerly courting the favors of young women, looking on them with longing eyes, ready to fight for them, each for the girl he loved; thinking each of the girl he loved as of a goddess or an angel – all perfection. The girls themselves ardently desired this foolish worship. Again, formerly, there would have been old men and old women looking with melancholy eyes on the scenes they were about to quit, and lamenting the days of their strength and their youth. And formerly there would have been among the crowd beggars and paupers; there would have been some masters and some servants; some noble and some bourgeois; there would have been every conceivable difference in age, rank, strength, intellect, and distinction.

Again, formerly there would have been the most insolent differences in costume. Some of the men used to wear broadcloth, sleek and smooth, with glossy hats and gloves, and flowers at their button-hole; while beside them crawled the

wretched half-clad objects pretending to sell matches, but in reality begging for their bread. And some of the women used to flaunt in dainty and expensive stuffs, setting off their supposed charms (which were mostly made by the dress-maker's art) with the curves and colors of their drapery. And beside them would be crawling the wretched creatures to whom in the summer, when the days were hot and fine, the Park was their only home, and rusty black their only wear.

Now, no activity at all; no hurrying, no laughing, not even any talking. That might have struck a visitor as one of the most remarkable results of our system. No foolish talking. As for their dress, it was all alike. The men wore blue flannel jackets and trousers, with a flannel shirt and a flat blue cap; for the working hours they had a rougher dress. The women wore a costume in gray, made of a stuff called beige. It is a useful stuff, because it wears well; it is soft and yet warm, and cannot be objected to by any of them on the score of ugliness. What mutinies, what secret conspiracies, what mad revolts had to be faced before the women could be made to understand that Socialism – the only form of society which can now be accepted – must be logical and complete! What is one woman more than another that she should separate herself from her sisters by her dress? Therefore, since their subjugation they all wear a gray beige frock, with a jacket of the same, and a flat gray cap, like the men's, under which they are made to gather up their hair.

This scene, indeed – the gathering of the People before the

supper-bell – is one of which I never tire. I look at all the eager, hurrying swifts in the air, I remember the Past; and I think of the Present when I gaze upon the great multitude, in which no one regardeth his neighbor, none speaks to none. There are no individual aims, but all is pure, unadulterated Socialism, with – not far distant – the Ultimate Triumph of Science!

I desire to relate the exact circumstances connected with certain recent events. It is generally known that they caused one deplorable Death – one of our own Society, although not a Physician of the House. I shall have to explain, before I begin the narrative, certain points in our internal management which may differ from the customs adopted elsewhere. We of the Later Era visit each other so seldom that differences may easily grow up. Indeed, considering the terrible dangers of travel – how, if one walks, there are the perils of unfiltered water, damp beds, sprained ankles, byrsitis of the knee, chills from frosts and showers; or if one gets into a wheeled vehicle, the wheels may fall off, or the carriage may be overturned in a ditch... But why pursue the subject? I repeat, therefore, that I must speak of the community and its order, but that as briefly as may be.

The Rebels have been driven forth from the Pale of Humanity to wander where they please. In a few years they will be released – if that has not already happened – by Death from the diseases and sufferings which will fall upon them. Then we shall remember them no more. The centuries will roll by, and they shall be forgotten; the very mounds of earth which once marked

the place of their burial will be level with the ground around them. But the House and the Glory of the House will continue.

Thus perish all the enemies of Science!

The City of Canterbury, as it was rebuilt when Socialism was finally established, has in its centre a great Square, Park, or Garden, the central breathing-place and relaxation ground of the City. Each side is exactly half a mile in length. The Garden, thus occupying an area of a fourth of a square mile, is planted with every kind of ornamental tree, and laid out in flower-beds, winding walks, serpentine rivers, lakes, cascades, bridges, grottos, summer-houses, lawns, and everything that can help to make the place attractive. During the summer it is thronged every evening with the people. On its west side has been erected an enormous Palace of glass, low in height, but stretching far away to the west, covering an immense area. Here the heat is artificially maintained at temperatures varying with the season and the plants that are in cultivation. In winter, frost, bad weather, and in rain, it forms a place of recreation and rest. Here grow all kinds of fruit-trees, with all kinds of vegetables, flowers, and plants. All the year round it furnishes, in quantities sufficient for all our wants, an endless supply of fruit; so that we have a supply of some during the whole year, as grapes, bananas, and oranges; others for at least half the year, as peaches, strawberries, and so forth; while of the commoner vegetables, as peas, beans, and the like, there is now no season, but they are grown continuously. In the old times we were dependent upon the changes and chances

of a capricious and variable climate. Now, not only has the erection of these vast houses made us independent of summer and winter, but the placing of much grass and corn land under glass has also assured our crops and secured us from the danger of famine. This is by no means one of the least advantages of modern civilization.

On the South side of the Square stands our Public Hall. The building has not, like the House of Life, any architectural beauty – why should we aim at beauty, when efficiency is our sole object? The House of Life was designed and erected when men thought perpetually of beauty, working from their admiration of beauty in woman and in nature to beauty in things which they made with their own hands, setting beauty above usefulness; even thinking it necessary, when usefulness had been attained, to add adornment, as when they added a Tower to the House of Life, yet did nothing with their Tower and did not want it.

The Public Hall is built of red brick; it resembles a row of houses each with a gable to the street. There is for each a broad plain door, with a simple porch, below; and above, a broad plain window twenty feet wide divided into four compartments or divisions, the whole set in a framework of wood. The appearance of the Hall is, therefore, remarkably plain. There are thirty-one of these gables, each forty feet wide; so that the whole length of the Hall is twelve hundred and forty feet, or nearly a quarter of a mile.

Within, the roof of each of these gables covers a Hall

separated from its neighbors by plain columns. They are all alike, except that the middle Hall, set apart for the College, has a gallery originally intended for an orchestra, now never used. In the central Hall one table alone is placed; in all the others there are four, every Hall accommodating eight hundred people and every table two hundred. The length of each Hall is the same – namely, two hundred and fifty feet. The Hall is lit by one large window at each end. There are no carvings, sculptures, or other ornaments in the building. At the back is an extensive range of buildings, all of brick, built in small compartments, and fire-proof; they contain the kitchens, granaries, *abattoirs*, larders, cellars, dairies, still-rooms, pantries, curing-houses, ovens, breweries, and all the other offices and chambers required for the daily provisioning of a city with twenty-four thousand inhabitants.

On the East side of the Square there are two great groups of buildings. That nearest to the Public Hall contains, in a series of buildings which communicate with one another, the Library, the Museum, the Armory, the Model-room, and the Picture Gallery. The last is a building as old as the House. They were, when these events began, open to the whole Community, though they were never visited by any even out of idle curiosity. The inquisitive spirit is dead. For myself, I am not anxious to see the people acquire, or revive, the habit of reading and inquiring. It might be argued that the study of history might make them contrast the present with the past, and shudder at the lot of their forefathers. But I am going to show that this study may produce

quite the opposite effect. Or, there is the study of science. How should this help the People? They have the College always studying and investigating for their benefit the secrets of medical science, which alone concerns their happiness. They might learn how to make machines; but machinery requires steam, explosives, electricity, and other uncontrolled and dangerous forces. Many thousands of lives were formerly lost in the making and management of these machines, and we do very well without them. They might, it is true, read the books which tell of the people in former times. But why read works which are filled with the Presence of Death, the Shortness of Life, and the intensity of passions which we have almost forgotten? You shall see what comes of these studies which seem so innocent.

I say, therefore, that I never had any wish to see the people flocking into the Library. For the same reason – that a study and contemplation of things past might unsettle or disturb the tranquillity of their minds – I have never wished to see them in the Museum, the Armory, or any other part of our Collections. And since the events of which I have to tell, we have enclosed these buildings and added them to the College, so that the people can no longer enter them even if they wished.

The Curator of the Museum was an aged man, one of the few old men left – in the old days he had held a title of some kind. He was placed there because he was old and much broken, and could do no work. Therefore he was told to keep the glass-cases free from dust and to sweep the floors every morning. At the

time of the Great Discovery he had been an Earl or Viscount – I know not what – and by some accident he escaped the Great Slaughter, when it was resolved to kill all the old men and women in order to reduce the population to the number which the land would support. I believe that he hid himself, and was secretly fed by some man who had formerly been his groom, and still preserved some remains of what he called attachment and duty, until such time as the executions were over. Then he ventured forth again, and so great was the horror of the recent massacre, with the recollection of the prayers and shrieks of the victims, that he was allowed to continue alive. The old man was troubled with an asthma which hardly permitted him an hour of repose and was incurable. This would have made his life intolerable, except that to live – only to live, in any pain and misery – is always better than to die.

For the last few years the old man had a companion in the Museum. This was a girl – the only girl in our Community – who called him – I know not why (perhaps because the relationship really existed) – Grandfather, and lived with him. She it was who dusted the cases and swept the floors. She found some means of relieving the old man's asthma, and all day long – would that I had discovered the fact, or suspected whither it would lead the wretched girl! – she read the books of the Library and studied the contents of the cases and talked to the old man, making him tell her everything that belonged to the past. All she cared for was the Past; all that she studied was to understand more and more –

how men lived then, and what they thought, and what they talked.

She was about eighteen years of age; but, indeed, we thought her still a child. I know not how many years had elapsed since any in the City were children, because it is a vain thing to keep account of the years; if anything happens to distinguish them, it must be something disastrous, because we have now arrived almost at the last stage possible to man. It only remains for us to discover, not only how to prevent disease, but how to annihilate it. Since, then, there is only one step left to take in advance, every other event which can happen must be in the nature of a calamity, and therefore may be forgotten.

I have said that Christine called the old man her grandfather. We have long, long since agreed to forget old ties of blood. How can father and son, mother and daughter, brother and sister continue for hundreds of years, and when all remain fixed at the same age, to keep up the old relationship? The maternal love dies out with us – it is now but seldom called into existence – when the child can run about. Why not? The animals, from whom we learn so much, desert their offspring when they can feed themselves; our mothers cease to care for their children when they are old enough to be the charge of the Community. Therefore Christine's mother cheerfully suffered the child to leave her as soon as she was old enough to sit in the Public Hall. Her grandfather – if indeed he was her grandfather – obtained permission to have the child with him. So she remained in the quiet Museum. We never imagined or suspected, however, that the old man, who

was eighty at the time of the Great Discovery, remembered everything that took place when he was young, and talked with the girl all day long about the Past.

I do not know who was Christine's father. It matters not now; and, indeed, he never claimed his daughter. One smiles to think of the importance formerly attached to fathers. We no longer work for their support. We are no longer dependent upon their assistance; the father does nothing for the son, nor the son for the father. Five hundred years ago, say – or a thousand years ago – the father carried a baby in his arms. What then? My own father – I believe he is my own father, but on this point I may be mistaken – I saw yesterday taking his turn in the hay-field. He seemed distressed with the heat and fatigue of it. Why not? It makes no difference to me. He is, though not so young, still as strong and as able-bodied as myself. Christine was called into existence by the sanction of the College when one of the Community was struck dead by lightning. It was my brother, I believe. The terrible event filled us all with consternation. However, the population having thus been diminished by one, it was resolved that the loss should be repaired. There was precedent. A great many years previously, owing to a man being killed by the fall of a hay-rick – all hay-ricks are now made low – another birth had been allowed. That was a boy.

Let us now return to our Square. On the same side are the buildings of the College. Here are the Anatomical collections, the storehouse of *Materia Medica*, and the residences of the Arch

Physician, the Suffragan, the Fellows of the College or Associate Physicians, and the Assistants or Experimenters. The buildings are plain and fire-proof. The College has its own private gardens, which are large and filled with trees. Here the Physicians walk and meditate, undisturbed by the outer world. Here is also their Library.

On the North side of the Square stands the great and venerable House of Life, the Glory of the City, the Pride of the whole Country.

It is very ancient. Formerly there were many such splendid monuments standing in the country; now this alone remains. It was built in the dim, distant ages, when men believed things now forgotten. It was designed for the celebration of certain ceremonies or functions; their nature and meaning may, I dare say, be ascertained by any who cares to waste time in an inquiry so useless. The edifice itself could not possibly be built in these times; first because we have no artificers capable of rearing such a pile, and next because we have not among us any one capable of conceiving it, or drawing the design of it; nay, we have none who could execute the carved stone-work.

I do not say this with humility, but with satisfaction; for, if we contemplate the building, we must acknowledge that, though it is, as I have said, the Glory of the City, and though it is vast in proportions, imposing by its grandeur, and splendid in its work, yet most of it is perfectly useless. What need of the tall columns to support a roof which might very well have been one-fourth the

present height? Why build the Tower at all? What is the good of the carved work? We of the New Era build in brick, which is fire-proof; we put up structures which are no larger than are wanted; we waste no labor, because we grudge the time which must be spent in necessary work, over things unnecessary. Besides, we are no longer tortured by the feverish anxiety to do something – anything – by which we may be remembered when the short span of life is past. Death to us is a thing which may happen by accident, but not from old age or by disease. Why should men toil and trouble in order to be remembered? All things are equal: why should one man try to do something better than another – or what another cannot do – or what is useless when it is done? Sculptures, pictures, Art of any kind, will not add a single ear of corn to the general stock, or a single glass of wine, or a yard of flannel. Therefore, we need not regret the decay of Art.

As everybody knows, however, the House is the chief Laboratory of the whole country. It is here that the Great Secret is preserved; it is known to the Arch Physician and to his Suffragan alone. No other man in the country knows by what process is compounded that potent liquid which arrests decay and prolongs life, apparently without any bound or limit. I say without any bound or limit. There certainly are croakers, who maintain that at some future time – it may be this very year, it may be a thousand years hence – the compound will lose its power, and so we – all of us, even the College – must then inevitably begin to decay, and after a few short years perish and sink into the

silent grave. The very thought causes a horror too dreadful for words; the limbs tremble, the teeth chatter. But others declare that there is no fear whatever of this result, and that the only dread is lest the whole College should suddenly be struck by lightning, and so the Secret be lost. For though none other than the Arch Physician and his Suffragan know the Secret, the whole Society – the Fellows or Assistant Physicians – know in what strong place the Secret is kept in writing, just as it was communicated by the Discoverer. The Fellows of the College all assist in the production of this precious liquid, which is made only in the House of Life. But none of them know whether they are working for the great Arcanum itself, or on some of the many experiments conducted for the Arch Physician. Even if one guessed, he would not dare to communicate his suspicions even to a Brother-Fellow, being forbidden, under the most awful of all penalties, that of Death itself, to divulge the experiments and processes that he is ordered to carry out.

It is needless to say that if we are proud of the House, we are equally proud of the City. There was formerly an old Canterbury, of which pictures exist in the Library. The streets of that town were narrow and winding; the houses were irregular in height, size, and style. There were close courts, not six feet broad, in which no air could circulate, and where fevers and other disorders were bred. Some houses, again, stood in stately gardens, while others had none at all; and the owners of the gardens kept them closed. But we can easily understand what might have happened

when private property was recognized, and laws protected the so-called rights of owners. Now that there is no property, there are no laws. There are also no crimes, because there is no incentive to jealousy, rapine, or double-dealing. Where there is no crime, there is that condition of Innocence which our ancestors so eagerly desired, and sought by means which were perfectly certain to fail.

How different is the Canterbury of the present! First, like all modern towns, it is limited in size; there are in it twenty-four thousand inhabitants, neither more nor less. Round its great central Square or Garden are the public buildings. The streets, which branch off at right angles, are all of the same width, the same length, and the same appearance. They are planted with trees. The houses are built of red brick, each house containing four rooms on the ground-floor – namely, two on either side the door – and four on the first floor, with a bath-room. The rooms are vaulted with brick, so that there is no fear of fire. Every room has its own occupant; and as all the rooms are of the same size, and are all furnished in the same way, with the same regard to comfort and warmth, there is really no ground for complaint or jealousies. The occupants also, who have the same meals in the same Hall every day, cannot complain of inequalities, any more than they can accuse each other of gluttonous living. In the matter of clothes, again, it was at first expected that the grave difficulties with the women as to uniformity of fashion and of material would continue to trouble us; but with the decay of those

emotions which formerly caused so much trouble – since the men have ceased to court the women, and the women have ceased to desire men's admiration – there has been no opposition. All of them now are clad alike; gray is found the most convenient color, soft beige the most convenient material.

The same beautiful equality rules the hours and methods of work. Five hours a day are found ample, and everybody takes his time at every kind of work, the men's work being kept separate from that given to the women. I confess that the work is not performed with as much zeal as one could wish; but think of the old times, when one had to work eight, ten, and even eighteen hours a day in order to earn a poor and miserable subsistence! What zeal could they have put into their work? How different is this glorious equality in all things from the ancient anomalies and injustices of class and rank, wealth and poverty! Why, formerly, the chief pursuit of man was the pursuit of money. And now there is no money at all, and our wealth lies in our barns and garner.

I must be forgiven if I dwell upon these contrasts. The history which has to be told – how an attempt was actually made to destroy this Eden, and to substitute in its place the old condition of things – fills me with such indignation that I am constrained to speak.

Consider, for one other thing, the former condition of the world. It was filled with diseases. People were not in any way protected. They were allowed to live as they pleased. Consequently, they all committed excesses and all contracted

disease. Some drank too much, some ate too much, some took no exercise, some took too little, some lay in bed too long, some went to bed too late, some suffered themselves to fall into violent rages, into remorse, into despair; some loved inordinately; thousands worked too hard. All ran after Jack-o'-Lanterns continually; for, before one there was dangled the hope of promotion, before another that of glory, before another that of distinction, fame, or praise; before another that of wealth, before another the chance of retiring to rest and meditate during the brief remainder of his life – miserably short even in its whole length. Then diseases fell upon them, and they died.

We have now prevented all new diseases, though we cannot wholly cure those which have so long existed. Rheumatism, gout, fevers, arise no more, though of gout and other maladies there are hereditary cases. And since there are no longer any old men among us, there are none of the maladies to which old age is liable. No more pain, no more suffering, no more anxiety, no more Death (except by accident) in the world. Yet some of them would return to the old miseries; and for what? – for what? You shall hear.

When the Chimes began, the people turned their faces with one consent towards the Public Hall, and a smile of satisfaction spread over all their faces. They were going to Supper – the principal event of the day. At the same moment a Procession issued from the iron gates of the College. First marched our Warder, or Porter, John Lax, bearing a halberd; next came an

Assistant, carrying a cushion, on which were the Keys of Gold, symbolical of the Gate of Life; then came another, bearing our banner, with the Labarum or symbol of Life: the Assistants followed, in ancient garb of cap and gown; then came the twelve Fellows or Physicians of the College, in scarlet gowns and flat fur-lined caps; after them, I myself – Samuel Grout, M.D., Suffragan – followed. Last, there marched the first Person in the Realm – none other than the Arch Physician Himself, Dr. Henry Linister, in lawn sleeves, a black silk gown, and a scarlet hood. Four Beadles closed the Procession; for, with us, the only deviation from equality absolute is made in the case of the College. We are a Caste apart; we keep mankind alive and free from pain. This is our work; this occupies all our thoughts. We are, therefore, held in honor, and excused the ordinary work which the others must daily perform. And behold the difference between ancient and modern times! For, formerly, those who were held in honor and had high office in this always sacred House were aged and white-haired men who arrived at this distinction but a year or two before they had to die. But we of the Holy College are as stalwart, as strong, and as young as any man in the Hall. And so have we been for hundreds of years, and so we mean to continue.

In the Public Hall, we take our meals apart in our own Hall; yet the food is the same for all. Life is the common possession; it is maintained for all by the same process – here must be no difference. Let all, therefore, eat and drink alike.

When I consider, I repeat, the universal happiness, I am carried away, first, with a burning indignation that any should be so mad as to mar this happiness. They have failed; but they cost us, as you shall hear, much trouble, and caused the lamentable death of a most zealous and able officer.

Among the last to enter the gates were the girl Christine and her grandfather, who walked slowly, coughing all the way.

"Come, grandad," she said, as we passed her, "take my arm. You will be better after your dinner. Lean on me."

There was in her face so remarkable a light that I wonder now that no suspicion or distrust possessed us. I call it light, for I can compare it to nothing else. The easy, comfortable life our people led, and the absence of all exciting work, the decay of reading, and the abandonment of art, had left their faces placid to look upon, but dull. They were certainly dull. They moved heavily; if they lifted their eyes, they wanted the light that flashed from Christine's. It was a childish face still – full of softness. No one would ever believe that a creature so slight in form, so gentle to look upon, whose eyes were so soft, whose cheeks were like the untouched bloom of a ripe peach, whose half-parted lips were so rosy, was already harboring thoughts so abominable and already conceiving an enterprise so wicked.

We do not suspect, in this our new World. As we have no property to defend, no one is a thief; as everybody has as much of everything as he wants, no one tries to get more; we fear not Death, and therefore need no religion; we have no private

ambitions to gratify, and no private ends to attain; therefore we have long since ceased to be suspicious. Least of all should we have been suspicious of Christine. Why, but a year or two ago she was a little newly born babe, whom the Holy College crowded to see as a new thing. And yet, was it possible that one so young should be so corrupt?

"Suffragan," said the Arch Physician to me at supper, "I begin to think that your Triumph of Science must be really complete."

"Why, Physician?"

"Because, day after day, that child leads the old man by the hand, places him in his seat, and ministers, after the old, forgotten fashion, to his slightest wants, and no one pays her the slightest heed."

"Why should they?"

"A child – a beautiful child! A feeble old man! One who ministers to another. Suffragan, the Past is indeed far, far away; but I knew not until now that it was so utterly lost. Childhood and Age and the offices of Love! And these things are wholly unheeded. Grout, you are indeed a great man!"

He spoke in the mocking tone which was usual with him, so that we never knew exactly whether he was in earnest or not; but I think that on this occasion he was in earnest. No one but a very great man – none smaller than Samuel Grout – myself – could have accomplished this miracle upon the minds of the People. They did not minister one to the other. Why should they? Everybody could eat his own ration without any help. Offices of

Love? These to pass unheeded? What did the Arch Physician mean?

CHAPTER II

GROUT, SUFFRAGAN

It always pleases me, from my place at the College table, which is raised two feet above the rest, to contemplate the multitude whom it is our duty and our pleasure to keep in contentment and in health. It is a daily joy to watch them flocking, as you have seen them flock, to their meals. The heart glows to think of what we have done. I see the faces of all light up with satisfaction at the prospect of the food; it is the only thing that moves them. Yes, we have reduced life to its simplest form. Here is true happiness. Nothing to hope, nothing to fear – except accident; a little work for the common preservation; a body of wise men always devising measures for the common good; food plentiful and varied; gardens for repose and recreation, both summer and winter; warmth, shelter, and the entire absence of all emotions. Why, the very faces of the People are growing all alike – one face for the men, and another for the women; perhaps in the far-off future the face of the man will approach nearer and nearer to that of the woman, and so all will be at last exactly alike, and the individual will exist, indeed, no more. Then there will be, from first to last, among the whole multitude neither distinction nor difference.

It is a face which fills one with contentment, though it will be

many centuries before it approaches completeness. It is a smooth face, there are no lines in it; it is a grave face, the lips seldom smile, and never laugh; the eyes are heavy, and move slowly; there has already been achieved, though the change has been very gradual, the complete banishment of that expression which has been preserved in every one of the ancient portraits, which may be usefully studied for purposes of contrast. Whatever the emotion attempted to be portrayed, and even when the face was supposed to be at rest, there was always behind, visible to the eye, an expression of anxiety or eagerness. Some kind of pain always lies upon those old faces, even upon the youngest. How could it be otherwise? On the morrow they would be dead. They had to crowd into a few days whatever they could grasp of life.

As I sit there and watch our People at dinner, I see with satisfaction that the old pain has gone out of their faces. They have lived so long that they have forgotten Death. They live so easily that they are contented with life: we have reduced existence to the simplest. They eat and drink – it is their only pleasure; they work – it is a necessity for health and existence – but their work takes them no longer than till noontide; they lie in the sun, they sit in the shade, they sleep. If they had once any knowledge, it is now forgotten; their old ambitions, their old desires, all are forgotten. They sleep and eat, they work and rest. To rest and to eat are pleasures which they never desire to end. To live forever, to eat and drink forever – this is now their only hope. And this has been accomplished for them by the

Holy College. Science has justified herself – this is the outcome of man's long search for generations into the secrets of Nature. We, who have carried on this search, have at length succeeded in stripping humanity of all those things which formerly made existence intolerable to him. He lives, he eats, he sleeps. Perhaps – I know not, but of this we sometimes talk in the College – I say, perhaps – we may succeed in making some kind of artificial food, as we compound the great Arcanum, with simple ingredients and without labor. We may also extend the duration of sleep; we may thus still further simplify existence. Man in the end – as I propose to make and mould the People – will sleep until Nature calls upon him to awake and eat. He will then eat, drink, and sleep again, while the years roll by. He will lie heedless of all; he will be heedless of the seasons, heedless of the centuries. Time will have no meaning for him – a breathing, living, inarticulate mass will be all that is left of the active, eager, chattering Man of the Past.

This may be done in the future, when yonder laboratory, which we call the House of Life, shall yield the secrets of Nature deeper and deeper still. At present we have arrived at this point – the chief pleasure of life is to eat and to drink. We have taught the People so much, of all the tastes which formerly gratified man this alone remains. We provide them daily with a sufficiency and variety of food; there are so many kinds of food, and the combinations are so endless, that practically the choice of our cooks is unlimited. Good food, varied food, well-cooked food,

with drink also varied and pure, and the best that can be made, make our public meals a daily joy. We have learned to make all kinds of wine from the grapes in our hot-houses. It is so abundant that every day, all the year round, the People may call for a ration of what they please. We make also beer of every kind, cider, perry, and mead. The gratification of the sense of taste helps to remove the incentive to restlessness or discontent. The minds of most are occupied by no other thought than that of the last feast and the next; if they were to revolt, where would they find their next meal? At the outset we had, I confess, grave difficulties. There was not in existence any Holy College. We drifted without object or purpose. For a long time the old ambitions remained; the old passions were continued; the old ideas of private property prevailed; the old inequalities were kept up. Presently there arose from those who had no property the demand for a more equal share. The cry was fiercely resisted; then there followed civil war for a space, till both sides were horrified by the bloodshed that followed. Time also was on the side of them who rebelled. I was one, because at the time when the whole nation was admitted to a participation in the great Arcanum, I was myself a young man of nineteen, employed as a washer of bottles in Dr. Linister's laboratory, and therefore, according to the ideas of the time, a very humble person. Time helped us in an unexpected way. Property was in the hands of single individuals. Formerly they died and were succeeded by their sons; now the sons grew tired of waiting. How much longer were their fathers, who grew no older,

to keep all the wealth to themselves? Therefore, the civil war having come to an end, with no result except a barren peace, the revolutionary party was presently joined by all but the holders of property, and the State took over to itself the whole wealth – that is to say, the whole land; there is no other wealth. Since that time there has been no private property; for since it was clearly unjust to take away from the father in order to give it to the son, with no limitation as to the time of enjoyment, everything followed the land – great houses, which were allowed to fall into ruin; pictures and works of art, libraries, jewels, which are in Museums; and money, which, however, ceased to be of value as soon as there was nothing which could be bought.

As for me, I was so fortunate as to perceive – Dr. Linister daily impressed it upon me – that of all occupations, that of Physicist would very quickly become the most important. I therefore remained in my employment, worked, read, experimented, and learned all that my master had to teach me. The other professions, indeed, fell into decay more speedily than some of us expected. There could be no more lawyers when there was no more property. Even libel, which was formerly the cause of many actions, became harmless when a man could not be injured; and, besides, it is impossible to libel any man when there are no longer any rules of conduct except the one duty of work, which is done in the eyes of all and cannot be shirked. And how could Religion survive the removal of Death to some possible remote future? They tried, it is true, to keep up the pretence of it, and

many, especially women, clung to the old forms of faith for I know not how long. With the great mass, religion ceased to have any influence as soon as life was assured. As for Art, Learning, Science – other than that of Physics, Biology, and Medicine – all gradually decayed and died away. And the old foolish pursuit of Literature, which once occupied so many, and was even held in a kind of honor – the writing of histories, poems, dramas, novels, essays on human life – this also decayed and died, because men ceased to be anxious about their past or their future, and were at last contented to dwell in the present.

Another and a most important change which may be noted was the gradual decline and disappearance of the passion called Love. This was once a curious and inexplicable yearning – so much is certain – of two young people towards each other, so that they were never content unless they were together, and longed to live apart from the rest of the world, each trying to make the other happier. At least, this is as I read history. For my own part, as I was constantly occupied with Science, I never felt this passion; or if I did, then I have quite forgotten it. Now, at the outset people who were in love rejoiced beyond measure that their happiness would last so long. They began, so long as the words had any meaning, to call each other Angels, Goddesses, Divinely Fair, possessed of every perfect gift, with other extravagancies, at the mere recollection of which we should now blush. Presently they grew tired of each other; they no longer lived apart from the rest of the world. They separated; or, if they continued to walk

together, it was from force of habit. Some still continue thus to sit side by side. No new connections were formed. People ceased desiring to make others happy, because the State began to provide for everybody's happiness. The whole essence of the old society was a fight. Everybody fought for existence. Everybody trampled on the weaker. If a man loved a woman, he fought for her as well as for himself. Love? Why, when the true principle of life is recognized – the right of every individual to his or her share – and that an equal share in everything – and when the continuance of life is assured – what room is there for love? The very fact of the public life – the constant companionship, the open mingling of women with men, and this for year after year – the same women with the same men – has destroyed the mystery which formerly hung about womanhood, and was in itself the principal cause of love.

It is gone, therefore, and with it the most disturbing element of life. Without love, without ambition, without suffering, without religion, without quarrelling, without private rights, without rank or class, life is calm, gentle, undisturbed. Therefore, they all sit down to dinner in peace and contentment, every man's mind intent upon nothing but the bill of fare.

This evening, directed by the observation of the Arch Physician, I turned my eyes upon the girl Christine, who sat beside her grandfather. I observed, first – but the fact inspired me with no suspicion – that she was no longer a child, but a woman grown; and I began to wonder when she would come with the

rest for the Arcanum. Most women, when births were common among us, used to come at about five-and-twenty; that is to say, in the first year or two of full womanhood, before their worst enemies – where there were two women, in the old days, there were two enemies – could say that they had begun to fall off. If you look round our table, you will see very few women older than twenty-four, and very few men older than thirty. There were many women at this table who might, perhaps, have been called beautiful in the old times; though now the men had ceased to think of beauty, and the women had ceased to desire admiration. Yet, if regular features, large eyes, small mouths, a great quantity of hair, and a rounded figure are beautiful, then there were many at the table who might have been called beautiful. But the girl Christine – I observed the fact with scientific interest – was so different from the other women that she seemed another kind of creature.

Her eyes were soft; there is no scientific term to express this softness of youth – one observes it especially in the young of the *cervus* kind. There was also a curious softness on her cheek, as if something would be rubbed away if one touched it. And her voice differed from that of her elder sisters; it was curiously gentle, and full of that quality which may be remarked in the wood-dove when she pairs in spring. They used to call it tenderness; but, since the thing itself disappeared, the word has naturally fallen out of use.

Now, I might have observed with suspicion, whereas I only

remarked it as something strange, that the company among which Christine and the old man sat were curiously stirred and uneasy. They were disturbed out of their habitual tranquillity because the girl was discoursing to them. She was telling them what she had learned about the Past.

"Oh," I heard her say, "it was a beautiful time! Why did they ever suffer it to perish? Do you mean that you actually remember nothing of it?"

They looked at each other sheepishly.

"There were soldiers – men were soldiers; they went out to fight, with bands of music and the shouts of the people. There were whole armies of soldiers – thousands of them. They dressed in beautiful glittering clothes. Do you forget that?"

One of the men murmured, hazily, that there were soldiers.

"And there were sailors, who went upon the sea in great ships. Jack Carera" – she turned to one of them – "you are a sailor, too. You ought to remember."

"I remember the sailors very well indeed," said this young man, readily.

I always had my doubts about the wisdom of admitting our sailors among the People. We have a few ships for the carriage of those things which as yet we have not succeeded in growing for ourselves; these are manned by a few hundred sailors who long ago volunteered, and have gone on ever since. They are a brave race, ready to face the most terrible dangers of tempest and shipwreck; but they are also a dangerous, restless, talkative,

questioning tribe. They have, in fact, preserved almost as much independence as the College itself. They are now confined to their own port of Sheerness.

Then the girl began to tell some pestilent story of love and shipwreck and rescue; and at hearing it some of them looked puzzled and some pained; but the sailor listened with all his ears.

"Where did you get that from, Christine?"

"Where I get everything – from the old Library. Come and read it in the book, Jack."

"I am not much hand at reading. But some day, perhaps after next voyage, Christine."

The girl poured out a glass of claret for the old man. Then she went on telling them stories; but most of her neighbors seemed neither to hear nor to comprehend. Only the sailor-man listened and nodded. Then she laughed out loud.

At this sound, so strange, so unexpected, everybody within hearing jumped. Her table was in the Hall next to our own, so that we heard the laugh quite plainly.

The Arch Physician looked round approvingly.

"How many years since we heard a good, honest *young* laugh, Suffragan? Give us more children, and soften our hearts for us. But, no; the heart you want is the hard, crusted, selfish heart. See! No one asks why she laughed. They are all eating again now, just as if nothing had happened. Happy, enviable People!"

Presently he turned to me and remarked, in his lofty manner, as if he was above all the world,

"You cannot explain, Suffragan, why, at an unexpected touch, a sound, a voice, a trifle, the memory may be suddenly awakened to things long, long past and forgotten. Do you know what that laugh caused me to remember? I cannot explain why, nor can you. It recalled the evening of the Great Discovery – not the Discovery itself, but quite another thing. I went there more to meet a girl than to hear what the German had to say. As to that I expected very little. To meet that girl seemed of far more importance. I meant to make love to her – love, Suffragan – a thing which you can never understand – real, genuine love! I meant to marry her. Well, I did meet her; and I arranged for a convenient place where we could meet again after the Lecture. Then came the Discovery; and I was carried away, body and soul, and forgot the girl and love and everything in the stupefaction of this most wonderful Discovery, of which we have made, between us, such admirable use."

You never knew whether the Arch Physician was in earnest or not. Truly, we had made a most beautiful use of the Discovery; but it was not in the way that Dr. Linister would have chosen.

"All this remembered just because a girl laughed! Suffragan, Science cannot explain all."

I shall never pretend to deny that Dr. Linister's powers as a physicist were of the first order, nor that his Discoveries warranted his election to the Headship of the College. Yet, something was due, perhaps, to his tall and commanding figure, and to the look of authority which reigned naturally on his

face, and to the way in which he always stepped into the first rank. He was always the Chief, long before the College of Physicians assumed the whole authority, in everything that he joined. He opposed the extinction of property, and would have had everybody win what he could, and keep it as long as he would, he opposed the Massacre of the Old; he was opposed, in short, to the majority of the College. Yet he was our Chief. His voice was clear, and what he said always produced its effect, though it did not upset my solid majority, or thwart the Grand Advance of the Triumph of Science. As for me, my position has been won by sheer work and merit. My figure is not commanding; I am short-sighted and dark-visaged; my voice is rough; and as for manners, I have nothing to do with them. But in Science there is but one second to Linister – and that is Grout.

When the supper came to an end, we rose and marched back to the College in the same state and order with which we had arrived. As for the people, some of them went out into the Garden; some remained in the Hall. It was then nine o'clock, and twilight. Some went straight to their own rooms, where they would smoke tobacco – an old habit allowed by the College on account of its soothing and sedative influence – before going to bed. By ten o'clock everybody would be in bed and asleep. What more beautiful proof of the advance of Science than the fact that the whole of the twenty-four thousand people who formed the population of Canterbury dropped off to sleep the moment they laid their heads upon the pillow? This it is to have learned

the proper quantities and kinds of food; the proper amount of bodily exercise and work; and the complete subjugation of all the ancient forces of unrest and disquiet. To be sure, we were all, with one or two exceptions, in the very prime and flower of early manhood and womanhood. It would be hard, indeed, if a young man of thirty should not sleep well.

I was presently joined in the garden of the College by the Arch Physician.

"Grout," he said, "let us sit and talk. My mind is disturbed. It is always disturbed when the memory of the Past is forced upon me."

"The Evil Past," I said.

"If you please – the Evil Past. The question is, whether it was not infinitely more tolerable for mankind than the Evil Present?"

We argued out the point; but it was one on which we could never agree, for he remained saturated with the old ideas of private property and individualism. He maintained that there are no Rights of Man at all, except his Right to what he can get and what he can keep. He even went so far as to say that the true use of the Great Discovery should have been to cause the incompetent, the idle, the hereditarily corrupt, and the vicious to die painlessly.

"As to those who were left," he said, "I would have taught them the selfishness of staying too long. When they had taken time for work and play and society and love, they should have been exhorted to go away of their own accord, and to make room for their children. Then we should have had always the due

succession of father and son, mother and daughter; always age and manhood and childhood; and always the world advancing by the efforts of those who would have time to work for an appreciable period. Instead, we have" – he waved his hand.

I was going to reply, when suddenly a voice light, clear, and sweet broke upon our astonished ears. 'Twas the voice of a woman, and she was singing. At first I hardly listened, because I knew that it could be none other than the child Christine, whom, indeed, I had often heard singing. It is natural, I believe, for children to sing. But the Arch Physician listened, first with wonder, and then with every sign of amazement. How could he be concerned by the voice of a child singing silly verses? Then I heard the last lines of her song, which she sang, I admit, with great vigor:

"Oh, Love is worth the whole broad earth;
Oh, Love is worth the whole broad earth;
Give that, you give us all!"

"Grout," cried the Arch Physician, in tones of the deepest agitation, "I choke – I am stifled. Listen! They are words that I wrote – I myself wrote – with my own hand – long, long ago in the Past. I wrote them for a girl – the girl I told you of at dinner. I loved her. I thought never again to feel as I felt then. Yet the memory of that feeling has come back to me. Is it possible? Can some things never die? Can we administer no drug that will destroy memory? For the earth reeled beneath my feet again, and

my senses reeled, and I would once more – yes, I would once more have given all the world – yes, life – even life – only to call that woman mine for a year – a month – a day – an hour!"

The Arch Physician made this astonishing confession in a broken and agitated voice. Then he rushed away, and left me alone in the summer-house.

The singer could certainly have been none other than the girl Christine. How should she get hold of Dr. Linister's love-song? Strange! She had disturbed our peace at supper by laughing, and she had agitated the Arch Physician himself to such a degree as I should have believed impossible by singing a foolish old song. When I went to bed there came into my mind some of the old idle talk about witches, and I even dreamed that we were burning a witch who was filling our minds with disturbing thoughts.

CHAPTER III

CHRISTINE AT HOME

When the girl Christine walked through the loitering crowd outside the Hall, some of the people looked after her with wondering eyes.

"Strange!" said a woman. "She laughed! She laughed!"

"Ay," said another, "we have forgotten how to laugh. But we used to laugh before" – she broke off with a sigh.

"And she sings," said a third. "I have heard her sing like a lark in the Museum."

"Once," said the first woman, "we used to sing as well as laugh. I remember, we used to sing. She makes us remember the old days."

"The bad old days" – it was one of the Assistant Physicians who admonished her – "the times when nothing was certain, not even life, from day to day. It should bring you increased happiness to think sometimes of those old times."

The first woman who had spoken was one whom men would have called beautiful in those old times, when their heads were turned by such a thing as a woman's face. She was pale of cheek and had black eyes, which, in those days of passion and jealousy, might have flashed like lightning. Now they were dull. She was shapely of limb and figure too, with an ample cheek

and a full mouth. Formerly, in the days of love and rage, those limbs would have been lithe and active; now they were heavy and slow. Heaviness of movement and of eyes sensibly grows upon our people. I welcome every indication of advance towards the Perfect Type of Humanity which will do nothing but lie down, breathe, eat, and sleep.

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