

THE BRIGHT MESSENGER

BY

Algernon Blackwood

UNITED STATE

1922

ILLUSTRATED & PUBLISHED
BY
CHEAPEST BOOKS



www.cheapestboooks.com

Copyright, 2026

Istanbul

ISBN: 978-625-8829-28-0

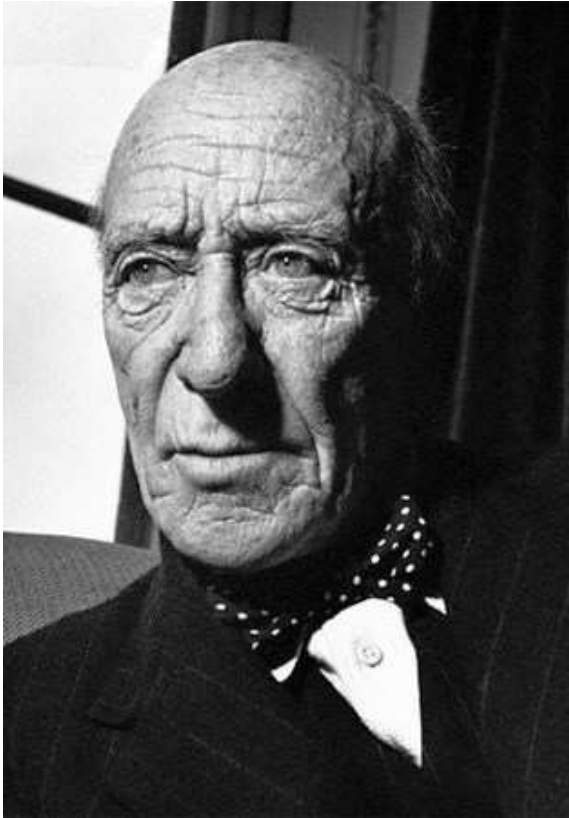


© All rights reserved. No part of this book shall be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or by any information or retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher.

Table of Contents

ABOUT AUTHOR	4
PREFACE	8
CHAPTER I.....	10
CHAPTER II	20
CHAPTER III.....	28
CHAPTER IV	33
CHAPTER V	46
CHAPTER VI.....	65
CHAPTER VII	93
CHAPTER VIII.....	109
CHAPTER IX.....	113
CHAPTER X.....	141
CHAPTER XI.....	160
CHAPTER XII.....	175
CHAPTER XIII.....	211
CHAPTER XIV	227
CHAPTER XV.....	248
CHAPTER XVI	261
CHAPTER XVII.....	274
CHAPTER XVIII	294
CHAPTER XIX	307
CHAPTER XX.....	322
CHAPTER XXI	343
CHAPTER XXII.....	368
CHAPTER XXIII	386
CHAPTER XXIV	415
CHAPTER XXV	436
CHAPTER XXVI	459
CHAPTER XXVII.....	488

ABOUT AUTHOR



Algernon Blackwood (1869 – 1951) was one of the most prolific and pioneering English authors of weird fiction and ghost stories. He developed a unique style exploring the uncanny powers of nature, mysticism, and the dark boundaries of human psychology.

If you enjoy horror / thriller in the style of Stephen King or H. P. Lovecraft, the true father of the genre is Algernon Blackwood. Even Lovecraft said, "*He is the greatest master of supernatural horror ever.*"

Life and Personality

- **Strict Upbringing:** Raised in a highly conservative Calvinist household, which triggered his lifelong pursuit of alternative mysticism.
- **Adventurous Youth:** Spent years in Canada and the United States working diverse jobs, including milk farming, journalism, and bartending.
- **Occult Interests:** Joined the famous **Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn** due to his deep fascination with the supernatural.
- **Media Career:** Became a popular broadcaster for the BBC in his later years, narration-style reading his own ghost stories on radio and television.

Major Works

Blackwood excelled at transforming natural elements into sources of terror. His most notable works include:

- **The Willows:** Follows two friends canoeing down the Danube River who encounter sinister, non-human forces. H. P. Lovecraft praised it as the greatest weird fiction story ever written.

- **The Wendigo:** A classic horror tale set in the Canadian wilderness, based on the Native American myth of a cannibalistic forest spirit.

- **John Silence Series:** A collection of stories featuring a "psychic detective" who uses occult knowledge to solve supernatural mysteries.

➡ **Literary Style**

- **Cosmic Horror:** Focuses on the insignificance of humanity and the terrifying scale of the universe, rather than typical monsters.

- **Atmospheric Nature:** Forests, rivers, and desolate landscapes are not just settings, but active, living, and threatening characters.

To the Unstable

PREFACE

An Ancient Force Reborn.

A Clash of Science and the Sublime.

Deep within the human psyche lies a power that

modern psychology is terrified to acknowledge. When a brilliant but deeply troubled young man named Julian LeVallon enters the care of a prominent London psychiatrist, he is diagnosed with a complex mental disorder. But as Dr. Fillemore observes his patient closer, he realizes that Julian is not mad. Instead, he appears to be an extraordinary being—a human vessel possessed by a colossal, primordial nature spirit, sent to awaken a dormant, industrial world from its spiritual slumber.

What follows is a brilliant, high-stakes intellectual and spiritual battle between rigid scientific logic and the overwhelming grandeur of the cosmic unknown. Julian possesses an erratic, terrifying power that can alter the atmosphere, control elemental forces, and shatter the safe illusions of modern civilization. As his influence grows, he becomes a beacon for both wonder and absolute terror, forcing everyone around him to confront a

reality that exists far beyond the boundaries of human intellect.

Experience one of Algernon Blackwood's most visionary and profoundly imaginative novels. Masterfully blending psychological thriller elements with cosmic mysticism, this timeless masterpiece offers a brilliant exploration of humanity's fragile connection to the universe and the breathtaking cost of witnessing ultimate truth.

CHAPTER I

EDWARD FILLERY, so far as may be possible to a

man of normal passions and emotions, took a detached view of life and human nature. At the age of thirty-eight he still remained a spectator, a searching, critical, analytical, yet chiefly, perhaps, a sympathetic spectator, before the great performance whose stage is the planet and whose performers and auditorium are humanity.

Knowing himself outcast, an unwelcome deadhead at the play, he had yet felt no bitterness against the parents whose fierce illicit passion had deprived him of an honourable seat. The first shock of resentment over, he had faced the situation with a tolerance which showed an unusual charity, an exceptional understanding, in one so young.

He was twenty when he learned the truth about himself. And it was his wondering analysis as to why two loving humans could be so careless of their offspring's welfare, when the rest of Nature took such pains in the matter, that first betrayed, perhaps, his natural aptitude. He had the innate gift of seeing things as they were, undisturbed by personal emotion, while yet asking himself with scientific accuracy why and how they came to be so. These were invaluable qualities in the line of knowledge and research he chose for himself as psychologist and doctor. The terms

are somewhat loose. His longing was to probe the motives of conduct in the first place, and, in the second, to correct the results of wrong conduct by removing faulty motives. Psychiatrist and healer, therefore, were his more accurate titles; psychiatrist and healer, in due course, he became.

His father, an engineer of ability and enterprise, prospecting in the remoter parts of the Caucasus for copper, and making a comfortable fortune in so doing, was carried off his feet suddenly by the beauty of a Khaketian peasant girl, daughter of a shepherd in these lonely and majestic mountains, whose intolerable grandeur may well intoxicate a man to madness. A dangerous and disgraceful episode it seems to have been between John Fillery, hitherto of steady moral fibre, and this strange, lovely pagan girl, whose savage father hunted the pair of them high and low for weeks before they finally eluded him in the azalea valleys beyond Artvine.

Great passion, possibly great love, born of this enchanted land whose peaks touch heaven, while their lower turf slopes are carpeted with lilies, azaleas, rhododendrons, contributed to the birth of Edward, who first saw the light in a secret chamber of a dirty Tiflis house, above the Koura torrent. That same night, when the sun dipped beneath the Black Sea waters two hundred miles to the westward, his mother had looked for the last time upon her northern lover and her wild Caucasian mountains.

Edward, however, persisted, visible emblem of a few weeks' primal passion in a primal land. Intense desire, born in this remote wilderness of amazing loveliness, lent him,

perhaps, a strain of illicit, almost unearthly yearning, a secret nostalgia for some lost vale of beauty that held fiercer sunshine, mightier winds and fairer flowers than those he knew in this world.

At the age of four he was brought to England; his Russian memories faded, though not the birthright of his primitive blood. Settling in London, his father increased his fortune as consulting engineer, but did not marry. To the short vehement episode he had given of his very best; he remained true to his gorgeous memory and his sin; the cream of his life, its essence and its perfume, had been spent in those wild wind-swept azalea valleys beyond Artvine. The azalea honey was in his blood, the scent of the lilies in his brain; he still heard the Koura and Rion foaming down towards ancient Colchis. Edward embodied for him the spirit of these sweet, passionate memories. He loved the boy, he cherished and he spoilt him.

But Edward had stuff in him that rendered spoiling harmless. A vigorous, independent youngster, he showed firmness and character as a lad. To the delight of his father he knew his own mind early, reading and studying on his own account, possessed at the same time by a vehement love of nature and outdoor life that was far more than the average English boy's inclination to open air and sport. There lay some primal quality in his blood that was of ancient origin and leaned towards wildness. There seemed almost, at the same time, a faunish strain that turned away from life.

As a tiny little fellow he had that strange touch of creative imagination other children have also known—an invisible playmate. It had no name, as it, apparently, had no sex. The boy's father could trace it directly to no fairy tale read or heard; its origin in the child's mind remained a mystery. But its characteristics were unusual, even for such fanciful imaginings: too full-fledged to have been created gradually by the boy's loneliness, it seemed half goblin and half Nature-spirit; it replaced, at any rate, the little brothers and sisters who were not there, and the father, led by his conscience, possibly, to divine or half divine its origin, met the pretence with sympathetic encouragement.

It came usually with the wind, moreover, and went with the wind, and wind accordingly excited the child. "Listen! Father!" he would exclaim when no air was moving anywhere and the day was still as death. Then: "Plop! So there you are!" as though it had dropped through empty space and landed at his feet. "It came from a tremendous height," the child explained. "The wind's up *there*, you see, to-day." Which struck the parent's mind as odd, because it proved later true. An upper wind, far in the higher strata of air, came down an hour or so afterwards and blew into a storm.

Fire and flowers, too, were connected with this invisible playmate. "*He'll* make it burn, father," the child said convincingly, when the chimney smoked and the coals refused to catch, and then became very busy with his friend in the grate and about the hearth, just as though he helped and superintended what was being invisibly accomplished.

"It's burning better, anyhow," agreed the father, astonished in spite of himself as the coals began to glow and spurt their gassy flames. "Well done; I am very much obliged to you and your little friend."

"But it's the only thing he can do. He likes it. It's his work really, don't you see—keeping up the heat in things."

"Oh, it's his natural job, is it? I see, yes. But my thanks to him, all the same."

"Thank you very much," said grave Edward, aged five, addressing his tiny friend among the fire-irons. "I'm much mobliged to you."

Edward was a bit older when the flower incident took place—with the geranium that no amount of care and coaxing seemed able to keep alive. It had been dying slowly for some days, when Edward announced that he saw its "inside" flitting about the plant, but unable to get back into it. "It's got out, you see, and can't get back into its body again, so it's dying."

"Well, what in the world are we to do about it?" asked his father.

"I'll ask," was the solemn reply. "Now I know!" he cried, delighted, after asking his question of the empty air and listening for the answer. "Of course. Now I see. Look, father, there it is—its spirit!" He stood beside the flower and pointed to the earth in the pot.

"Dear me, yes! Where d'you see it? I—don't see it quite."

"He says I can pick it up and put it back and then the flower will live." The child put out a hand as though picking up something that moved quickly about the stem.

"What's it look like?" asked his father quickly.

"Oh, sort of trinangles and things with lines and corners," was the reply, making a gesture as though he caught it and popped it back into the red drooping blossoms. "There you are! Now you're alive again. Thank you very much, please"—this last remark to the invisible playmate who was superintending.

"A sort of geometrical figure, was it?" inquired the father next day, when, to his surprise, he found the geranium blooming in full health and beauty once again. "That's what you saw, eh?"

"It was its spirit, and it was shiny red, like fire," the child replied. "It's heat. Without these things there'd be no flowers at all."

"Who makes everything grow?" he asked suddenly, a moment later.

"You mean *what* makes them grow."

"Who," he repeated with emphasis. "Who builds the bodies up and looks after them?"

"Ah! the structure, you mean, the form?"

Edward nodded. His father had the feeling he was not being asked for information, but was being cross-examined. A faint pressure, as of uneasiness, touched him.

"They develop automatically—that means naturally, under the laws of nature," he replied.

"And the laws—who keeps them working properly?"

The father, with a mental gulp, replied that God did.

"A beetle's body, for instance, or a daisy's or an elephant's?" persisted the child undeceived by the theological evasion. "Or mine, or a mountain's——?"

John Fillery racked his brain for an answer, while Edward continued his list to include sea-anemones, frost-patterns, fire, wind, moon, sun and stars. All these forms to him were bodies apparently.

"I know!" he exclaimed suddenly with intense conviction, clapping his hands together and standing on his toes.

"Do you, indeed! Then you know more than the rest of us."

"*They do*, of course," came the positive announcement. "The other kind! It's their work. Yours, for instance"—he turned to his playmate, but so naturally and convincingly that a chill ran down his father's spine as he watched—"is fire, isn't it? You showed me once. And water stops you, but wind helps you ..." and he continued long after his father had left the room.

With advancing years, however, Edward either forgot his playmate or kept its activities to himself. He no longer referred to it, at any rate. His energies demanded a bigger field; he roamed the fields and woods, climbed the hills, stayed out all night to see the sunrise, made fires even when

fires were not exactly needed, and hunted with Red Indians and with what he called "Windy-Fire people" everywhere. He was never in the house. He ran wild. Great open spaces, trees and flowers were what he liked. The sea, on the other hand, alarmed him. Only wind and fire comforted him and made him happy and full of life. He was a playmate of wind and fire. Water, in large quantities at any rate, was inimical.

With concealed approval, masking a deep love fulfilled yet incomplete, his father watched the growth of this fiercer strain that mere covert shooting could not satisfy, nor ordinary sporting holidays appease.

"England's too small for you, Edward, isn't it?" he asked once tentatively, when the boy was about fifteen.

"The English people, you mean, father?"

"You find them dull, don't you? And the island a bit cramped—eh?"

Edward waited without replying. He did not quite understand what his indulgent father intended, or was leading up to.

"You'd like to travel and see things and people for yourself, I mean?"

He watched the boy without, as he thought, the latter noticing. The answer pleased but puzzled him.

"We're all much the same, aren't we?" said Edward.

"Well—with differences—yes, we are. But still——"

"It's only the same over and over again, isn't it?" Then, while his father was thinking of this reply, and of what he should say to it, the boy asked suddenly with arresting intensity:

"Are we the only people—the only sort of beings, I mean? Just men and women like us all over the world? No others of any sort—bigger, for instance, or—more wild and wonderful?" Then he added, a thrust of strange yearning in his face and eyes: "More beautiful?" He almost whispered the last words.

His father winced. He divined the origin of that strange inquiry. Upon those immense and lonely mountains, distant in space and time for him, imagination, rich and pagan, ran, he well knew, to vast and mighty beings, superior to human, benignant and maleficent, akin to the stimulating and exhilarating conception of the gods, and certainly non-human.

"Nothing, Edward, that we know of. Why should there be?"

"Oh, I don't know, dad. I just wondered—sometimes. But, as you say, we've not a scrap of evidence, of course."

"Not a scrap," agreed his father. "Poetic legends ain't evidence."

The mind ruled the heart in Edward; he had his father's brains, at any rate; and all his powers and longings focused in a single line that indicated plainly what his career should be. The Public Schools could help him little; he went to Edinburgh to study medicine; he passed eventually with all

possible honours; and the day he brought home the news
his father, dying, told him the secret of his illegitimate birth.

CHAPTER II

THE subsequent twenty years or so may be summarized.

Alone in the world, of a loving, passionate nature, he deliberately set all thought of marriage on one side as an impossibility, and directed his entire energy into the acquirement of knowledge; reading, studying, experimenting far outside the circle of the ordinary medical man. The attitude of detachment he had adopted became a habit. He believed it was now his nature.

The more he learned of human frailty and human faculties, the greater became the charity he felt towards his fellow-kind. In his own being, it seemed, lay something big, sweet, simple, a generosity that longed to share with others, a tolerance more ready to acquit than to condemn, above all, a great gift of understanding sympathy that, doubtless, was the explanation of his singular insight. Rarely he found it in him to blame; forgiveness, based upon the increasing extent of his experience, seemed his natural view of human mistakes and human infirmities. His one desire, his one hope, was to serve the Race.

Yet he himself remained aloof. He watched the Play but took no part in it. This forgiveness, too, began at home. His

grievance had not soured or dejected him, his father's error presenting itself as a problem to be pondered over, rather than a sin to blame. Some day, he promised himself, he would go and see with his own eyes the Khaketian tribe whence his blood was partially derived, whence his un-English yearnings for a wilder scale of personal freedom amid an unstained, majestic Nature were first stolen. The inherited picture of a Caucasian vale of loveliness and liberty lay, indeed, very deep in his nature, emerging always like a symbol when he was profoundly moved. At any crisis in his life it rose beckoning, seductive, haunting beyond words.... Curious, ill-defined emotions with it, that drove him towards another standard, another state, to something, at any rate, he could neither name nor visualize, yet that seemed to dwarf the only life he knew. About it was a touch of strange unearthly radiance that dimmed existence as he knew it. The shine went out of it. There was involved in this symbolic "Valley" something wholly new both in colour, sound and outline, yet that remained obstinately outside definition.

First, however, he must work, develop himself, and broaden, deepen, extend in every possible way the knowledge of his kind that seemed his only love.

He began in a very practical way, setting up his plate in a mean quarter of the great metropolis, healing, helping, learning with his heart as well as with his brain, observing life at closest quarters from its beginning to its close, his sympathies becoming enriched the more he saw, and his mind groping its way towards clearer insight the more he

read, thought, studied. His wealth made him independent; his tastes were simple; his wants few. He observed the great Play from the Pit and Gallery, from the Wings, from Behind the Scenes as well.

Moving then, into the Stalls, into a wealthier neighbourhood, that is, he repeated the experience among another class, finding, however, little difference except in the greater artificiality of his types, the larger proportion of mental and nervous ailments, of hysteria, delusion, imaginary troubles, and the like. The infirmities due to idleness, enflamed vanity and luxury offered a new field, though to him a less attractive one. The farther from simplicity, from the raw facts of living, the more complicated, yet the more trivial, the resulting disabilities. These, however, were quite as real as those, and harder, indeed, to cure. Idle imagination, fostered by opportunity and means, yet forced by conventionality to wear infinite disguises, brought a strange, if far from a noble, crop of disorders into his ken. Yet he accepted them for serious treatment, whatever his private opinion may have been, while his patience, tact and sympathy, backed by his insight and great knowledge, brought him quick success. He was soon in a fair way to become a fashionable doctor.

But the field, he found, was restricted somewhat. His quest was knowledge, not fame or money. He chose his cases where he could, though actually refusing nothing. He specialized more and more with afflictions of a mental kind. He was immensely successful in restoring proportion out of disorder. He revealed people to themselves. He taught them

to recover lost hope and confidence. He used little medicine, but stimulated the will towards a revival of fading vitality. Auto-suggestion, rather than suggestion or hypnotism, was his method. He healed. He began to be talked about.

Then, suddenly, his house was sold, his plate was taken down, he vanished.

Human beings object to sudden changes whose secret they have not been told and cannot easily guess; his abrupt disappearance caused talk and rumours, led, of course, by those, chiefly disappointed women, who had most reason to be grateful for past services. But, if the words charlatan and quack were whispered, he did not hear them; he had taken the post of assistant in a lunatic asylum in a northern town, because the work promised him increase of knowledge and experience in his own particular field. The talk he left behind him mattered as little as the small pay attached to the humble duties he had accepted.

London forgot him, but he did not forget what London had taught him.

A new field opened, and in less than two years, opportunity, combined with his undoubted qualifications, saw him Head of an establishment where he could observe at first hand the facts and phenomena that interested him most. Humane treatment, backed by profound insight into the derangements of the poor human creatures under his charge, brought the place into a fame it had never known before. He spent five years there in profound study and experiment; he achieved new results and published them.

His *Experimental Psychology* caused a sensation. His name was known. He was an Authority.

At this time he was well past thirty, a tall, dark, distinguished-looking man, of appearance grave and even sombre; imposing, too, with his quiet, piercing eyes, but sombre only until the smile lit up his somewhat rugged face. It was a face that nobody could lie to, but to that smile the suffering heart might tell its inmost secrets with confidence, hope, trust, and without reserve.

There followed several years abroad, in Paris, Rome, St. Petersburg, Moscow; Vienna and Zurich he also visited to test there certain lines of research and to meet personally their originators.

This period was partly a holiday, partly an opportunity to know at first hand the leaders in mental therapeutics, psychology and the rest, and also that he might find time to digest and arrange his own accumulation of knowledge with a view, later, to undertaking the life-work to which his previous experience was but preliminary. Fame had come to him unsought; his published works alone ensured his going down to posterity as a careful but daring and original judge of the human species and its possibilities. It was the supernormal rather than the merely abnormal powers that attracted him. In the subconscious, as, equally, in the superconscious, his deep experience taught him, lay amazing powers of both moral and physical healing, powers as yet but little understood, powers as limitless as they seemed incredible, as mysterious in their operation as they were simple in their accessibility. And auto-suggestion was

the means of using them. The great men whom he visited welcomed him with open arms, added to his data, widened yet further his mental outlook. Sought by high and low in many countries and in strangest cases, his experience grew and multiplied, his assortment of unusual knowledge was far-reaching; till he stood finally in wonder and amazement before the human being and its unrealized powers, and his optimism concerning the future progress of the race became more justified with every added fact.

Yet, perhaps, his greatest achievement was the study of himself; it was probably to this deep, intimate and honest research into his own being that his success in helping others was primarily due. For in himself, though mastered and co-ordinated by his steady will, rendered harmless by his saving sense of humour and (as he believed) by the absence of any harboured grievance against others—in his very own being lay all those potential elements of disorder, those loose unravelled threads of alien impulse and suppressed desire, which can make for dangerous disintegration, and thus produce the disturbing results classed generally under alienation and neurosis.

The incongruous elements in him were the gift of nature; γνῶθι σεαυτόν was the saving attitude he brought to that gift, redeeming it. This phrase, borrowed, he remembered with a smile, for the portal of the ancient Mysteries, remained his watchword. He was able to thank the fierce illicit love that furnished his body and his mental make-up for a richer field of first-hand study than years of practice among others could have supplied. He belonged by

temperament to the unstable. But—he was aware of it. He realized the two beings in him: the reasoning, scientific man, and the speculative dreamer, visionary, poet. The latter wondered, dreamed among a totally different set of values far below and out of sight. This deeper portion of himself was forever beating up for recognition, clamouring to be used, yet with the strange shyness that reminded him of a loving woman who cannot be certain her passion is returned. It hinted, threatened, wept and even sulked. It rose like a flame, bringing its own light and wind, blessed his whole being with some divine assurance, and then, because not instantly accepted, it retired, leaving him empty, his mind coloured with unearthly yearnings, with poignant regrets, yet perfumed as though the fairness of Spring herself had lit upon his heart and kissed it into blossom on her passage north. It presented its amazing pictures, and withdrew. Elusive, as the half memory of some radiant dream, whose wonder and sweetness have been intense to the point of almost pain, it hovered, floating just out of reach. It lay waiting for that sincere belief which would convince that its passion was returned. And a fleeting picture of a wild Caucasian valley, steeped in sunshine and flowers, was always the first sign of its awakening.

Though not afraid of reason, it seemed somehow independent of the latter's processes. It was his reason, however, he well knew that dimmed the light in its grand, terrible eyes, causing it to withdraw the instant he began to question. Precise, formal thinking shut the engines off and damped the furnaces. His love, his passion, none the less, were there, hiding with belief, until some bright messenger,

bringing glad tidings, should reveal the method of harmonious union between reason and vision, between man's trivial normal faculties and his astounding supernormal possibilities.

"This element of feeling in our outlook on Nature is a satisfaction in itself, but our plea for allowing it to operate in our interpretation of Nature is that we get closer to some things through feeling than we do through science. The tendency of feeling is always to see things whole. We cannot, for our life's sake, and for the sake of our philosophical reconstruction, afford to lose in scientific analysis what the poets and artists and the lovers of Nature all see. It is intuitively felt, rather than intellectually perceived, the vision of things as totalities, root and all, all in all; neither fancifully, nor mystically, but sympathetically in their wholeness."

To these words of Professor T. Arthur Thomson's, he heartily subscribed, applying their principle to his own particular field.

CHAPTER III

THE net result of his inquiries and research, when, at

the age of nearly forty, he established his own Private Home for unusual, so-called hopeless cases in North-West London—it was free to all, and as Spiritual Clinique he thought of it sometimes with a smile—may be summed up in the single sentence that man is greater than he knows, and that completer realization of his full possibilities lies accessible to his subconscious and superconscious powers. Herein he saw, indeed, the chief hope of progress for humanity.

And it was to the failures, the diseased, the evil and the broken that he owed chiefly his inspiring optimism, since it was largely in collapse that occurred the sporadic upheaval of those super-normal forces which, controlled, coordinated, led, must eventually bring about the realization he foresaw.

The purpose, however, of these notes is not to furnish a sensational story of various patients whom he studied, healed, or failed to heal. Its object is to give some details of one case in particular whose outstanding peculiarities affected his theories and convictions, leaving him open-minded still, but with a breath of awe in his heart perhaps, before a possibility his previous knowledge had ruled

entirely out of court, even if—which is doubtful—he had ever considered it as a possibility at all.

He had realized early that the individual manifests but an insignificant portion of his being in his ordinary existence, the normal self being the tip of his consciousness only, yet whose fuller expression rises readily to adequate evocation; and it was the study of genius, of prodigies, so-called, and of certain faculties shown sometimes in hysteria, that led him to believe these were small jets from a sea of power that might, indeed ought, to be realizable at will. The phenomena all pointed, he believed, to powers that seemed as superior to cerebral functions as they were independent of these.

Man's possible field of being, in other words, seemed capable of indefinite extension. His heart glowed within him as he established, step by step, these greater powers. He dared to foresee a time when the limitations of separate personality would have been destroyed, and the vast brotherhood of the race become literally realized, its practical unity accomplished.

The difficulties were endless and discouraging. The inventive powers of the bigger self, its astonishing faculty for dramatizing its content in every conceivable form, blocked everywhere the search for truth.

It could, he found, also detach a portion of its content into a series of separate personalities, each with its individual morals, talents, tendencies, each with its distinct and separate memory. These fragments it could project, so to speak, masquerading convincingly as separate entities,

using strange languages, offering detailed knowledge of other conditions, distant in time and space, suggesting, indeed, to the unwary that they were due to obsessing spirits, and leaving the observer in wonder before the potential capacity of the central self disgorging them.

The human depths included, beyond mere telepathy and extended telepathy, an expansion of consciousness so vast as to be, apparently, limitless. The past, on rare occasions even the future, lay open; the entire planetary memory, stored with rich and pregnant accumulated experience, was accessible and shareable. New aspects of space and time were equally involved. A vision of incredible grandeur opened gradually before his eyes.

The surface consciousness of to-day was really rather a trumpery affair; the gross lethargy of the vast majority *vis à vis* the greater possibilities afflicted him. To this surface consciousness alone was so-called evil possible—as ignorance. As "ugly is only half-way to a thing," so evil is half-way to good. With the greater powers must come greater knowledge, shared as by instantaneous wireless over the entire planet, and misunderstanding, chief obstacle to progress always, would be impossible. A huge unity, sense of oneness must follow. Moral growth would accompany the increase of faculty. And here and there, it seemed to him, the surface ice had thawed already a little; the pressure of the great deeps below caused cracks and fissures. Auto-suggestion, prototype of all suggestion, offered mysterious hints of the way to reach the stupendous underworld, as the Christian Scientists, the miraculous

healers, the New Thought movement, saints, prophets, poets, artists, were finding out.

The subliminal, to state it shortly, might be the divine. This was the hope, though not yet the actual belief, that haunted and inspired him. Behind his personality lurked this strange gigantic dream, ever beating to get through....

In his Private Home, helping, healing, using his great gifts of sympathy and insight, he at the same time found the material for intimate study and legitimate experiment he sought. The building had been altered to suit his exact requirements; there were private suites, each with its door and staircase to the street; one part of it provided his own living quarters, shut off entirely from the patients' side; in another, equally cut off and self-contained, yet within easy communication of his own rooms, lived Paul Devonham, his valued young assistant. There was a third private suite as well. The entire expenses he defrayed himself.

Here, then, for a year or two he worked indefatigably, with the measure of success and failure he anticipated; here he dreamed his great dream of the future of the race, in whose progress and infinite capacities he hopefully believed. Work was his love, the advancement of humanity his god. The war availed itself of his great powers, as also of his ready-made establishment, both of which he gave without a thought of self. New material came as well from the battlefields into his ken.

The effect of the terrible five years upon him was in direct proportion to his sincerity. His mind was not the type

that shirks conclusions, nor fears to look facts in the face. For really new knowledge he was ever ready to yield all previous theories, to scrap all he had held hitherto for probable. His mind was open, he sought only Truth.

The war, above all the Peace, shook his optimism. If it did not wholly shatter his belief in human progress, it proved such progress to be so slow that his Utopia faded into remotest distance, and his dream of perfectibility became the faintest possible star in his hitherto bright sky of hope.

He felt shocked and stupefied. The reaction was greater than at first he realized. He had often pitied the mind that, aware only of its surface consciousness, uninformed by thrill or shift of the great powers below and above, lived unwarned of its own immenser possibilities. To such, the evidence for extended human faculties must seem explicable by fraud, illusion, derangement, to be classed as abnormal rubbish worthy only of the alienist's attention as diseases. To him such minds, though able, with big intellects among them, had ever seemed a prejudiced, fossilized, prehistoric type. Restricted by their very nature, violently resisting new ideas, they might be intense within their actual scope, but, with vision denied them, they never could be really great.

One effect of the shock he had undergone will be evident by merely stating that he now understood this type of mind a good deal better than before.

CHAPTER IV

THE war was over, though the benefits of the long anticipated peace still kept provocatively, exasperatingly, out of reach, when, about the middle of September, Dr. Fillery received a letter that interested him deeply.

The shattered world was still distraught, uneasy. Nervously eager to resume its former activities, it was yet waiting for the word that should give it the necessary confidence to begin. Doubt, insecurity, uncertainty everywhere dominated human minds. Those who hoped for a renewal of the easy, careless mood of pre-war days were dismayed to find this was impossible; others who had allowed an optimistic idealism to prophesy a New Age, looked about them bewilderingly and in vain for signs of its fair birth. The latter, to whom, perhaps, Dr. Fillery belonged, were more bitterly disappointed, more cruelly shocked, than the former. The race, it seemed to many unshirking eyes, had leaped back centuries at a single spring; the gulf of primal savagery which had gaped wide open for five years, proving the Stone Age close beneath the surface of so-called civilization, had not yet fully closed. Its jaws still dripped blood, hatred, selfishness; the Race was still dislocated by the convincing disproof of progress, horrified at the fierce reality which had displaced the two-pence coloured dream

it had been complacently worshipping hitherto. Men in the mass undoubtedly were savages still.

To Dr. Fillery, an honest, though not a necessarily fundamental pessimism, seemed justified. He believed in progress still, but as his habit was, he faced the facts. His attitude lost something of its original enthusiasm. Looking about him, he saw no big constructive movement; the figure who more than any other was altering the face of the world with his ideas as well as his armies, was avowedly destructive only. He found himself a sobered and a saddened man.

His Private Home, having accomplished splendid work, had just discharged its last shell-shocked patient; it was now empty again, the staff, carefully chosen and proved by long service, dismissed on holidays, the building itself renovated and repaired against the arrival later of new patients that were expected.

Devonham, his assistant, away for a period of rest in Switzerland, would be back in a week or two, and Dr. Fillery, before resuming his normal work, found himself with little to do but watch the progress of the cleaners, painters and carpenters at work.

Into this brief time of leisure dropped the strange, perplexing letter with an effect distinctly stimulating. It promised an unusual case, a patient, if patient the case referred to could properly be called, a young man "who if you decide after careful reflection to reject, can be looked after only by the State, which means, of course, an Asylum

for the Insane. I know you are no longer head of the Establishment in Liverpool, but that you confine yourself to private work along similar lines, though upon a smaller scale, and that you welcome only cases that have been given up as hopeless. I honour your courage and your sympathy, I know your skill. So far as a cure is conceivable, this one is hopeless certainly, but its unusual, indeed, its unique character, entitles it, I believe, to be placed among your chosen few. Love, sympathy, patience, combined with the closest observation, it urgently demands, and these qualities, associated with unrivalled skill, you must allow me, again, to think you alone possess among healers and helpers of strange minds.

"For over twenty years, in the solitudes of these Jura forests and mountains, I have cared for him as best I could, and with a devotion a child of my own might have expected. But now, my end not far away, I cannot leave him behind me here uncared for, yet the alternative, the impersonal and formal care of an Institute, must break my heart and his. I turn to you.

"My advanced age and growing infirmities, in these days of unkind travel, prohibit my bringing him over. Can your great heart suggest a means, since I feel sure you will not refuse the care of this strange being whose nature and peculiarities indicate your especial care, and yours alone? Is it too much to wonder if you yourself could come and see him—here in the remote mountain *châlet* where I have tended and cared for him ever since his mother died in bearing him over twenty years ago?

"I have taught him what seemed wise and best; I have guarded and observed him; he knows little or nothing of an outside world of men and women, and is ignorant of life in the ordinary meaning of the word. What precisely he may be, to what stratum of consciousness he belongs, what kind of being he is, I mean...." The last two lines were then scored through, though left legible. "I feel with Arago, that he is a rash man who pronounces the word 'impossible' anywhere outside the sphere of pure mathematics." More sentences were here scored through.

"Dare I say—to you, as master, teacher, great open-minded soul—that to *human* life, as we know it, he does not, perhaps, belong?

"In writing—in this letter—I find it impossible to give you full details. I had intended to set them down; my pen refuses; in the plain English at my disposal—well, simply, it is not credible. But I have kept full notes all these years, and the notes belong to you. I enclose an imperfect painting I made of him some four years ago. I am no artist; for background you must imagine what lay beyond my little skill—the blazing glory of the immense wood-fires that he loves to make upon the open mountain side, usually at dawn after a night of prayer and singing, while waiting for the strange power he derives (as we all do, indeed, at second or third hand), from the worship of what is to him his mighty father, the life-giving sun. Wind, as the 'messengers' of the sun, he worships too.... Both sun and wind, that is, produce an unusual state approaching ecstasy.

"Counting upon you, I have hypnotized him, suggesting that he forget all the immediate past (in fact to date), and telling him he will like you in place of me—though with him it is an uncertain method.

"I am now old in years. I have lived and loved, suffered and dreamed like most of us; my hands have been warmed at the fires of life, of which, let me add, I am not ignorant. You have known, I believe, my serious, as also my lighter imaginative books; my occasional correspondence with your colleague Paul Devonham has been of help and guidance to me. We are not, therefore, wholly strangers.

"The twenty years spent in these solitudes among simple peasant folk, with a single object of devotion to fill my days, have been, I would tell you, among the best of my long existence. My renouncement of the world was no renouncement. I am enriched with wonder and experience that amaze me, for the world holds possibilities few have ever dreamed of, and that I myself, filled as I am with the memory of their contemplation, can hardly credit even now. Perhaps in an earlier stage of evolution, as Delboeuf believes, man was fully aware of *all* that went on within himself—a region since closed to us, owing to attention being increasingly directed outwards. Into some such region I have had a glimpse, it seems. I feel sometimes there was as much fact as fancy, perhaps, in the wise old Hebrew who stated poetically—recently, too, compared with the stretch of time my science deals with—"The Sons of God took to themselves daughters of the children of men...."

The letter here broke off, as though interrupted by something unexpected and unusual; it was signed, indeed, "John Mason," but signed in pencil and at the bottom of an unwritten blank sheet. It had not all been written, either, at one time, or on the same day; there were intervals, evidently, perhaps of hours, perhaps of days, between the paragraphs. Dr. Fillery read, re-read, then read again the strange epistle, coming each time to the same conclusion—the writer was dying in the very act of forming the last sentences. Their incoherence, the alteration in the style, were thus explained. He had felt the end of life so close that he had written his signature, probably addressed the envelope as well, knowing the page might never be filled up. It had not been filled up.

Something behind the phrases, behind the intensity of the actual words, beyond the queer touches that revealed a mind betrayed by solitude, the hints possibly of a deluded intelligence—there was something that rang true and stimulated him more than ordinarily. The reference to Devonham, too, was definite enough. Dr. Fillery remembered vaguely a correspondence during recent crowded years with a man named Mason, living away in Switzerland somewhere, and that Devonham had asked him questions from time to time about what he called, with his rough-and-ready and half-humorous classification, "pagan obsession," "worshipper of fire and wind," referring it to the writer of the letters, named John Mason. "Non-human delusion," he had also called it sometimes. They had come to refer to it, he remembered, as "N. H." in fact.

He now looked up those Notes, for the mention of the books caused him an uncomfortable feeling of neglected opportunity, and John Mason was an honoured name.

"You know, I believe ... my books," the writer said. Could this be, he asked himself anxiously, John Mason, the eminent geologist? Had Devonham not realized who he was? Must he blame his assistant, whose jealous care and judgment saved him so many foolish, futile, un-real cases, reserving what was significant and important only?

The Notes established his mistakes and his assistant's—perhaps intentional?—ignorance. The writer of this curious letter was unquestionably the author of those fairy books for children, old and young, whose daring speculations had suggested that other types and races, ages even before the Neanderthal man, had dwelt side by side with what is known as modern man upon this time-worn planet. Behind the literary form of legend and fairy tale, however, lay a curious conviction. Atlantis was of yesterday compared with earlier civilizations, now extinct by fire and flood and general upheaval, which once may have inhabited the globe. The present evolutionary system, buttressed by Darwin and the rest, was but a little recent insignificant series, trivial both in time and space, when set beside the mightier systems that had come and gone. Their evidence he found, not in clumsy fossils and footprints on cooled rocks, but in the *minds* of those who had followed and eventually survived them: memories of Titan Wars and mighty beings, and gods and goddesses of non-human kind, to whose different existence the physical conditions of an over-

heated planet presented no impossibility. The human species, this trumpery, limited, self-satisfied super-animal man, was not the only type of being.

Yet John Mason, in his day, had held the chair at Edinburgh University, his lectures embodied common-sense and knowledge, with acutest imaginative insight. His earliest writings were the text-books of the time. His name, when Edward Fillery was medical student there, still hovered like well-loved incense above the old-town towers.

The Notes now intrigued him. No blame attached to Devonham for having missed the cue, Devonham could not know everything; geology was not in his line of work and knowledge; and Mason was a common name. Rather he blamed himself for not having been struck by the oddness of the case—the Mason letters, the pagan obsession, worshipper of wind and fire, the strange "N. H."

"A competent indexer, at any rate," he said to himself with a smile, as he turned up the details easily.

These were very scanty. Devonham evidently had deemed the case of questionable value. The letters from Mason, with the answers to them, he could not find.

The slight record was headed "*Mason, John*," followed by an address "Chez Henri Petavel, peasant, Jura Mountains, Vaud, French Switzerland," and details how to reach this apparently remote valley by mule and carriage and foot-path. Name of Mason's protégé not given.

"*Sex, male; age—born 1895; parentage, couple of mystical temperament, sincere, but suffering from marked*

delusions, believers in Magic (various, but chiefly concerned with Nature and natural forces, once known, forgotten to-day, of immense potency, accessible to certain practices of logical but undetailed kind, able apparently to intensify human consciousness).

"*Subject*, of extremely quick intelligence, yet betrays ignorance of human conditions; intelligence superior to human, though sometimes inferior; long periods of quiescence, followed by immense, almost super-human, activity and energy; worships fire and air, chiefly the former, calling the sun his father and deity.

"Abhors confined space; this shown by intense desire for heat, which, together with free space (air), seem conditions of well-being.

"Fears (as in claustrophobia) both water and solidity (anything massive).

"Has great physical power, yet indifferent to its use; women irresistibly attracted to him, but his attitude towards other sex seems one of gentleness and pity; love means nothing. Has, on the other hand, extraordinarily high ideal of service. Is puzzled by quarrels and differences of personal kind. Half-memories of vast system of myriad workers, ruled by this ideal of harmonious service. Faithful, true, honest; falseness or lies impossible ... lovable, pathetic, helpless type——"

The Notes broke off abruptly.

Dr. Fillery, wondering a little that his subordinate's brief but suggestive summary had never been brought to his

notice before, turned a moment to glance at the rough water-colour drawing he held in his hand. He looked at it for some moments with absorption. The expression of his face was enigmatical. He was more than surprised that Devonham had not drawn his attention to the case in detail. Placing his hand so as to hide the lower portion of the face, he examined the eyes, then turned the portrait upside down, gazing at the eyes afresh. He seemed lost in thought for a considerable time. A faint flush stole into his cheek, and a careful observer might have noticed an increase of light about the skin. He sighed once or twice, and presently, laying the portrait down again, he turned back to the *dossier* upon the table in front of him.

"Very accurate and careful," he said to himself with satisfaction as he noticed the date Devonham had set against the entries—"June 20th, 1914."

The war, therefore, had interrupted the correspondence.

Devonham had made further notes of his own in the margin here and there:

"Does this originate primarily from Mason's mind, communicated thence to his protégé?" He agreed with his assistant's query.

"If so, was it transferred to Mason's mind before that? By the father or mother? The mother was, obviously, his—Mason's—great love. Yet the father was his life friend. Mason's great passion was suppressed. He never told it. It found no outlet."

"Admirable," was the comment spoken below his breath.

"Boy born as result of some 'magical' experiment intensely believed (not stated in detail), during course of which father died suddenly.

"Mason tended mother, then lived alone in remote place where all had occurred.

"Did Mason inherit entire content of parents' beliefs, dramatizing this by force of unexpressed but passionate love?

"Did not Mason's mind, thus charged, communicate whole business to the young mind he has since formed, a plastic mind uninfluenced by normal human surroundings and conditions of ordinary life?

"Transfer of a sex-inspired mania?"

Then followed another note, summarizing evidently Devonham's judgment:

"Not worth F.'s investigation until examined further. N.B.—Look up Mason first opportunity and judge at first hand."

Dr. Fillery, glancing from the papers to the portrait, smiled a little again as he signified approval.

But the last entry interested him still more. It was dated July 13, 1914.

"Mason reports boy's prophecy of great upheaval coming. Entire race slips back into chaos of primitive life again. Entire Western Civilization crumbles. Modern inventions and knowledge vanish. Nature spirits reappear.... Desires return of all previous letters. These sent by registered post."

A few scattered notes on separate sheets of paper lay at the end of the carefully typed *dossier*, but these were very incomplete, and Devonham's handwriting, especially when in pencil, was not of the clearest.

"Non-human claim, though absurd, not traceable to any antecedent causes given by letters. What is Mason's past mental and temperamental history? Is he not, through the parents, the cause? Mania seems harmless, both to subject and others. No suffering or unhappiness. Therefore not a case for F., until further examined by self. Better see Mason and his subject first. Wrote July 24th proposing visit."

Dr. Fillery's eyes twinkled. His forehead relaxed. He looked back. He remembered details. Devonham's holiday that year, he recalled, was due on August 1st; he had intended going out mountain climbing in Switzerland.

The final note of all, also in half-legible writing, seemed to refer to the treatment Mason had asked advice about, and the line Devonham had suggested:

"Natural life close to Nature cannot hurt him. But I advise watch him with fire and with heights—heat, air! That is, he may decide his physical body is irksome and seek to escape it. Teach him natural history—botany, geology, insects, animals, even astronomy, but always giving him reasons and explanations. *Above all*—let him meet girls of his own age and fall in love. Fullest natural expression, but guarded without his knowing it..."

For a long time Dr. Fillery sat with the notes and papers before him, thinking over what he had read. Devonham's

advice was clever enough, but without insight, sound and astute, yet lacking divination.

The twinkle in his eyes, caused by the final entry, died away. His face was grave, his manner preoccupied, intense. He gazed long at the portrait in his hand.... It was dusk when he finally rose, replaced the *dossier*, locked the cabinet, and went out into another room, and thence into the hall. Taking his hat and stick, he left the house, already composing in his mind the telegram instructing Devonham, while apologizing for the interrupted holiday, to bring the subject of the Notes to England with him. A telegraph girl met him on the very steps of the house. He took the envelope from her, and opened it. He read the message. It was dated Bâle, the day before:

"Arriving end week with interesting patient. Details index under Mason. Prepare private suite.

"DEVONHAM."

CHAPTER V

IT was, however, some two weeks later before Dr.

Fillery was on his way to the station to meet Devonham and his companion. A slight delay, caused apparently by the necessity of buying an outfit, had intervened and given time for an exchange of letters, but Devonham had contented himself chiefly with telegrams. He did not wish his chief to know too much about the case in advance. "Probably he regrets the Notes already," thought the doctor, as the car made its way slowly across crowded London. "He wants my first unbiased judgment; he's right, of course, but it's too late for that now."

The delay, however, had been of value. The Home was in working order again, the staff returned, the private suite all ready for its interesting occupant, whom in thought he had already named "N. H."; for in the first place he did not know his name as yet, and in the second he felt towards him a certain attitude of tolerant, half-humorous scepticism.

Cut off from his own kind for so many years, educated, perhaps half-educated only, by too speculative and imaginative a mind, equally warped by this long solitude, a mind unduly stretched by the contemplation of immense geological perspectives, filled, too, with heaven knows what strange stories of pantheistic Nature-feeling—"N. H." might

be distinctly interesting, but hardly all that Mason had thought him. "Unique" was a word rarely justified; the peculiarities would prove to be mere extravagances that had, of necessity, remained uncorrected by the friction of intercourse with his own kind. The rest was inheritance, equally unpruned; a mind living in a side-eddy, a backwater with Nature....

At the same time Dr. Fillery admitted a certain anticipatory excitement he could not wholly account for, an undercurrent of wonder he ascribed to his Khaketian blood.

He had written once only to his assistant, sending briefest instructions to say the rooms would be ready, and that the young man must believe he was an invited guest coming on a visit. "Let him expect complete freedom of movement and occupation without the smallest idea of restraint in any way. He is merely coming to stay for as long as he pleases with a friend of Mason. Impress him with a sense of hearty welcome." And Devonham, replying, had evidently understood the wisdom of this method. "He is also greatly pleased with your name—the sound of it," was stated in the one letter that he wrote, "and as names mean a lot to him, so much the better. The sound of it gives him pleasure; he keeps repeating it over to himself; he already likes you. My name he does not care about, saying it quickly, sharply. But he trusts me. His trust in anyone who shows him kindness is instantaneous and complete. He invariably expects kindness, however, from everyone—gives it himself equally—and is baffled and puzzled by any other treatment."

So Devonham, with "N. H.", who attached importance to names and expected kindness from people as a natural thing, would be in London town within the hour. Straight from his forests and mountains for the first time in his life, he would find himself in the heart of the greatest accumulation of human beings on the planet, the first city of the world, the final expression of civilization as known to the human race.

"'N. H.' in London town," thought Dr. Fillery, his mouth twitching with the smile that began in his quiet eyes. "Bless the lad! We must make him feel at home and happy. He shall indeed have kindness. He'll need a woman's touch as well." He reflected a moment. "Women are a great help in doubtful cases—the way a man reacts to them," he mused. "Only they must be distinct in type to be of value." And his mind ran quickly, comprehensively over the women of his acquaintance, pausing, as it did so, upon two in particular—a certain Lady Gleeson, and Iraida—sometimes called Nayan—Khilkoff, the daughter of his Russian friend, the sculptor.

His mind pondered for some moments the two he had selected. It was not the first time he had made use of them. Their effect respectively upon a man was invariably instinctive and illuminating.

The two were radically different feminine types, as far removed from one another as pole from pole, yet each essentially of her sex. Their effect, respectively, upon such a youth must be of value, and might be even illuminating to

the point of revelation. Both, he felt sure, would not be indifferent to the new personality.

It was, however, of Nayan Khilkoff that he thought chiefly. Of that rare, selfless, maternal type which men in all ages have called saint or angel, she possessed that power which evoked in them all they could feel of respect, of purity, of chivalry, that love, in a word, which holds as a chief ingredient, worship. Her beauty, beyond their reach, was of the stars; it was the unattainable in her they loved; her beauty was of the soul. Nayan was spiritual, not as a result of painful effort and laborious development, but born so. Her life, moreover, was one of natural service. Personal love, exclusive devotion to an individual, concentration of her being upon another single being—this seemed impossible to her. She was at the same time an enigma: there was an elusive flavour about her that made people a little in awe of her, a flavour not of this earth, quite. She carried an impersonal attitude almost to the point of seeming irresponsible to common human things and interests.

The other woman, Lady Gleeson, Angela her Christian name, was equally a simple type, though her simplicity was that of the primitive female who is still close to the Stone Age—a savage. She adorned herself to capture men. She was the female spider that devours its mates. She wanted slaves. To describe her as selfish were inadequate, for she was unaware that any other ideal existed in life but that of obtaining her own pleasure. There was instinct and emotion, but, of course, no heart. Without morals,

conscience or consideration, she was the animal of prey that obeys the call of hunger in the most direct way possible, regardless of consequences to herself or others. Her brain was quick, her personality shallow. When talking she "rattled on." Devonham had well said once: "You can hear her two thoughts clicking, both of them in trousers!" Sir George, recently knighted, successful with large concessions in China, was indulgent. The male splendour of the youth was bound to stimulate her hunger, as his simplicity, his loneliness, and in a sense his pathetic helplessness, would certainly evoke the tenderness in Nayan. "He'll probably like her dear, ridiculous name, too," Dr. Fillery felt, "the nickname they gave her because she's the same to everybody, whichever way you take her—Nayan Khilkoff." Yet her real name was more beautiful—Iraida. And, as he repeated it half aloud, a soft light stole upon his face, shone in the deep clear eyes, and touched even the corners of the rather grim mouth with another, a tenderer expression, before the sternness quickly returned to it.

"N. H." would meet, thus, two main types of female life. He, apparently an exceedingly male being, would face the onslaught of passion and heart, of lust and love, respectively; and it was his reactions to these onslaughts that Fillery wished to observe. They would help his diagnosis, they might guide his treatment.

It was a warm and muggy afternoon, the twilight passing rapidly into darkness now; one of those late autumn days when summer heat flits back, but light is weak. The covered sky increased the clammy warmth, which was damp,

unhealthy, devitalizing. No wind stirred. The great city was sticky and depressing. Yet people approved the heat, although it tired them. "It shortens the winter, anyhow," was the general verdict, when expressed at all. They referred unconsciously to the general dread of strikes.

London was hurried and confused. An air of feverish overcrowding reigned in the great station, when he left the car and went in on foot. No sign of order, system, direction, was visible. The scene might have been a first rehearsal of some entirely new experiment. Grumbling and complaint rose from all sides in an exasperated chorus. He tried to ascertain how late the train was and on which platform it might be expected, but no one knew for certain, and the grudging replies to questions seemed to say, "You've no right to ask anything, and if you keep on asking there will be a strike. So that's that!"

He listened to the talk and watched the facial expressions and the movements of the half-resigned and half-excited concourse of London citizens. The clock was accurate, and everyone was kind to ladies; stewed tea, stale cake with little stones in it, vile whisky and very weak beer were obtainable at high prices. There were no matches. The machine for supplying platform-tickets was broken. He saw men paying more thought and attention to the comfort of their dogs than to their own. The great, marvellous, stupid, splendid race was puzzled and exasperated. Then, suddenly, the train pulled in, full of returned exiles longing to be back again in "dear old England."