

INITIATIONS

by

SÉDIR

Translated from the French by Madame Zadah-Guerin

**Works by SEDIR
(Available in English)**

MYSTIC MOSAIC (An Anthology of his works)
INITIATIONS

A FEW FRIENDS OF GOD
MEDITATIONS FOR 52 WEEKS
DIALOGUE BETWEEN JESUS AND SIVA
THE THREE SACRIFICES (Of Antiquity; of Jesus; of the Disciple):
THE SEVEN MYSTICAL GARDENS
THE INCANDESCENT PATH
ON DREAMS: Their Theory, application, interpretation
BIOGRAPHY: Sedir, the Man and his Works
SPIRITUAL GUIDELINES FROM LETTERS (Reflections on Mysticism) © 1992
CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM (c) 1992
THE GOSPEL AND SAPIENCE

Five Volumes on the Gospel of Christ:

THE CHILDHOOD OF CHRIST
THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT
THE HEALINGS OF CHRIST THE KINGDOM OF GOD (c) 1993
THE CROWNING OF HIS WORK (c) 1993

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PREFACE

Since 1926 the voice of Sédir has ceased to be heard. His was the voice of a precursor, the voice of an annunciator crying out in the wilderness of the crowds.

Sédir consecrated his life to the diffusion of the Gospel. His thought, his teachings and his activity can be condensed into one word: Christ. Here we can only mention his public life, but those who have had the privilege of being among his intimate friends know that his life was dedicated to, in and for Christ. His mind had probed and encompassed all of human knowledge. There was not a domain within men's activity that he had not explored thoroughly: religion, arts, literature, history, agronomy, therapeutics, sociology, etc. He could discourse expertly upon any subject in full cognizance; but his humility was such that he never spoke except to answer queries or to prevent errors.

And when he had solved distressing problems or rectified hazardous opinions, he never failed to show the provisional character of intellectual structures and to warn against adhering to rigid systems. He liked to say that life must first of all be lived, and that the greatest homage man can render to Truth is not to limit it to a formula but to live it.

Yvon Le Loup (Sédir) was born on January 2, 1871 in Dinan, Brittany. However, he spent most of his life in Paris, where he passed away on February 3, 1926.

Sédir made a profound study of the religions of the orient, and of the ensemble of speculations which constitute esotericism. Eminent occultists admired his mastery of these sciences. Between 1894 and 1900 he published a series of works, now out of print and difficult to find, where he expounded some of the results of his scholarly research. Meanwhile, from 1890 on he had collaborated with various magazines and periodicals, among which was *L'Initiation* (founded by Papus in 1888) in order to bring to the public at large these venerable syntheses which are inaccessible to the layman. It was in the October 1891 issue of *L'Initiation* that the name of SEDIR appeared for the first time. It is then that, having reached the summit of knowledge and powers, he suddenly cut himself off from most of his fellow craftsmen, to consecrate himself solely to the Gospel. In his life, a decisive and solemn event took place, (in July 1897) which made him aware of the Nothingness and vanity of secret sciences and societies.

While we are not at liberty to say anymore, we can quote an excerpt from a letter of his published in 1910 in the *Echo du Merveilleux*:

"I have delved into many subjects since 1887, a time when these studies began to attract me passionately.... I never had much material means, but destiny compensated me by placing on my path the representatives of the highest esoteric traditions Rabbis have communicated their secret manuscripts to me; alchemists admitted me to their laboratories; Sufis, Buddhists and Taoists, many a night have taken me along to the abode of their gods. A Brahman permitted my copying his Mantramic tables and a Yogi gave me the secrets of contemplation. But one evening after meeting a certain person, all that these admirable men had taught me became as naught, as ethereal as the light vapor which rises at dusk from the overheated earth."

Sédir had but one ambition -to lead to Christ those with whom he came in contact. In this book which we are presenting to the English-speaking public, he tells the story, we should say the drama, of the sublime meeting which decided his apostolic destiny. This story is presented in novel form, but Sédir certified to us, personally, that every detail in this book is factual.

In fact, during this skeptical, frivolous and scientific century, proud of its conquests and powers, it has been Heaven's plan that one of the true Friends of God has lived among us, passing as a "Nobody" among the crowds, hiding his disconcerting, multitudinous powers "under the mantle of an average bourgeois life, dissimulating his virtues and superiorities as we dissimulate our vices."

There is a Prince of this Earth -delegate of Lucifer; and there is also the Lord of this Earth -delegate of Christ. All the servants of Christ are such only by virtue of their union with Christ. This union is more or less profound; but no matter how profound, the individuality of the servant, his "I" remains all distinct from the "I" of Christ. There never is any identity between Him and the servant, but only resemblance, concordance, and harmony. The identity as taught by the Orientals between Atma and Parabrahm, is but a metaphysical illusion.

Hence, the Lord of the Earth is the one among the servants, soldiers or friends of Christ who possesses the qualities and the right quantity of Lights most suited to link our terrestrial life to the Word directly. He receives the orders of Christ, executes them, then transmits the hopeful aspirations of the earth's inhabitants to Him. He is not Christ. He only represents Christ. No being will ever receive the Word totally. He is all that the Earth is capable of perceiving and of receiving from Christ. Earthly creatures mistake him for Christ. They are not wrong because he is Christ, I repeat, within the measure where the total Christ can show Himself on our planet without dazzling it nor reducing it to ashes.

In this book, Theophane represents an inner part of Andréas -the pure Light of the eternal soul; Andréas being the immortal spirit. The Doctor represents the conscious, reasoning mind, and Stella is the intuition. Objectively these figures or persons represent levels and functions in the Army of Light.

Just as the great poet, Théophile Briant, a friend of Sédir and one of the few who understood him thoroughly, wrote:

"Even in the crux of the deepest sorrows one must never despair. The promise of our Saviour is formal. God is and always will be among us until the end of the world. But one must not seek Him either on stages, in palaces, nor in the places where the trumpets of renown or fame are blasting. He is the "Unknown," the "Nobody" of Sédir, lost anonymously in the crowd. He shuns the "curiosity of the wicked."

"Let us love our brothers as ourselves and we shall find Him. He may be working alongside of us, in one of those phalansteries or crushing-mills of human personalities. He may be that man at the subway entrance who lets himself be pushed aside by an impatient commuter. He may be that passerby who leans over the parapets of the Seine, or the one who walks along the dams.

"He is Humble and has only meager means, perforce, because he does not care to amass wealth beyond that which the invisible Archangel who walks by his side

awards him each day. He lives among us. He watches us and awaits us. He carries, just like Tarcisius, the Eucharist of his Heart among men; he is the depository of the tongues of Fire. Under his nondescript clothing he hides the splendour of Mt. Tabor and perhaps the salvation of the World."

EMILE BESSON 1957

(1 Chapter 5: A Few Friends of God).

INITIATIONS

"There were some Greeks among them that came to worship God at the feast. They approached Philip, who was of Bethsaida in Galilee and made this request: "Sir, we would see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew and both went to tell Jesus. He then spoke these words to them: "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be Glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, unless the corn of wheat falling into the ground dies, it abides alone; but if it dies it will bring forth much fruits. He who loves his life shall lose it, and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. Let him who wants to serve me follow me! And where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me him will my Father honor. Now, my soul is troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But it is for this cause that I came to this hour! Father! Glorify Thy name!"

Then a voice came from Heaven, saying, "I have glorified it and will glorify it again."

The people who stood by and heard it, said, "It thundered." Others said, "It was an angel who spoke to him."

Jesus answered: "This voice came not because of me but for your sakes. Now is the Judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I when I shall be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

He said that to signify what death he should die from.

The people answered him, "The Law teaches us that Christ abides forever; why do you say, 'The Son of man must be lifted up?' Who is this Son of man?"

Jesus answered them, "The Light is among you still but only for a short time. Walk while you have the Light, lest darkness come upon you, for he that walks in darkness does not know whither he goes.

"While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that you may become children of Light."

Thus spoke Jesus, then He departed and hid Himself from them."

John 12:20-36

I STATE OF SOUL

I had just reached forty. The busy life of an overworked doctor in the Paris suburbs had not quenched the dreams of my youth; the time when I was free to drop everything to go in search of a rare book, or to pass the time with a mystic. Often as I was reminiscing, a focal point always led me back to my old friend, Desiderius, dead these twenty years, and to the strangers I had met at his funeral. Whenever fatigue did not overcome me, I would read into the night, perusing the books which he had willed to me, specially the little black book which I mentioned before. My eyes were always drawn, without any apparent reason, to the names of Andreas and of Theophane.

A petty incident broke the monotony of these days, when my servant inadvertently made a tear in a beautifully embroidered hanging which one of my relatives from the Colonies had given me.

This splendid panel depicted a bouquet of peach tree branches with pink flowers interwoven with the boughs of a cherry tree profusely covered with white buds. From the background, the embossed forms of the wood, of the leaves, and of the vaporous petals stood out in rounded polychrome relief. The semitones, the transparencies of the shadows, the marriage of the exquisite shades were all rendered with the delicacy of a La Tour pastel. Three flowers had been accidentally damaged, and for the past two weeks I had been seeking a skilled embroiderer to repair it. From the Marais, I was sent to the Epinettes; from the Epinettes to the professional school at Plaisance. There I was told that near the Lake Saint-Fargeau, I would find some sort of an antiquary who dealt in curious objects d'art, and that his wife could restore my priceless piece.

So, one morning from Billancourt where I lived, I strode forth to the hilly heights of Ménilmontant. I knew the neighborhood well - I used to call frequently on an alchemist shoemaker friend. However, it took me a long time to find the street I was seeking. The walk was charming under a cool April sun; one might have believed to be in the outlying districts of some small town. The lilacs were blossoming profusely in the small gardens; the leaves of the acacia trees were protruding over the fences of old-fashioned homes - a 'la Paul de Kock; children were running over the weedy stones; while the organ-grinder so dear to the true Parisian, turned out his melodious airs. As the street sloped up toward the Porte du Pré, hedges took the place of walls; outdoor cafes and stands with waterproof roofs, and multiple ball games were to be found.

As I reached the street where the antiquarian lived, I saw a brougham standing before a house with a signboard. It was a large antiquated yet comfortable carriage. Great was my surprise when I recognized through the door, the ambulatory office of my venerated professor of histology, Dr. B.... who had had it built to specifications in order not to waste his time between calls. The papers, the special medical reports, the electric bulb and the small typewriter, were all there.

Not wanting to have to explain my presence here in case the professor would come out, I continued on my way. The carriage was stationed just in front of the number I sought, so I decided to come back fifteen minutes later. The street led to the

'fortifications.' Just then, a herd of sheep, led by a man and two superb dogs of the lost race of the old Beaucerons, passed by.

Someone stopped near me to admire the work of those two noble animals. He was one of these individuals who inspire confidence at first sight. Tall, distinguished, perfectly groomed -rather a startling sight in this neighborhood and at such an hour. His mien was rather distant yet most cordial, as he said, "You too like these sheepdogs?"

"Yes," I answered, "I love them, specially the Briards."

"So do I. We are both probably old shepherds," and he smilingly added, "Don't you recognize me, Doctor? No matter, we shall meet again." He saluted me and vanished toward the Paris gate without my attempting to keep him.

His face reminded me of someone, especially his eyes, and the way he carried his head. But where had I met him? What enigmatic words! When he said the word: shepherd -I felt a slight shock in my chest, and now I felt a wave of force penetrate me totally. What did it mean? Perturbed, I turned back. The carriage was gone. A new surprise awaited me! On the hanging sign, I read:

ANDREAS
ANTIQUARIAN-MENDER
REPAIRS OF ALL KINDS

Was Andréas -the mysterious signer of the 'LETTERS,' the dandy barely seen at the funeral of Désiderius? If so, then the stranger of a while ago, must be he, the head of the unknown heirs. Yes, his eyes, his majestic bearing -it was he, or else the name could only be a coincidence!

I made an effort to regain my composure as I examined the little brick house. The main floor was actually a bric-a-brac store. A garden in the rear extended to the boulevard where the sheep had passed by earlier. It was under cultivation. Vegetables grew here, flowers there; also some exotic trees grew in the right places; a runway for chickens; a kennel and a well. The roof of the store served as a terrace to the recessed second floor. Through the bars of the balustrade, a silvery-brown, heavy-browed and mustached dog passed his head, watching me. On the roof perched a small cabin as a kind of observatory. As I approached the store, I saw through the window, a workbench with several fixed vises, a jeweler's bench lavishly strewn with stamps, dies, files and precelles. Also a carpenter's bench. In the corner, the tools of the repousseur. A variety of shears, snips and gauges of the woodcarver hung from laths. On small tables were pots, jars and basins; in short, the heterogeneous junk that Balzac could have dreamed of as a perfect setting for an old artisan.

II ANDREAS

As I continued my examination, a man wearing the sleeveless shirt of a blacksmith-forged, came to the doorstep. His neck, the breadth of his torso, the size of his arms indicated an extraordinary strength. His muscles were rounded, as are those one finds among Tartars; yet his facial structure was that of an average Frenchman, a bit rugged as an old soldier's. It was much later that I could read in it beside kindness, both finesse and intelligence, plus a lot of other things.

I was so certain that I was dealing with a workman that I asked if Monsieur Andreas were in. "It is I," he answered, thus not only surprising me but also causing a certain letdown, because he did not resemble in any sense the elegant young man I had once seen.

"This is what I came for," I said. "This embroidery has been torn, and I was sent to you as it seems that your wife is the only artist able to repair this mishap."

"Fine, Monsieur, come in. If you have a little time to spare, look into this portfolio of etchings. I have something urgent to finish. I shall be back in five minutes." This man went back to his forge, after having scrutinized me rather unexpectedly with a penetrating look.

A peculiar individual no doubt, smitten by a hundred hobbies, I thought. In this combination atelier-shop, I found some very fine engravings, exquisite potteries and priceless items. I decided to win the trust of this Andreas, so I went and joined him in the yard, using the pretext that I preferred being outside in the sun. The large dog came down, turned, and sat between me and his master.

"Be quiet!" the blacksmith told him. "It's a friend. Give him your hand, Monsieur, these dogs like to be treated like persons," he added, smilingly.

The dog came closer, sniffed my hand and pressed it with his large cold nose, and then went back to the terrace.

The shed, where I had rejoined the master of the house, was equipped for iron-mongering. In a very picturesque corner of the garden the robust smith went back and forth, placing his anvils, sinking hammers, and activating the fire in the forge. From the vantage point of the woodshed, a cat was spying upon us; sparrows and red breasts were screeching in the shrubbery, while from the floor above, a contralto voice was softly humming a noble old refrain. From adjoining lots we could hear swarms of children at play -altogether a very peaceful, joyous and lively atmosphere.

"I believe," the man said to me in a deep, though slightly covered voice, "I believe that all those old trappings interest you. I have a great many more. Look at this one (it was a Damascus blade) the secret of this tempering has been lost. Look, isn't it magnificent workmanship?" and he bent the blade in a circle, then releasing it, it regained its straight line. "I believe that this was tempered in boiling ram's tallow." "That's an old wife's recipe," I said. "Pardon me, sir, the fat of the he-goat does not have the same chemical formula as the sheep's. Their properties are

different." He was speaking by fits and starts while hammering a small article. When he had finished, he examined my silk panel.

"That's a beautiful piece," he declared. "It comes from the Quanng-Si and bears some Japanese influence. No matter, I have rarely seen any finer. Do you know how it should be hung to really be appreciated? No? Then look! The shadow of this camellia is gray when the light strikes it in full, but pinkish when coming sideways. The shadow on this horizontal twig is horizontal, hence it should hang on an eastern wall, to be viewed at sunset by a spectator seated on the floor."

Surprised by these ingenious remarks, I immediately tried to stump him by a few quizzes on embroideries and ceramics of the Far East.

He furnished me with names which I seemed not to recall, adding with a smile, "My dear Monsieur, you do not trust me. It is true that you think that we have just met, but we'll get along. My wife will need at least three weeks, and 200 francs for the repair. I shall give you a receipt, giving your panel its full value and guaranteeing all risks. Anyhow, here she is."

A middle-aged woman was slowly descending the stairs of middle stature, with a nice figure, dressed soberly and spotlessly. Beautiful gray hair framed her face which shone from within in spite of the marks of age. Her winning charm immediately won one's trust. The way she held her head, her walk and the elegance of her hands astonished me; she gave the impression, at times, of being truly a 'grande dame.'

"Stella," ... as the blacksmith pronounced her name, something very sweet filled the air and caught in my throat. Never had I seen between two lovers anything to equal the love which flowed between this old couple. The vibrations of his deep voice, the smile in his eyes, all the lines of his well-tanned face, as if he had withstood all the storms and gales of the earth -his very posture indicated the inexpressible tenderness and the unmovable profundity of superhuman sentiments.

I was suddenly struck by emotion. No doubts anymore! Here before me were the Andreas and the Stella of Desiderius. Was it possible? A second later, mistrusts returned. Concealing my state of mind, I decided to wait. In fact, what definite proofs had I of the identity of these two?

"Stella," said he again, "here is a work which concerns you. I have asked two hundred francs and three weeks time."

Smiling, the woman acquiesced in a few words. I analyzed her more closely. Her features, taken one by one, expressed opposite qualities; the mouth was prudent and kind; the nose, imperious; the contour of the cheeks was energetic even to violence; the slant of the eyelids, noble melancholy; the ridges of the forehead and temples denoted kindness. In her eyes shone the happy light which is found in the pupils of innocent children. The sum total was two enigmatic beings.

As Andreas refused the deposit I offered, I insisted, saying, "You do not know me." "That's what you think," he answered smilingly, and, "The Deer calls the Tiger," he added, quoting the proverb of Laos.

My distrust gone, I exclaimed, "But, who are you? Where have you learned all these things that I find you know? Have you lived a long time in those Eastern lands to know so many intimate details?"

"Yes, I have traveled over there and I brought back mostly memories, some errors too, and some truths. Thus, for example, the sign I find in the palm of your right hand tells me, according to the Yellow soothsayers, that you are particularly interested in occult sciences and somewhat successfully. But, another line tells me that you possess, over and above most amateurs, a rare advantage...."

"Which is?"

"If I told you, you would lose it," he gravely answered.

"You have searched far, but remember that the true Light comes from God alone."

I then understood that that man KNEW, and that I had reached the end of my quest. I had sacrificed everything for the pursuit of the occult: family, pleasures, even lucrative positions. Twenty years of research had led me to a wall. Among those whom I had believed to be masters, some had promised more than they could give; others had repelled me by their intolerance of race and religion; some had pitilessly dropped me, or else they wanted me to seek their truth in foreign lands. Is not Truth everywhere? So many aborted endeavors left me wearied. This man here, was he my Andreas? And the woman? What about the stranger just encountered on the street? Was I on the right trail? My interlocutor was still speaking.

"A miraculous phenomenon does not prove what Truth is, because we cannot discern whether the power which produces it comes from above or below. Science is no criterion either. What brain can fathom all the arcana of all Nature? How can we judge what dose of knowledge suits the spiritual, intellectual or physical state of a disciple, the one suited to his past, his future, his surroundings and to the beings for whom he will become a leader, and to those whom he follows? Do not believe, Sir, that I am anyone in particular, I am nothing: I do not even know the depth of my ignorance."

"So, how does one go forward?" I asked, choosing my words as I felt my solemn and technical vocabulary to be out of character with this simple man. I, who was initiated into many degrees, affiliated with all the European sects which come far and near to illumination; a working adjunct of quite a few among them; I, who had written so many scientific brochures; I, whom my foreign correspondents addressed as 'Very Learned Master' (and who had begun to believe it -having heard it so often) and who had solemnized magical rites and revived the paracelsic cures; I, who believed myself impassible and fearless, I began to feel my ivory tower shaken to its foundation; I felt lost. I would have reproached myself for showing this strange man anything but a really sincere attitude which was: the ardent desire of attaining both a synthesis and peace.

"I shall answer you," said Andréas, "when you will do us the kindness of coming for lunch. Let us set the date, shall we?"

I accepted the invitation and left. My professional duties kept me from thinking too much of this incident, and when I returned to Andréas' home I felt more puzzled than ever. The habit of analysis had obliterated intuition in me. I realized

much later, how much time I had lost by not guessing the identity of the stranger met on Boulevard Serrurier.

III ORIENTALISM

Stella had set the table under the arbour. While awaiting luncheon, Andreas served some white brandy and water, explaining that such a drink made from the residue of grapes which had been harvested at night was not injurious, especially if it had been distilled several times; also that it does not destroy the fatty tissues with which people of my temperament are not sufficiently endowed. As we drank and smoked, my host was questioning me.

"Here are questions which puzzle me," I said to him. "I shall do my best to condense them. Let me begin with the Buddhist philosophy. It proclaims matter to be indestructible and eternal; why? Where does the motion which animates the world come from? Should we follow it or break away from it? The desire for living which we carry in ourselves -who instilled it in us? And who inspires the opposite among a few of us? Such as we are, we have to fight against the powerful magic of the senses through a mental body which is part and function of these powers we would destroy. On the other hand, the Arhats impose experimental, positive and analytical steps to the meditating student. Hence if the extinction of ignorance annihilates sensory power, the disciple will have, in order to escape his Karma and escape rebirth, to retain his awareness, his consciousness after death. In other words, he must have found previously through intuition, the existence of an invisible Universe which his rational meditations could not reveal to him. The Mahayana enumerates the eight paths of the Way. I admit that through the first which is science, one realizes the emptiness of physics; the five interdictions of the second, and the abstention of the ten sins of the third are morally evident; but the practice of the six transcendental virtues, or fourth path, seems impossible to me.

"For example, if I became a monk and possessed nothing, how could I give alms? Filled with selfishness, vanity, disdain, since I would consider myself better than others, how could I practice "love of all that breathes"? The Cingales, Tibetan, Japanese, Chinese and Tartar sects of Buddhism offer to whomever follows them, but a long succession of temporary syntheses, of compromise between the state of the disciple and the ideal toward which he aims. Evidently, pain is inseparable from existence, but no one can prove existence to be produced by ignorance.

"If a pleasure leaves me cold, it has ceased to be a pleasure for me, yet it has not ceased to exist; consequently, there always remains the possibility that in the future, I may be lured by its appeal. If I were to resist, I would deprive some cells of their fulfillment, and I, Buddhist, scrupulous of all life, would have caused the death of some energies. I do not want to insinuate that we should satisfy all our passions; I only call attention to the contradiction between two Buddhist rules.

"And then, where would I today find not only a master but a doctrine? How can one choose among the dozens of Japanese sects? The Chinese bonzas are not well versed anymore. In Tibet, how can we distinguish that which comes from the Bonpa cult, from the Yogacharya school, or from the tantrism of Kalachakra? There also remains Siamese Buddhism of which I have no documentation."

"That seems quite clear to me."

"Let us now examine the mysteries which descend from Brahmanism in a straight line. I admit that the Yoga system has been created to permit the human mind to

receive the germs of the greatest number of powers and make them active. The special processes used to control sound, voice, optics, magnetism, muscular force of passions do not interest me, because it seems to me that if we arrived at understanding the core of all that, one would automatically conquer its results. Hence, I have studied only the Radja Yoga. Please forgive me for giving you all these details, but I wanted to enable you to give me a definite diagnosis."

IV THE RACHITIC CHILD

Someone was calling from the street. Andréas went out to see and then came back to fetch me; it was a woman of the laboring class carrying an ailing baby in her arms.

"See, Doctor, what is the matter with this little one," Andréas asked. After examination, my conclusions were: rickets due to hereditary alcoholism.

"I do not think so," contradicted Andréas. "It must simply be a xiphoid appendix." And in fact, the point of the sternum's soft cartilage was bent inwardly.

"I have here something for the bones," he continued, "but I am not a physician, I do not have the right to prescribe drugs." "I can sign any prescription you want." "Thank you, Doctor, I do not wish to involve you. Here is a much simpler thing that the mother can do as often as she wants." He laid the baby on an armchair and asked the mother to run her index finger along the small sternum.

"Do you feel anything?" he asked her.

"Oh, yes, Monsieur," answered the woman. "It feels as if cold water were running inside my finger."

"That's fine. Now do you feel the little point which moves?"

In fact, the cartilage seemed to be moving forward in little jerks.

"Oh, Monsieur, I, thank you," said the woman tearfully.

"Now, now!" Andreas was saying as he made faces to amuse the baby. "When a mother loves her child, God helps her. It is He, we must thank; it is He alone we must implore... instead of gossiping with neighbors. So, do this, every time the baby sleeps. And good-bye. If he is not any better, my doctor friend will always be there."

When we were alone, he said, "You were right, it is due to alcoholism, but it was better for this woman not to despise her husband. Let's go and eat!"

V THE PROLETARIAT

We did not have three quiet minutes during this luncheon. A file of visitors interrupted us constantly; all of them factory workers -male and female -who hurriedly came over for advice before the whistle recalled them.

I soon became aware, that if Andreas had only a few admirers among the intellectual and social elite, on the other hand, he possessed a horde of fervent friends among the working classes. The hangar was often full.

They came, either about a bad cold, a wound, a fight with an overseer or about a disagreement with the boss of the union; Andréas seemed to know everything; he knew the factories, the engineers, the small industrialists and the committee chairmen. He spoke their kind of slang; he understood the mason, the mechanic or the assemblyman as if he had been one of them.

The ideas of that milieu were familiar to him; he knew how to touch a heart and calm the hotheaded ones. He would circumvent the plans of the ambitious by speaking quite apropos of 'the wife, the kids and weekend outings.' More than one family owed him the father's returning home on Saturday nights, steady on his feet, with the pay envelope almost intact.

"How do you manage to have all these people listen to you?" I asked him. "I -when I was connected with the hospital, I had all sorts of trouble trying to please them, or rather not to hurt their feelings; and the best among them were the most intractable. The little 'voyous' - brats could be easily managed."

"Why, that is simple, I have lived among them. You are a bourgeois, a thousand nuances separate you. You do not feel as they do, and it prevents you from understanding them. In fact, it is the same obstacle which keeps any domain of life closed to us; not to be able to step out of our shoes."

"Yet, isn't assimilating a metaphysic the same as penetrating a state of mind?"

"Perhaps yes, but you know that I am ignorant of both metaphysics and psychology."

Astounded, I looked at Andréas, expecting this to be an epigram, but no, he was not smiling but speaking seriously. He went on:

"To understand and to know is not the same thing as to perceive and conceive: It is to take with, be born with, organize and be embodied with the help of all intellectual, aesthetic and even physical means.

"If you wish to really understand the laborer, you must become one without any thought of return; otherwise you would be nothing but a 'declassé.' It is not easy; at least, go among the working classes, become aware of their mentality and of how they feel, without any preconceived ideas."

"You mean, what the learned doctors call: objective observation?"

"If you wish."

"It seems to me that the real inventor of the idea is Abailard?"

"No matter. Let us only remember that to know completely, one should be able to abandon all personal equations, one's temperament, one's individuality. Through a series of systematic meditations one can reach that state in the mental world; the Brahmans say so, the Jesuits also attain it in their way. But when we consider that the intellect is constantly being modified through physiological, magnetic, sentimental, and spiritual variations, one is led to seek higher for another and more central organ. This organ is 'the heart.' No object can be understood unless we love it first. Thus only he who has become a 'meek in spirit', simple down to plain unity, stripped of all down to nudity, and so humble that he believes he is a zero, he alone attains perfect knowledge."

"Do the Gospels really contain a whole system of logic?"

"Yes, among a thousand other things. But let us come back to our workmen. They have, especially the Parisians, a lot of self respect. They are unaware that they are the rich soil from which the strong trees and beautiful flowers grow, they only see that they are close to the earth and that everyone has walked over them for centuries. All soils need a tractor now and then. The laborers know that they have little instruction, practically no education, but they don't like to be reminded of it even by a glance. They do not want to be treated as pariahs. At their first contact with a gentleman, they are on the defensive. They are so sure that they are despised because they do not wear a white collar nor speak correctly. Also, regarding their fear of hospitals, they think that because they do not pay they will be used as guinea pigs, so they prefer paying any old M.D. whose prescriptions they will not follow anyway. The foreman is always the pet aversion of the workshop because he is officially a step above the others; besides, he admires the boss, encourages his bad tendencies, specially the one about cutting corners."

"What do you mean; you seem to belittle savings?" I interrupted.

"To hoard is not inscribed among Heaven's laws. On the other hand, the boss is often wrong, he is too anxious to make profits. Pitilessly, he considers his employees a bit like machines. The little boss often forgets that he too was one of these workmen against whom he swears daily. A safe has replaced his heart and in a small way, he apes the tyrants. Hence, an invincible distrust separates the two castes, each persuaded that the one exploits the other. The problems of management make the directors tense, while the dissensions between unions keep the proletariat on tenterhooks.

"Unions do not really serve as they should because they are the caricature of fraternity. Based upon matter, they are animated by the spirit of division and intrigue while illegitimate favoritism swarms. For these groups to really produce the expected social fruits, it would be necessary for their members to meet with a common ideal; but how many centuries will pass before the masses are awakened to the self-forgetfulness of each man for the benefit of the collectivity!"

"So, what about the moment?"

"Let us do the best we can, each in his little zone. It is excellent to go among the lower classes as a comrade without preaching. Anyhow, if we want those above us to come and see us, we must first descend among our inferiors. And you can be sure that if, during a discussion, we have abstained from personalities, if we dismiss all preconceived ideas, and if we ask Him, Heaven will inspire us to use the kind, the right and appeasing words."

VI VEDANTA ANALYZED

As we had started on that premise, the meal lasted quite late. I had appointments and had to leave. Upon my next visit, it was Stella who continued our metaphysical conversation.

"My stand is already taken," said she smilingly, "yet I still enjoy hearing these matters discussed, though I am quite ignorant ... or rather because You criticized Buddhism the other day, Doctor, have the Brahmans found grace in your eyes?"

"I do not think either Buddhism or Brahmanism are any the worse for my criticisms. But I would like your comments on this:

"The Vedas let it be understood that in man are contained in miniature, parts of all that which exists in the universe. In both there exists a central principle, a pivot upon which the wheels of both machines are geared with their multiple and diverse multiplications. This pivot in man is the Atma, or pinnacle of the higher unconscious, from which the mental is derived. The latter can appropriate the successive wheelworks of the unconscious in order to direct them. To broaden, fathom, and sublimate the conscious sphere up to the Atma, such is the aim of the higher Yogis."

"That is all quite correct," Andreas answered. "You know that the Goupta Vidya, among all sciences, holds the unusual premise of becoming more complicated in proportion to the complexity of the intellect which assimilates it. Its authentic manuals, anyhow those that I read in the crypts, are but summaries. The most detailed ones consist of twenty odd pages only. They are made from these palm leaves which have been rendered incorruptible through a curious process. They are merely reminders and each student must inaugurate his own adaptation of the general rule. But, I am preventing you from pursuing your expose, forgive me. I have reached the age where one likes a captive audience."

"I am always certain of deriving great benefits from the recollections that you wish to share with me, but as I said, I would feel much better relieved, after airing the doubts I possess. For instance, this is what I gather from Radja-Yoga, and stop me if I am wrong. Let us say, that I pick up a stone. It takes an infinitesimal time for the sensation of the contact to be felt; the motion of voluntary return, by which I either leave or take my hand away will take about equal time -approximately thirty-three thousandths of a second, I am told. The Yogi attempts to become aware of the two currents and of the cerebral phenomena which take place during the short interval, already mentioned. When he will have been able to discern consciously the nerves through which the sensation and reflexes passed, the affected cerebral cells, and the various phases of the perception, he will have almost mastered his mental state, which means that the mental will not be tied to the brain anymore, and that it could be transported to any part of the body. The Yogi will then be able to see with his finger tips, hear with his eyes, and so forth. Then, he goes through another similar training period for hyperphysical sensations, for thoughts, for feats of memory, for the actual thinking principle itself and lastly for the self realization. Having thus reached the abstract neuter point which is the

highest peak of the conscious, he will then attempt the indescribable experiences which will make of him: a 'free soul', a 'delivre' "

"That is exact," Andreas interrupted, "at least according to my personal experiences."

"Well!" I went on, "I have begun these experiences and have already obtained a certain amorphous state of the mental. I approached monodeism which I came close to attaining, then all of a sudden, each time a wall would spring up, throwing me back into ordinary life."

"There is a wall."

"Granted, but is this wall providential? Should I cross it, or tear it down? It is I who built it priorly? Is it a friend or a foe?"

"I cannot tell you, doctor; it is up to you to find out. You can demolish it, turn it over, jump over, dig under; but don't try anything yet. Wait. These exercises apply only to a few of your faculties. You are making the same mistake as a young athlete who develops his pectoral muscles and biceps, forgetting that he must enlarge his thorax and strengthen his heart first."

"That's it!" I exclaimed, happily catching a new vista. "Your viewpoint differs from the Brahman's, but do you know of a more central principle than the intellect, one which does not belong to the unconscious at the same time? The Hindu books all place the 'mental moon' up above the 'vital sun!'"

"That is exactly right for those to whom they belong, but we have something else."

"What?"

"You have read the name a thousand times, Doctor, when you were a child...."

"But in what book?"

"In the Gospel," Stella murmured softly, "Jesus speaks constantly of our heart."

"Our heart; the heart," I argued, "is a symbol, it's a rhetorical figure of speech"

"Oh no, no," said Andreas with emphasis. "Symbols are found in the Gospels only by those who live in the kingdom of allegories. What is a word as against an action? What matters a system before facts? What is knowledge as opposed to power? To know a phenomenon thoroughly demands that one should have experienced it a thousand times."

"But that is the downfall of Science that you propose! Have you then dried the well of all sciences? Have you some untapped powers in hand? If you speak truly, all my dreams are shattered.

It remains for me to forget all my books, hieroglyphics, my Numbers and schemas - I will then have wasted twenty years of study - I am but flotsam!"

"Doctor, I too have weathered doubts," replied Andréas affectionately. "I have despaired to the point of not having any tears left, yet I should have been sustained by pride, by a great pride, the pride of having reached summits that no European had ever attempted to scale for centuries. Today, I know that I did not do so through my own powers. But in those days, I believed only in myself. Tragedies had been heaped upon me without my flinching. Never had I ceased trying, I surpassed all my colleagues, and all of a sudden I felt alone. My masters were merciless. If he falls, they thought, it is because he is too weak to climb higher and we would waste our time helping him."

"I had learned so much, fought, seen, and solved so many contrary enigmas that I could not distinguish between good and evil, nor between right and left anymore. Is there a God? Is there a devil? Is creation orderly? Is it a chaos? Even I, what am I? Slave or free? What will become of me? Will I succumb? Is Nothingness the end of it all? Is there such a thing as glorious eternity in the making?"

"When recogitating upon my thoughts, works, and travels, I would ceaselessly pass from fear to lassitude. All these philosophies, dialectic theologies, and practical mysteries which I had experimented with, the poisons, the terrifying and macabre presences, the desperate sentences of all those who have lost their illusions! What could I conclude from it all? I had seen the form of the gods of Nature and Science in my initiatory ecstasies. As Kipling's bridge-builder inebriated by the opium of occultism, I had overheard the secret colloquy of those formidable beings. All that remained from all this was an overwhelming fatigue. What could be done? Should I, as do the Benares adepts, ask from all-victorious matter, the vials of forgetfulness?"

Subjugated by the living echoes of these confidences, I listened intently. At last, I had found a man who did not speak from hearsay; I had found a true experimentalist. I visualized the end of my search; I anticipated hope, pure hope, the dawn at last! While Andréas, peacefully drawing on his long Flemish pipe - as brown and satiny as an opium bamboo - went on:

"During this inner crisis, though all seemed peaceful around me, I had to fear for my personal safety. I was aware of the slowly wrought but cleverly induced oriental rancours, also I had aroused certain distrusts. Here is how. Fate had brought about my being admitted among most of the Moslem, Hindu and Chinese esoteric associations such as the Sivaist Tantrists, Javanese sorcerers; the Red-hats of the Bhutan, and the Mountaineers of the nan-Chan had initiated me to their magical rites. I knew the lost idioms, the rites which are only murmured from mouth to ear, the horrible objects procured only by crimes; the search for rare herbs and stones which demand months of peregrination. I had lived in retreats hidden in far away jungles; I had seen the preparation of subtle poisons and irresistible philtres. I had even gone on hunts with those fearless men who tear out the nail, the tooth or the hair, which the ritual demands, from living wild beasts. Many a time, the monstrous forms of the Gods of the Beyond appeared in the smoke of holocausts, and in the effluvia of strewn blood. How many nightmares did I have, caused by the ironical eyes of these beings beside whom the most powerful and sagacious humans are but pygmies. The artful evocator who, thanks to skillful correspondences, stop these titans to wring an answer from them, are often the butt of their laughter, and their victims.

"I progressively became more and more convinced that only the theory of magic is an exact science; its practice is subject to too many errors, that many of its tenets are inaccurate. Whoever tries to wrench any undue powers from Nature by sheer force, falls under the law of Karma and any attempt to free oneself, even if it loosens the hold for a while, only tightens the ligatures anew, with added pains. Nothing matures before the time which was fixed since the beginning of time. If man evokes the desire to have all powers, it means that he already possesses the germs of it. But, being too impatient, he tries to ripen them through artificial means which produces nothing but frail plants, destined to wither at the first indication of a storm Hence, these conclusions condemned all the researches of my youth or else I had to ignore this evidence and start anew."

"I am stupefied," said I, "to see how you shed light upon my own situation. Why have I searched afar and labored to fathom secrets, when after all, truth is so close and so simple!"

"Everyone falls into the trap, Doctor; console yourself. It is very difficult to evade the lure of mysteries. I remember how the adepts whom I had encountered at the outset of my stay in India had loyally warned me. They explained to me how wrong I was to seek strange symbology afar, when my own native religion gave me an admirable solution. They affirmed that our perpetual Master -for us Europeans is Jesus, and that His followers who place their trust in Him can never be disappointed in their expectancies. Yet, I kept these words pigeonholed in my memory for years, without 'hearing' them! How wrong we are in not forgetting ourselves, by not living selflessly both morally and intellectually! When these Brahmans spoke to me thus, had I laid aside the preconceived idea that they wanted to mislead me, these two minutes of clear thinking would have saved me years which can never be regained. Yes, I have had the weakness of regretting that waste of time."

"Weakness?" I asked him, somewhat surprised.

"Of course! It is a weakness to believe anything to have been unnecessary."

"And now, what do you think of the Brahman's warnings?"

"I find them to be right."

"Then -one must follow his religion; go to church -the Church?"

"One must follow one's conscience, after having enlightened it as best could be!"

"In fact, man had a conscience before any ecclesiastical organization had been founded."

Here Andréas must have read my thoughts because he interrupted with a smile:

"Oh Doctor, let us not go astray, neither one of us is a bishop; we must neither judge priests, their theology nor their casuistry. If you believe Christ to be still among us, follow His word. It is everything."

The accent with which Andreas pronounced these last words seemed to me rather peculiar. Suddenly agitated, I repeated almost involuntarily: "Christ is still alive?"

And suddenly, I understood the frightful import and extraordinary consequences that such an hypothesis could have. Andréas' statements always impressed by their definite accent; not that he was an orator; he expressed himself in the simplest manner; but within his familiar discourses without a single gesture or a facial expression to underline their meaning, I detected more and more the soft mysterious yet powerful gleam which truly reveals a supernatural Presence. This duality disconcerted me. I dared not question him closely upon his likely relationship with Desiderius or with Theophane. I would have seemed naive, had he wished to mislead me; or distrustful, were he sincere. I waited for time to prove it one way or another and to calm my doubts - these were painful, because the whole purport of my life was at stake these days.

After a short pause, Andréas went on, as if talking to himself:

"Yes, no matter under what guise I consider the actions and words of this Divine Being, I can only take pity upon the indecent imaginative stupidities that have been written about Him. The Brahmans themselves have shrugged their shoulders when I mentioned that many occidental spiritualists believe that Jesus went through Essenes, Egyptian or Lamaic initiations; that the spiritualists represent Him as a medium, the hypnotists as a forerunner of du Potet, and the occultists as a Magus; that they all claim being able to reach His level; not forgetting those who believe themselves superior to Him because they came 2000 years later!...

"Ah yes!" I interrupted. "I have heard that humbug stated by the famous...."

"No names please, Doctor, let us not judge, let us only compare," he replied, as he stood up. "Also, you see, we are learning tolerance from Christ: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

VII THE BRAHMAN

Two months had gone by since my first visit. Andreas had sent me patients from his neighborhood. Though it was quite a distance, I gladly took care of them. Now it gave me a good excuse to go calling on him.

So, one morning after my calls, I went up to see him. On the corner of his street, I stopped at the laundry, whose owner had been my patient. Naturally, I knew all the little helpers, courageous youngsters whose youth skirted anemia because of the humidity and the vapors of the wash and the overpowering heat of the cast-iron stove. This talkative, chirping little group, fresh and frolicsome but as straight as a die, always received me with open arms. I was permitted to share their secrets and buy them some chestnuts from time to time. Having been told of the oncoming feast day of the apprentice, I purchased that morning on the way up the Faubourg du Temple, a beautiful glass-ruby and gold-plated ring that a peddler had been willing to sacrifice for 49 sous, 'instead of twenty-seven francs and fifty centimes!' So, I entered the laundry, with my offering of the ring, and paid a round of white wine with the permission of the employer. I was assailed and consulted on multiple symptoms, while gossip gave me the latest morsels on the policeman's wife, the mayor's clerk, the street sweeper.... "And you know, M'sieur, your friend M'sieur Andreas, he's got a Chinaman at his house. He got there last night. He even scared me when he came in to ask directions and I hadn't lit the lamps yet. He doesn't speak French well, but he's a handsome man...."

"He's not a Chinaman; he's got no queue!"

"Of course. He's got a yellow skin...." and so forth.

I escaped as soon as I could, but not wanting to be indiscreet, I first ate luncheon at the corner café, and arrived at Andréas' at 2:00 p.m.

His 'Chinaman' was a superb, turbaned, bearded Hindu, as straight as a die, obviously a high cast from Kouhou. After due introductions, he willingly laid aside his triple pride of Aryan, aristocrat and priest and we talked freely of this and that. English culture, archeology, epigraphy, medicine, astrology, agnosticism, and monoism were subjects which gave a chance to size up each other graciously. Here and there Andreas would say a few words until finally, the Hindu began to praise Radja-Yoga as the Science of sciences. It was a pleasure to listen to him. He was more fluent than eloquent, but his choice of words, the synthesis of his ideas, were so well formulated that one never could tire of following the development of his trend of thoughts. Facts, theories, word pictures would be linked, then oppose one another to be finally reunited. It was of a grandiose design, of luxuriant composition, such as a sculptured frieze of temple walls, where warriors, monsters, genii, gods and dancers are profusely interwoven, till the benumbed brain of the visitor, overwhelmed by such details, falls into a lethargic state from which all seems possible and facile -all mysteries explicable and all utopias reasonable.

I was thus listening to the Brahman when Andreas stopped him, saying:

"May I interrupt my guest a moment to ask of him one or two questions?"

The Oriental having acquiesced, Andreas pursued: "If my memory served me right, your tests demand that no Yoga training ever be attempted before one has successfully mastered the systems of moral training; otherwise, the practice of these exercises would be pernicious, if not fatal to the imprudent student."

"What you say, is correct," granted the priest.

"Fine! Would you then kindly explain these preparatory trainings in detail?"

"I would not teach you nor our honorable friend anything new, Monsieur, in enumerating the ten observances and the ten purifications.

Here are the first:

"AHIMSA -which is never to cause a pain to any living being either in thought, word or action.

SATYA -which is to always tell the truth by word, gesture, or thought.

ASTEYA -which is indifference to all possessions, in mind, thought, speech or action.

BRAHMATCHARYA -which is chastity of body, speech, and thoughts.

DAYA -which is the exercise of kindness toward all creatures, even toward demons.

ARDJAVA -which means having total equanimity in performing prescribed functions and in abstaining from all forbidden actions.

KSHAMA -which is the virtue of suffering all pleasant and unpleasant things with patience.

DHRITI -which means maintaining an unshakable constancy through happiness and through sorrows.

MITHAARA -which consists in choosing nourishing foods equal to the quarter of the stomach's capacity, and finally,

SANCHA -which is the purification of the body through religious rites and the purification of the heart by making a distinction between the absolute and the relative."

"Please give me, also, the ten formulae of the second series," asked Andreas.

"Here they are," the Hindu went on.

"First of all:

"TAPAS -which consists of moderate corporal penance.

SANTHOSHA -which consists in being satisfied with everything and being thankful to God for all.

ASTIKEYA -which means adopting the Vedic doctrine on merit and demerit.

DHANA -giving alms to any worthy person.

ISWARA-POUJA -the worship of the Lord according to rites.

SIDDHANTA-SRAVANA -knowing religious philosophy.

KRITI - to be ashamed of the religious or civic faults we have committed.

MATHI -following the precepts of sacred books with love and faith.

DJAPA -to recite the daily prayers.

Finally, VRATA -to abstain from actions forbidden by the religious regulations."

"So," Andreas asked, "it is only when a disciple has become incapable of missing any of these precepts that he is ready to undertake the practice of Yoga?"

"Yes, sir," Nagendra-Nath answered. "Such is the pure doctrine of the ancient Rishis, but modern followers mutilate or forget it."

"I know it, oh Brahman!" said Andreas. "Forgive my having requested all these details, but they were necessary for our Doctor friend to know," and he accented the word: our. "As for me, I deciphered the venerable texts during my youth -just before my sixteenth birthday -and this reading completely absorbed me for twenty-one days and twenty-one nights."

The priest's eye glittered a second between his long narrowed eyelids, but it was in a conversational tone that he asked:

"You have then been in my country, Monsieur? What states have you visited?"

"Several," quietly answered Andreas; "because I was searching for the stone which is in the head of the stag."

Here I must explain that the people of India attribute to this hypothetical stone the sovereign virtue against snake bites; and that an important occult fraternity giving this belief its symbolic meaning, makes use of the phrase which Andreas had just used as its password.

"Really!" answered the Brahman, in the same nonchalant and courteous manner, "I have such a stone at home. I also have a seven-holed flute to charm cobras."

"Your country has rare treasures," said Andreas, rising to take his pipe; he remained standing while he crossed his right leg over the left one. Then he added: "So, one of your compatriots, an old man who walked with the help of a bamboo cane, gave me a Vina (a Pyre) whose sounds even charm the gray vipers; it was, if I remember correctly, in the kingdom of Oudh, close to Roudrapoura."

Here, Nagendra seemingly lost his impassiveness, because the answer that Andréas had just given was none other than the phrase by which the roving agents of the Agartta make themselves known to their inferiors. However, because of my presence, the priest merely acknowledged the fact, by standing and saluting Andreas.

"I beg you to remain seated," Andréas went on, as he returned to his chair. "Let us pursue our discussion on training. I shall offer some remarks which you will immediately understand, if you are willing to forget for a few minutes who we are, and who your teachers were. First of all, where is the man who can live on earth without causing pain to anything? This match suffers when I light it, it will suffer when I extinguish it. My breathing alone sacrifices thousands of tiny beings. To explain Truth presupposes that one knows it. If one knows truth, of what use is Yoga? To become indifferent to all things is an impolite act against God. All that He gives us is precious, as it is by making the best use possible of His gifts that we enable Him, if I dare express myself so, to continue His newer and better munificences."

"To be chaste? If my parents had been, my soul would still be knocking at the gates of the earth and this forced inactivity would be an atrocious torture. To be kind to all creatures? First, only One is good. If I have become good, it means that I have reached the goal, hence no more need of Yoga. Constant equanimity? For that, it would have been necessary to have undergone all experiences and initiation would become superfluous; no one can remain impassible before a sorrow unless he has experienced it before 'once upon a time'; so this is still begging the question. To be thankful to God for all that he sends us, even for the deepest sorrows? Only the 'Liberated' or free man is capable of it; certainly not the Yogi student. Regarding the rituals, these I leave to you, since by the mere fact of your being born in the holy land of Bharat, the Vedas contain all the truths for you."

The Hindu saluted and said:

"You unfold horizons such as one sees from the summit of Mount Merou."

Andreas went on: "Yes, you venerable Brahman, you have your path; the Yellow man has his, the Moslem his; the Christian his also. We are all subjected to the artifices of the goddess Illusion; let us each keep our path. You have just returned from America and from London. You have been received with speeches, honors; decorated and dined. Once back in your Ashram, after having duly performed the sacrificial rituals and paid the extraordinary fines which you, as priest, must pay your temple for having left your country and lived among the Mleechas, the smelly Beef-eaters; you will find that the lowest among the police chiefs, wearing a khaki uniform, mounted upon an Australian horse, will order you up and down the country, if it so pleases him, calling you 'nigger' or 'idolatrous savage.' The Anglo-Saxon speaks of brotherhood, but he does not practice it. Have you not seen how the 'civilised-Yankees' treat the colored gentlemen? You have permitted yourself to become dazzled, yes, dazzled, although no one would have suspected it a second, by the beautiful women in your New York, Boston or Philadelphia audiences; or by the superb ladies dining at the Carlton. You think that they understood your metaphysics? There is a wall separating you from the Occidentals. Forgive my telling you these things, but you must be made aware of them."

And as the Indian, a little vexed, threw me a side glance: "Regarding my friend," said Andreas, "don't worry. He leans on the mendicants staff."

"Oh!" replied the relieved Nagendra, "I am well aware that the wisest prudence guides all of your actions; and I have no doubts about his either." And he bowed to me and to Andreas. Then he began a long discourse in Hindi which I did not understand.

For several evenings, at the expressed invitation of my host, I attended their long dissertations.

He and Nagendra spoke French, English and a 'vernacular'. From time to time I would grasp the name of a Mullah, of a Russian general, or that of a Moslem chief, and thus I learned, between these two men, many more things than is good to admit knowing about in the Asiatic world. A trip of the Tzar, a Japanese ethnographical expedition, details about the Lazariste missionaries, the construction of a railroad, a stock exchange deal at the Strand, and such unrelated events were dissected. I was shown their underlying use, and I was able to verify once more the Hermetic saying -'All is in All'.

Esoteric portent was to be found in many odd happenings; how much wisdom these men had! What depth, what cleverness! Andreas was definitely the hero of my little black book; how far he has traveled since then, I thought. He has succeeded and seems to have reached the last degree of initiation.

Later visits threw me back into perplexity.

VIII THE DOURACAPALAM

The questions which persisted in troubling me were not new ones, they were old enigmas -the same old antimonies. I tenaciously went over them with Andreas. He -patiently listening -would by way of an answer, tell me some of the experiences of his nomadic life. In general, these stories would include one word which, though seemingly said haphazardly, would enlighten a problem against the edge of which my limited logic would butt.

Here is one of the most revealing of his marvelous stories. It is Andreas who speaks in the first person. It took several visits for him to relate it.

"Before leaving Paris, I had made contacts with the representatives of certain Hindus; everything had been looked into so that I would find the right persons upon arrival. Right after landing in a small Malabar port, I was to take a walk in the city, dressed as a priest of Shiva, wearing a certain amulet on my wrist. I had barely crossed into the Hindu quarter of town when a man of low caste made himself known to me. He took me into the country. Then a small carriage took us to the Ghats, which we began to ascend toward evening. The steepness of the terrain did not allow me to enjoy the nocturnal coolness nor the beauties of the landscape. Thorns, stones, and fear of the wild cats or venomous animals absorbed my total attention. A little before dawn we reached a granite plateau, covered with a type of hard burnt grass which seemed to cover some stone piles arranged in circles. My guide led me toward a rock mass which resembled closely the vertical stones of Stonehenge or Cornwall. Barely had I been able to cast an admiring glance toward the rising sun over the sea on my right, than I had to start crawling under an arcade formed by these stones at the end of which, I found a hole through which I followed my guide. Then a slanting hall led us to a sort of oubliettes -dungeons - where reptiles were crawling among old whitened bones. The Hindu whistled to drive the snakes away and after a few steps, we finally reached a narrow ravine. Seeing a band of blue sky above, really pleased me.

"We entered another narrow but short tunnel; finally we found ourselves in the open air with the moving spectacle of an ancient city in ruins spread out before us.

"The Pandits affirm that many dead cities are to be found in the Dekkan, due to cataclysms and wars. Only later did I learn that this one became isolated through an earthquake that cracked the rocks which form a high round cliff of stones, the smooth walls of which prevented any attempt to descend. The emplacement of this city at a lower level than the plateau we had scaled, plus the chalky-adobe nature of the soil, stored the rain waters. That is why these ruins were covered with luxurious vegetation where birds nested and monkeys thrived. It was a fantastic landscape.

Palaces in ruins bordered the wide roadways whose cracked flagstones bore the mark of centuries.

"Here and there a few pink marble columns, small ponds which were once baths, surrounded with balustrades which the ever smothering plants were slowly demolishing; also monumental stairways with their long disjointed steps: all this now encroached upon by flowers and foliage, ringing with a symphony of the birds and the chatter of monkeys. An extraordinary orchestra with deafening ensembles,

full of secrets and majestic silences. All around were trees, whose magnificent foliage would prevent the curiosity seeker who might have scaled the adjoining cliffs, to see anything through them.

"My guide was hurrying through the terraces, amidst shaky columns and ancient crossroads having now become glades. Suddenly we came upon the immense sculptured facade of a pagoda. We had arrived. A Brahman appeared and greeted me in English. He installed me on the balcony of a gallery, in the shade, ordered fruits and refreshing drinks to be brought and invited me to take a few hours rest on a camp bed. But the expectancy of unknown spectacles, and the element of surprise prevented me from sleeping.

"I examined the temple. Its massive beauty, its wealth of details and the extent of its proportions made it equal to the most famous monuments of Benares and Ellora. As far as my memory retained from my tantric readings, I was able to conjecture that this temple must have been erected in honor of Ganesha, the elephant god. It consisted of an immense enclosure or circular gallery within which were five other enclosures, all concentric, in tiers and with portals. The highest or central gallery was the temple itself. I later saw that it contained three altars, under a dome held by massive and highly decorated columns. Each altar, consisting of a cubic mass of three meters per side, served as base to a slightly higher five-sided and truncated pyramid. The roof was an ellipsoid terrace, at the pivot-points or foyers of which were erected a fourth or fifth altar. Between the two altars, the center of this terrace opened unto the lower nave to permit free passage to an enormous statue of the god, whose halo surpassed the total assemblage.

"All the bas-reliefs and friezes depicted the legend of Mahadeva, such as it is described in the Skanda-Pourana. Only stone was used; neither wood nor metal.

"Parama-Siva and his twenty-five mourthis were portrayed on the first altar. On the second, Daksha surrounded by the Pradjapatis did penance to Shiva and engendered his sons: the first thousand, or Haryasousas; the second thousand, the Sabalalousas, who govern the subtle essences of the Universe or Tattwas; then his sixty daughters, among whom shone Ouma, the wife of Shiva. The long procession of all these figures, each mimicking the symbol of a definite cosmic force, unfolded on the four sides of the altar, on the five walls of the sustaining columns, and on the five planes of the terminal pyramid.

"The third altar depicted the fall of Daksha and the transformation of his daughter Ouma into a Parvati on Mt. Himavan, while Shiva, under the guise of Dakshinamurti, vainly tries to teach initiation to the mounis in the shade of a banana tree, only to start once more on the summit of Kailaca. During this initiation, the Asouras spread over the earth to commit atrocities. Then from Mahadeva emanates Houmara, or Subramanya, the spiritual warrior.

"On the higher terrace, the fourth altar depicted the incidents of the birth of the other son of Shiva, Ganesha on the fifth altar were portrayed according to the myth of the Linga-Pourana, the quintuple Shiva and his twenty children. First came Sadhadjyata by whom life is reabsorbed; then Vamadeva, by whom the law and rituals are fulfilled; Tatpourousha, who establishes created beings in the supreme science; then there is Aghora the terrible, who teaches Yoga; finally, as Isana, the

form of all forms, synthesizing Union, Reason, Penance, Knowledge, Religious Observance and the twenty other qualities of the soul who has attained Liberation.

"Along the exterior peristyle crawled the seven-headed serpents of Eternity. The symbolic guardians of the mysteries stood erect at regular intervals. The sacred elephants, bearers of occult knowledge, and doorkeepers of the temple, lowered their trunks and their granite tusks toward the visitor. The supporting wall vanished under the chaotic sculptures of demonic forms, which are confined according to the Books to the lower worlds of the Invisible realms. In the shadows behind the Euphorbiacepus plants, the thorny Indian figs and cacti shrubbery, one could see in relief, the thick-lipped faces, the bestial canines of vampires, some Pisatchas, some Katapoutanas and some Ulkamoukhas Pretas. Carved on the columns were long bas-reliefs of dancing Gandharvas musicians. To the north were the figures of Soma and of Indra; to the east, those of the Yakshas, the guardians of treasures presided by Koubera and Yakshini, his wife; to the west the terrible army of the Rakhshasas commanded by Khadgha-Ravana, the dispenser of victories. The principal entrance was on the south.

"The thin and slender Brahman with the narrow aristocratic face, and the beautiful deep-set eyes of a Roman prelate, who had welcomed me, rejoined me at sunset. He explained that all of this old temple, now transformed into a laboratory, was entirely at my disposal and that all hosts, out of respect for the high personage who had introduced me, considered themselves my servants. I thanked him according to the hyperbolical formulae of the oriental savoir-faire and we began the grand tour.

"There is a mental attitude which I advise you to adopt immediately,' my cicerone told me. 'It is to have control over yourself and never hurry, to consider that you have all time possible before you and that you are going to face certain new conditions. Hence impatience, even haste, would be an obstacle and of no help.'

"I promised that I would make the effort to achieve this calm which I knew to be the distinctive sign of the wise men whose student I wanted to become; I asked for a little credit and prepared to take the first lesson.

"This temple belonged to the category of laboratories or to manual arts class work. Hence, one did not find therein rare minerals nor precious essences, nor paraphernalia for psychological magic. The research scientists who work there study only that which the Europeans call the physical forces -through means of very sensitive instruments. These must be isolated from the magnetic currents of the earth and of the atmosphere. This isolation can only be attained through processes of manual fabrication. No machine permissible. The metallic parts, the wires, all must be hammered, forged, laminated and beaten out by hand with unbelievable patience. I have seen one of these workmen strike a copper piece with a watchmaker's hammer ceaselessly from dawn to dusk; another man replaced him during the night, and this work, I was told, had been going on for months.

"I shall not bore you with the detailed descriptions of all the machines which my guide took apart for me. There is one, however, whose fantastic use really surpasses the most extraordinary imaginative science fiction books.

"While walking through this Machine-museum, my guide, whose name was Sankhyananda, called my attention to a sort of large cubic chest made of a substance as yellow as gold, and as transparent as glass.

"This,' he told me, 'is a Douracapalam, that which in your language can be translated as a Telemobile. We make use of it to travel to the planets of our material universe.'

"My eyes opened wide, but my guide went on: 'You see here an application of the theory of the Tattwas, which your monist philosophers have rediscovered a part of in the fourth dimensional theory. Here is the reasoning sequence we have followed: I shall only enumerate for you, the indispensable parts of the involved Sankya physics which he exposed in minute details.

"There is one particular universal substance from which all objects are but a form therefrom. We only perceive these forms only through our five senses, hence they can be classified according to the name of the sense which registers them. Each sense is sensitive to a special mode of atomic motion; for instance: hearing, sight, feeling, taste and smell belong respectively to vibrations of Ether, light, air, water or earth which are also atoms in motion. Ether: motion in all directions; light: rectilinear radiation; air: whirls; water: equilibrium of motion; earth: motion stopped. Moreover, each one of these elements is underpinned by and partakes of the quality of the others. Ether, for instance, besides sound contains a color, a form, a taste and an odor. You can follow the other applications for yourself.

"Lately, each of these kinetic forms finds echo or representation in human mentality. So, correspondences are to be found everywhere under certain conditions.

"But it was mostly the properties of acoustical fluids that Sankhyananda gave me. He said, 'Sound among other qualities possesses mobility, fluidity and mellowness. We call it *Sneha*. Besides, long before your physicists, we knew that it emits heat. Finally, it incites motion through a power of impulsion we call *Pranamitva*. String instruments, rhythmic melodies, the clap of thunder prove the existence of these diverse properties. In short, the form of the universal substance which we call *Akasha* possesses the specific quality of sound, and as generic qualities -form, motion and heat.

"Long and repeated experiences have taught us that some species of sound contain the most perfect forms, while others are richer in caloric, and others produce a stronger motion. We know how to distinguish these classes, produce these sounds and even augment their intensity by diverse psycho-physiological codes. For example, a fakir can elevate himself and remain suspended for a certain time by utilizing certain sounds under a certain nervous tension; in other words, nervous energy can act upon matter through the means of sound. This is a proven fact. Here is another: The concept of space is one of the most difficult to determine - you Europeans -you only accept physical space. You call it 'real space.' For us it is an illusion; while our true or real space is that which some of your geometricians and your mathematicians have called Hyperspace. Physical space is finite because were it infinite, only an indefinite number could measure it, as there cannot be any concrete infinite number. Tradition and reason agree on this point and I hope that experience will prove it to you.

"If space is limited (finite) then it has a form and this form is a sphere, because there is no reason that it should spread in one direction rather than in another. Space is the abode of all creatures and you certainly remember the cosmogonic personages which symbolize it. These inhabitants are subject to the ineluctable law of transformation. These are mere elementary truths. They are sufficient to explain the underlying principle of the Telemobile.

"This apparatus must be able to transport itself upon all planes of space and to subsist there. Its substance must be inalterable, and possess a propelling force independent from the physico-chemical and fluidic forces, far superior to cosmic forces. It is understood that we do not leave the visible universe. These conditions seem unrealizable, yet we have overcome them, here is how. The chemists who work in our crypts can fabricate metals which are impervious to any physical agents; but to obtain metals unassailable to the forces of another planet, we would have to know that very world which we are attempting to explore. How can we get out of this vicious circle?

"Our observations of the firmament, from the mechanical, mathematical and biological point of view -that which we call astronomy and astrology -have been kept for over twenty thousand years. Even today, each night, records are kept. We classify them, record them and make a synthesis. We thus establish for each celestial body a table of probabilities from all of its physical, chemical and natural properties. Thus we are able to amass and extricate not only probabilities, but the computations prove that the margin of error is negligible.

"So, if an observer were transported by the Telemobile as close as possible to the nearest planet, he could rectify the statistics (syllabus) we have regarding that planet. Our chemists and engineers could then invent a second machine to examine the next planet.

"The ancient and venerable Magic which manifests under various guise in each century is not made up of all cloth and divagations; it is positive and exact science. The true magicians are not fanatics or pseudo-scientists, but engineers, physicists and chemists of the Invisible. The naive beginners who hypnotize themselves into making use of pentacles or Mantrams to obtain a certain power do not know that these schemas are but the embodiment of an unknown kinematic, whose domains are the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th dimensions in mysterious space. To even visualize that would seem sheer folly to your philosophers. Yet, there exist active entities in those Spaces; intelligences think there; physical organisms work there -some make machines and others give birth to works of Art. Pentacles are the trajectory Force-lines of these machines, the armature of these invisible statues, the structure of these inaudible symphonies, yes, of all these unknown creations who fecund noble hearts and spirits which are profoundly human.

"If, as Descartes, you consider all matter as extension and all extension as matter, meaning a filled space, or matter as impenetrable expanse with interspersed voids - or whatever you admit the celebrated expanse with interspersed voids - or whether you admit the celebrated system of pre-established rhythms -or that finally you endow the world with a power of attraction and repulsion - none of these four opinions disagrees with ours. The farther you advance into Knowledge, the more you will see that the traditional doctrines tend to level off the

differences which ceaselessly attempt to rise in the closed circuit of esoteric philosophy.

"Yes, expanse is substantial -yes -the simple forces which fecund it exist independently.

"To make ourselves master of one and all, such is the dual problem that our Telemobile attempts to solve.

"We already possess the special acoustical energy which I mentioned previously. There remains to be found a pivotal point of fixation, finally a direction gear to direct it.

"Now, the simple elements of matter; the atoms cannot act one upon the other since they do not touch each other. Otherwise, due to their infinitely small size, their entire surface would be touching and matter being a full block would remain immobile. We must then suppose them as being bathed in a more fluidic substance made of other and still smaller atoms which are animated with vertiginous speed, hitting the ether atoms ceaselessly and imparting vibratory movement to them. This hypothesis is based upon differential calculus. We have verified it through numerous tests made by means of optical apparatuses much more powerful than your microscopes, and whose magic mirrors of legendary tales are but a rough draft.

"How does the matter become organized? The answer to this question will probably furnish the datum we lack.

"The atomic mass of the so-called simple bodies has been established. In spite of the uncertainty of these calculations, the certitude remains that the atomic mass of bodies of the same family are in simple rapport. Needless to remind you of Dumas and Wurtz. If an unforeseen break permits a chemist to find an agent capable of modifying the position of atoms in a body, it will become possible to transmute chlorine into iodine, or carbon into rubidium.

"And, this agent exists; our wise men know it, our books name it. It is the Vyoma-Panchaka-Akasa. Moreover, the Mandala-Brahmana describes its five forms. The fourth, known as Sourya-Akasa has the peculiar property of condensation. We also have found a substance which can receive a considerable charge of these spirituous molecules which are able to permeate all three dimensional material forms. Our accumulator has the aspect of a bloc -a large in quarto -composed of five or six hundred thin crystal sheets. You know that crystal, in alchemy parlance, is a sky of Saturn. These sheets are cut out according to a form which reminds one of catacaustic surfaces. When the apparatus needs to be charged, one of our Sannyasis trains himself to attain a certain nervous tension. Then he locks himself in with the crystal book, repeating the same Mantrum about one hundred thousand times upon it. From the laboratories on the ground surface one must be able to hear the harmonic vibrations of these crystal leaves, held by our operator in his crypt, situated approximately twenty meters (65 feet) under ground.

"Such is the motor of our Telemobile. That apparatus must have a protective framework, be in a shelter protecting it against temperature changes, against electrical storms, the incursion of unexpected visitors and also against any unforeseen incidents which could occur during the interplanetary trip, the least of which could mean death to the conductor of the spaceship.

"To use occidental terminology, let us again use pan-geometrical theories. Whether we accept the Euclid or the Bolyai system, the geometry of the sphere remains stable; while in hyperbolic geometry, as the circle increases, the circumference does not tend to a straight line but toward a curved line quite distinct from the straight one while remaining tangent -that is called the horicycle. This fantastic curve parallel to the straight one engenders surfaces and volumes which develop naturally within surfaces and Euclidian volumes. That is what we have finally achieved to obtain inside a physical material body.

"This substance, impervious to all mechanical agents and to all known physical reactives, is a precious metal that we transmute by means of numerous threshing and special tempering. In its gold-state, it absorbs only the Taijas or luminous ether; while at present, this particular cubic chest is filled, if I may express it so when speaking of an imponderable substance, with Sourya-Akasa.

"Don't touch it!" warned the Brahman, as I extended my hand toward the shining coffer. "You would be very incommoded by the contact. To make use of such an apparatus, one must have followed the rigorous training which prepares the organism to withstand terrific electrical charge. It is a special yoga. We do not have a qualified subject in our temple, at this time; secondly, the fluidic state of the country is unfavorable during this season. But were you to remain a little longer, you could witness the test.

"Such was the information first given to me by my guide," Andreas continued after a pause. "Here are the complementary details which I gathered bit by bit and which I shall tell you as I recall them.

"The problem, in short, consists in finding an accumulator capable of absorbing the sonic force, or acoustical fluid, if you prefer, and also the nervous fluid by means of which a human being perceives sensations and conceives ideas. The primary matter of this apparatus comes from a metal which has been extracted with infinite care, from certain aluminae. The transparent coffer, which I mentioned, has in its center this little apparatus which resembles a crystal book. To charge it, seven priests must first undergo forty days of rigorous training. They only have one meal a day which consists of oats, brains of certain animals and very electrical fish. They live in a cell, the walls of which are painted lavender and decorated with the schemata of the force to be obtained. They have four hours rest in twenty-four in between four periods of five hours each, chosen so that the middle point of each coincides with sunrise, noon, sunset and midnight. They must, through repetition of the Mantrams of sonic force and through mental concentration upon the known properties of this force, finally reach the point of seeing it, touching it, tasting it, feeling it, and hearing it. These periods of training are chosen and fixed by astrologers by means of the minute study of the magneto-telluric variations. The locale chosen is also made from a map of these currents.

"The training lasts for forty days. Then the operators must sleep for three entire days. Then for seven days, six of them charge the machine by means of laying of hands, without sleep, without food, without rest. I first saw them on the evening of the seventh day. Their aspect was fantastic. Living in darkness for seven weeks, since the solar rays are contrary to their projected experience, the parched skin of these men resembled dark ivory. Their hollow eyes shined fixedly under bisted lids; each movement measured to save energy. They were taken down twenty

meters underground in the cell where the Telemobile was and were placed on lynx skins, at chosen definite fixed points. Can you conceive the absolute silence in this cave, this strange atmosphere, the phantom-like appearance of these men? I can still feel it, Doctor. It was the first time I ever witnessed such a scene.

And Andreas walked back and forth, acting out the scene, placing each actor, for my benefit.

"Here is the seventh operator," he went on. "He is entering the transparent chest, whose twelve corners are sealed with a special mastic. He takes a diagonal position, his legs are crossed, hands joined according to a special asana. The accumulator is behind him; at eye-level is a disc of brownish gold; under his elbows are two crystal hand levers which communicate with the accumulator by means of two silver shanks. He takes place on a hollow seat filled with charcoal which comes from a species of laurel. Thus he remains immobile, his breath suspended, his eyeball already revulsed, in a state of Dharana. All of this takes place in total silence, the only light coming from a wick dipped in camellia oil. Squatting in an outside enclosure, I witness all of this through a purple glass. The intense currents which permeate the cell make it most dangerous to anyone not having undergone the training.

"The operator pushes both handrails two or three times. A shrieking whistle hurting my ears is followed by the heavy clamor of a tempestuous sea. The chest then totally disappears from my sight.... I was so surprised that I thought I had been hypnotized. However, I could still see the six immobile aides, I could hear my teacher speak to me, and I had no fever. I had thus witnessed a disintegration of the most extraordinary type My teacher explained to me that the apparatus, as well as the body of the operator had been so saturated with sonic force that their double remained in the cell, quite visible to a clairvoyant. Also that they were held or tied to the geometric figure -known as a pentacle among occidental occultists -which was designed on the floor of the cell.

"A week later, Sankhyananda had me descend again to the observation chamber. The six aides were still there - statue like. I waited an hour. A fluorescent light appeared in the darkness, the aides extended their hands toward the schema. A vapor floating in mid-air took form. Then all of a sudden, silently, the translucent chest with the operator within appeared and landed in the same spot from which they took off. He was taken out, as stiff as a mummy; he was quickly carried to another room where he was given a warm bath, was massaged, ointed, rubbed, and minute care given him. Then, after being taken up to the fresh air, he was given a little food and he made his report to the head of the community while walking casually back and forth, as if he had not been the hero of an incredible odyssey."

IX THE BRAHMAN EVOCATION

"Are you aware, dear Doctor," said Andreas, when I called again, "that we Europeans have not yet spelled out the alphabet of Science? Neither have the Orientals, though they seem to know more than we do!" he added smilingly. "It's because they spell out another alphabet."

"Another alphabet?" I interrupted, quite scandalized, because I believed in the esoteric dogmas that Science is one; Religion is one; Power, one. "Are there several types of 'Knowledge'?"

"Naturally, Doctor. I, for example, who am but a little child, I know at least a dozen systems of chemistry;" and Andreas still smiling added as a consolation piece: "Here is another story:

"The Brahmans teach that the cosmic forces are organized, each forming a kingdom similar to the one taught in natural history. They believe that magnetism is a world, electricity another and so forth. How can we verify this hypothesis? How can we analyze, perceive and utilize these unknown universes? By inventing sensitive machines? By educating our nervous system? Materialists would have chosen the first method; mystics would employ the second. My teachers used both. Their method being to solve opposites.

"Let us take one of the earth magnetisms which we shall call: 'C.' The Brahmans have defined some of its properties. Then they sought which of the human psychic forces presented the same characteristics. And as they say all corresponds, they suppose that by unchaining one, others would automatically respond. It seems that the variations of the 'C' magnetism are allied to certain solar spots and that in the human organism its transmitting center is the umbilicus, according to them.

"You are aware that certain somnambulists claim to see via the solar plexus or by the forehead. In the orient, they know how to carry a physical sense to any part of the body; it is one of the Yoga. A certain training permits one to feel and think via the solar plexus.

"There remained nothing else to do than to choose a ready subject, choose the hour and place where strong 'C' currents would pass. The experimenter carried along fully conscious in this fluidic wave, would make his observations and thanks to a fixed 'point of support' (a strongly tied link with the physical world) would return as expected on the return tide to the physical plane. Such as a deep sea diver who would not be held by the necessity of coming up for air.

"This is the condensed version of the explanations given me. I immediately asked if I could participate at such an experiment. The answers were evasive; one had to wait, nothing had been scheduled; it was a delicate test; one's health was at stake; one's cerebral equilibrium imperiled. I diplomatically replied that my teachers' judgment surpassed mine and so we seemed to lay the whole project aside.

"A few weeks later Sankhyananda mentioned some oncoming earthquakes, spoke of 'C' currents, of 'vortices' passing through the temple. I understood these allusions and renewed my demand. I was then accepted to be among the five operators.

"Water flowing in a prepared river bed is the exact image of the process they were to follow. This 'C' magnetism always precipitates to the point of least tension; it seeks equilibrium, yet it does so with tempestuous force, I thought, since it is called: 'The Tempest of Subterranean Regions.'

"Weeks of severe training followed: food, sleep, bodily positions, breathing control, incantations, were all scheduled with tyrannical minuteness. I am not aware of what eternal value these attempts are to the human being; but they give him for a while a sense of physical and mental sprightliness. One becomes younger, the senses are more active, thought more lucid and understanding as clear as a tranquil lake. Nature's serenity permeates us; one finds oneself free from apprehension and worries. Days pass in quietude.

"Our experience took place just before sunset. A small round space surrounded by rocks had been chosen, nearby. The ground had been cleared; figures and characters which signify the properties of the Subterranean Tempest had been traced upon it with colored powders. Objects, perfumes, clothing and orientation were fixed according to known correspondences between this force to be studied and the divers minerals, vegetables, odors, space, forms and sounds. You know the theory of signatures, do you not?

"My orders were not to move from my place, no matter what, even if the earth were to open up. Once settled in the prescribed posture, we were to enter the psychophysical state of Dhyana in which the consciousness remains vigilant. I could see my comrades; before us the chief stood naked, murmuring his Mantrams, holding odoriferous wands in his hands, while algae, mixed with nauseating gums, were burning. Suddenly I felt I was descending into a very old palace in the pit of a mine shaft. The architecture of this edifice, the beings inhabiting it were spotting the landscape, such as one sees on spirit-photographs, where a phantom blurs the outline of material objects. Little by little the air became drier, and though the unbearable stench of asafetida did not incommode me anymore -because in the state we were in, breath only takes place every half hour -another aroma filled my nostrils and throat. Thickish, greasy, bitter with acrid mustiness, this horrible fetor all of a sudden was accompanied with a clap of thunder in the center of which we seemed to be. My bones trembled under these powerful vibrations; I suffered the nightmare of sinking into a bottomless pit. My muscles contracted in spite of myself; my body was afraid and wanted to flee. But I knew it would mean death for my comrades and myself. One does not face the naked rays of secret forces with impunity.

"Add to this anguish the fear of perhaps not seeing a possible sign from our master, of not knowing what to do, plus the anxiety of not being able to hold out to the end. I spent a most disagreeable time which seemed endless.

"Then, in the midst of this tension, I suddenly saw a little above our heads, in the center of our circle, two eyes which were looking at us with curiosity, ruse and power. A face framed in curly locks took shape, then a body formed, standing on one leg, the other folded under. The whole figure was clothed in sumptuous materials and scintillating jewels. But from the shoulders protruded approximately twenty arms, all gesticulating; hands with agile fingers seemed to convey meaning, such as deaf mutes do. Two among them repeated, ceaselessly on the chest, the

gesture which lights the magic fire from Below. Lightning broke out at intervals. This fantastic gigantic figure, molded black upon black, exuded terror. It conveyed the idea that it was an enormous machine, alive, doubtless obedient and imbued with intelligence such as an antediluvian monster barely tamed. An intense cold annihilated us; the continuous and penetrating roar pierced us to the marrow. In the twinkling of an eye, I saw our master's body bathed in sweat. The leaves upon which we were seated yellowed and withered. At this sign we knew the Presence had finished to speak. The phantom, in fact disappeared shortly after the light of the risen moon. We stood up with difficulty. We had been there six hours, grappling with the most frightful panic: that of the hostile invisibles.

"I slept the entire following day and night. Our nervous system does not possess the plasticity nor the flexibility of the Hindus! During the morning meditation, upon awakening, I felt I had made a forward stride. I understood how forces unveil progressively in proportion to the eye which contemplates them. They seem, at first to be a blind coincidence; then one finds therein a definite pattern of logic which we consequently call: fluids, currents, vibrations, laws... finally one is made aware that they are the works of the creatures which polytheism salutes by the title of Immortals.

"But above all -yes, above all -I began to discover that I knew nothing. Could I someday just feel life! Ah! That I wished for, with all my heart! Little did I know then, that for the realization of the wish, the most effective help would come to me from a woman."

And as Andreas was saying these things, he gazed upon Stella with ineffable love.

X COMFORTED

Andreas was out, as I called one Sunday. I had to wait several hours, during which time Stella kindly showed me the recesses and treasures of the store; portfolios filled with engravings, drawers full of curios, showcases filled with rare objects. She unfolded pieces of Point de France, Genes and Honiton laces. She showed me greenish turquoise stones macerating with ash-root pieces; here in wooden bowls were feathered opals and lusterless pearls also waiting for medication. Among the thousand rarities, the carcass of an Irish Growth reconstructed according to old miniatures was drying in the sun.

"You cannot imagine," Stella said, "how patient, meticulous, and careful Andréas is. Take for instance, this viol-case which he has made out of old pear wood -after treating it for months, subjecting it to the sun-rays by means of lenses; he made the varnish from maritime pine resin and I remember that he has put at least twenty coats of varnish upon this Growth. Here is a cauldron bought at the Tronemarket. Out of it he is going to make a Tibetan vase. These ivory pieces have been soaking for months in these jars for the sake of taking on color."

Besides the repair shop department, this store had all the trappings of a museum: XVIth century Flemish wooden panels, ancient theorbos; Red-skin calumets; secret locks; Persian compotiers made of exquisite translucent porcelain decorated with the cypress of Zoroaster; a priceless Japanese teapot in yellowish gray pottery spangled with mica; a few Chinese porcelains, among which was one of the "famille verte" inscribed with some benefic characters in Ta-Tchouang; sonorous stones; chiseled gongs; rare coins; Marat and Rocambole rings; some made of iron, others with a serted stone from the Bastille.

Etchings, official billboards, physionotracing portraits, rolled up tapestries, magic Tibetan daggers which ward off phantoms, Tougouses masks and what not!

"Each of these curios has a story," Stella said. "Someday he shall tell you about some, no doubt. In fact, here he is."

Andreas came in, as affable and good-humored as usual. He asked my permission to work while we talked, and he began putting the finishing touches on a pewter ewer he had been repairing.

As I was relating to him the mishaps of the past week: the fatigues, the rancours, feelings of disgust, of laziness, of impatience: "You'll see a lot worse," he told me by way of consolation.

Stella offered us some tea, brick tea which comes direct from China and is called KIAPA KA KIG in Tibet, Andréas told me. It was delicious. While filing away, my host listened kindly to my acrimonious grievances and I continued admiring how this man, so simple, so quiet, yet so alive in just measure, always remained affectionate without familiarity, fatherly without stiffness, in short, human. Just as a very wise old man who would prefer me among his other children; yet I knew that all who came to him with an open heart must have received the same impression of being the Benjamin of his heart. Does an unknown state of Love exist, I wondered? My impressions of the moment surpassed in pure freshness, in

lustre and sheer bloom all of the purest joys I had experienced so far. I felt calm and secure, as if resting in the shade of a serene and stable affection.

Andreas had started to use the familiar form of "thou" toward me. I did not feel surprise -on this particular day, by his side all became natural and clear.

"Take hold of yourself," he told me; "take a second wind, become calm. The One you love, the Ideal Being which still seems so far beyond you, still is your host at times. This hero of Eternity is surrounded by enemies, it is true, and fog keeps you from seeing Him at times; but His victory is certain and His influence upon you remains powerful. Do you not believe that He foresaw the pitfalls on the road that He asked you to follow? Nothing happens to man except through His own will. That which you must do, it is useless and detrimental for another to fulfill in your stead. Look at a poor scholar who has not learned his lesson; he gives marbles for his more studious pal to write his theme for him. When he will have copied it, will he have learned his lesson? No, he will have wasted his time and lied; and at the final exams his ignorance and laziness will be proven. So, don't refuse the ordeal which presents itself, do not imitate that dunce; you would only take a step backward under the pretext of going forward. Anyhow, this haste alternating with discouragement would only echo within you the present instability of the world. Life is hectic, desires become exasperated, energies become tense and then fail. Could you but see within the minds of your contemporaries you would not find five in a thousand perhaps not even two who seek the true Light with a pure heart.

"You know that treatises on magic promise power both over men and in the invisible realm; this promise is always taken for granted in the lessons for hypnotists. In the midst of our so called positive and utilitarian civilization are there not many societies which propagate the absurd doctrines of the influence of the will upon the 'serious' matters of life, such as upon wealth, success, and other angles? You are well aware that such disciples are either nitwits or cynical lynx who enjoy so-called worldly fame.

"These scientists proclaim that the material universe is perfectly organized; that everything follows the law of justice since all is subjected to the laws of cause and conservation of energy. So far so good - but they want the moral universe to be in a state of anarchy and the invisible universe in chaos. What inconsistency!

"They cannot deny that justice operates on all planes. Why do they incite man to revolt against destiny instead of teaching him to make use of it? Why do they expect the spiritual debtor not to pay his debts? Why do they teach how to attack and plunder in the dark? They persuade a simpleton how, in a few easy lessons and with a little training, he can auto-suggest an opponent, charm a buyer, or seduce an indifferent person. By what right do they teach anyone how to commit such a double crime? How to cheat by underhanded methods and how to make use of forces to serve material selfishness, while these were created for the work of the spirit?

"Are these people not aware that they foment envy, discord and hatred? They fan this infernal fire within the human heart and doubly so in the world, since they make use of the breath of the Invisible unduly captived. Are they not the blind who push other blind men over a precipice?

"This is how the earth corrupts almost all the light it receives. I remember how a friend was sent to a certain district of Russia, at the time of the TSar Alexander I; he laid the groundwork for a small society called: 'Children of Heaven.' A few peasants began the work; they actually put fraternity to work among them. Persecutions followed quickly. An honest man defended them against the government; he succeeded in having them left alone. This man's name was Lopoukine. But what the Caesar state could not do, the Evil spirit (the Spirit of Darkness) could. The children of these workers listened to false prophets and today, the Doukhobors -for it is they I am referring to -perverted through the writings of a celebrated author of worldwide fame, have reached a state of revolt, of mental aberrations, hatred of labor and dementia.

"Just as soon as man, on the universal scene, had understood that he carried within himself the seeds of occult powers, he did not waste a moment to make them fructify by any means whatever, perverting them under the name of hypnotism, suggestions, power of mind or magic. So, may those who have understood God's teachings accept voluntary poverty: to be poor in spirit, in body, even in intelligence. The curiosities you will sacrifice now, Doctor, I promise that they shall be repaid a hundred fold someday."

Thus spoke Andreas. These profound lessons renewed my courage. I foresaw clearer horizons; a new force awakened in me; I became profoundly grateful to this elderly man and this kind lady who received me with open arms. After all, why search whether they were or not the friends of the Desiderius of my youth? Was it not wiser to accept and utilize what they offered me gratuitously?

XI THE SPIRITUALIST

I was just going to share these thoughts with Andreas, who was cleaning up his workbench, when Stella announced dinner.

Toward the end of the meal, I heard several people coming in. Andreas and I joined them. I was rather surprised to see among the fifteen or so visitors, several faces whom I had seen at various schools and neo-spiritualistic societies. I greeted an old magnetician-doctor; another young man who was both a homeopathic doctor and an astrologer; a cabinet maker from Picpus who was renowned in his neighborhood for healing fractures and sprains; a typographer, both liberal and mystic. A saddle-maker, disciple of Boehme; a retired captain, president of a spiritualistic group; an electrician, disciple of Allan Kardec; a library attendant who was a gnostic bishop; a hermetist-druggist; a clear-eyed pastor still a blond young man; an old "republican" of '48, disciple of Charles Fourier -from all of them sincerity, ardor and conviction radiated.

I have always felt a great sympathy toward these idealists with new concepts. They perpetuate the shining and liberal tradition of the Celts. These average men, who rise above their social status by means of work, who overcome the lack of formal education by an intelligence which is not only original, but rich in generous motives, candid in spite of disillusion, gay in spite of hurts; untangling themselves out of the brambles of old utopiae - in short, to me they represent the vivacious and finest aspects of the French soul.

No price seems too high for them to attain their goal; they do without many little things and deprive themselves of bigger ones, very simply. I have known some, who coming out of the shop at 7:30 P.M., in lieu of dinner, would munch a piece of bread in dark alleys, in order to reach a conference at 8:00 P.M. then at 11:00 go home afoot in order to save the price of a bus fare toward the purchase of a needed book. Poor, unsung sacrifices -are they not touching? Should they not spur us on toward working harder? Are they not proofs that we should have faith in the future of the race? Its old, fine and generous blood has not dried up yet, nor the light of its spirit dimmed!

Later on, I noticed that Andreas' guests did not really know him. One thought him a healer, others took him for one of the surviving members of the first Allan Kardec group, or as an extraordinary M.D.; two or three took him to be an initiate of oriental schools. Everyone smoked and drank; except one member of the "Etoile Bleue" (Blue Star). The main discussion ran on the metapsychical convention which was to be held the following spring.

Andreas hardly joined the conversation; he gave rather evasive answers, saying that he was not qualified to give any advice, or that there were enough scientists to scrutinize abstract questions, and so on. I noticed that these good men were disconcerted. As I knew several among them, I thought I would put my two cents worth. I declared on my own authority that we would not ask Andréas to accept a post at this convention; that his name would not even be mentioned, but that if he had any advice to give, we would follow it as best we could.

Andréas seemed to accept. The program was explained to him, the organizers and orators were mentioned and the aim in view was exposed. He remained silent a long time. Finally, he turned toward me:

"Do you not think, Doctor, that unless its members are just about saints, such a congress is already predestined to a sterile finish? If the participants hope to shine, if they boast of their achievements, if they disparage one another, if they collect the clippings of the Argus of the Press...." And his sentence, begun in an ironic vein, ended in a kind smile.

"That's the reason why," interrupted the dark and lanky typographer with the passionate face - "that's why the Egyptians held their conclaves secretly, among initiates."

"Yes," acquiesced Andreas, "and they were not the only ones. Today, it is necessary that all be uncovered, in the open; it's written in the sky. Isn't it also written in the Bible?"

"Yes," answered the pastor, citing Book, chapter and verse.

"On the other hand, perfection is not of this world. One cannot expect searchers to remain anonymous. What can be done? First, find a tag, a flag, a title which unifies you all. You will then unite under the rules of tolerance, so that no one personality, no one school will dictate; so that each group will have, not a president but a secretary in order for all participants to be equal. Thus individual actions would yield better to the Spirit. But! You want a Convention - have it! -at least, do not base it upon money nor upon any one person; anchor it upon an ideal."

"We can fix that easily," the cabinetmaker said in his throaty voice. "We are all brothers, aren't we? We do not have the same opinions, but that's no matter; we can discuss, air it out. Me, for instance, I don't like to read, it puts me to sleep; but to listen to others, ah, that's for me!"

"Naturally," Andreas approved, "one learns by listening, as long as no one tries to best another."

"Have you read the program?" asked a young law student. "The proposed theme is the study of magnetism, in its physical and therapeutic angles, also the study of currents, the Od, the double, spirit phenomena and transcendent photography. Do you know that the phantom of a living person was photographed? That's the way one will try to furnish experimental proofs and affirmations of the esoteric."

"And you, dear Councilor," Andreas pursued, "do you have a theme?"

"No," the lawyer answered, "my field is sociology."

"Who knows a good, healthy, robust subject - a good woman?"

"I," said a jovial, goodhearted giant, a country magnetizer.

"Then, give me your hand, like that, here. We shall ask Heaven to show us something else besides the three known poles of magnetism. Are you all willing?"

"Sure -sure," came in unison.

"Please observe that I do not make the least suggestion," Andreas said. "I do not will anything, I only ask. Now what do you feel?"

"My index is throbbing," said the giant. "It even hurts".

"Now, it is my middle finger, the flesh feels tight and icy. Now, the ring finger, it's warm as if it were close to a candle; my little finger is now trembling, feels just like an electric current; in my thumb also, in the bone itself, I feel a cool current now, I feel nothing."

"Now, you remember these five sensations? This is what happened. The spirits of each finger were for a while liberated of any ties with the general magnetism of the body. Each time that you will ask -with clean hands, or rather a pure heart, you understand this liberty will be restored to one of the other of the fingers, for a minute. The index, for liver troubles; the middle finger for the bones; the ring finger for the heart and the little finger for the nervous system; and the thumb for psychic troubles. But keep your heart clean, which means a pure conscience. Has anyone ever told you that?"

"No, no," said a few.

"Notice please, that I do not hypnotize. One could photograph these unknown emanations, one could even try to obtain color photos."

"Have I your permission to seek that?" asked the spagirist chemist.

"Certainly," answered Andreas. "Anyhow, I cannot either grant or forbid anything. What I showed you then, is not new. I already discussed similar facts with the Baron du Potet, but I don't think he ever made use of it."

"What! You have known du Potet?" exclaimed someone. But at the same moment the spiritualist asked:

"What about the dead, monsieur?"

Andreas seemed to hear only the second query. "The dead... you should leave them alone," he answered kindly. "Yes, I know you won't listen to me, but at least, pray before your séances, and try not to tire out your mediums."

"Yes - but if we work in the dark, the skeptics say we are a fraud."

"Why not try lamps with lavender or purple glass globes? Put within these lamps some oil perfumed with cinnamon or cloves."

"What if we made use of animals, blood or perfumes?" insinuated a disciple of Eliphaz Levi.

"No, first of all the animal would suffer too much; and then, you don't know what a perfume is. Rather try this. Get a solid, square table. Fix under the board, at opposite corners, two thin plates of brass, and two of zinc; join them by means of wires so as to construct a sort of solenoid. You will then have the medium sit on a chair placed on the same wool rug as the table, and you will close the current upon her. In this way you may obtain that objects will be displaced without any contact, and with the minimum amount of fatigue. See that the audience is even numbered and that the director of these séances keeps his wits about him, especially if the fantasy takes you to have currents running in the wires."

"All of which is well and good," claimed a disciple of Hoene Wronski, hidden in the shadow, "but a phenomenon only convinces the one who already has eleutherian convictions. One would need a doctrine, a synthesis...."

"A doctrine? But you have me, dear professor," retorted Andreas. "The Messianic beliefs are as true as possible. And then, there are so many theories already -so many systems! But you, Doctor!" he continued, addressing a physician, "you who are known, you should launch a foundation, a sanatorium where you would welcome mediums; where their health would be restored, where their minds would

find rest, and for two or three months all their material needs met, and worries removed from them. All you need to begin with, is a person of means with a two or three bedroom house in the woods. You would then have much more interesting phenomena and less trickery. Many of the celebrated experimenters have been duped, because these poor devils have many excuses... they are used, forgotten, bothered, finally relegated to the dump heap and paid little..."

"But," timidly asked a tall pale boy, a follower of Catholic contemplative orders, "are these not rediscoveries, renewals?"

"Of course," Andreas told him with a smile. "It's the same old story. In a short time, you will see something new -beware. These will be poisoned fruits. However, for the past few years our atmosphere conceals new forces, but until now, I only know of two or three men who can manipulate them."

Several wanted more information. Andreas warned them: "No, no, I will add nothing more; these men want to remain anonymous; but you are free to search. What they have discovered is within reach -for each of you."

"How? What must we do?" several voices asked.

Andreas mischievously laughed. "Ah, well! You know it only too well, what you must do for Heaven to reveal its secrets to you. Don't you remember? You, for instance, twenty years ago, when your mother was very ill! And you, the year of the big strike, when I encountered you one night on the Tolbiac bridge; and you Doctor, when you did a replacement in Nice -you were still an intern, and you almost used the wrong tube?"

"Yes -but I am extra careful now -you know it," answered the physician sotto-voce. "Well! To come back to our friend Alexander the Great," as Andreas had nicknamed the saddle-maker, because he always bent his head to the left, - "it would be a good idea for someone in your Congress to render public homage to your predecessors. They have the right; they are entitled to it. These predecessors should be mentioned, be rehabilitated -the names of those whom intolerance vilified should be published; also those whose lives were but misery and sarcasm! It is they who paved the way, never forget it; it is their tears which watered the field which you are now harvesting."

"Permit me, sir," said the old fighter of 1848, "let me tell all of you how foolhardy you are. You wish or seem to ignore the discipline of the secretiveness which the ancient initiatic fraternities and their heir, Free-Masonry, advised so strongly. Why? Here you are, wanting to teach the crowds how to hypnotize, influence from a distance, captivate fluids, to autosuggestion, and what else? Not one of you foresees that these precepts might be read by criminals or cashed in by the vulgar! Are you not aware how Mesmer bears the responsibilities of all the villainies committed through hypnotism! Do you not know that all the accounts of your exteriorisation experiences make you responsible for a certain number of bewitchings? If not, then your theory of reincarnation, and your sermons on karma are but phrases!"

And the old enthusiast frowned upon us indignantly.

"He is right," Andréas concluded, "but he speaks in the wilderness. You are all good people, most kind, but you still take pleasure in seeing your articles published and your names eloquently praised in print. Still, think of some measures you can

introduce into this Convention, to prevent the harmful use of your discoveries. Now it's late, you live far away, and all of you must rise early in the morning. So, hurry home. When you come back another time, the old man will have something else to tell you."

XII THE MAGNETIST

A few days later, I found Andreas and the country magnetist in deep conversation. His cures had incensed the Medical Board of his city and he had been summoned to the police-court. This good man angrily denounced all those "parchment-ignoramuses" who charged the poor so much, but did not heal them completely. He was insisting, proof in hand, how they lacked dedication, were mercenary, intolerant and so forth.

Andreas was trying his best to calm him down.

"You are now acting like the free-mason orators who blast at all the clergy, englobing them in the same reprobation, because a few priests are found to be unworthy. I am not a churchgoer, neither do I have unlimited faith in official science; but I know that there are fine people everywhere. I know a few admirable priests, also some dedicated doctors. In any field one finds the same percentage of selfish, avaricious and ambitious members. You say, doctors charge too much! That is not true as to country doctors or general practitioners. Their six or seven years of study have cost them a lot; they bought their diplomas; they have a license to pay, a certain upkeep and a family to support.

By what right do you expect from them a quality of abnegation that not one man in a thousand possesses?"

"But why do they prevent me from healing when I can do it much better than they can?"

"Ah! They fight because you are a competitor! That's life. Not an ideal one, I agree; but where is the one who fulfills an ideal? The fine that they will impose upon you will replace the license fee which you escape paying."

"Well, I suppose you are right," agreed the magnetist. "That's justice; I had not thought about it that way. It's true that they paid for the right to practice."

"While you, you heal naturally, without studies or at least with little work compared with the demands of the Faculty of medicine. Also, between us - we can talk freely, can't we? -You heal. Fine! But you are compensated, perhaps less than a medical specialist. But, are you certain that you have always healed?"

"That's true," agreed the magnetist. "I have had a few failures, but not many."

"Yes, I know, but that is not what I am talking about. I am thinking of all the sick people who upon leaving you seem healed. Are you certain that it was a radical cure?"

"Of course, I am sure," the magnetizer exclaimed with surprise. "What do you mean?"

"Simply this, that often you heal in appearance and for a certain time, at the end of which the disease returns under another form. Would you perchance make your patients immortals?"

"Of course not!"

"Hence you only heal them partially. I may seem to speak in paradox, but listen to me. You, you are a believer in the theory of fluidic currents of emanations. A

sickness represents bad fluids. You get rid of them and replace them with good ones -fine. One of your colleagues gives herbs, another uses his will, and the third employs spirits. In the end, it's all the same. These bad 'fluids' which you discarded, where are they going? When you have water bugs in your kitchen and you plug up all the holes, the bugs go to the neighbors. Have you ever asked yourself where do these morbid forces go after you have dislodged them through your curative power? They go elsewhere in search of another organism ready to receive them."

"But then, Monsieur," said the puzzled man, "then I must never magnetize again? What can I do?"

"Go on, of course. You are doing good. You must use the means that Nature gave you to heal. You are doing all right. I only wanted to let you know that you are not all-powerful, that you are only a little better than doctors, just a little ... and that is only because you believe in Life!"

"I merely see that you are shattering my self-confidence. Please tell me about something to replace it."

"Well! I shall not tell you that if someone suffers, or falls ill, it is because he has merited it and to leave him alone to expiate...."

"Ah, no!" interrupted the magnetist. "Were you to tell me that, I would not listen. I know nothing about scientific theories. I'm just an ordinary fellow. My father could not afford to give me any higher education. All I know is that if someone suffers and I can help him get rid of his illness, that I would be a queer individual if I didn't do it."

"I know," answered Andreas. "You are a gallant soul. You never save yourself and you are sincere. I advise you to go on and continue your magnetic passes. But how to prevent the bad effluvias from going somewhere else and doing harm? By magic? Of course it is possible to conjure, to tie the disease to a certain spot, but later a horrible storm would break over your head. By your own means? But you are not able to see these effluvias. With the help of a psychic? Yes, if your subject keeps perfectly lucid and you can protect her; because one is much more vulnerable while asleep than when awake. And, there are no psychics who can see all, anymore than there are scientists who know all. So, there is only one resource left, to have recourse to the Master of Life and Death."

"To utter a lot of prayers?" muttered the man. "Do you think that the rabid old churchgoers ever heal? On the contrary, they are the most malicious of scandalmongers."

"Forget these bigots. God wants us to be charitable. When you were a little child and you brought home good marks from school, your father gave you a few pennies. Do the same. Help the poor, even more than you are doing now; never become angry and when you see a sick man, call upon God. Ask Him: 'Father, help me; I don't quite know how, but as I am going to pass on the vital force You gave me, to this man, let him be healed and then You take care of the rest.' Then, go and perform as usual."

"God must have a lot to do, if...."

"Don't worry," interrupted Andreas. "You know that the servants in a chateau are more snobbish than the lord; so with God, the simpler we are, the better He hears us. And never forget, that the sick are healed only because He permits it."

"Yet, He cannot want us to suffer!"

"Naturally not, He wants us to be happy. That is why we always suffer less than we should, in pure justice."

"But, why should we suffer? God could certainly prevent it."

"Yes, were we not insisting upon having our own way. We are obstinate enough not to follow His teachings. When we have visited the wine cellar too long, we have a hangover the next day. It is not God who gives us this headache; it is nature's way of reacting. Diseases have no other causes. We act wrongly; it bothers other beings, whether visible or invisible, naturally; and being that there is no reason why they should take abuse, they protest. This then engenders disease, misfortune, and ill luck. That is why we must always ask God: "Please heal this man if it be Thy Will," because it could be that that person could stand the illness far better than the sorrow or the loss of money which would replace the disease which you, the healer, want to remove from him."

"Fine, I understand. In short, I should do the best I know how and not force the issue of healing?"

"That is it exactly. You see, there are twenty ways one can break a leg; yet it is always a broken leg. So also there are twenty ways of healing. A man who heals is not necessarily a good man. A hardhearted, avaricious M.D. will cure if he has the know-how. Also, certain beings in the Invisible can give someone the power to heal because they obtain control over a patient."

"But all that is dangerous!" the magnetist exclaimed.

"Yes, it's dangerous. But you have nothing to fear on that angle as long as you remember that you are nothing but an instrument in God's hands. God never permits those who have faith in Him to go astray."

XIII THE UNION OF THE SPIRITUALISTS

When I visited Andreas again, the young saddler was there inquiring as to the best means of amalgamating the various spiritual groups at the famous Congress we had previously discussed. Andreas was attempting to reduce the generous utopias of this enthusiastic mystic to a workable level.

"First of all, modern spirituality is still in a kindergarten stage. Its vocabulary is not even universally fixed; technical terms have a different meaning in each sect. The same idea is known by several names and one has to follow a whole course of study beforehand to know what it is all about."

"A lexicon could perhaps be published?"

"Yes, if you find one person sufficiently authoritative, so that his definitions will be acceptable to all. Otherwise, your lexicon will only clarify the teachings of a certain school."

"What if a doctrine were first established?"

"Go out of your own circle. Visit a few centers for magnetists, astrologers, occultists, of Theosophy and of Spiritism; then come back and report the basis and sum total of your doctrines! Yet they consider themselves tolerant. But their tolerance consists in showing that the other schools only possess part of the truth, while their own is the only one to have it totally. However, their multiplicity of theories is natural, necessary as well as useful. Truth has various facets and one must know them all. Then, unity is born only out of multiplicities as in Nature. Finally, the conflict of ideas and sentiments engenders true tolerance."

"So, my project is not good?" the young man asked.

"I would still launch it, if I were you. You would see a general upheaval among the bigwigs; that in itself is instructive. Then, in the midst of the battle, choose the opportune moment to reveal to them, the important notion, to wit: The only possible unifying point of contact in all these systems belongs not to the mind but to the heart; not to learning but to power; not to theory but to practice; and that is ethics."

"Yes, but," objected the artisan, "if the spiritual groups do not agree on ethics, it is not much use centralizing them, since the highest spiritual code of ethics is equal to the highest materialistic code of ethics. To do good for the sake of good; neither in fear of the visible or invisible police force, nor in hope for recompense; Epictetus and the great Catholic saints teach the same things."

"You are right, but try to unite them anyway. You see one must dream. Dreams are useful but one must not live in castles in the air. Where are we? We are on earth. Where do we want to go? We want to go all together to the Absolute. The distance is enormous, as vast as what any astronomical figure can convey to our mind. We cannot all take the same paths because we are not identical.

Take, for instance, travelers leaving for opposite directions; they will see different countries, landscapes, cities, peoples, monuments, and museums. These are like the different religions and divers paths of initiation. All travelers accomplish the same actions -they walk, otherwise they would not be travelers. This is the role of

love, or moral philosophy. Without it one can amass rites, sciences and mysteries to no avail. With it, with nothing else, one goes forward that much faster since one is not detained by curiosity-seeking stops."

"In other words," concluded the young man, "spiritual seekers need a lot of common sense; they should not start something they are not yet able to bring to fruition."

"That is right, my dear boy, keep your feet on the ground. The day when two spiritualists will be incapable of saying a derogatory remark about each other, they will have done more to unify the various schools than if they had called twenty conventions and signed twenty volumes of exhortations. What do you think, Doctor?" Andréas added as he turned toward me.

"I agree entirely with you," I answered. "I believe we are all guided without our being aware of it; but our guides, good as well as evil, do not confide their plans anymore than a general informs his soldiers. So, the crafty lords of Darkness, who are clever, know how to plant, in candid hearts, nefarious curiosities under commendable pretexts. Let us beware!"

"God would certainly not permit a sincere man to go astray!" exclaimed the Boëhme follower.

"If only that man," explained Andréas, "were willing to concede the possibility of his straying; and not rely altogether on his knowledge nor his intellect, and he had modesty."

"Yes," the young man concluded, "we have but to remain sincere, become humble and prove our courage. God will do the rest, since above all religions and initiations is to be found the cult of the Spirit. Thus, in becoming one with the Father through the Son, only then will we be worthy of the name 'spiritualist.'"

During these last rejoinders, our friend the Pastor had quietly come in. He expounded the tentatives made by some of his colleagues to bring the Catholic and Protestant churches together - "This is the day of utopias!" I thought to myself.

"It seems to me," said the minister, "that we, who practice free self-examination, represent the universal principle of individuality and of liberation (freedom); we are a sort of forerunners, religiously speaking, while the Catholics, who are conservatives, traditionalists, and systematic, represent the past. Wanting to merge these two viewpoints seems hazardous. Both priests and pastors must know, since they are ministers of the same God and witness to His solicitude, that man is always taken care of by the divine activity known as Providence. Through this divine direction, our highest aspirations find an answer, and without any constraints whatever it enables us to find a means of escape from the pits where our karmic debts have enmired us as well as those of our boundless outbursts toward the future."

"I see, Monsieur, an indefinite number of sects among your co-religionists; also how rationalism has earmarked it both in its philosophical aspect as well as in its historical studies which in the end obliterates the divine meaning of the Gospel. Is it not true that your most learned clergymen recognize the Saviour only as a man and see in His miracles either symbols or scientific works? And is this not the same teaching as anti-Christian, oriental philosophies?"

"No one more than I deplores this state of mind," replied the pastor minister. "It is a mistake that Catholicism does not fall into. But your theologians, if you permit my frank opinions, are hypnotized by the past, and exaggerate the value of rituals. The letter kills the spirit and the government of the Church is too politically minded. The only common ground for mutual understanding would then not be the divinity of Jesus-Christ since too many of my colleagues do not believe in it, but the moral quality known as Charity."

"Of course controversies are useless; those who talk do not execute," said Andreas. "Show me just one priest and one minister who are saints. By that, I mean, men of good sense, of strong will and who have integrated the practical ideal of their religions into their lives. They will reach a common understanding very quickly. Into such men, whose lives are a perpetual evocation of Providence, as they continuously offer the sum total of their moral and physical hardships for mankind, Unity descends; it embodies within them; they become capable of constructing an organic cell or body for it in the social collective."

"Ah, yes!" cried out the young workman. "Would that such men only convince the Consistorium, influence the Sacred College politicians and even unbelievers! Yet, I have read books on apologetics which claim that the phenomena of mysticism are to be subjected to experimentation. I also read about the cataloging the millions of factors which contribute to a collective religious body or that of a political organism. And yet, one is not even able to enumerate the forces which produce a microbe!"

"That is a rather basic example," Andreas remarked with half a smile, "but it is rather true. To conquer matter, one must use material means; but the Spirit is not easily captived, it escapes where it wills! It is through the Eternal Spirit that our immortal spirit finds perfection. Religion is one only from above. To juxtapose religious bodies is but a kind of mosaic. What is needed, is for the faithful of divers creeds to rise to God - there they shall become one. The Eternal Being is a living God; that is what one must find and experiment."

"These attempts at unification are not new," I added, as I wanted our host to clear up a few dark corners of history of mystical fraternities. I cited names, mentioned the Rosicrucians, the Philalethists, the Inner Church of Eckartshausen; but Andreas cut me short, telling us that we would miss the last bus. As he usually kept me after midnight, I understood that he would not talk anymore that evening, and I left with the pastor and the Boëmist.

XIV UNCERTAINTY

Circumstances prevented me from returning to Ménilmontant for a few weeks. Business problems, friends and acquaintances all became a source of difficulties to be met during this interval. Even malicious rumors about Andreas came to me from people of so-called fine social standing. Doubts assailed me anew. Never having dared to question him about Desiderius, my confidence weakened. Indecision and discouragement arose in me. I decided to go back for my silk panel and end our relationship. I could not accuse Andreas of anything, yet, an inner voice told me not to judge him. I knew how worldly gossip misrepresents anything; yet I wanted to erase him from my memory. I was perplexed by these conflicting impulses. I had not then had much experience with the purgatorial stages of the soul.

Having climbed up to Ménilmontant, the very sight of the little house restored my serenity. Stella received me with her usual charming gaiety and showed me her work.

"I had to make a cartoon with Chinese paper. Andréas covered it with a soft varnish of his own making; I was then able to cut out the missing lower petals, so that my new embroidery could remain as translucent as the original."

"Wouldn't buckram have been good enough?" I asked, quite surprised of such care.

"No, it would have seemed opaque. Anyhow, judge for yourself."

The panel was perfect. It was impossible to detect the mending. I was delighted and thanked Stella warmly, but when I offered to pay, she categorically refused, saying that her husband would scold her. -And they say these people are closefisted and unscrupulous! I thought

At this moment Andreas entered and agreed with his wife. "Besides," he added, to make it easier for me to accept his gift, "you will find occasion to repay this someday."

We sat under the arbor and Stella served us liqueurs she had prepared according to old recipes. As the conversation flowed from one subject to another, I finally told them of my doubts and of the gossip that was circulating about them. These coincidences left them unconcerned.

"Worse stories than these are being bandied about me and I am delighted," Andréas declared. "I much prefer to be maligned than eulogized. As the Bible tells us: Everything has its weight, its number and its measure, isn't it so? A certain number of calumnies exist in the world, so I would rather they would fall upon me than upon others whom they would affect, or who could be hurt by it. It is good which feeds evil, since it is good which possesses life. Better to serve as pasture to evil, than to make a bargain with heaven for the good ... better be assailed than to be the assailant ... provided one can remain humble!"

"You answered the question I was just coming to formulate," I said. "Though I have heard a mystic, an old ship-doctor you probably know, teach that not to fight calumny or slander was suicidal."

"I do not deny that slander wounds, but if you shove it aside, it will fall on the neighbor, plus the fact that when something comes your way, it was meant for

you." "Is that the doctrine of abandonment to God's will?" I asked. "Yes, but let us not fall into the doctrine of quietism. One must do good and bear suffering."

"Meaning to unite the passive with the active?"

"That is right. Take a good look at your life these last few years; do you not see where your actual state of doubts began?"

"No," I admitted. "I have not been able to trace from effect back to cause. Is it due to my occult studies, or to my attempts in Yoga? Must we not first test something before judging, as St. Paul says?"

"Certainly," Andreas answered with a smile. "But you are a European, always in a hurry. Action is excellent, but to think first and then ask for Light, are precautionary measures which have never harmed the work."

As I was keeping silent, he added, "You have pursued a course of training exercises, hein? Such as control of the eyes, building mental images, self-hypnosis, and developing will control? ...The whole Grrreat operation! -according to the rituals of Eliphaz Levi?"

My smile showed agreement. Andreas continued:

"Your face shows it. You overdid the training. Your liver is not too well, neither are your lungs. Even if a 'genii' had appeared to you -what then? Suppose you had acquired a tenfold force, do you think you could handle one of a thousand?"

"Yet, a motorman with a turn of the wrist can start a large locomotive."

"These are not forces of the same kind. The magician uses his own power... call it astral ... on beings also of an astral nature. The mechanic knows certain laws of matter, while the magician conjures in order to explore mysterious forces; he perpetrates a *petitio principii*."

"You are right, evidently."

"Your magic has only brought you together with a being a little stronger than you. Notice I speak of force and not of Light. The chemist who discovers a new compound risks poisoning himself or being blown up with his laboratory."

"I believe I shall not try any more magical experiments." "Then," concluded Andr as, smiling, "straighten your back and shoulder your responsibilities. Analyze any one of your training exercises and recapitulate in detail -all the food cells, all of the molecules of the dyes, of the drugs, of the furnishings, plants, and animals that you have made use of; all of the fibers of your body which were put in motion toward that aim, and all of the invisible creatures which you have enslaved by your will -to all of these, you must make amends and redress the ruins and disorders."

"That is but justice," I said.

"Then go in peace. Heaven will take care of you," Andreas paternally concluded.

Once more I left, feeling secure and serene. A few clarifying words from that simple man, reduced the most abstract metaphysics to plain common sense. His steady eye had inoculated me with strength; his smiles had dispelled my pessimism. I went out full of confidence, almost ashamed of my recent doubts.

XV VISION IN THE MENTAL WORLD

The next time I called, I found Andréas on the verge of going out. He invited me - or rather asked me to accompany him, as if I could be of service. His courtesy which took various exquisite forms always seemed to surge forth spontaneously, as from a bubbling spring. Charm permeated his kind attentions toward his guests. The Saint of Assisi must have had the same obliging courtesy. Andreas really liked his visitors and those to whom he rendered the most service saw him act as if it were he the debtor. There I learned what a truly humble man is like.

"I am going to Plaisance to see a sick man," he said. "The long walk does not scare you?"

"Oh no," I replied, "I like to walk, but wouldn't it be an economy of time to take a cab or the 'ceinture' train?"

He said he preferred walking. And in fact, for years, I never saw him make use of any vehicle in the city. Did he do so as an imposed penance? Perhaps these hours were, thanks to his power of concentration, used for mental work. In any case, I often remarked to him that he did not take the short cuts.

It was the first time that I was going out with him. Though we traveled along noisy streets, this interminable trek seemed short to me. Andreas kept the steady pace of the racers, who do fifteen leagues in one stretch. He smoked a lot but spoke little. I must also mention that every time I accompanied him, I was in a special state of nervous exhilaration. Whatever sights we came across did not divert my attention nor relieve me from this certain inner tension, thanks to which the subjects of our dialogues were clarified in our minds even before being formulated. I felt as if I were on a platform seeing the reverse side of things -or rather their "right" side.

I was unaware of my body, never felt fatigued -in fact, I always returned with the sensation that I had learned a great deal more than what we had talked about.

This particular day, I spoke to Andréas about another series of my studies, of my attempts at contemplative practices; about all my groping endeavors to achieve tangible results.

"And," broke in Andreas, "your best results so far, is your becoming a phthisic."

He surprised me by enumerating different pathological symptoms which I had never mentioned to anyone. I dared not ask him how he knew. He went on, giving me a long technical explanation of a Yoga, abstaining from the use of Sanskrit words, for fear of appearing pedantic, but taking care to translate them clearly and concisely.

"In short," he concluded, "breathing exercises practiced in moderation are useful. But if you add to them a tension of the will, be it magnetic or mental, you infringe upon the Law. The volume of oxygen, of carbonic acid and our food capacity is set for each of us, beforehand. To surpass these limits even with the so-called noble intention of intensive psychic research, provokes reactions. As subtle as our reasoning may be, one can never prove that good can be achieved by using wrong

methods; it will always be but an apparent, provisional good and the cause of an ensuing wrong."

I kept quiet, seeking objections and finding none. Due to my silence, Andréas went on:

"Let me tell you about what I saw one night during my second trip through Tibet. During my sleep, I was shown a battalion of soldiers engaged in preparing demolition works, in view of storming a fortress not yet visible. Galloping couriers came and went. Because the whole countryside was bathed in a lunar light, it proved to me that this dream was on the intellectual plane. A curious thing was that the grayish, rocky soil seemed to palpitate and throb like a heart. All of a sudden a group of beings appeared. Their enormous heads disproportionate at the top reminded me immediately of the effigies of the Chinese Sages that you well know, Doctor. This phalanx was advancing toward the tent of the general. It was led by an extraordinary macrocephalian whose body was entirely translucent. He addressed the general with harshness; little lights came out of his mouth. Right away the movements of the scouts and pioneers changed. Many of those dressed in red were expelled from the camp; I saw them running hither and thither in the field and fall one by one on the ground. Their comrades who had remained in camp were gradually becoming like the large headed beings. The siege maneuvers were abandoned. Crossing the moving plateau, we went toward a fairy like city that I saw located on the crest of a mountain range. I understood that this fairy-scene was nothing but a mirage. The ascent took years. From time to time the hikers encountered fantastic forms, antediluvian animals and monsters seen only by psychics. All of a sudden the battalion was encircled by the Reds whom I had thought dead. A long-haired officer was directing them. They quietly advanced upon the crystal-like beings who, as soon as they were caught, fell to dust on the ground. The rocks took on the aspect of humus and in a short time luxuriant vegetation sprang forth.... Then all disappeared. I awoke As it was dawn, I climbed a small knoll to enjoy the sunrise as usual."

"How beautiful the sunrise must have been!" I exclaimed, forgetting the vision, "if it can in any way compare with what I have witnessed in the Belledonne Mountains!"

"It is beyond imagination. The lowest valleys were three thousand meters deep. The clear atmosphere, the pure air, the absolute silence and the pathetic drama of colors which unfolds on the horizon just before the sun surges forth. The immense spaces gush into your soul in waves and renovate it. That morning, standing in the freezing air of perpetual snows, while praying according to the formulae of the Path I was following, I understood the sense of my vision and I was overcome. I believe you do not need all the decor given me to understand the meaning of it."

"It seems to me," I answered, "that the arid soil represents the mental plane, infertile in itself, and upon which can be erected nothing but illusions. The red soldiers and the pioneers represent sensations while the crystal-like beings are what Boehme calls the will proper. This vision teaches and indicates that man does not have the right to juggle with any of the vital manifestations with which Nature has endowed him. To want to govern the motions of the thinking-principle is a dangerous illusion, because in order to recognize which of our mental images we must obliterate or strengthen toward attaining omniscience, one would have to first possess omniscience."

"But then, our only instrument, the brain, is capable of reflecting only a very small portion of the universe," Andréas added. After waiting a few seconds in silence, he resumed with a half-smile: "Well, my dear Doctor, you have easily grasped one of the meanings of my vision; so I shall spare you my own conjectures. People who live in solitude are garrulous, especially as they get older and when they find a captive audience."

XVI PLAISANCE

The crossing of the Boulevard Saint-Michel kept me from answering. But as soon as we had reached the Luxembourg, I renewed the thread of our conversation. "I understand all that you teach me, but I am still not convinced," I declared. "You are right, Doctor!" exclaimed Andréas. "We have been given judgment and analysis to use."

"Please let me specify what I do not comprehend. Providence is supposed to be good and just, isn't it? Why does it permit men to invent pernicious methods of evolution?"

"What you are citing, is in fact, a difficult problem," answered my companion gravely. After reflecting a minute, he added: "You would have to decentralize yourself mentally."

"Decentralize? I don't understand."

"That's true, I have a bad habit of using unrelated comparisons. As you are aware, hyperspace functions like an algebraic system or like a draught of understanding descriptive geometry and don't forget there still is differential calculus."

"I still do not understand," I admitted, after due reflection.

After gesturing dubitatively, Andréas asked me: "And after you will have understood, can you promise me to continue acting as if you did not know?"

I was going to protest -yes -but under the sagacious gaze of Andréas, I felt my answer to be vain and conceited, so I contented myself with the statement that I would do my best. By that time, I remember that we had reached the beautiful park of Couesnon, which has been cleared since then, to make room for a streetcar yard. Dusk was falling. Andreas straightened his head, which he usually carried tilted to one side; he looked me straight in the eyes and said:

"Happy are the poor in spirit! That is what one can find in the BOOK OF THE LAMB. The spirit of man is known only to those who can live in the atmosphere of the Consoler. We -we cannot breathe that rarified air. Each test however strengthens our lungs and intensifies the image of the figure of the Word which each of us carries within our souls. But we never shall be able to vivify that statue alone. Only the Word can breathe Life, His Life, into it. Many deluded men believe this statue to be alive, they attach themselves to it making it their own. They work for it. Instead, they increase Darkness; while believing that they are headed toward the Being, they lose their way in Nothingness. A few, however, become aware of their error; those in whom pride is not paramount. Those can hear the warning of their guardian angel; they begin to feel the inconsistencies of this world; they learn to forget -and Heaven rushes in a hundred steps closer for every one they descend toward the center of the world. Remember that all you ever read or heard which was exotic and mysterious repeated this axiom to you - 'Action calls for reaction; your hand may only be raised to heaven in equal ratio to the effort of your shoulders and your body's weight on earth.' You used to call it the binary law, didn't you? All during the years you spent in pursuit of these studies, your gray cells were storing up, while the white cells became more refined; you discovered within yourself a lot of unknown organisms to which you gave Sanskrit, Greek, Hebrew,

Egyptian or Chinese names according to your search of the moment. You amassed strength where and how you could; you became a decorative and useless athlete capable of extraordinary feats occasionally but condemned the rest of the time to following a meticulous regime. People admired you and you were proud of it.

"All bodies are born, grown, then diminish. Would your invisible bodies escape this law? Of course not; you will have to retribute all of these organs, and these premature powers. And it is now that you are being led on the descending path."

Andréas stopped talking. We had arrived at our destination. We were entering a cheap housing development, consisting of dirty one-story brick houses, the alleys of which were filled with noisy youngsters. A fat old woman recognized Andreas and asked us to enter into a dilapidated room where a man lay in a rather clean bed. He turned and looked toward us anxiously. He was one of those pariahs that cities engender by the thousands. Worn out from childhood by precocious labor, to whom alcohol has become a necessity in order to survive in spite of inadequate food, lack of hygiene and negligence.

He and his wife began a duo of lamentations. Andréas, hat in hand, still standing, listened attentively, assenting once in awhile with compassion, lost in thought. Finally the old man terminated his complaints with all his remaining strength and screamed: "God is not just anyway! And all these are just exploitation stories! There is no God!"

"What! God is not just?" growled Andreas. "And you, are you just? Shall I tell everything in front of your wife?" he added softly, while the woman had left the room for glasses for a little drink. He then bent down and spoke in the ear of the sick man. "How do you know that?" exclaimed the frightened man. "Keep quiet, keep quiet," answered Andréas, with the delighted expression of someone who has just played a good trick. "To each his own. Do not complain anymore. But!..." threatening him with his index finger, "you will have to go straight."

The woman returned. We drank a toast and she began to complain anew.

"Will he be cured, my dear Monsieur? What is to become of me?"

"Oh, I don't know, mother," answered Andreas. "My doctor friend here, will tell you about it, won't you, Doctor? It's very bad, isn't it?"

I was rather embarrassed regarding the patient. Medically speaking, the man was at the end of his rope; but Andréas was there. I decided to tell the truth.

"Yes. It's grave. It would be a miracle if he comes out of it."

"Well, old mother," asked Andreas, "do you really want to keep this pest of a husband?"

For an answer, the old woman began to cry. So, Andréas affectionately took her arm under his. "Console yourself, all will be well! Only, don't have fights anymore, it would not be worth it. And remember that there are lots of people unhappier than you are. You heard, didn't you?" he said to the man. "So, good-bye, and see you again one of these days. Are you coming, Doctor?"

I felt nonplussed, having expected to witness a miracle.

"Why didn't you heal him, right away?" I asked.

"Eh -first of all, it isn't I who would cure him; secondly, he does not need to be up and around right away. He has a little cash and can wait a week. Speaking of that, what would you occultists have done to cure this man?"

"I really don't know; he is very ill," I answered. "I might have tried to transplant the disease into a tree, or an animal...."

"Yes, introduce it into a place where it had no right to be. Also, I certainly would like to see you laden with a disease of the gods; you'd have the right to complain then!"

"That's true. I had never thought of it that way. What about if I were to launch another genie on the genie of the disease?"

"If your genie is the weaker, your patient will become worse. There must be a parable to that effect in the Bible. If your genie kills that evil or chases it away, it is you who are responsible for what happens afterward. The genie of tuberculosis for instance will go in search of companions to avenge itself; and you, what will you do? Also, what about if these angry beings attack innocent people?"

"Then I don't see any solution except to keep within the confines of regular medical care."

"Oh, no, Doctor, it is when the impossible presents itself that it becomes interesting. One must be obstinate. Either Heaven will cancel the debt of the sick man or will change its mode of payment."

"I'm willing to believe you, but I am not convinced."

"I know," he answered smilingly. "Good-bye, Doctor, keep well. Come and see me next Wednesday, will you?"

"Certainly," I answered, a bit perplexed in my mind. Here I had envisioned a good, long and slow trip home, filled with interesting confabs, with silent intermissions and new concepts to be talked out. I had so many things to talk over, so many projects to submit! But Andréas had already disappeared in the shadows which only a few lamp posts pierced here and there. I melancholically retraced my steps homeward.

XVII THE MAN ATTACHED TO THE EARTH

Two months previously, I had received from a Society publishing scientific publications the order for a big work on a certain phase of Pathology. I had sent my manuscript a few days before. Having come home from the rue du Chateau, I found in the mail a letter from the editor, advising me, on one pretext or other, that he was returning the manuscript. First disillusionment! Luckily, my days were filled and I was kept busy. Two weeks later, passing-through the Place de l'Ecole de Medecine, I saw a new book displayed, treating of the same subject. I perused it only to find it to be a copy of my treatise with but a few modifications. My disillusionment turned to stark indignation. As I was to have lunch with Andréas that day, I wasted no time in deliberating whether I should first blow my top at the editor or lodge a complaint, I took the bus arriving a bit late at Lac Saint-Fargeau.

July had just begun., Crowds were milling in the faubourgs at midday, the sidewalk cafés were filled; hawkers of vegetables were harried by the policemen; the light-colored shirtwaists, tents and white walls in front of multicolored shop front windows dazzled the eye; millinery apprentices were eating french fries -the cries, odors, gestures, laughter, and tragic words -all of that was of interest to me and renewed my sympathy for the working man, and my admiration for the gushing, boundless energy he spends heedlessly.

Hardly had I shaken hands with Andréas and Stella, that my rancor came out. I told them my story. My hosts were laughing while they heaped food upon my plate, and all Andréas would say to console me, was: "Forget it! Let it be. The editor knew you to be intelligent, consequently he did you the honor of moving safely. Read your agreement again. I bet you haven't read it and cannot quote its stipulations."

"That's true. I barely glanced through it," I admitted. "Well, Stella, since he admits his ingeniousness, give him -give us, some Tokay."

My friends were spoiling me as if I were their son. I was scolding myself: Was I not stupid, me and my rancours! Why should I increase the evil that a crafty tradesman had dishonestly heaped upon me? So, chasing my bad humor away I began to enjoy the charm of their home.

We had gone under the arbor to drink our coffee, when the doorbell rang. The maid showed a middle-aged man in -apparently a businessman. In spite of the sun, he wore a heavy overcoat and walked doubled over with the aid of two canes, his face ravaged by pain.

Andréas asked him to sit down and explain the reason of his visit. It seemed that for the past month, he had been seized by violent, unbearable and irreducible pains, suddenly and without cause, especially in the back. They began from early morning till evening with a lull between twelve and two, and a few moments of relief now and then. He had consulted several doctors and healers to no avail; he was neither syphilitic nor suffering from arthritis nor rheumatism; his parents were healthy and there were no hereditary nervous symptoms. This was the consensus of the doctors' opinions to which they added that they did not understand his illness nor would they know of a cure.

This man, whose face showed willpower and even stubbornness, admitted his despair and the fact that he could not bear such martyrdom any longer.

"My pains are atrocious," he told us. "For instance, at this moment, as I am speaking to you, my back feels as though it were being hacked into; that my muscles are being torn by iron teeth, that I receive violent punches, that I am being punctured and my vertebrae are being torn to pieces." In fact, the poor man could barely speak, writhing on the armchair seeking to escape his unbearable tortures.

"If I thought I had a single enemy, if I even believed in those things, I would think he had cast a spell upon me. Monsieur, if you cannot do anything for me, I believe only a bullet will relieve me from this hell."

"We must never despair," said Andreas, "even were we tied to the muzzle of a canon. Yes," he added, pipe in hand, "your case is curious. Are you free this afternoon?"

"Free! Why of course. How could I work in the state I am in?" replied the patient.

"All right, if you are willing, we shall take a ride in the country. That relaxes, doesn't it, Doctor?" Andreas said, as he turned toward me.

"Certainly," I agreed, though not understanding, but surmising that I would witness something extraordinary.

"Go to the country! What for; are you joking?" said the sick man. "Anyhow, I don't care. I care about nothing."

"Oui," Andréas concluded, as if answering the other's thoughts, "maybe we'll find some herb."

We took a cab to the Vincennes station. Andreas bought three round-trip tickets for a distant small station where we alighted one hour and a half later. At the inn, Andréas was able to rent a carriage which the keeper's son drove. Andréas gave him the name of a rancher in the vicinity. About three kilometers away, we reached a beautiful farm, with three main buildings, in the courtyard of which Andréas and I descended, while the sick man remained in the carriage. Andréas asked a farmhand to see the Master. While waiting, we paced the yard between the poultry house and the pigsty, under the vigilant watch of two bearded dogs.

"Ah!" exclaimed Andréas. "I knew it!" as he caught sight of a well which workmen were digging in the corner of the courtyard. He approached the excavation, picked up a handful of earth and examined it closely, weighing it thoughtfully, then letting it fall back in powder form. A few minutes later the farmer arrived.

"Ah, Mr. Martineau, I bet you can't place me!" Andréas said, using the vernacular, habitual to each.

"Truly, I can't," said the cultivator, "though I seem to...." "Now -don't you remember when you were ten years old, you were spending your vacation with your uncle at Bagnolet, and you had broken your leg in three places."

"Why, of course, so it's you, the bone setter!" exclaimed the man. "You certainly fixed me up. It's you. I was quite young then, but I remember your eyes and your pipe."

"Yes, it is I," replied Andréas smiling, "but it's not the same pipe."

"Good. I am delighted to see you again. Come on in and the wife will give us something to cool us off. She'll be here in a minute; she's filling the racks."

I followed the two men in, we sat and drank and talked, but I could not forget the poor man complaining in the carriage.

"I see," Andréas suddenly broke in, "that you are digging a well."

"Yes, the other one is drying up, also, I must explain...." and the farmer went on describing domestic administrative details at length.

"Well! I am going to speak to you frankly," Andréas said, after listening quietly. "It bothers me to have you dig this well."

"What do you mean?" interpolated the farmer. "It bothers you, how and why? I know that I am indebted to you, but still, your request is rather peculiar."

"Yes, it bothers me that you dig at that spot," Andréas insisted, looking the man straight in the eyes. "I just came to ask you to dig it somewhere else."

"But!" the farmer suddenly exclaimed with surprise. "How did you come here? How did you find my farm? My uncle died eons of years ago and my parents are not natives of this county. And then, how did you know I was digging a well?"

"While I was taking a walk," replied Andréas softly.

"Ah, yep! I know I owe you a lot, and after all you don't have to tell me your affairs."

"Listen," Andréas said, using the intimate "thou" form, without the man being aware of it. "How much have you spent so far? I shall reimburse you and I shall tell you of a far better place for you to find better water. Here, you are on a derivation, an elbow. I shall tell you of the sheet itself, for free. And you know, this will be water good for the health."

"Ah, so you are a water-diviner? I should have guessed it," the peasant added.

"All but the wand is missing. Here, we must catch a train. I am going to pay you back, right now. You, you stop the laborers right away, and start digging where I shall show you - and if day after tomorrow, your sounding line has not brought up delicious water, and I mean delicious, you can keep my money and continue your first excavation."

"Fine -agreed!" exclaimed the peasant. "Let's put it in writing, hein?"

"Of course. But fill up right away."

As we re-entered the farm, the sick man whom we had left, screamed from afar, "Are you going to stay any longer? I don't like cold air, you know!"

We went to keep him company, and suddenly as the excavators began filling up the hole, with the first shovelfuls, the man's face changed. He paled, open his mouth wide and only after two minutes had gone by, was he able to murmur with fear in his eyes: "My pain is gone."

"Just as I said," Andréas replied. "Country air does one good."

The deal was quickly closed. Andréas gave about fifteen louis to the still cagey farmer, plus his address to know how the new well was progressing....

The horses trotted as fast as could be back to the railroad station. No one spoke. I was puzzled and the sick man flabbergasted. All he kept repeating was, "I don't feel any more pain. I don't feel any more pain."

As we separated at the Place de la Bastille, Andréas took the man aside and I heard the man acquiescing: "I promise you, Monsieur, it shall be done."

When we were alone I probed Andréas with questions.

"What rapport is there between those pains and that well? Is there one?"

"Naturally, Doctor," Andréas told me with a shrug. "This earth and the back of that man were of the same family."

I understood he was not going to talk. "But how did you know?"

"While walking."

"How did you find that farmer again and all that?" "While walking, I told you!"

Andréas definitely was not in a talkative mood that night. He apologized for it in his usual charming and polite manner before leaving me. He had, so he said, complicated problems to solve at the moment; I learned nothing more. He seemed to want to be left alone in a hurry.

XVIII THE MUMMY

One beautiful fall morning, Andréas and I were walking along the admirable Quai Voltaire which only the true Parisian can enjoy to its full value, and feel its noble beauty and discreet charm. On the bank, the old aspen trees, whose red leaves had felt the touch of frost, usually hide in this season the long gray silhouette of the Louvre.

The dome of the Palais de l'Institut, the princely mansions, and the profile outlines of the Place Dauphine blend gracefully into a delicate perspective under the diffused light. From the right, the sun leaves the spire of the Sainte Chapelle and the towers of Notre-Dame, in distant shadows. This is truly an intellectual landscape reflecting the stately and aristocratic elegance vibrating from the sum total of what past generations and centuries have amassed of ardor, of thought and of pain.

Andréas smoked in silence, his eyes fixed on the ground, then as we passed the glass display case of the mineralogist's stall, located across from the old home of the gentleman-painter the Marquis Desboutiers, he turned around suddenly and took from the counter of the ruddy-faced merchant, a little Egyptian statuette of the hawk faced god. Worn, corroded, verdigris, misshapened, this bronze figure was nothing outstanding.

"Look at it well, mon Docteur," he said.

As I examined it closely, I began to experience something and feel ill at ease without cause.

Andréas looked at me sideways and added smilingly, "It's better, you see, that we take this bird; someone else might be harmed. Come, follow me." He called the antiquarian and bought the statuette without bargaining. At that moment, my cane caught in between my legs and I would have fallen with a thud, had not Andreas held me. I attributed it to my clumsiness and only later did I connect this incident with the bronze figurine we held.

Andréas went toward the Pont-Neuf and we descended the steps which are at the foot of the statue of Henri IV. He did not enter the garden, but passing behind a row of fishermen, he stopped at the extreme edge of the bank and turned his back to me. For over five minutes he silently contemplated the statue. Being accustomed to his strange ways, I stayed back, without speaking.

I thought I saw escaping from his hands a bluish flame which evaporated immediately in the brisk air. Andréas took a newspaper from his pocket, carefully wrapped the statuette, tied it with a string and waited for a riverboat which was coming upstream to pass by. He then threw the package as far as he could into the water. We turned around and went back onto the bridge.

"Well?" I asked.

Andréas offered me some tobacco and after taking a few puffs:

"You remember the story of that mummy in the British Museum which has been causing so much trouble to the visitors for the past eight years?"

"Of course, all the newspapers mentioned it, and I heard that an English couple had gathered a whole record of this affair." Andréas went on, "At death doesn't the body have to decay so that the cells may rest? Isn't it true that many of the spirits around a man await this moment? Then, if we prevent the putrefaction from setting in, we violate a natural law, we cause the cells to suffer. We prevent the evolution of certain beings, so we stop one or more wheels of time, hein?"

"That's right, I had never thought about it."

"When Egyptian priests embalmed thousands and thousands of cadavers, don't you see how they immobilized the wheels with tremendous power -that they even enchained souls to the native land of their bodies -that they were amassing a formidable battery of a certain kind of electricity?"

"Yes, it seems so; but what for?"

"That was their secret -needless to reveal it. Think it over and you will find the answer quickly. So, if in a closed circuit, an exterior source establishes contact, doesn't that produce a short circuit?"

"Ah! The Egyptologists do that?" I cried out. "And their plunder consequently causes a natural disorder in the strange and refractive environment when they are exposed. Yet, we know that the particular sarcophagus we mentioned does not contain the mummy anymore."

"What does it matter? You know very well that according to rites, the figures, signs and colors which decorated the coffin, explained the vital character of the departed, and were related to him by special charms. That must have been printed somewhere?"

"Of course, I saw it in the Annales of the Guimet museum."

"So! You understand now?"

"Yes, I think so, but can't we do anything to attenuate this evil?"

"Ah! -If you can find a man capable of seeing the events which transpired four thousand years ago; one who is capable of speaking to Atlantean souls, capable of releasing the bonds tightened by secular colleges; capable of liberating and putting into motion again, spheres that are peopled by thousands of spirits immobilized since those times - that man can do something."

As Andréas made those comments, he had taken on the mysterious aura which his audience felt to be an unknown radiance of force, so I did not ask him anything else. It was he who broke the silence.

"Doctor, I remember passing by here, about fifteen years ago with one of my friends, Mr. d'Annovilliers."

"The one who left us the anecdotes on Jean Lorrain?"

"Right! Well, he told me that one night he had dined at Mr. Sadi Carnot's, who was then only the president of the Senate. He had given him, at his request that evening, a little basalt

Buddha, which he himself had received from an explorer, who had found it in the Song country. It's in the eastern part of Upper Burma. I went by there in my youth, too. This statuette had belonged successively to five or six village chiefs, all of whom had died a violent death. The Bonze from whom the explorer had purchased it, being a Buddhist, was honest enough to want to warn him about its peculiarities. The explorer also died in an accident. As Mr. d'Annovilliers was telling that story at the dining table, Mr. Carnot, not believing in superstition, insisted upon having the idol. And you know how he died."

"Which means, Maitre, that if I understand it well, one must not change the course of things; nor violate the course of natural laws; nor even take out from their countries, the beings which are attached to it?"

"Yes, Doctor, that is always our Friend's loving advice: 'Let the dead bury the dead.' And if ever you go in some ancient lands and see statuettes which seem to have been forgotten in dusty corners, leave them alone. I promise you that later I shall teach you how they can be handled."

"What about the blue diamond of Tavernier?" "That's another story; we'll speak of it someday." And having relit our pipes, we continued smoking as we circulated among friendly "bouquinistes," under the familiar plane-trees.

XIX THE FIRST OF MAY

There were rumors that on May 1 of this year there would be imposing Labor manifestations, so I had broached the subject to Andreas expressing my desire to understand what corresponded within the Invisible planes to the political unrests and social movements.

He gave me an appointment for the eve of May 1st. That evening I found him in company with a middle-aged woman, whom he introduced as a psychic.

"We cannot go together on the other side of the Veil," he told me. "A stronger mastery of self than we possess is needed. The appearance of certain beings and the violence of other vortices would disconcert us. This woman will go in our stead and will tell us what she has seen."

"Doesn't she take the same risks we would?"

"No, she won't be as exposed as we would have to be. She shall be in a sort of observation chamber."

"Can't you give me the same protection?"

"Yes, it would be possible if you were good, but you are not obedient enough; you would take chances."

"In that case," I agreed, "I must accept."

I expected to witness a mystagogy or something similar to a magic ceremony with incantations. Nothing like that occurred. Andréas simply told the medium: "Sit in the armchair and we shall begin."

The woman installed herself comfortably and immediately fell asleep.

"Now we'll see. What do you want?" he asked me.

"First I would like to know the state she is in," I answered.

"But, Doctor, she'll be in the state you desire. I do not make use of any odique fluid. You are well aware that there are many kinds of magnetism; the one we are going to use is little known. I make no passes, no suggestions and this woman hears you as well as I. I never would permit myself to bind anything in anyone. Moreover, she can see as well in your wallet as in Peking, and is even able to read your thoughts."

I tried a dozen experiments needless to mention here, to verify these assertions. They were exact. I also noticed that the subject, during her visions, was fully conscious of the physical plane. Only it was difficult for her to move.

Finally I asked Andréas to send her into the social plane of the Invisible, the study of which interested me most at the time. The psychic turned toward Andréas with a quizzical expression.

"Yes, your escort is coming," he told her. "What escort are you talking about?"

"Would you travel alone in a totally unknown land?" he answered. "And if you could make it in a few days by railroad,

you certainly would not choose the pedestrian means for several months. The people she is going to meet are neither terrestrial nor even men. We must shield her from their curiosity and investigation. There are customs -duty elsewhere than on earth."

"That must be what the guardians in the *Pistis Sophia* are referring to, as well as the passwords of the symbolic rooms of Free Masonry."

"Of course." And turning toward her, he said, "You can go now."

"How is she led?" I asked. "Are there different modes of travel in space? What sense guides her?"

"Oh! You want to know it all," laughingly answered Andréas. "Wait, we'll study that later."

"Here is the bear, the unicorn, the leopard, the reindeer, the dragon, the lion, the eagle, the dromedary, the cow, the castor, the cock..." the medium uttered.

"Fine, don't enumerate the whole menagerie," said Andreas. "See what the cock is doing, since it is France which interests us primarily."

"So," I asked, "there exists in the Beyond, a place, a space where nations are represented under animal forms. How is that? I thought that Egregores were fluidic fields. What then is an animal?"

"But," Andréas answered with a smile, "all is in all. A stone here on earth may have a human form elsewhere; an archangel of the Invisible world may be a gem in the depths of the rock, or rather inhabit it. The enigma of the Universe is so simple! That is why it has never been solved. An animal? But everything is animal: I, the earth, the Milky Way, an automobile, geometry.... Jonas and his whale is a scene which has taken place in a corner of the Universe. What distinguishes the animal biologically? It is an individuality which has will, is responsible and mobile, which maintains temporary domination over an abstract principle, over fluidic energies, which maintains temporary domination over an abstract principle, over fluidic energies, minerals, vegetable organisms and viscera similar to the stars. We see only the physical animal species on earth; but there also exist species which are terrestrial, hyperphysical, social, religious, human like, political, cosmic, industrial, and intellectual, etc....

"The modern theories of the radiation of matter, of ions, and of electrons which show us that organic cells or inorganic atoms are microscopic suns, may help us understand the visions of antiquity regarding the holy animals, the godly Devas and fiery dragons.

"Would not our body appear as a little nebulae as compact and brilliant as the one shining above if an instrument were invented to make the ions, of which it is composed, perceptible?"

"But you make me chatter like a magpie.... Look well at the cock," Andréas went on addressing the medium after two seconds of observation.

"He was very beautiful," she said, "but here he seems to vanish in smoke while other animals are coming out of the fog he has become. I see an enclosed field in which is a herd of very dirty sheep; they seem confused, they stamp and bleat. Around them are bulldogs. They defend these frightened animals, but they occasionally kill one and devour it. A horde of small animals resembling dogs is rushing toward the first group, they are of all shapes and colors. A kind of monster, immobile, with arms like an octopus stays close by them; he excites this horde and urges them to assault the sheep.

"In their midst is a fox towards whom they turn ceaselessly; he orders the bulldogs. In a corner, behind the bushes, a crocodile seems asleep but crows, magpie and jays are constantly going to and from him to the fox and to the octopus. They land here and there on the two herds augmenting the confusion by screams and by pecking the animals; while the fox and the octopus hold consultations at intervals to augment the fright of the sheep and increase the dogs' attacks. They occasionally devour the wounded which are brought to them, but they are really unaware that it is the crocodile which directs them. I see a man carrying a

fisherman's net which he unfurls between the two herds. The dogs are gradually quieting down -the sheep graze again; the man looks at the three animal-leaders and makes them come to a corner. He speaks to them several times."

"That's fine," interrupted Andreas. "Take a rest."

"What does it all mean?" I asked.

"If the woman made up this little tale or if I suggested it to her, it means nothing. It might really be a scene which unfolded before her."

"In that case?"

"It's up to you to find out. It may be alchemy, it is perhaps astrology or a social phenomena. How do I know! The subject only looked. It would have been necessary for her to converse with those beings, but it would have been too tiring for her."

"So! Of what use was this somnambulistic séance?"

"Of not much use, Doctor. You understand that it is fine to have enthusiasm, but we must not undertake any work beyond our strength. If you and I were pure, if we could call ourselves children of God, nothing in Creation would be hidden from us. And then, because we would really be humble, it would be possible for us to be en rapport with the spirits of nations, or with those of political and religious sects and to direct them according to the designs of Providence. Meanwhile, we can only work in silence -devote ourselves to and have confidence in our Friend."

XX THE INVISIBLE REALM

Andreas had gone to Brittany for one of his short and impromptu jaunts. We met in Nantes as planned, in order to go together that evening to pay a call upon a sick peasant who lived two leagues away from Vannes. Due to the hedge of the hollow path, one could not see the ridge piece of the large roof of his gray house from the road.

The Curate thought the man to be possessed. The Doctor, knowing him to be an alcoholic, wanted to intern him as soon as possible.

With these taciturn Bretons, Andreas had been sparing of words. The little lamp in the semi-dark room animated the shadows; the grandmother and daughter were busily tending both the cradle and the supper's boiling pot. The man was sitting near us, holding his "pen-baz", hat on head and a pipe between his teeth. Andréas was also smoking as we three were drinking a bowl full of cider. A thin cat was begging; two muddy dogs, with shining eyes lay warming themselves in front of the hearth.

Outside, the wind had risen. It began sighing a little in the chimney, but it soon changed into a furious orchestra which made the old squatty house resound from top to bottom. As storms are rare in September, one of the women with a surprised expression on her face got up and held the door ajar to look outside. I saw her make a gesture, take a few steps down the road and then she rushed back into the house. Her face was ashen, and in a low voice she said, "There is no breeze outside," as she made the sign of the cross.

Her husband raised his head suddenly like someone who has just been awakened. He jumped to his feet and raised his stick with savage-like agility; but Andréas had already stood up, riveting his eyes upon those of the man which he held under the stare of his own immovable pupils.

The peasant fell on all fours and started biting the benches here and there, and howling like a hunger-maddened prowling wolf. The women stood trembling under the stairway, the animals had taken refuge between them. As the tempest sheathed and blowed, the man's shrill bark increased. The black demon of terror sprayed his most venomous poison in the room. Impatiently I waited for Andréas to move. He should be doing something ... he must ... yet minutes were passing by in the same penumbra to the accompaniment of the diabolical concert of the possessed man and the wind.

Then -a brown Thing pushed the door -silently with its paw; as tall as a large, agile old wolf, mute, with taut hair and burning red eyes and its mouth foaming -it came and sat in front of the man who continued barking and shaking convulsively under the stinking breath of the Beast.

Andréas stood between them. The beast raised its large, clear, cruel, and cunning pupils toward him. He softly took hold of the large savage head, his hands immersed in the heavy fur, and yet I could see them as if the body of the wolf were diaphanous at times. This really made me lose my sang-froid. From its foaming mouth an indescribably fetid stink came out by waves. The beast suddenly crouched as if to spring, but Andreas held it back by the shoulders. Both remained

still, with staring eyes, until the moment came when the red glare which danced in the center of its savage pupils was extinguished, just like a snuffed-out candle.

"Put everyone out, and sit the man down, quickly!" Andréas said to me.

I pushed the cradle, the women, and the dogs outside. Then laboriously I raised the quieted man. The tempest subsided at the same time, the beast fell back on its four paws, receded toward the hearth and vanished in vapor. The peasant stretched himself out, grumbled a bit and rubbed his eyes. As he saw the slime on Andreas' sleeve, he jumped.

"Listen, Jean-Marie," Andréas told him. "In an hour, you will remember everything, but you must never speak of it! Leave now -go to old mother Le Dallo; you will reach there tomorrow at dawn. You will also walk back. You will give her the hundred francs, you know, the hundred francs of twenty years ago, plus another hundred for interest. After her death you will have a mass said for her every Saturday. Promise?"

"Yes," said the man. Going toward the little plaster Virgin on the chimney, he crossed himself, recited an Our Father, an Ave Maria, and said, "I swear to return the twenty pistoles, to have masses said and never speak of it."

"All right," said Andréas. "Let me see you leave. Don't be afraid; there won't be anything on the road tonight." Three minutes later, we left. While Jean-Marie was headed north, we returned to Vannes. Naturally, I was prying Andréas with questions. "It's a vengeance," he answered. "But the wolf, it was translucent, yet he had weight; he was material since he soiled your coat?"

"Of course! Haven't you studied magic? You know what lycanthropy is. We're in the werewolf country. In these regions where Nature primes, man has little intellect and offers the spirit of stones, of the woods, of ponds, of clouds, of the wind and of unfurrowed soil possible means of manifesting themselves. So the physical beings are psychic, intuitive, mediumistic and the invisible beings are closer to matter.

"It is then another proof that Nature always proceeds by imperceptible gradations and that every man has the intuition of the Invisible realms inborn in him."

"Yes, man receives innerly all that he needs. One has the tendency today to claim that all mysterious sciences come to us from the East. That is not exact. Not only in occidental books but in all popular traditions we find the same theories taught by the esotericisms of India, of China, and of Tibet. We are simply dominated by a mental fascination held over us by certain powerful men, but that will not last forever."

"It is true that the Zohar contains all the ideas that I had previously found in the Pouranas. The Brahman theory of chronological periods is also in the SEPHER, also in Trithemius and Arbatel. If Agrippa is complemented with certain of the Church Fathers, one can establish a pneumatology as complicated and as thorough as that of the Vedas. Paracelsus gives the same teachings as the Hindu SAMHITAS in medicine, natural history, physics and chemistry. We can always say that the Orient is the source of knowledge from which all the European initiates have drawn, can't we?"

"That's right. It is useless to discuss priorities. You know that people understand nothing about nothing; we only seem to understand. The Kabbalist, the Pythagorean, the Yogi, the Arhat, the Wali and the Saint -none of them have been able to attain the zenith of power and knowledge, not one more than the other; they only have approximations, more or less related; each being on his mountain top. All of them see stones, trees, animals, villages, and clouds - these are the concordances of tradition. But none of them see the same forests, nor the same hamlets -these are the divergences of tradition."

"You mean to say that esoteric subjects are too far away from us, for us to be able to discern within them anything but a comprehensive whole?"

"Yes, and when the seeker finds something clear and precise, this point is the rendezvous of so many different forces that it is impossible to enumerate them all, consequently he cannot appraise his own finding. For instance, the scene you just witnessed is the last act of a drama begun four hundred years ago. This peasant and the sorceress who had taken the form of a wolf are old enemies. They will be reconciled shortly, but who can count the millions of diverse spirits that their secular hate has put into motion?"

"And who will re-establish order?"

"God, by means of certain beings. All is living, each thing has its spirit, its intelligence; even a material form is but the body of a genie. If -let us say -if I were able to and wanted to reconcile these millions of sparks of life, I would need more time than it took that man and that woman to put them at cross purposes. If I want to address the different chiefs of the genii, I would have to hunt and find them, while they probably have left this earth by this time. It is much more simple for me to call upon God, Who knows all and Who, in the twinkling of an eye, will have called this crowd together, will have judged, then reorganized it."

"So the esoteric books on magic, on pneumatology, on angelology, while containing exact data, incite the searcher to look to secondary causes instead of for the primary cause?"

"Of course, though they claim that they address themselves to God, and that they never undertake anything without enticing His aid through their pure conduct, they pass up that first page which is judged good enough for the crowds, but not for the initiates we think ourselves to be. We chase after secrets, after mysterious things only to find that in the end we have lost our way."

"In brief, there exists many genii, chiefs, princes, satraps, and invisible kings; gods of planets, of races, of nations, of cities and of hamlets; guides for professions and individual positions; also saviours who help us. The religions, the Kabbala, the Sufis, Buddhism, and Brahmanism are all unanimous about it. But it is more prudent and more expedient not to rely upon them but to apply directly to God."

"Yes, man must act with the Light which made him human, which means with the divine spark that was placed within him since the beginning.... If man makes use of one of the bodies of this spark, uses his intelligence, his magnetism, or his will, he acts in the outer and on the outer, and not in the center nor on the central plane of the world. If you remain in the center, in unity, and in harmony, all that you will do will radiate unity, harmony and peace. Let me repeat; all that the greatest of men have taught, all that which has been revealed to the purest of them does not embody one millionth part of total Science. Each follows his path. There are no polemics, no censures, nor battles in the plane of oneness where we should stand. So, that which you believe to be true, speak of it, but especially put it into

practice. Others do that which they have to do. Our Friend is there to settle everything, to place each where he should be, according to a plan that He alone knows. So work and be at Peace."

XXI THE VINEYARD

Instead of returning directly to Paris, Andréas took the Chinon train and we descended at "L'Isle-Bouchard". From there we took a little local with its bevy of farmers and womenfolk returning from the market. The little locomotive asthmatically wended its way through hills warmed under a blazing summer sun.

Separated by dried stone wall, each vineyard disposed their vine-stock in tiers. As far as the eye could see, were plants with their leaves blue-coated from sulphuration sprays. The season was not promising. The peasants were groaning that the harvest would be less than half that of ordinary years. The wine would probably not keep; neither powders, liquids, fertilizers nor grafting seem to stop the new diseases which broke out. Ruin was in sight. How many good years would be needed to catch up!

"You have had good years," commented Andréas. "What use have you made of them? You hoarded your money and did not even spend a penny extra for pleasure. Did your Town Council repair roads or do anything for the poor? No. Well! Why should the earth be better than you?"

"Don't you know how much we have spent for American vineslips, for dung spread and irrigation?" replied the peasants.

"They were of great help this year, weren't they!" Andreas retorted. In fact, nothing had stopped the disease. The agronomists' science had had to admit its powerlessness and the winegrowers had to return to the empirical practices that the elders recalled, as they sat under the walnut trees, smoking their pipes with their chins resting on their canes.

"Yes," continued Andréas, "once upon a time, a procession carrying the holy species: God, went through the fields, but today you have become too smart. Your god has become copper sulfate and his angels are the phosphates. Try to get something out of a soil which you have depleted. You have been too lazy to re-sow seeds; that is not natural. You know very well that if a man were to live on residuum without food, he would die shortly. one cannot force nature. You know how to spare your horses and oxen; do the same for your vines."

The peasants were listening without comments, as they did not want to appear dumb, but some of them inwardly agreed that the gentleman must be right!

"You don't want these people to go back to church and the curate?" I asked Andréas.

"Why not?" he answered. "They don't need a comprehensive view of the government. They were born peasants, which means that for this life, they must obey. Know that Catholicism is the best among religions."

"Yes, but what link is there between it and the vine?"

"Very close ones, Doctor; also with cattle diseases, also with hail, rain, wind and a lot of other things." "How?"

"Why, quite naturally. You know that the basis of the religion of Jesus is to relate the entire creation back to God since that is the religion of the Word. You understand that?"

"Almost. But it seems to me I would have a hard time explaining it to philosophers."

"Oh! We're not there yet. First of all, they would have to understand the objective reality of religion. They only see in it but an ensemble of subjective formulae, and

the dogmas to them are but intellectual symbols, and rites but edifying symbols. Dogma possesses something by itself, and a rite contains a property within itself; moreover if the priest is a saint, this virtue increases. But, to come back to our premises we must understand, in order to fathom the influence that a liturgical prayer may have over a physical phenomenon, that the collective body of a Church comprises much more than the men who belong to it. For example, the Catholic Church not only includes the priests and its living and dead members, it also regiments a lot of other visible and invisible beings. First are the genii of nations who profess it and the subordinate genii who obey them. It is also composed of a certain portion of infernal spirits as well as celestial ones; the spirits of the sciences and arts particular to these nations; the spirits of cities and villages, of rivers and mountains, and of forests and fields which are dependent upon the national or ethnic genii; the spirits of the political, civil and intellectual institutions; those of machines, houses and palaces; in brief, the spirits of a variety of all beings and material forms either created by the force of Nature or the will of men who have professed their faith to the master of that religion."

"One could then erect a spiritual physiology of religion, of the state, of industry, or of all which constitutes civilization?"

"Yes," answered Andréas. "Always remember that Nature works according to one plane alone, and that the stars are subject to the same law as that which rules the seed, knowledge, virtue and the rest. Do you see now how the Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed? Do you see why one must study the Gospel with one's innermost consciousness?"

"Yes, I can visualize vast horizons! But what about our unhappy winegrowers?" I added, knowing how cleverly Andréas sometimes eluded the question.

"All right, let's go back. What is man's highest achievement? That which puts his finest and deepest energies into activity; that which consequently awakens the most echoes in all the spheres of his individuality? Is this not the religious ones? Hence, as all things are related in the universe and as anything we do has repercussions upon the center, hence, prayer which stirs the most secret centers of our beings, will by reaction move all the centers of the milieu to which we are attached."

"That's not all, is it?" I asked.

"If, in the social scale, the priest who is the cell, whose duty it is to represent the function of prayer, asks for something according to the forms handed down by tradition, which means through the chain of ancestral priests down to the founder of said religion, such a demand first finds an echo in all the membership of said collectivity; it is the same as when you pray, your entire body feels it. The rest of the collectivity, the visible as well as the invisible, hears that prayer and because of the name of God Who is invoked, the parts of this collectivity must perforce conform themselves to it, whether they agree or not."

"Yes," I answered. "I'd like to believe you, but I do not quite understand."

"Naturally, you don't understand," smilingly exclaimed Andréas. "I'm not telling you all this for now. You won't need it till a later date; and by then you will have forgotten it. As you are well aware, we often experience earthquakes within our bodies, the deepest layers of our spirits often rise to the surface of our conscience, while that which was above gets buried in subterranean vaults. Isn't that written somewhere in the Gospels?"

"It is probably what is meant by: 'He has humbled the mighty.'"

"No doubt," answered Andréas. "And so -when the parish priest accompanied by the schoolteacher, the children, a few peasants and their womenfolk, carried the

Blessed Sacrament across the wheat fields, while they sang the psalms more or less in tune, there were invisible assistants witnessing the ceremony. They were listening to the Latin words; or rather the Faith which gave dynamics to these words appeared to them as streaks of light, walls of fire and points, and so the little beings who make the hail, the rain and wind, would obey much better than they would heed the blunderbuss which you see sticking out there among the vines."

"Is it as simple as that?"

"Of course. Nature in its rustic state is very responsive to psychic forces; that is why sorcerers or bone setters have more success in the country than in cities. Religion is such a natural process, and the heart is so much the receptacle of life that both of them find their greater normal expansion outside of the artificial creations of human genius."

"Then can we find a reason for the chemical treatments failing in these particular vineyards this year?"

"Yes, one can. The earth which is alive, first of all, becomes accustomed to anything and is mithridated after a while. Secondly, the chemical product is dead most of the time; consequently, it cannot give what it hasn't got, hence it is only a stimulant just as coffee or alcohol are for our body. Besides, the earth just like our body has only a limited capacity of absorption. Once saturated, it reaches the end of its yield and cannot surpass it. It is then that the cultivator must find something else. That is what happened this year in this region. Imminent justice sends out decrees which must be executed

regardless of the artifices of men's ingeniousness. If, for example, men have shown themselves to be obstinately avaricious or consistently slanderous for a long time, in spite of the clemency of the weather or the quality of the soil, certain beings justiciaries -open a certain door to the other side and so avariciousness and human slander enter into a locale where they receive from life a certain faculty of organic procreation; so, on the surface of the earth, in several places, mildew and microorganisms are formed which at first are unicellular, and then by rapid evolution become animalcules. Phylloxera has no other origin; and that which I am telling you is so true, that in the region we are going through, there is but one vine which is almost healthy - and that is the one belonging to a man who prays."

"Would there be constant relationships between what the occultists term the astral and physical planes?"

"of course. All parts of the universe are interrelated -they bathe one into the other. Except when, by exception a wall is built as a local and temporary isolation booth. It is because of this universal fusion that all religions strongly recommend that we refer any act and thought to God."

"What about these poor people, won't Heaven help them again this time and save them from ruin? Maybe having been so close to ruin, they will reform."

"Heaven has been patient for quite a number of years," Andréas said. "It did not do any good. Anyway, God is not in a hurry. If only there were one person among them who understood

His request, quite a bit of suffering would be spared But...!"

"So -why can't we warn the man you mention?"

"All right -we'll warn him," Andréas answered, using the tone with which one gets rid of children's embarrassing questions. "If only men would become aware of the tender solicitude they are the objects therefrom! We are vulnerable from so many facets, from our bodies to the apex of our keen minds. Death, many kinds of deaths brush past us so many times a day. No! Man certainly does not cultivate

gratefulness sufficiently. For instance, we have been traveling all day without any mishaps; we think it normal! Ah! We are ingrates!"
Upon these words, Andréas, closing his eyes went into a long, taciturn meditation.

XXII AVALANCHE IN THE HIMALAYAS

As I called upon Andréas one evening, I found him and his wife in the midst of packing. A close friend of Stella's was ill and needed her, so she had to catch the Sud-Express immediately. We took her to the Austerlitz station. I noticed how Andreas ingeniously tried to do everything to make her comfortable. I also noticed his exquisitely refined manners which I had only seen two old *grand-seigneurs* possess. Then, I observed how well Andreas knew the personnel -from the special commissary down to the ordinary porters and crew.

After the departure of the express train, he suggested that we take a nocturnal walk in the country. I accepted with enthusiasm. A night spent talking things over with such a companion was a godsend. I suggested that we take a suburban local in order to reach the pure air and silence of the fields a bit sooner. So it was that about 1:00 A.M. -any of the inhabitants of Villaine who had not yet fallen asleep - could have seen two shadows cross the fields leading to the wooded hills which dominate the Briere Valley.

"How I wish I could visit the vast expanse of Tartary, India, and China!" I said.

"Yes, but how many have left their bones there! The reputation of some countries is such that one is warned and takes precautions; such as India or the Himalayas. But the climate of Turkestan and of Mongolia is no less murderous. I recall how much I suffered there."

"How so?" I asked.

"When I first went to Lha-Ssa, I was going through a moral depression, similar to the one you described and as no test comes alone, other things worried me too. I went through this experience. As you well know," Andréas went on, as he climbed a steep slope, "politics and occult sciences are closely interrelated and help one another in all Asia. The Brahmans retain their aloof ethnogenic quiet; the Moslems are more active and a cause of concern to the Empress of India as well as to the Tzar. In China, everyone knows of the underground plotting of the secret societies against the Manchu dynasty. The Annamites dream of regaining their autonomy while the Tibetans observe from their snow-capped observatories the movements of the people milling in the vast continent below.

"The migrations of the Buddhistic nomads of Tartary, of the Iranian, Afghan and Hindu Mahometans, of the Taoists, of the members of the Triad and of the White Nenuphar are faithfully transmitted to them through their roving emissaries as well as by a wireless which has been known to them for centuries. The Lamas take a great interest in the descent of the Russians toward the South, as well as to the advance of the British to the North.

Their sympathies are with the former.

"I shall not relate to you the fastidious historical details of Tibetan politics nor the vicissitudes of its central priesthood (sacerdoce). All you need know is that the Dalai-Lama and the great Lamas of Tartary are more closely related than the mass of their faithful realize. Their supreme council which consists, outside of the LIVING BUDDHAS, of the heads of all the initiations of India, China, Japan, Annam and Malaya, was attempting to organize a closer union with the head of a large

European empire. That was quite a few years ago. They needed an emissary who was well versed in occidental customs, so they chose me."

"But the ceremonials, the caravans and numerous messengers needed could not keep these negotiations secret. The population, the novices, lamas and even the Klampos or cardinals would quickly have learned that something was transpiring due to the many trips such diplomatic proceedings entailed. So, they had to find a pretext which would justify the importance of my presence in the eyes of the population."

Here, Andreas stopped, lit his pipe and stood still as he admired the knolls sleeping under the moon.

"Nature is kind, here," he commented. Then turning aside, he lost himself in contemplation. The first tinge of light appeared in the east; rabbits were adventuring on the avenue, blue birds began chirping near a farm in the valley. Suddenly, the sun majestically rose before us over the Hay Woods; at the same moment, a lark rushed out of a furrow, like a ball, singing its matutinal, prayer. Andreas came back to me and continued his narrative.

"The Transcaspian was not finished. Hence, my cortège and I had to cross the plains of Turkestan on horseback. Again I saw the ruins of antique Amarcanda, of Merv, the ancient and defunct centers of the brilliant Arabic civilization. I would like to have seen you there, roasting by day, freezing by night, blinded by the dust in the evening, suffering from thirst at all hours, and not daring to quench it for fear of intestinal infections; a prey to sand-blindness which renders the most patient of us peevish. But I'll tell you about this another day.

"My mission accomplished, we returned to Tibet. We had a peaceful trip up to the high plateaus of the Hindu-Kousch. There, terrible things awaited me on this summit of the world.

"This was the third time that destiny was bringing me to the snowy solitude of the Himalayas. Cold, fatigue or hunger were far from disheartening me! Besides the joy of experiencing the peace which I always felt in the desert; the arduous ascents, the dangerous descents, the tempests and terrifying optical illusions - none of these counted versus the joys of the mountaineer.

"Nothing equaled my being able to fill my lungs with the rarified atmosphere of the peaks, or to become overpowered in the evening by the splendour of the sky, to feast upon the magic of the rising sun and the tragic orchestration of colors in the setting sun - or to bathe into the quiet beatitude of the nights when the moon sheds its eerie light into the formidable silence, broken only by the cry of a beast hunting in the valley. In this immense peace, immobile yet alive, the majesty of visible Nature exalts the heart of man up to the Invisible. There he can rest closer to the womb of Mother Earth. All that which is artificial and superfluous falls aside just like dried old bark. Besides the grandeur of material physical forms crunches it to bits, from the heart rushes forth a feeble little appeal -the only one which can reach Heaven and bring down Love.

"It is not haphazard that the most marking episodes of religious history take place on mountain peaks. The Merou, the Nebo, the Horeb, the Thabor and Calvary are the mysterious springboards from which the prayers of Initiators soar by supernatural effort. They are the Havres-de-Grace, the Havens of Safety where

from eternal shores dock the ships carrying to the sacrificed one, the necessary succor for the consummation of the Holocaust.

"The sanies of electro-telluric currents fall into the valleys; mountain air is purer, its earth richer. Beneath a blanket of snow the rocks silently incubate the formation of virgin alums; invigorating spring waters flow, saturated with the savour of their maternal soil. The forest odors inhaled deeply develop the lungs; the vast horizons sharpen the sight; the scaling of steep slopes forges muscles of steel; the unforeseen cataclysm of avalanches and the treachery of crevices subdue the nerves under the spontaneous control of the will; while the soul finds exaltation in the semi-solitude which impels it also to breathe deeply the unpolluted air of the mystical summits.

"The pseudo-culture of civilization withers and dies at Nature's contact. The innermost meaning regains its normal place. The instinct of Truth unhampered by prejudices and social conventions can freely unfold its green foliage in the perpetual springtime of a soul, having regained innocence. Ah! If men were only willing to admit that they are not wiser than Nature, how quickly they would realize how sterile their systems are and which can produce only insipid fruits.

"How they would give free rein to the living powers of their inner being; without thought of the morrow; and offer themselves to the rays of the real sun in order to radiate joy to all around them as well as within themselves, just as children dance around the maypole in front of their homes.... But, we do not want to understand that simplicity is truth.

"One night we had pitched our camp on the southern slope of a mountain in order to shield ourselves from the bitterly cold wind from which we had suffered all day. The heavens were clear, nothing prognosticated a storm, yet I had seen a few white-headed hawks fly north against the wind, in the valley below us. I had shared my concern with my companions and I had had my tent set up between two rocks in a north-south angle, where I, as candidate to the Nomekhanat slept alone. I was awakened during the night by the sound of something falling on my felt roof. As we were surrounded by crevices and precipices, I decided to wait till morning to investigate, so I spent a few hours listening to the snow storm and its fall upon my Tartar yurt.

"When the sound ceased, I decided to go out. I had to forge my way through the snow. The diamond-like peaks and immaculate plateaus shone under a radiant sun. But my companions, their tents, their camels and horses had all disappeared - carried like a leaf by the avalanche -and there I was, alone, with a sack of tea, without water, without fire, at an altitude of fifteen thousand feet, at thirty-five below zero centigrade.

"Yet, I was only mildly concerned. If my followers had really been the victims of an accident, I could by means of what is called applied-telepathy ask help from the nearest monastery and then wait a few days in the lethargic state of Hatha-Yoga. But, if my abandonment had been premeditated, I could only rely on myself, not a single Lama would answer my call. The wisest course then was to circumvent hunger.

"You certainly have heard about adepts who can from a grain of rice as base materialize a whole sack. I -I had only tea which is not nourishing. Snow covered

all the algols where I might have found a vegetable fragment left from a camel's stomach. I could not even make use of that process. But it was relatively easy for me with patience to absorb and draw certain nutritive particles which come from the decomposition of rocks exposed to rain. The minerals which your doctors have studied for a century contain all that man needs. Primary matter was then not lacking.

"I had already gathered a handful of reddish powder; I had already prepared the floor of my yurt, written the formulae and oriented the operation when, without any reason, these words read once upon a time and forgotten crossed my mind: "Let these stones become bread." I stood up, profoundly disturbed. By what right would I disarrange Nature's plan? What would become of all these microscopic lives which my will is going to transfer into a spiritual world, not their own? One which would destroy the curve of their evolution curbing them to accomplish a task they are not prepared to undertake? And yet is not my life more important than all these dust particles? Yet, if I pursue my operations, it is the law of the stronger which I execute; and if I perform an injustice today, what abuse of power will I not commit tomorrow?

"The hour was advancing. Soon I would have to postpone the projected transmutation to the morrow. Ideas were surging into my head such as: 'If I resist these suggestions, it means death; I am not afraid to die, but I do not want to die. My wounded pride overshadows my desire to live! ... So I began preparing for the operation again; all was ready and I was just about to pronounce the ritualistic words when -my lips refused to move. Something bitter like an astringent liquor descended into me. All of a sudden I felt so small in intelligence as well as in body that I remained there, hanging unto the rocks like an insect expecting the unknown, yet happy, waiting in the night under a starlit sky.

"At dawn I came out of that dangerous torpor. All mystical scruples had vanished, I had forgotten all about dignity, mysteries, worldwide politics and Lamaic churches. I was only a hungry explorer, still alert, wanting to overcome the cold and the precipices.

"So I tied my felt-tent into a sort of sled, upon which I attached myself as securely as possible. Then using a stake as rudder, trusting my star and my experience in snow countries, I let myself slide down an approximately safe incline at the bottom of which, a few hours hence, I hoped to find a living man.

"I risked breaking my neck many times and was badly bruised. But toward midday, after having descended two thousand meters, I saw further down a small patch of grass and some trees. I was saved!

"From the edge of the wood, I collected my remaining strength in order to send out a shrill call, the echo of which some shepherd might hear. I was overjoyed when a trilling response came from afar, and a half hour later a peasant ran up the embankment, so happy at being able to render service to a holy Lama, whom he found seated under pine trees, with a great air of detachment and nobility."

XXIII PROBATION

"A few days later," Andreas went on, "led by herdsmen, I reentered my cell to await with the greatest calm possible, events which I felt to be decisive. The Ambassador of the Grand Lama of Ourga arrived shortly under the pretext of a birthday celebration. The following day they called for me with great pomp, to the accompaniment of hand bells, fireworks and popular acclaim. The council of the twelve Nomekhans was assembled. They seated me in the center. A long parchment was handed to me, in silence, and great was my surprise when I read that had I not given tangible proof of my incapacity during the European mission, I would have been nominated to a very high post. Expressionless, I passed my eyes over the assembly, because I felt that they were all watching me intently Anyone else would have offered an excuse, death being the usual result of such secret judgments; but my previous experience of oriental ruse served me well. Had they decided to annihilate me, nothing short of a miracle could have saved me; I could not escape through my own means. First, I had to guess what they expected of me. I knew myself to be superior to them in the performance of certain rites which the Brahmanic sanctuaries have never divulged to the Buddhists. To force me into disclosing these mysteries, such was probably the aim of these clever maneuvers. But I did not want to break my given word. So I waited under the fire of these twelve strong wills coveting to tear out my secret in the silence of the hall, in the heart of the buzzing monastery and of the city in mirth. No desert had yet seemed as terrible to me as this.

"My judges found my impassivity surprising. I was led back to my cell, after having had as an honor symbol, a ring passed on my thumb - a superb teco which is a carved and engraved Jade ring.

"Evidently, the Nomekhans were not after my physical body. But I had to fear other kinds of torture with which they are familiar and which I had never seen any unhappy victims, whom the secret council's politicians wanted to obliterate, resist. The scholars never speak of the art; but the common people believe that certain lamas can unchain a horde of demons on your trail. You will understand my reticence at saying anything more.

"In fact, that is exactly what happened. Ideas germinated in my mind as I planned an escape. But how could I? I never was allowed outside alone; I possessed no other clothes than the large woolen robe and the wide hat. I had no money. I was in despair. Then I thought of using hypnosis to win one of the servants over. But they had circumvented my plan; in short, all were under the spell of the Grand Council. It was very difficult to keep my endeavors secret. I was caught like a fly in a spider's web. For a week, I fought; I attended the public rites holding a beechnut rosary in my hand, while mouthing the teaching principles, because they still kept up for me the decorum and functions of a dignitary which were so many additional chains. Then my nerves calmed down and consumption began to undermine my energies. That is what my tempters were waiting for. When they found me weakened, impressionable, despairing, they sent for me and proposed to put me in charge of one of the monasteries of Lhasa. They made me visit the convent from roof to caves - the wealth which was amassed there is inconceivable. Some rooms are filled with uncut precious stones, others with jewels, others with coins, arms, art objects, manuscripts, sketches, furniture; collections of plants, of minerals, of

antediluvian animals, of magical instruments and of costumes. I was dazzled. In spite of myself my hands would open toward these treasures. But, before the fever of possession totally engulfed me, I was able to tell my companions: 'What for? Gold is squandered, science is vain, and beauty does not inhabit this earth.'

"Changing their tactics, they saluted me as the One they were waiting for to accomplish their schemes. They revealed them to me. The idea was to launch half of the Old Continent upon the other half in order to subject the whole earth to their domination. I saw myself as a hero, as a demigod adored by millions of men. All the beauty, power and wealth of the world would be mine, all intelligence too, and all the love that human hearts can hold. In my weakened organism a flame flared up. I had to hide my hands so that no one would see their tremor. At my feet were to be the treasures of men, below my eyes were splendid horizons, summits, the sky and the forests in their spring-like innocence; on the lower terraces the novices and monks bowing before my presence were pouring out for me the wine of ambition."

"'You will establish the glory of our Lord the Buddha on this entire earth,' the Lamaic cardinals told me. 'You may even be able to change the destinies of our world; maybe you will even be able, with the help of the enthusiasm of multitudes, to bring it to submission. You will always live here present on these mountains as well as present also wherever you wish; incognito if you want, or the sole object of men's admiration, if you so desire.'

"For hours on end, these men, vowed to silence more or less by habit, recited the rosary of sublime concupiscences in my ear. "The invisible kingdom of the Buddha opened before my mind, his halo surrounded me for an instant. But among the diamond studded rays of the fluidic wheels, through the gold flames which scintillated in my brain, in the lava of rubies flowing within my breast, at the very peak of the sapphire dais over my head, a tiny light appeared -as fresh as a dewdrop, as soft as a breeze wafting through a budding orchard. And all I could answer was: 'The Lord Buddha has said -"All is illusion." You cannot destroy one illusion by creating others. Permit me, oh venerable wise men, to first annihilate within myself the radical illusion. Only then will Truth be able to descend; only then I might be able to answer you; then shall we altogether serve all the Buddhas and their father the Inconceivable.' At these words, the vanquished Nomekhans retired.

"My sufferings were over. A few days later a man arrived with a caravan of Chinese merchants. By the way, I think you have already met this person," Andreas added in parenthesis. "They found out that my health required a more clement climate and they suggested my going down with him to India. I accepted. What enchantment this trip through silent valleys, in the shade of pine, helm-oak and birch trees, proved to be. Once in a while we came across a little brown bear, a deer and monkeys; a gray eagle followed us, soaring overhead. Flowers similar to those found in European mountains, ranunculas, syringas, clematis and anemones grew more profusely as we advanced toward the fertile hills of High Nepal. In the Saran we finally took a train which crossed the Behar, the Bardwan and Madhupur toward the Ganges and Calcutta. During these three months, many living lessons were taught me by this mysterious companion whom I had never expected to see again on this earth...."

Andréas stopped. The sun was quite hot and he chose a shady spot on the reverse side of a ditch and invited me to sleep for a couple of hours. Later we went down to his friend's farm, which we could see for quite a distance from the crest where we were. Our host was a tall elderly peasant with sideburns and gold rings in his ears. He took us through his stables and mews, then after lunch made us tour his vast fields of produce. He and Andreas spent a half hour conferring alone, then we left.

Hardly were we back on the road when Andreas asked me: "Have you dreamt this morning?"

"Yes," I answered, "but they were memories of yesterday -farm, ploughing, rain...."

"Ah!" Then he asked, "If material life influences our dreams, why should not our dreams influence life too?"

"What you suggest is ingenious; what obscure science must oneiromancy be!"

"That's more or less our fault. We first weave a net over our eyes and then we complain we cannot see."

"All right," I cried out with all the ardor of my dearest hopes and enthusiastic desires, "make it possible for me to see!" "Oh, Doctor," he exclaimed kindly with a reproachful air, "whom do you take me for? You know that I am ignorant, powerless, incapable. When I was still young I thought there were things still permissible to me; but now, every day, each minute I find out that I am nothing."

He stopped. His muteness was filled with things incomprehensible to reasoning, but to which my heart listened. I began analyzing my sensations with clear thinking; my legs were joyfully scouring the road under the shady apple trees; my lungs delightfully absorbed the cool wind of sunset; a magnetic force quivered within my muscles and in my bones; my head remained calm since I was able at this moment to enumerate the logical motives which might have explained to me Andreas' conduct. But in my very depths, far from the usual sojourn of my will, there was another Me, not an unknown, but one little known, who raised itself and replied to Andreas with the mouth of the first me, the daily, usual me: "Yet, there are men who know, men who can. There is a man ... perhaps far away ... maybe close by -the one you were speaking about!" I said, thinking of the traveling companion he had alluded to that morning. I could not help associating that man with the one who had presided at Desiderius' funeral, and with the passerby I had met upon my first visit to Andreas.

"I don't know if I should," murmured Andreas, shaking his head. "If I show you the Light that I have seen, you will also want to take a share of it. Everything has been placed upon the road that leads to it, to keep the stroller away. Inadequate paving-stones, dust, steep inclines! There are ditches; no shade, intersections where one risks being run over; dark passages where thugs lay in wait at night...." (His voice suddenly vibrated like the string of a cello.) "And when your feet are bloody and you are bathed in sweat or frozen by the wind, when your knees are torn and your belly empty, still you must go on in spite of all!" he shouted under his breath with a terrific concentration of energy within his powerful frame.

That man, at times, would stir your heart just as a lion shakes his prey before carrying it away. I felt awed before the unknown of which he seemed to be the guardian. And as usual I reiterated then and there the most puerile protestations of courage, of perseverance and all sorts of other things that crossed my mind.

XXIV THE TIGER

For the sake of clarity in the narration, I must refer here to a tale that Andreas told me many months later, regarding one of his trips to Siam. I shall tell it as verbatim as my memory permits.

"You already know," he said one evening, "that a long time ago I was wandering through the Northern basin of the Salouen. The legends circulating about these unknown lands had fixed my choice. The mountains, the interminable forests, unchartered water ways, an exuberant flora and fauna, and the tiger hunts added up to a bevy of irresistible attractions.

"As soon as I was free from schools and family jurisdiction, I rushed to visit India. My eyes filled with the wonders of a thousand glorious sights, I went to Rangoon for a rest and also to prepare for a less hasty voyage through the Laos and the Schan. Wanting to penetrate the soul of these people, I decided to use a stratagem which my current skepticism seemed to me to be legitimate.

"I had noticed the extreme courtesy extended by the Oriental toward the Europeans. Only it seemed to be forced, dictated by other sentiments than sheer kindness or fear. I felt it to be inspired by a feeling of definite superiority over us. But what did this superiority consist of? Even to the superficial observer, it is clear that India and its neighboring countries are the proper domain of all kinds of priests. These people are deeply religious. The layman might laugh at their sacerdotal practices, but deep within he venerates them and his fears remain intact. I thought it would be a clever move to become a Buddhist. I already spoke Hindustani; I began studying Pali in order to be able to decipher the words of the Sublime in the texts. I accustomed myself to walk barefoot, to lower my gaze and to restrain my demeanor; I got rid of my explorer's gear.

"Having misgivings regarding the rapidity with which news travels by word of mouth among these people whom toil does not completely absorb, I pretended to go aboard a ship ready to sail, and with the help of a friendly accomplice, I hastily changed costumes in his cabin, then went ashore transformed into a mendicant monk. So radical a change in my habits and regime determined an equivalent transformation in my mentality. I became a nobody, a nonentity, owning nothing but a robe, a bowl and a stick. In a few days I had even forgotten the boulevardier that I had been. I felt reborn in physical vigor and cerebral lucidity. I lost track of days, weeks and months -I was just living -that's all.

"I had believed the Siamese bonzes to be indolent, unoccupied and lazy. Do not our orientalist portray them as limited, as knowing nothing but a few ritual precepts and aware of but a few common philosophical meeting-grounds? I was quickly undeceived after having spent a few days in a distant convent where I had pleaded to be accepted. Each novice is bound to a "Perfect one" for at least one year. The one to whom I was entrusted was an elderly man, sympathetic and calm. Contrary to the "Erring" ones who have an absorbed look, this priest was affable and had a perpetual smile. Rather heavy set, shorn head, piercing eyes -in short, the ecclesiastical countenance one meets under all latitudes. He reminded me of those wise and vigorous Franciscan or Benedictine provincial monks one finds in Italy and

whose silent but always active intelligence is the most effective factor of Catholic perennality.

"Such was the one I was to call 'Monsignor,' whose feet I washed three times a day, and whom I served.

"The first weeks were delightful. Rising before dawn in order to sweep the courtyard and straighten things out while all were still in their cells, I youthfully enjoyed the fresh air, the air scented by the adjoining forests, the silence and the lovely sky. I remained under the spell of this matutinal joy all day long; and the reading in the evening found me in the same quietude.

"However, I had not forgotten the purpose of my trip. An occasion presented itself for me to achieve it. France at this time was preparing its conquest of Tonkin (Indo-China). These hostilities had caused a rippling unrest in all these mountainous lands where the river Claire and the Songka (Red River) originate; a fact unknown to our diplomats. I never found out what the reasons were for such extraordinary alarm among these distant tribes.

"The fact remains that my Birman Buddhists were in constant contact with monasteries and far away hermitages in the Lolos territory. There were buildings to be erected and other works which they adjudged my physical strength to be able to handle. Upon my departure, my teacher gave me a little sermon, admitting in rather discreet terms of mixed eulogy and counseling, that he doubted the sincerity of my religious convictions. Being surprised by his penetrating observations, I protested of my fervor."

"Fine, my son,' he said, lowering his eyes, and his face serene. 'Then why are you collecting poison?'

"I was stupefied because he was telling the truth. I had secretly fabricated an air-cane, collected long thorns and I was on the lookout for the venom of the terrible little gray vipers whose bite kills in less than a minute. I needed these for my future explorations as arms against wild beasts. I had not told anyone of my preparations. I thought I had been spied upon so I denied everything. But my venerable Teacher answered: 'My son, a lie is a suicide. A tiger cannot harm him who has vanquished anger. You still must live in the state of Illusion before being aware of the Permanent. So, go forth in your Mountains, where destiny calls you. There you will learn how he who frees himself from the twelve entanglements finally penetrates the thoughts of others.'

"Five or six of us left together.

"All travelers' tales resemble one another, so I shall spare you the details of mine. You can well imagine the charm of these long silent days -they surpassed my expectancies; but the nights were less pleasant due to the mosquitoes and venomous beasts. Yet, in our two months travel through jungles, forests, marshes and rocky roads, none of us were stung.

"I shall pass over the weeks spent in building the Vihara. I became impatient. Thoughts and ideas and plans came into my mind. I rejected each in turn. We were on the eastern shore of the Black River. Consequently all I had to do was to follow one of the numerous brooks which descended the mountain in order to reach the heart of Tonkin in a few weeks time. We had established camp on a grassy plateau nestling between forests; the air was aromatic and electrified. Also according to Scriptures, our superior had ordered us to follow a severe regime. I alone was permitted the right to go out in search of roots and fruits which were our only food. I felt calm, detached, a bit somnolent, conquered by the strong hold of this

luxuriant nature and the collective magnetism that these powerful, masterly men had over me.

"One morning, the noise I made by jumping over a felled tree in the forest awakened one of these terrible gray vipers that I was searching for. She raised herself faster than lightning -my eyes met her fixed and coldly cruel ones, then she escaped as fast as a cracking whip -but the hunter in me came back to life -I made one leap and was lucky enough to break her neck. I pulled her fangs out and saved the venom in the hollow of a stone. I decided to leave at sunset.

"There was no moon that night. I hid my beggar's bowl and my poisoned arrows beneath my yellow robe and started forth. It was a rather reckless venture. I had nothing to worry about from those I left behind, but everything to fear from the country I was to cross which was infested by ferocious beasts. The vertiginous slopes of these mountains are an inextricable bedlam of high grasses, of thorny shrubbery and rocks where tigers have their lair. I began hearing them on the second night, so in order to rest and sleep I had to spend the nights rather high up in the trees. As far as reptiles were concerned nothing could be done to escape them; so I put my trust in my good star.

"I found water only on the sixth day. I drank and drank and then followed the brook in the direction I had adjudged to be right according to the stars. A week later that brook became a torrent; then the stream became navigable. I decided to make use of it. I built myself a sort of raft with bamboo and liana -and sailed along lightheartedly.

"I caught sight of a man only a week later. He seemed to be a tall individual, leading oxen. I wanted to stop but was not able to as I could only propel the raft with a small stern-oar. Twice I had changed my water course -now I was navigating on a river whose current was slower. A few hours after this meeting, I began hearing a terrific roar at the river's bend, as my raft pirouetted over a hole, I heard it much stronger and I knew that I was approaching a rapid. My heart tightened. To guide myself would have necessitated the maneuvers of a native. I knew I was lost if the cascade was ever so high and with rocks in the vicinity. There was nothing I could do. All of a sudden the river became encased between rock-walls -the noise deafening. I felt myself carried like a leaf among the foamy backwaters. I felt myself being pitched out, confused, falling, and drowning. Instinct impelled my coming up to the surface, then I found myself bruised and stranded on a sandy bank where I lost consciousness.

"A sharp pain awakened me. Something was tearing into my back -while a heavy weight was crushing me - a putrefying odor suffocated me. As I had fallen face down I could not move. I knew a tiger was on my back. He was not in a hurry to carry me away -his grating tongue was licking the blood flowing from my shoulder. Suddenly coming to, I understood with the lucidity of despair how I would have to get the small arrows out of my robe - it was a wonder I had not been pierced by them - but the animal would kill me in his death spasms! No matter, I had to make the try. With infinite care, I finally bent my elbow ready to grasp the arrow. I was ready to turn a little to enable me to direct the aim, when the animal suddenly let out a terrible bellow and with all his weight and might dug his frightful claws into my flesh. I thought I would die of pain. My convulsive movements had turned my body toward the river bed. I could see the horrible muzzle of the beast over my head. Looking straight ahead at something, he was not concerned with me.

"I looked around and saw a tall man coming quietly toward us. Acute pain had brought me back to normal. I was not even feeling the powerful claws gripping deeper bloody furrows into my muscles. I was observing the approaching man. Dressed in a yellowish-red material, his legs and right torso were naked and displayed an admirable perfection of lines and muscles. Broad-chested, wide shouldered, his aristocratic bearing, his head held high -the sum total of grandeur proclaimed an unusual power, both physical as well as moral. Either he was a European or a Brahman of pure caste whose skin is as light as that of a Provençal. In spite of my dizziness, I was admiring the harmonious movements of that man. I was surprised that he wore a beard. I wanted to be able to analyze his face, but I was so worn out that although I stared at his eyes, all I could see was a purplish haze through which shone the brilliancy of his gaze.

"The tiger roared. I could hear his powerful tail whipping the earth, like the flail on the hardened threshing-floor. The man was only a few feet away. The tiger's claws dug in deeper as if he were going to spring. I felt his paws tremble. He let out a shriek. The man was close by, putting his hand out on the beast's forehead. The terrible muscles relaxed, and his crushing weight was lifted from me. The ferocious beast was leaving, his ears low, legs bent, following my saviour. Reaching the thicket, I heard the man saying to the tiger in French: "I shall not punish you - go, but never attack a man again." The beast licked the naked feet of the unusual tamer and disappeared in the forest.

"This man helped me up, washed my wounds, made a dressing of healing herbs and a bandage with lianas. Then having prepared a bed for me in the adjoining rocks, he went in search of fruits for our meal. After I had rested and eaten,' he consented to speak. You guess who it was...." concluded Andreas, with a smile.

XXV PRAYER

I want to take up the thread of my story relating our walk from where I left off. Although these souvenirs occasionally partake of a romantic touch, I hope that one will understand the intensity of my interest in Andreas' revelations. Though one may remember the numerous disappointments I had met with during my search after a true master, I still had retained the enthusiasms of my youth and the obstinate certainty of success. Those who have nourished the same passions for a whole lifetime will understand me.

Andréas, having acquiesced to my demand, again became taciturn. He offered me tobacco, lit his pipe, left me on the side of the road as he paced back and forth a good fifteen minutes, alone.

When he rejoined me, I kept silent, not knowing how to reopen the conversation. It was he who did.

"Yes, Doctor, believe me. The tests spoken of by Iamblicus, such as the well of Raguel into which Moses descended; the Olympic lairs, the Mysteries of the Isle of Sein, and of Samothrace; the subterranean retreats of the Bramatcharia where all the gods of the Underworld and the dragons which prevent the Yellow race from ascending the tower of the 'Invariable Center Point' of the universe and where even the coprophagus and sodomite tyrants steeped in blood, which some perverted men adore, meet; neither sojourn in any of these places, nor the presence of any of these beings demands the energy output needed for the continuous, simple, daily effort toward the Light of Lights. In this ascent, there are moments where none, you understand...!" and his voice roared... "None would have sufficient strength to even lift an eyelid were it not for an angel having been sent to us... Ah, Doctor! That is what teaches us the value of prayer!"

I felt disconcerted by these words. I had always considered the ancient Mysteries as the summum of human glory for whose conquest one needed an all-powerful will. So, my books had failed me. Was there something else?

"What initiation are you talking about? What prayer?" I asked.

He stopped and looked at me intensely, up and down. He answered:

"I assure you that I have forgotten all initiations. But I understand you. You think: Why should I pray since the Primary Cause acts with justice, kindness and perfection? Prayer would then be childish, it would prove our hearts to be blind or denote mere tenacious selfishness. According to you, it would be like a child crying for his toy, or pride which considers itself important enough for the universe to grant its wishes -or like a human being who cannot conceive that his desires should not be granted!

"Oh, you wise man!" and his friendly hand weighed heavily on my shoulder. "Have you not seen a babe suckling his mother? Or a woman's head resting on her spouse's shoulder? Does not the buried stone seek the light? Does not the plant pierce a wall in search of light? Animals at least once a day salute the sun. The ocean at regular intervals rises with the tides which selenic waves revivify. People seek happiness; planets, also, when inclining their poles. Even your intelligence has become vast because it asked for it. Does it mean that each of these beings asks as he should? No. All that was created is imperfect, but it recognizes its powerlessness and feels that there is a higher sphere.

"If perfection and idealism did not exist, would Providence have had the cruel courage of sowing its seeds into our very depths? Man's path is similar to the path of all the other beings; let him in all simplicity follow the spontaneous, palpitating meaning of life within himself, then he will not be able to err."

I remained a long time in the darkness, as I mulled over his words. They seemed to be precious and definite. I had never heard any thoughts so clearly defined. My emotion prevented my being able to reason them through. All I could do was to etch these words into my memory.

XXVI THE PHAP

Andréas went on: "The man you want to speak to me about, Doctor, is the same one whom you saw at the funeral of Desiderius. In Europe he is known as Theophane. I met him for the third time in Lhasa where I had stopped upon my return from Siam, after a long circuit via China, Mongolia and Kiachta.

"I shall always remember those trips with pleasure; the trains racing through jungles and steppes -seeing the wild beasts silhouetted in high flora. Once in a while seeing the dark skull of an anachorete with bloodshot eyes; meeting occasional fellow travelers, an Englishman or an American dressed in khaki, a turbaned native gentleman in a white suit, mobs of saintly men of all sects and creeds; seeing the chaos of the large thoroughfares, of ports and of caravanserais. Feeling the calm repose at the beaches; the majesty of the eternal snows which seem suspended overhead; and the grandiose melancholy of grass or sand deserts. That is how I learned how to find and appreciate beauty everywhere and in everything. I feel as much poetry emanating from a six-story apartment house of the working classes as from the haughty Himalayas.

"Weary of the arid studies of occult physics, I had left the Brahmans from the Dekkan, hoping that I might penetrate deeper into the Hindu soul by becoming initiated into their cultural life. I arrived in Benares with all the necessary letters of introductions so that the contempt evinced by the Orientals toward us might become mere caution. The politeness which they tender the 'Beef-eaters,' as they call us, has a sheer ironical savour to those who know them well. Neither our scientists nor our officials can gain the confidence of an Oriental in a matter of months, yet neither the philologists nor the philosophers they made fun of, will ever acknowledge it, because each race with their hands over their hearts considers itself superior to the other.

"First I cantoned myself in the study of natural Sciences but could not find any satisfactory conclusions to my tests. I blamed myself, thinking that both my powers of observation and of reflection were not sufficiently developed to extract the substance of the teachings which the Brahmans claimed to be contained therein. It was simply that I did not have sufficient documentation. So, I headed toward Java -thence to the plains and back to the mountains.

"It was at the end of my second stay in the Himalayas that I underwent the experiences which I related to you the other day -to which Theophane gave a conclusion at his fourth visit. I had received the Lamaic ordination. As I knew the Wou-Wang characters and that I could write Tibetan rather well, I immediately received a good post in the hierarchy of the Lamasery, the 'Peroun-Mabrou.'

This palace or rather this city had fifteen thousand inhabitants. It is for the protection of the Dalai-Lama, though he remains invisible most of the time. My functions were to make the calculations each day for the ceremonies to be held at a particular temple -because everything there is regulated by astrology -and I assure you this etiquette is quite complicated.

"It was at this epoch that one morning I saw Théophane again. His face was the same as it was twenty years ago, but his expression had changed, although all the

lines of his body and his movements had retained the same superhuman power. A caravan, escorting an Annamite Phap to the city, overtook me on the road that I was traveling that day.

"Théophane saw me and came toward me with a smile. Hardly had I grasped his proffered hand when an unexplainable feeling overwhelmed me. I felt as if plunged into a bath of light, kindness and of infinite strength. From my heart to my fingertips all the cells of my body were tingling with the same sensation of freedom as if I had come out of a dungeon into the rarified air which wafts over the summits at sunrise.

"How are you and how is Stella?" he asked me."

Under the spell of these memories Andreas stopped, smiling inwardly, then he continued:

"I wanted to tell him of the work of my mature years, but he told me, 'You will soon hear from me,' and he strode forth with the magnificent glance you will someday know, I hope. His escort which had remained aside, went on. I stood there, watching this athletic silhouette climbing the incline, until the bend of the road hid him from view. I came to from the state of ecstasy into which his sudden apparition had thrown me. Such was our third encounter."

"And yet," I interpolated, "you must have seen great things and witnessed terrible ones also among all those Oriental priests?"

I did not hear the answer. I too became absorbed. The profound depths into which I had been wandering for a long time seemed to become illumined. No irremediable thing could happen to me. Even were I in a maze -I would find the issue; if deceptions awaited me, they would seem less important since I had anticipated them. What about if this were to be the end of my search! I had just reached these conclusions when a streetcar bell announced the end of the line. We said goodnight and headed for home.

XVII AVIATION

One evening at Andréas' house we were discussing the extraordinary progress that the science of aviation had achieved; all the friends present were chanting praises for the ingenuity, daring, and cleverness of the fliers. Our host did not seem to share our enthusiasm and someone mentioned it to him.

"But of course, it's wonderful," he protested. "And since public opinion is distracted by it, one is less concerned with the indispensable but bothersome problems of the day."

One among us called attention to the development of civilization, to the national defense, to the culture of energy and to the spirit behind business ventures that a people needs to maintain its place as a first-rate nation.

"Oh yes," answered Andréas. "These are fine ideas, but will they be fulfilled? Will all inventions benefit humanity? You know as well as I that for nations as well as for individuals, it is the help one extends to one's fellow men that counts. These aviators are courageous, of course! But had they not received help, in spite of all their courage, their perseverance, their selflessness and science, they could not have attained the success that they have. Man does not realize how much help he receives in everything he puts his hand to!"

"So! If Heaven has helped aviation, it must be an excellent discovery on all points?" "Heaven?" answered Andreas shaking his head. "Yes and no! Nothing happens save through Heaven's pleasure of course. But Heaven permits a lot of things which are really nothing but curiosities, subject to cupidity or caprice. Heaven does not oppose the people who try to improve their situation; but that is not its precepts - since it orders the contrary!"

"In that case," the student retorted, "if a country does not go forward, others go beyond it, oppress it and finally conquer it."

"Yes, that is right," agreed Andréas. "I do not mean to say that a country should fall asleep in quiet indolence. Nature would not permit it anyway. See what happened to the Boers...."

"Were the English right?" quickly asked an old salesman.

"Of course not. I did not say that. The Boers were wrong in not shaking themselves out of their patriarchal torpor, but Europe was at fault for not helping them."

"What must a people do?" asked the student.

"The same as any individual. One must work, be aware of all new things; maintain a standing and not fear either spending its funds to help others, even other nations when necessary."

"Hasn't France done that?" "Often of course. It is not haphazardly that France has been called the older sister among nations, and I am not chauvinistic when I mention that."

"Oh!" exclaimed the student. "You should hear what the Americans, the English and the Germans think of their nations! We are quite modest by comparison."

Andreas gestured equivocally ... the student stopped talking. Then I asked: "So, what about aviation?"

"What do you want to know?" our teacher queried.

"Tell us a few facts, please."

Andreas seemed to collect his thoughts while his face took on an abstract expression. Having re-seated himself, he went on:

"All comes to man by means of *clichés*, whether it is their destiny to come down here on earth, or whether it is man's desire which attracts them. Very few among us are strong enough to cause a cliché to detour from its path. The *clichés* constitute a complete universal world of their own. They are the ensemble of God's designs, of the work He has prepared for all creatures as well as for ours. There are cosmic *clichés*; creation is the greatest. There are planetary *clichés*, continental, racial, national and individual ones. There are meteorological, astronomical, religious, scientific and political *cliches*. A disease, a marriage, a catastrophe, a book, a misfortune, a birth, a death are all *cliches*. A battle, a murder, a volcanic eruption, a sweepstakes; algebra, a powerful discourse, this evening's meeting, for instance, are all *clichés*. Even objects such as: a cannon, a ship, a cathedral; political institutions, a tribunal, a law, a city, a mountain, a machine, even automobiles are all *clichés*. An airplane is the materialization of a *cliché*."

"This is neo-platonic illuminism," said a Doctor of Literature.

"Do you think, Monsieur, that Plotin, Porphyry and others have invented these things of whole cloth? Don't you know that they merely reproduced intellectual entities?" And without waiting for an answer, Andréas gestured vivaciously.

"No, don't you see that man is nothing but a more or less ingenious copyist and that the brain is but a more or less sensitive photographic instrument."

"What about the will?" replied the university student.

"It merely opens or closes the obturator," retorted Andréas. "But," said he saluting, "there are exceptions. Strong people, very intelligent people can do a lot with the will, while we poor mortals are led like a herd. I always refer to the average man. Now, let us say that a particular man is anxious to find something new; another one wants to earn a lot of money, or a third wants easier living conditions while a fourth has another motive. Whether these men seek on their own or whether God's will or that the natural sequence of circumstances places a certain cliché on their path, the same phenomena will occur. If that man refuses the cliché, it will go away, then come back. If he refuses it the second time, the cliché returns a third time, but if that man refuses it again it leaves definitively.

"However, if the man only accepts it at the second offer, he will have more difficulties than if he had accepted it the first time.

"If he accepts the cliché the third time, the invention will cost him a lot of worries. When I use the word man here, it is not what is referred to as an entity by psychologists; I refer to and mean the spirit of man, his veritable self, that part of him which is higher than his conscience.

"If that self becomes interested in the cliché, the latter stops and lingers. These two beings remain face to face a rather long time, they reciprocally interpenetrate; the human spirit magnetizes the cliché, so to speak, and from it builds a vitalized image with more or less power. When this work of spiritual assimilation, of digestion, is ended, the modified cliché leaves to continue on its road. Then the image ascends beyond the brain, I mean beyond the mental state, and when that latter perceives it, all of a sudden an idea is born into that man's mind. He does not know where it comes from, either he believes it to be his brain child or rather the result of his research. It doesn't matter. Nature has no sense of ownership nor a copyrighter's pride. Once this first intuition, is perceived by the conscious, that which we ordinarily term the will can either grab that light or not. If not, then the image floats around the man a bit longer and if he definitely does not bother with it, it leaves in search of a more hospitable, more curious and more receptive brain who may welcome it. If the will accepts the intuition then the

worries, the concern, the tribulation and the multi-tests of an inventor begin ...but final success erases all that from his mind."

After a moment of silence, the philosopher said, "I don't ask anything else but to believe you, although it seems to me to be but a recall of mythological legends. How can this mysterious image of the unconscious pass into the conscious?"

"I shall explain that to you," answered Andréas, "as soon as you will have shown me in word or numbers, how the zero becomes one, how physical sensations produce a perception of an idea. We are lodged in an enclosure, better say, within four walls. To study the various geometries at 'N' dimensions is a ruse, not a solution. Instinct and intuition perceive the non-self by a sort of contact, as if face-to-face. But that does not satisfy intelligence which wants to know. So it starts to dissect, to cut, to analyze and distill by abstractions. When intelligence is healthy, it reaches the right solution, but that is not often the case, and the scientific system does not correspond to reality anymore."

"So, I was right when I refused to study," declared a healthy young man with a willful face, who had kept quiet till then.

"No, you were wrong," answered Andréas. "On the contrary, one must study and use one's reason. Why would God have given it to us otherwise? But let us always remember that we know nothing. To ponder, to deduct, to probe, to sketch draughts and equations, all of these are useful. But let us leave them where they belong. For instance, whoever wants to build an airplane has first received his idea from the cliché; he then tries to put his idea across on paper by using his knowledge of the laws of physics. In order to build a bicycle, one needs a knowledge of arithmetic, geometry and mechanics; but to ride a bicycle is mere instinct. Those who possess a sense of equilibrium learn faster, even though they do not make any calculations on the changes of the centers of gravity. They hardly reason; only practice plus experience is of any help. The same thing goes for the automobile, swimming, and mere walking. No one asked us for equations when we began to walk as babies. You must admit that intellectual search is always subjugated to instinct or to an intuitive perception."

"Yes, but the perception in turn depends upon what? From the *cliché*? And what rules the *cliché*?" the young man suddenly asked. "The *clichés* are living beings," answered Andréas. "For instance, the man with the sickle is a *cliché* of death for the ear of corn that it mows down. *Clichés* have their own existence, their personal destiny. To remain in the domain of inventions; all the machines that man has invented are metal and wood copies of some particular organs or groups of animal-like organs. The heart is an in-breathing or force-pump; the nervous system is a telegraph, and so on. On earth, for instance, between one deluge and the next, the psychic tensions become a machine thirty to sixty centuries later, and much later, that objective machine becomes in turn a physiological organ for man. As an example, during the last platonic year, the Atlanteans were very much concerned with thought transference. Their efforts finally brought into the earth's fluidic atmosphere, forces which begot the wireless, and maybe after one or two subsequent deluges, there will be men who possess a natural telepathic system."

"What imagination!" called out the philosopher.

"Isn't that true, Monsieur," replied Andréas with a kind expression. "The willpower of many, many men exerted for a long time finally draws what it wants, it lives and it evokes life. That which transmits thoughts are not fluids; basically they are really beings. About one hundred years ago, a planet came near us. Thereon lived animals with many legs, with protruding eyes and a carapace similar to gigantic coleopters; it is they which constituted the automobile's *cliché*. For the past fifty

years, in an unexplored region of the world, there have existed some winged animals; it is they, who without seeking for it, by the mere fact of their presence, have helped the solution of the problem of 'heavier than air!'"

"If this be so," asked the adjuster, his eyes aglow with interest, "could we not call these creatures closer to us, make them propagate and do something about utilizing them?"

"No, that is impossible," answered Andréas. "One could do it, but one must not. When I say that one could, I mean only a powerful and courageous man could, but I know of no one capable of such an undertaking. You understood, of course, if I made myself clear, that the world of *clichés* is the key to Universal life. The Father only loans it to those wise enough never to use it for evil, and one must have undergone terrible suffering, believe me, before being capable of being that wise. These people must have offered themselves as sacrifice, have learned forgiveness and have worked for centuries and centuries. We shall all receive that key some day, I promise you; but let us begin the work, now. Don't you all agree?" he added, facing all of us.

Then Andreas turned toward the Doctor of Literature.

"You see, Monsieur, that all of these flights of imagination result in simple and common ethics in the end."

"Yes, let's go to work," concluded the old employee. "Yet it seems to me that a cliché, after having been in close contact with human spirits, must in turn become a different cliché than when it came?"

"That is true," answered Andreas. "We do influence the *clichés*; it is an unconscious but nevertheless real influence. Just help your fellow being and you will be accomplishing your duty in full."

XXVIII AT COURT

The following week, I went back to Menilmontant. Andréas was at work. On his workbench was fixed the diamond-pointed chisel of an engraver. With a burine in hand he was etching and perfecting the scroll-patterns of a little gong, in the spiral designs of which hieratic symbols were to be found.

"This is ancient Chinese writing," he told me smilingly. "The gentlemen who have their cards engraved by Leroux, would be quite at odds to have to decipher these."

I then saw Stella who was accompanying a well-dressed, large and heavy-set man to the door, with her usual exquisite manners. I was certain that I had met him at official dinners, but she did not introduce us.

On finding out that Andréas was not in too much of a hurry, I asked him for the rest of the unfinished story, which he had more or less promised me. He acquiesced graciously. Having taken on his paternal attitude, one would never have thought him to be the same man who could read inside one's heart, who could cure a disease or restore a man's courage.

"You are aware, of course, from what you know of oriental politics that there are many reasons which prevent my revealing to you either the names of the people or of the countries I visited during my last diplomatic mission. It is not that I do not trust you, but all this is sewn up in secrets I cannot reveal, being that they are not mine."

"Of course, I understand," I answered. "You have accepted me with open arms and with such friendliness that I cannot be hurt at the partial reserve you feel necessary to maintain toward me."

"Ah!" He addressed his wife and stopped etching. "How sad were those days which I spent successively in the ancient Orient and modern Western worlds when I knew you to be so close to me, darling. You, of course, knew that I was nearby, and yet not once could I break the formal chains of the pomp surrounding me - the very pomp envied by the thousands of visitors who had rushed from afar to see the mysterious ambassador from mysterious mountains. I even recognized many a face among the diplomats and bedizened general staff; yet not one of them ever evinced more than mere curiosity toward me. I must have changed a lot. Even you, Stella, had not love given you its clairvoyance, would not have recognized in this heavysset man whom the snows, the sun and the winds had wrinkled and hardened the features and eyes - the one they used to call 'The handsome Andreas!'" and he laughed softly.

His wife knelt and began kissing his long muscular hands. He raised her without any difficulty and continued his story while holding her close to him. These effusions, which in any other middle-aged couple might have seemed ridiculous, due to the serenity and nobility of their attitude and an intangible something, became ennobled. On the contrary, they gave birth to the pure emotion one feels before a superhuman spectacle. Andreas then went on:

"So, one night as I was present at one of these celebrations, seemingly as impassible as I should be, my thoughts were going toward you, toward your

beloved self -and to think that only fifty hours of railroad-travel separated us! While I sought the means of escaping from the constant shadow of my would-be bodyguards for a few days - I saw, seated by the monarch who was receiving me, the august face of Theophane. My bones trembled; I could hardly contain myself and keep the reserve one needs to salute and to respond to official discourses. One of the King's relatives introduced Theophane to me under an assumed name - he, the one in whom I had placed all my trust -yet to all of those present, he was a noble of lesser degree than the High Tibetan dignitary I was supposed to be.

"We exchanged a few phrases in English. He told me that he had traveled far and wide in the Orient and had become very interested in the wisdom of my pseudo-compatriots. I thanked him in the name of one and all and we took our seats at the royal table. In my false status of Grand Lama, I was seated at the left hand of the King, while across from me Theophane was at the Queen's right. Though I held my role - a strange role I must admit - facing the difficulties deriving therefrom by forgetting them, really, proof was given me that there exists a divine Principle which leads man closer and closer to Him; yet given with such tender solicitude as if our own conduct were in any way able to influence Its essential immobility. Theophane was looking at me. From his eyes I felt such a force emanating -a peculiar fluidic atmosphere which clarified my own confused ideas, which coordinated my scattered energies and yet opened my mind to larger and wider horizons.

"Don't think, Doctor, that there was any kind of magnetic fascination in this kind of inner ecstasy. My training had long ago cleansed me of any such passivity. No one's eye or light could have or could now make me lower my eyes. In Theophane there is something which escapes all senses, all reasoning and all analysis. He had that something which I cannot explain," Andreas said as he glanced at me sideways. "I think that I have gone through all the hells and all the paradises which the ancient sages have been able to discover since the last two or three deluges. Yet the aspect of no one, of no being, nor do the emanations of any one of them resemble the shining countenance or equal the emanations from him, who, as I already told you, would once again save me from inevitable death.

"Never have I seen Theophane employ the subterfuges that the ordinary cosmopolitan politicians make use of so advantageously. His walk, his posture, his voice, his eyes and gestures were of extreme mobility. One moment -he seemed clothed as an inspired orator, the next, he became a prosaic father listening to the tales of his grandchildren. Another moment we saw the irresistible smile of a god, or we bore the acuity of his eyes which looked through us. Among friends his voice becomes firm, clear, like a sounding brass; the next moment when among would-be scientists, he seems to hesitate and acquiesces politely. On the side of the road, he will console with compassion a poverty stricken woman with a drink-sodden husband; while in the palace he will coldly predict the awful tests that the ruler is to face. He can resist all fatigues, withstand insomnia and the worries of insoluble problems and yet he complains of a headache. He resurrects the dead, he masters the sea, the earth and the invisible kingdom and yet he repeats that he knows nothing and cannot do anything. Though he admits he never read a book, he knows in which pagoda a certain manuscript is to be found and in what corner of a mountain grows a certain rare plant. He counsels the farmer, the soldier, the diplomat, the priest, the sailor, the librarian, the artist and the erudite. To one he shows where his technical knowledge is at fault, to another he indicates how weak

his senses are, his lack of taste, or his lack of willpower. Never ostentatious -yet -I never saw anyone taking any familiarities with him. Without flattery, he gives each person the honors due to his position. All the noted ones on earth were honored by his friendship. In short, he was an enigma, who let himself be solved only at times and by a chosen few Oedipus solvers."

While Stella was preparing lunch, we pursued our talk and I asked him, "You of course know what the legend regarding the Rose Croix is? If I have well understood, man's final point of evolution will be the same no matter by what name it is called. Whether that perfect one is called a true Rosicrucian, an adept, a friend of God, a saint, or a reintegrated one?"

"Naturally," answered Andreas. "Scientists -(and by that he meant the sectarians of occultism) -scientists use identical terms which designate many different states and also use different terms for the same state of being. The Rose-Croix is one thing; sanctity is another; the friend of God has reached quite a characteristic development; the adept another and so forth. But at the *limit* all becomes One, before being differentiated anew in Heaven according to God's will. But that which I call the *limit*, the end, is so far, so far away, that Gautama himself did not tread one hundredth of the path that leads to it."

"In that case, how can I, how can anyone reach the state where you are, and where Theophane is?"

"Oh but, Doctor," quickly protested Andreas. "Don't think that I know anything more than another. I cannot do anything."

"Please permit my telling you that you are not logical. It is self-evident that you know and are able to achieve an infinity of things I cannot even attempt."

"I repeat, Doctor, that I am no higher than anyone else. I am even smaller than many. And your question, I would say, is rather narrow, because how can you tell whether you have the wherewithal to reach a certain state rather than another?"

"That's true," I admitted, "but then what could I ask for?"

Here Andreas escaped my query by suddenly saying in the same voice he used for profound exchanges, "Excuse me, Doctor, but I must go down in the cellar to draw some wine."

It was to this constant interchange of the common necessities of life with the sublime of spiritual life, succeeding each other without shock, as I recall his simplicity to be so natural that I attribute the peculiar charm he exerted over me, and that he still holds a fascination over me. I consider this simplicity to be the most flagrant proof of true greatness.

When he came up again, his arms laden with bottles, he stopped before me and declared with violence: "Doctor, I only know one thing. We must ask to do God's will, do our utmost, even more than that, and not worry about the rest."

XXIX TOWARD CHRISTIC INITIATION

He went to the kitchen to deposit his load, then pumped some water from the well, cooled the wine bottles in wet towels, then came back and invited me to sit down.

Stella was a first rate cook. Professing that one must follow the eating habits of the country having the same climate as the one we live in, she had prepared some hot spicy dishes and some curry, as it was very warm that day. She permitted me to drink only water with the meal and later a very fragrant light brandy which she had made herself. They were both spoiling me as if I were convalescing. And I let them do it, because the cuisine was so good. However my hosts ate very sparingly in any case.

As I complimented Stella, she laughed: "It is Andréas who brought me back these recipes. At first it was he who did all the cooking and I certainly ate some extraordinary dishes. Believe me, it is in northern India that one eats the best; in fact you have just had a sample."

I was not losing track of satisfying my curiosity and once in awhile I asked a leading question:

"What do you call the limit? Is it the Tao of Lao-Tzu? Is it the Parabrahm, the Ain-Soph or the Nirvana?"

"These are mere words. Would you be scandalized if I told you what I think?"

"I shall try to understand you," I replied.

"Well! I believe that the most capacious mind on Earth only reflects the image of an infinitesimal fraction of the Cosmos. I believe that intelligence possesses life, but that it is not Life; that if we cultivate it exclusively, we work on a reflection, while there exists in us a Reality which is the heart."

So! Mysticism, bhakti...I thought.

"That which I call the heart," he continued, looking at me searchingly, "is not the contemplative sentimentality of the cloistered nun; yes, it is that, plus all the sentiments, all loves, hates, joys and pains; all the laughter, tears, melancholies; the flexion of the muscles under strain; it means the emotions of adolescence and all the ambitions of maturity. In short, it is the all-comprehensive life that we must live. Purifying our astral body is merely like taking showers in order to acquire magical powers. It is the act which we must purify, sublimate and unify. Such is the true Imitation of the Word."

"Ah!" I exclaimed. "I understand why Julianus de Campis teaches that he who practices the first book of *the Imitation of Jesus-Christ* is already more than half a Rosicrucian. Up till now I had thought it but a simple religious expression without depth."

"That man was absolutely right," said Andréas.

"So, we must take the words of the Gospel literally and absolutely. If we live right, this 'else' that Heaven promises 'to be added unto you,' includes everything: science, power and transcendent faculties!"

"That's it exactly," Andreas answered, while pushing the tobacco jar toward me, "read the teachings of Jesus with an open mind, with candor and simplicity. Little by little that which seemed insipid will become ambrosial to you. The law is simple, my child, do what is asked of you.... To serve must be your motto, my

child He who serves men will someday be waited upon by angels," he said, while puffing his pipe.

One might be led to believe these were empty phrases. In fact, these words seem cold and empty as I write them now on paper; but when they struck my ears, they were alive and vibrating. They awakened long forgotten memories! How I miss these wonderful discussions at dusk in the picturesque little house, in that quasi-solitude, whose calm was broken only by a child's cry or once in a while by a rare passing vehicle. Now I miss seeing his strong powerful silhouette, his august and rugged face, and Stella busily engaged, quick and gay, with the promise of dawn in her eyes! My melancholic middle age so well-suited to their magnificent autumn! Winter has now come upon me. My souvenirs of them still give me strength, just as their presence once brought me light. It still does sometimes as it renews itself in the silence of the nights.

Breaking the silence I answered, "Master, I must then leave speculations aside, fight against the desire to know, against the ardor of acting according to the esoteric ideal found in books which tell how a Magus or seer works in the serene state of will he has attained."

"Books!" exclaimed Andréas while Stella smiled with indulgence. "Ask her advice. She has read all those pertaining to occidental tradition, the Germans, the English, the Latins and the French. I too have inspected a great many others. May the one who is satisfied to remain there, do so; but for him who wants to fulfill his veritable destiny even at the expense of what may seem to be his noblest aspirations, let that one follow the unique Book, let him accept the abundant Life in which he finds himself and where he shall be permitted to restore order amidst its confusion from time to time."

"Is it really more difficult to simply live than to isolate oneself during nights and days for a whole lifetime, examining arid texts, away from the vanities of the world? Running from the false pleasures which the crowds seek?"

"You shall see, Doctor, if you try," answered Andréas. "The most insignificant action can have a great influence upon your future and upon that of the beings who surround you. Your philosophers have discussed Cromwell's grain of sand, but they never understood that there are many orders of immaterial creatures attached to man. You must have learned something about this in the DE REVOLUTIONIBUS ANIMARUM of Loriah."

"Yes, I read this book in Rosenroth."

"So, everything is important. For instance, marriage which many are trying to tear down today by all sorts of means, has a far reaching repercussion on the couple's future; it was planned by causes just as profound. But we must understand that seeking to know the reason for the past and the future is vain for us. The present is all we need know - to look beyond and below is sheer folly. I do not mean to say that the people who seek are wrong -any search is useful. But you, Doctor, who want to do God's will; I who am ignorant; we must be content to learn listen closely -to learn to forget ourselves always and in every way and in all circumstances for the benefit of others. Love between a man and a woman is but an elementary school of love of souls for souls. When this love is ablaze, lovers can

be separated by the entire zodiac, they still feel one another's presence, and their prayers as a chorus ascend in one leap to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost."

As he had stood up to pronounce this last sentence, I too got up and took my leave.

XXX
THE SPIRITUAL TOWER OF BABEL

Andréas and I had just been to the Louvre to see the new exhibit of a collection of papyrus and we were walking up toward Montmartre. It was raining. The Place de l'Opera and especially the Place du Havre resembled, with their puddles, ditches and temporary fences, a bombarded embankment. Trucks, motorbuses, street cars and taxis assembling their horns, sirens and bells created a frightful bedlam. Bugged down, one was also blinded by the electric lights. A crowd was surging from the darkness into light in their haste to catch the suburban trains. Evidently raging devils were harassing these people, having taken them out of stores, offices or factories only to throw them into other kinds of ovens. Most of these pedestrians were silent; others were ceaselessly prattling unnecessarily and saying gross things in hacked sentences, as if for one and all the tomb were not close by.

"And yet," said Andréas, as if he had read my thoughts, "it is good for them to be here, to run around as they do - they advance that way."

"I was also thinking about another confusion, with which I am more concerned. There are numerous attempts on all sides to conciliate the different spiritual groups, they are seeking the common denominators among the Yoga, the Kabbala, the Gnose, Buddhism, Taoism, Pythagorism, Catholicism, the Hermetics, the Pantheisms and all Humanists -they analyze, they compare...." I said.

"And," interrupted Andréas with a smile, "wanting to erect a monument, all that will be achieved will be a replastered job." "That, being what I fear, I am looking for an indication or a direction."

"Go on, tell me."

"For instance," I went on, "in the past two weeks I have been reading books written by leaders of various neo-spiritualistic schools of Spiritism, of Psychism, of Neo-Catholics, of liberal Protestants, by some who think themselves orthodox Catholics and by others who believe they have reached the adept stage. I naturally believe these various scholars to be earnest and sincere; far be it from me to suspect them of being voluntarily the agents of an occult diplomacy. But, whatever they say, I notice that many are anti-Christian and I would almost dare say anti-Christic, if the word did not have such a medieval flavor."

"You are not far from wrong," answered Andréas.

"For instance, Madame Blavatsky makes use of astronomical concordances to be found in the lives of those who founded religions. That John the Baptist was born at the summer solstice and Christ at the winter solstice; that He was resurrected at the Spring equinox; Dupuis, Ragon and Vaillant and many others had already said so. They had already collected similar analogies regarding Lao-Tzu, Krishna, Buddha, Pythagoras, Plato and others. Parthenogenesis, temptations, suffering, identification with the Absolute, martyrdom: It's all there...."

"And what does that prove?" interrupted Andreas. "Can't you see that it is only a materialist's argument to want to find a spiritual similarity from a material resemblance?"

"Yes, what about the divining sciences?"

"The divining sciences oscillate from the physical to the mental and not to the spiritual. From the fact that the blood, the lymphs and reflexes are the same in a man as in a dog, will you infer therefrom that both have the same intelligence or the same soul?"

"I knew that Christ is unique, that He is different from His predecessors and from His successors in the history of universal Messiahship. I know that in Him, His fluidic body, His astral, if you prefer, His mental body were healthy and holy organisms, as wise and as powerful as those of the highest of adepts, but that His self, His individuality were a special act, a particular act of will of the Absolute. In an ordinary man, the self is a nucleus of composites, it is not a SIMPLE or ordinary principle, it is a complex center in the core of which slumbers the divine Light of the soul."

"In Christ, it is that latter itself, awake, perfect, splendid, which is His Self, His Will. He is truly the Son of God. The other saviours were nothing but men, though I believe many to have been inspired by God at intervals, and I believe that they were able and are able to help their followers if they will follow the simple but indispensable condition which is that they try to practice the fundamental commandment: Charity."

"Yes, I see now what the scholars have written," said Andreas. "They cannot do otherwise. It is better, and less harmful for them, that they follow their present trend of thought to the end."

I did not reply because it was not the first time that I noticed that Andreas was not in a hurry to convert others to his opinions. He went on:

"No, our Friend has not said: 'My Heavenly Father and I -(my incarnated ego) -are one and the same thing!' If His visible being had been the Father, neither men nor the planets could have withstood His dazzling splendour. He said much more simply and to the point: 'I and my Father, we are One' -the same essence and not the same substance."

"Neither did He say: 'My Father, I and you, my disciples initiated to my doctrine, we are one, fused into Unity'; but He said: 'May they be one, as we are one; as you, You are in Me and I am in You, let them be one in Us. Because these disciples from certain and innermost knowledge know that I came from You.'"

I asked: "Christ said: 'My Father is greater than I,' and elsewhere: 'My Father and I are one.'" "There is no contradiction there. It is in you that the contradiction exists, the one you think that you find in it. Sometimes it is the God who speaks, sometimes it is the Man. Everything is not told in the Gospel; anyway it would not be understood. Or rather, everything has been said, but man does not comprehend and it is impossible to explain to him that which he does not yet possess as latent intuition within; he needs time." "It is true," I pursued, "that there is a pedagogy of Revelation. It is true that human intelligence grows; but is there anything else besides just a matter of different initiation between modernism and orthodox dogma? The divinity of Jesus is incomprehensible; it is beyond intelligence; it is a phenomena, a state of being which took place beyond the created and the relative states; while our intellect can only function within the two spheres. There existed within the primitive Church a certain reserve on some dogmas, an initiation, if you want, but it never could have been the teaching of the priests who could have given this light to the neophyte. God alone has the quality and power to make Himself known by those He finds worthy."

"There is a lot of truth in what you state, dear Doctor; but no one, do you understand, no one has ever seen God in esprit so how can one speak of Him authoritatively? It is quite evident that fraternity, the obligation of being virtuous,

to believe in the existence of the Divine and in the immortality of man are accepted by all. But if a school were to reject prayer because it disclaims God, or because it teaches that the Absolute would not change anything just to please us, that school would be wrong. There is a God. Man is small enough not to be ashamed of his pusillanimity. It would be preferable for him never to ask for any material thing for himself, but where is he who has Faith? Besides, though it may shock our human logic, the Absolute does modify His plans and designs if it can please one of His good children. It is not at a loss with new ventures nor to take something new out of its treasure house. You are well aware that Its resources are endless. Prayer is at the other pole from the Radja Yoga exercises; there are many kinds of ecstasies, a great many more than 'Adepts' have ever heard of."

"Consequently," I said, "if Paul of Samosate formally denies the divinity of Christ; and if Arius in 325, and if the Council of Milano in 355, the Council of Smirnum in 357 and the second Council of Ancyre in 358 teach this same thesis; on the other hand, if in 349 the Council of Antioch proclaims His divinity while in 380 the Council of Saragossa insists that the human nature of Jesus was but an illusion; so if the Council of Ephesus admits the two natures, that simply goes to prove that the intellectual Light leaves men who do not maintain the Moral Light within themselves. With a contemporary Catholic philosopher, it is time to quote Saint Augustine's remark to the Manicheans: "Let those who ignore how difficult it is to find truth and escape error, punish you!"

"That is quite a wonderful statement," acquiesced Andr as, nodding his head. "You are too much in a hurry, my friend Doctor.

You have a lot of time before you."

"Yet, we cannot afford to waste any of that time."

"Of course -but not using it that way," he said with his affectionate smile. "Trying to find whether God is personal or impersonal when we do not even understand how a stone has or does not have free will? If Oriental teachings tell us that God is not anthropomorphous, we agree, but if it means that the Absolute is an abstract entity, empty and formless, no; because then it is Nothingness that is being described. We do not even understand what the term 'Relative' means, so how can we speak of its rapport with the Absolute? Let us not ride our high horse; let us humbly accept the fact that we are small, insignificant things; then will the lights descend from this pure incognosible Spirit."

"Am I right to think that the Christian Trinity is not the same as the Trimourti of Krishna, nor the Sat-Chit-Ananda of the Upanishads? Is their Atma the Platonic Logos?"

"No -but that is so unimportant. When you were small, was your mother concerned with your astronomical flights of imagination or with your obedience?"

Then changing from one subject to another, apparently unrelated as he was in the habit of doing, Andreas continued: "The Parthenogenesis of such extraordinary men, of Christ in particular, is not a symbol -it is a fact. It is even a physiological necessity motivated by the excessive tension of the works they have to accomplish. The gnostics were mistaken when they spoke of the Holy Ghost as feminine. Of the Three Persons, the Holy Ghost is the one who remains utterly unknown. No - God does not incarnate in all religions; the ancient Brahmans were aware of it; all you have to do is read their theories on the Avatars. I am only telling you this, yes you, because it may someday be of use to you, but these are subjects which will take centuries of study to even touch upon with any success.

"Many of our modern hierophants, though richly endowed with precious intuitions, lack common sense. The resurrection of forsaken cults, the revivification of petrified dogmas and the dressing up of the theories of self-deification in Hebrew, Greek, Sanskrit or Chinese are but the worthy illusions of pious sons and the touching candor of erudites lost in dreams. But they are the obscure subterranean cornerstones of a future religion which will be cemented with tears, blood and sweat. These pioneers who neither accept positive science nor ecclesial faith grow old over metaphysical hieroglyphics, phantoms and neuroses. If after twenty or forty years of study, happy are those who realize that those symbols, those arcanes and disinterred rites are but the veils of common sense and of a healthy mind. The artless feel that instinctively because the heart of man is the tabernacle wherein shines the eternal Light from which the great arcanes of the occultists are but the deformed shadows.

"Modern man is not equilibrated. Nature so rarely gives birth to masterpieces. Within us, consuming flames are burning and the gods of money, of glory, of science and of art plague their poor devotees out of orbit. That is why a doctor finds so much psychopathy among spiritualists, among mystics, among their bands of followers and in the pseudo-leaders of crowds.

"The experimenter of hyper-physical space can remain aloof; but the sentimentalist, the one who seeks the Mysteries with all the ardor of an anxious and sorrowful heart; he who desires to contact the impalpable and to speak with the inhabitants of heavens and hells; he whose aim is occult phenomena, that is the one who finds a thousand to one occasions of being partially mentally ill, enmired into some kind of hysteria, of mania, or pride as exorbitant as it is naive. Nevertheless, these unbalanced minds are pioneers; one must neither despise nor laugh at them. So, my dear friend, don't exaggerate your apprehensions. If you were to tell the noted founder of societies, Mr. So and So, that he is filled with false pride, even if true, would you accomplish anything but to have hurt his feelings? Would you have changed his heart? Look within your heart and you will know that you haven't. So! To get the initiates, the esotericists, the amateurs of ecstasies and the abstractors of quintessence! Do not provoke them! Listen if they want to explain their theories to you; only stop them if you think they might end in evil; try to obtain from them some kind of practical modification either in thought or action. That would be worthwhile."

And that is how my ideological enthusiasms received, under a steady rain, an additional shower bath.

XXXI
THEOPHANE

The next time I visited Andreas, I found him decorating some potteries in the Norwegian style which was currently in vogue. While he designed the foliage with a clean stroke, I asked him to explain prayer to me. He seemed to attach so much importance to prayer.

"One can see you have never been hit over the head," he answered smilingly. "Foremost among its teachings the Kabbala lists this axiom which you must read over and over again, without paying any attention: 'Everything is a living being,' says Simeon-ben-Jochai, therein."

I nodded affirmatively.

"So, both good luck and misfortune are, in a certain world, beings which possess a form, an intelligence and freedom. Thus, if your physical self is limited, so are your astral, your moral and other selves too. If an orangoutang is seven times stronger than man, why would there not be invisible beings much stronger than the inner forces which we mass together under the term of will? When one of these colossi has taken hold of you by the neck and shakes you like a rabbit, what else can you do but scream for help? That is prayer. If you were attacked in the forest, your servants would come to your help, provided you had learned how to make yourself loved by them. It follows that one must be loved by the servants of Heaven, which means fulfilling God's will. And that is how our prayers are answered."

"Yes," I said, "man's moral force is limitless."

"Yes -if he keeps it, but if it be taken from him? Do you by any chance, Doctor, believe that the smallest atom of your body is yours, that it belongs to you? Undeceive yourself! Your whole self is a free-given loan to your soul. And believe me!" he added, as Stella came in to sit with us, "There is only one thing by means of which man can conquer the world...."

"Don't tell him," cried out Stella. "I am going upstairs to fetch the letter you want." She ran up to her bedroom, then came down and handed me a sheet of 'papier de Chine' carefully folded in a leather wallet. "Read," said she gravely.

There were a few lines in French, similar to the hasty and quick handwriting of Napoleon I. I was overwhelmed with an unexplainable emotion, as I slowly began reading the hieroglyphics. The text was:

"My child, you must not let yourself become discouraged, you carry within yourself the eternal force which sustains cosmic armies. It is called love. Love is the father of all that which we call time, good, evil, pleasure and pain. Its all powerful virtues transfigure souls. It is the supreme Master from whom we learn all lessons, it is the password which make the guardians of all temples stand aside; it is the sword at the sight of which enemies take flight. It ignores obstacles of evil; it is only aware of its weaknesses; it forgets the past; it does not concern itself with the future; its only concern is the present; it is the phoenix which immolates itself constantly and receives after each sacrifice a varied treasure of hope and light.

Continue on your road, Stella, and fear not. If you have made the same sacrifice fifty times, be ready to do it another fifty if need be."

The signature was an illegible paragraph; but I was certain that this letter had come from Théophane.

Stella told me after a lengthy silence:

"I received this letter through the intermediary of the Chinese Embassy. It came with another message addressed to the plenipotentiary, asking him to forward this paper which was sealed with the imperial seal, the Dragon with five claws. Happily one of the attaches of the Embassy who had been a neighbor of mine in Neuilly where I was then living -a long time ago -" said she apologetically, "knew me, and brought me, kowtowing low, the envelope that the Son of Heaven had certainly held in his hands."

What was the reason which permitted Theophane's close access to this monarch guarded by the most infrangible ceremonial, I have never been able to guess.

We were looking silently at the Golden Dragon with five claws.

"Don't you think that the words of this ... man convey even now, so many years later, an undefinable virtue which wafts like a breath of sylvan perfume reawakening new hopes in us and the presentiment of an unknown garden of Eden?" Stella asked.

"Who is Theophane, who is he, what is he?"

"Really! Dear Doctor friend, do you think that knowing it, I would tell? Don't you think that if he wanted, he would tell you? Have you ever seriously thought about the true discipline of veritable secrets?"

"Yet, Christ has said: 'Here, I shall be with you each day until the end of time.'"

"Yes, He told it to His disciples."

"Everything is possible to God! Certain sects have announced a return of Christ. I know their Christ to be false; but the idea is correct."

"Ah, yes, my friend, the idea is exact. Two thousand years ago a man lived in a house; he pursued his affairs just as men do today; in the evening he spoke with other men in the town square just as we today go to the cafe. Were he living today, he would wear a suit instead of a robe and so on. You must accustom yourself in order to better recognize the possible presence of our Friend."

"You mean that you might know that perhaps on a certain street, at a certain number, lives a man who might be... I dare not say it..."

"So you see, it is far better to remain silent at times. To say it aloud would be terrible. And yet, though you may dissert upon human nature and divine nature, upon native knowledge and experimental knowledge and others; though you may dissect Thomas Aquinas and re-read the Jesuit Theologians of the Sacred-Heart, you will always reach the same premise: that nothing is impossible to God."

"Yes, I understand that one must be silent at times. However, it seems to me that the close and intimate intercourse of the soul with God is so sacred and profound that were that favor to befall me, I would never dare mention it."

"Lastly, remember that we have been warned: 'If you hear that Christ is somewhere or other, do not go.' After a few moments of silence, Andréas went on: 'That is all we dare tell you regarding Theophane. The rest depends upon you. When you will have proven your willingness, when you have at last taken the road that leads to His domain, you will meet Him. You might meet him on the street, in your house, among the great or in a hovel; perhaps in another sphere; but you may be sure that He will come to you when you will have proven your humility and love which are the marks of the children of Light. You do not know him, but He knows you; you do not know what He is, but He knows where you came from and where you are going. Besides which, remember that a doctor is there for the sick and not for the healthy.'"

"And you only met him five times in your whole life?" I asked, discouraged, realizing that if a man with the science, the energy and kindness such as Andreas possessed had only received such a recompense, what could I hope for -I with my vacillating will and lack of courage?

"We saw him once more together, Stella and I," answered Andréas. "And He will probably pay us a last visit before we leave this earth."

"Do you think you'll have to die?" I asked in sheer surprise -because my studies had taught me that a man having reached the degree of science and power which I felt Andréas to have achieved must be able to prolong his earthly existence as long as he cared to.

"The legends regarding the elixir of long life have some truth," Andréas told me. "There have been men, there are still a few men, who have been here on this earth for centuries. You yourself have met some, but I shall not divulge their names, that you might not be tempted to judge them."

"Are they wrong, then?"

"That must not be done," he answered. "When a man is born, his destiny is fixed. If he violates the normal span, however pure his intentions may be, he oversteps his rights; and that, he cannot do without causing an illegal rape of certain forces, without violence upon certain beings, without trouble or causing pain around him."

"So, the best is to submit upon all planes?"

"Yes, Doctor, we must first learn obedience before wanting to lead."

It was getting late. I regretfully took leave of my hosts. I had such a wealth and supply of new ideas from which I would draw for many months to come.

XXXII THE COMETS

A comet, whose arrival had been predicted, appeared at this time. Everyone wanted to see it; so I used this pretext to urge Andreas to take one of those nocturnal walks he seemed to enjoy as much as I. From the electric train taken at Les Invalides we alighted, one night, at the Val Fleury. From there, the forest paths led us to the plain of Villacoublay where the firmament was visible almost in its entirety. We could examine the haired comet at leisure.

We fell under the spell of this beautiful night; we went into the sombrous and rustling forest, conversing of one thing and another.

What peace in comparison to the feverish city we had just left! What freshness in the scented air! The beauty in nature retained its serene variety whether we walked along candid little ponds, whether we brushed aside the branches of the thickets from which issued the multiple sounds of nocturnal insects breaking the silence, or whether emerging at a clearing, the moon showed us the high roofs and the turrets of a five century old farm in the plain.

Once in a while we heard dogs barking in their distant forestial homes; at the skirt of avenues we would stop a moment to witness the palavers of rabbits while Andreas in a hollow voice would comment on the habits of animals and plants. He showed me the noble artemisia in tufts which feeds on broken stones and refuse; the humble colt's foot which indicates the hygrometric changes, the proud Bonhomme-Jean preparing for the next moon its cluster of odoriferous and pectoral-medicinal flowers, and so many dozen other plants. Peaceful population - a motley multitude still as harmonious, as charming and familiar as the delicate clear skies of the Ile-de-France which Corot has so well depicted.

Andréas called my attention also to the sounds of the fields, of the brook and of the thickets; to the worried yelp of a fox who must have felt great fear to so spoil his chase; to the barely audible flapping of wings, to the meeting of Elytrons.

Having left the 'Chêne-Sanglant' and the 'Cordon d'En-Haut' on our left we emerged upon a sandy promontory where the badgers had dug holes among the heather, the aspens and young foyards. At our feet unfolded a landscape of magic serenity. The hill sloped in a steep incline down to the Sarcelles pond which was sending off its freshness, to the hollow grounds of Velizy which, strewn with cottages, extended between the two railroad lines while further up were the copsewoods of Viroflay, of Ville-d'Avray and the woods of Fausses-Reposes. In the profound lunar silence bathed the stylized profiles of the adjoining hills while myriads of stars animated the immobile firmament.

We sat down to smoke like Sachems, to the probable despair of badgers and martens whose return we certainly prevented. Andreas began speaking in the toneless, resonantless voice he so well knew how to use when he did not want a third party to overhear him. He had once answered my query as to the motive behind such precaution:

"The fields have eyes and the woods have ears."

"But under the stars, why? How?" I had asked.

"The why is the secret of the Father and He probably will tell it when we are ready to return to His house. The how? All parts of Creation resemble one another and reproduce one into the other. Only, we do not see it as a continued whole when we contemplate it; we only see uncoordinated fragments. These fissures have a reason and correspond to other fissures in our faculties of understanding. For instance, on this earth, we see men under the aspect of individuals while we see minerals as a mass. Let us raise the eyes of our spirit to the inner heaven and we shall see men as a compact ensemble; let us raise our physical eyes to the skies and the immense army of stars will offer, though greatly enlarged, the same spectacle that the microscope discovers in a molecule. The rhythmic battle of electrons, ions and magnetons is nothing else than an infinitely small astronomy."

"In other words," I added, "you want to make me visualize the Greek Hermetic axiom from a new viewpoint: 'All is in all.' If I am right, the science of true ontology enumerates many modes of existence: the arithmologic mode, the mechanical mode, the fluidic mode, the mode of energy, the mode of astronomy, the mode of collective beings and the mode of liberty? Hence each living form, each creature whether morphic or amorphous, definite or indefinite, conscious or unconscious, would contain all of these modes, but would be so organized as to recognize only one of them in the other creatures in the midst of whom it lives?"

"Yes, and what you describe is a sort of synopsis of biology according to a Pythagorean table. This process certainly offers new vistas, yet it is only a process; it can only reveal to you but one aspect of Truth, though rather correct yet vast. Human wisdom as far as I can recall from secret doctrines, has never found anything better. But the man who has become pure again discards these intellectual instruments and addresses himself directly, without intermediaries, to the beings he needs to know."

"Is there an end to these myriads of stars?"

"Yes," answered Andréas. "It is a field, around which the Father has set boundaries. The pole-star is one of these 'milestones' of the universe."

"Consequently, if Polaris is a landmark, a limit, it must be the furthest away. Astronomers say that among the stars the closest to earth, the polar star has the weakest parallax. That means that it is very distant from us; but there are some still further away."

"Is the earth the center of the world? And is the Cosmos in the shape of a sphere? And is the Sun immobile?" asked Andréas.

"That is what no one knows!"

"So we cannot judge the distances, the space nor the astronomical flashes except in relation to us. And, has anyone ever wondered if, when crossing inter-astral regions, the luminous rays do not undergo refractions or metamorphoses? And has anyone ever calculated them, if they do exist?"

"Not that I know of," I answered.

"So you see that as exact as it seems to be, the science of Astronomy is not positive. Its usefulness in the end has been of moral value, because it makes us cognizant of our insignificance and aware of the breadth of the work of the Father. Also through the sacrifice of its theories and its precarious discoveries it humbles our vanity."

"That is the usual result of most scientific studies. But then what is our universe?"

"This universe? For us, its inhabitants, it means all which exists. Outside of it there is nothing but Nothingness. Yet, were we to see things from the point of view of God's Kingdom, we would see that even Nothingness lives. That which will always prevent metaphysicians from agreeing among themselves and with themselves is that these two points of view co-exist in the human soul; also being that his soul is

dual, it is both created and non-created at the same time; and the perceptions of the natural self and of the supernatural self are constantly mixing within us."

"Is it then useless for us to try to know?"

"Excuse me, Doctor, we must try with all our might, not for our personal satisfaction, but because of charity, if I may express myself, in order to keep the rational and intellectual powers, which the Father has placed in our care, alive; in obedience and in love for Him."

"But," I objected, "to take away from man the bait of personal profit is to cut his arms and legs off."

"Yes, if man does not believe in God; but if he does, what greater happiness than to obey the one he loves? What motive gives greater energy, constancy and enthusiasm? If you are a man who carries the torch of the infinite, don't be like this little fox who ran out of the thicket a moment ago; his main idea in life is to swallow as many eggs, eat as many chickens as he can, and to teach his offspring to do the same. We - we have quite another task.

"Now, if you want to, let us sleep on this and where we won't feel the dew, while waiting for the time when we can find some breakfast at les Bruyeres."

After having slept awhile, we continued on our walk. How delightful are these mornings when the entire forest under a clear light shines like a virgin shaking her hair as she emerges from a stream! The titmice, the wrens, the warblers, the black birds, the bruants sing at full voice at that time of day. The air is filled with fresh scent, the leaves are of a lighter green, the sky seems of a more delicate blue and the clouds more vaporous. The dreary past seems far away and the future beckons. Amidst

such peace we feel blissfully happy. So, I wanted to resume our conversation.

"The Pouranas also say that the 'egg of the world' -the Universe, floats on an unfathomable ocean. But where are the bottom and the shores of that ocean? Such conceptions, which nothing proves anyway, are they not rudimentary?"

"They would be," Andréas answered, "if the substance of the world were everywhere identical to the earthly substance. But it is not so. For instance, close to us, an invisible planet is wandering in another space than ours, yet whose density is almost twice that of our earth's. Thus an immaterial imponderable fluidic projection of the will may act or have the influence upon a heavy mass. How many analogies similar to this fact could I cite! Our understanding functions only under certain conditions which put a limit on that which we perceive and so, we cannot really visualize any other conditions being different; yet they exist. So much more so, we cannot really understand Nothingness any more than we can imagine how we see the stars and the rest."

"Then, one begins wondering if things really exist, whether there is something else besides sheer appearances?"

"Of course, things exist. Man has life within himself; he cannot create absolute illusion; his main weakness is his seeing mutable forms instead of the pure essence. So, in each world and on all planes of each world, appearance is but a middle point, proportionate between the essence of the object, its actual aspect and the pure essence of the one perceiving and his faculties of perception, which are more or less sound.

"This is the basis to the science of signatures. The trunk of this birch tree which seem so silvery and its leaves so mobile appears to us only as the terrestrial expression of a Universal force. The red, green and yellow stars we were looking at a while ago also are signs."

"Consequently, men are right when they say that a comet is the cause of calamities?"

"Yes and no," answered Andréas. "When it is going to rain the snails go out; but it does not rain because they are out. When a comet becomes visible, it does not provoke wars or pestilence; it is rather the astronomical consequences of a demiurge's action, or that of a cliché whose social consequences might be war on earth."

I had a lot of other questions to ask regarding comets. But that morning followed the usual course of previous ones. Frequently the conversation would deviate according to Andreas, lead, yet he never opened a subject, he only answered my queries. I forgot the questions I had prepared, or else an indefinable timidity kept me from asking them. I found consolation in the thought that my teacher knew better than I what I needed to know and which information would be of benefit or useless to me.

That morning, however, as far as I can remember, I did ask some details on the role and the utility of comets.

"When a man is ill and drugs do not take effect," Andréas answered, "another method of ingestion for the therapeutical agents is sought, other than via the stomach, the skin, the lungs, or the bloodstream. For instance, serum when injected follows another trajectory than the usual one in the organism. The comet is such a regenerator in the solar system; and is also a tonic for it. It brings into our zodiac something quite new therefore of a tremendous dynamic quality which comes from another zodiac; a comet also restores perturbed functions.

"As far as the comet itself is concerned, the voyages are for study purposes. It brings something to the worlds it crosses but it also receives something from them. Then after its tour of the world, its speed diminishes and thus feeling the reactions of the other celestial bodies, its trajectory changes course little by little, it slows up and finally the comet becomes the core of another system. A similar process takes place in embryology in the first hours following the fecundation of an ovule."

"I remember reading something like that in the Hindu DJATAKA."

"Doubtless; these are simple matters. A comet still has a third function, not in a kinetic category but in the individual order."

"How's that? A comet is not a person like you and me!"

"No, it is the garment of a person, just as our body is the garment of our individuality. All celestial bodies are garments for beings, that they clothe, whom we do not know and whom we can see only after long and painful preparatory labors; yet each of them fills a function. The comets clothe prophets whether for good or evil; they clothe artists who distribute joy, hope, enthusiasm and news around."

"If you told those things publicly, you would be taken for an anthropomorphist."

"And so, I keep still. Anyhow, it is man who is built and acts in the image of Nature and not Nature in the image of man. But we are so imbued with our own importance that we think ourselves to be indispensable to the march of the worlds. How much would we know were we really humble!"

We had walked as far as Fonceaux. There, we stopped for a country breakfast to which we did honor, and the conversation deviated.

XXXIII THE FLOOD

This was the epoch when the rising of the waters caused such a tremendous damage in the basin of the Seine. It was absolutely impossible for me to call on Andréas for two weeks. I had had to leave my laboratory to help with consultations at the hospital. All beds were occupied, stretchers everywhere, even on the landings; the staff was overworked and the stewards disorganized. Our old building had never had such commotion since the year of the influenza. Finally I had a cot set up in the interns' room for myself, because so many patients were coming in at all hours. So, on my first free morning, though I was behind in my sleep, I slipped out as fast as could be to the little house in Menilmontant.

Andréas was worried that day. Usually so active, he was stretched out on a long wicker chair, slowly smoking a long earthen pipe, which was as brown and polished as the bamboo becomes after fifty years of use from opium smoking.

"Beautiful pipe!" I greeted him.

"It was all white last night," he answered unconcernedly.

"You must have smoked all night?"

"Yes.... I haven't any tobacco left."

I offered him some of mine. A few minutes later, Stella came in bringing some café-au-lait, and we commented on the disaster which was ruining Paris and had ravaged the suburbs for the past two weeks.

"Where does all that water come from?" she asked her husband. "It is not just due to rain nor to the melting of snows!"

"Nor to the clearing of trees!" I added.

"I do not think it is necessary to try to find the cause of these water-risings. What would we gain?"

"To prevent its recurrence""

Ah! And if these are subterranean sheets of water which have changed their level? Will engineers drill wells of two, three or more kilometers in depth?"

"Is there water so deeply buried? Of course all Parisians know of the little pond which was under the Opera and about the one which is to be found below the Butte des Moulins which are the last vestiges of the Grange-Batelière stream. Of course, it is also true that the Savoyards speak of a subterranean lake where the Rhone disappears, and the Vaudois say that another exits at the extremity of the Lake de Joux."

"There are many others, Doctor; I know in France alone, four sheets of water which vary between two and four thousand meters in depth; several of them extend below one or two departments (states)."

"Which means that if any of them do reach and communicate with any of these holes, such as the ones in the Côte-d'Or in which the peasants throw their dead cattle, and that should there be a rise of water, the rivers could overflow immeasurably?"

"Yes, Doctor; but that can only happen in case of a ruptured equilibrium in the mineral mass. These modifications can only result from the precessions of Equinoxes or from a subterranean eruption, or still, from the birth of a new magnetic center such as the proximity of a comet could bring about. But such phenomena are not due to a hazard: They are willed by cosmic intelligences or else brought about as reactions to social or ethnic diseases, you might say. Hence, wisdom is a-priori to let them alone."

"What about, perchance, if it were the act of an evil power?"

"There are no absolutely evil beings. That which seems so to us is only temporarily or relatively so, and in any case, nothing happens without the tacit consent of the Father. However if there were a need to modify the march of phenomena of this caliber, the operator would have to converse face to face with the prince, the lord and the spiritual entity of this earth. He would have to have an exact knowledge of the state of the entire solar system; also be conscious of the plan of the cosmic *clichés*."

"And is there such a man here on earth?"

"You must surely guess that there is, dear Doctor," Andréas told me with that wonderful smile of his which lit and transformed his usual severe and immobile face.

"What about us; can't we do anything against such cataclysms?"

"It is a little late. There should have been a few courageous men fifty or one hundred years ago. Unless an innocent being, hidden somewhere is willing to sacrifice himself, there is nothing else but to submit to it."

"What do you mean by innocent?"

"Oh! Someone whose spirit does not yet know evil...."

"How could he prevent a catastrophe?"

"There would have to be a pact between his spirit and the gods. We would know nothing of it and probably neither would the intelligence of that man be conscious of it either. We would only witness his sorrows, enmities, moral suffering, betrayals and ruin!"

"Another question. How is it that this catastrophe was not even foretold by seers or astrologers?"

"Heaven does not like soothsayers. Through Its friends, It has told all that is necessary for men to know. The rest is wrought by curiosity, confusion, fortuitous insight of the intellect or through fallacious sparks from the dark forces, (powers of darkness). As far as I am concerned, were I aware of the future I would not have the right of divulging it. We always imagine that our fate is of interest to the Universe; as you well know, we are such puny little things."

I made a gesture of discouragement and remained silent, thinking about the thousands of poor devils, about the anemiated women, ill fed and ill clothed children, without fire, without bread. Stella had left us. Andréas became lost in a deep

reverie. The rain came beating down against the windowpanes. I must have dozed off for quite a long time. It seemed to me that a man had entered the room. Rather tall -though I could not really see his features nor his costume, yet I saw that he radiated light. Then all became dark again. I opened my eyes. Andreas was standing before me. Head held high and his chest forward as if he were going to propel himself from the earth; his eyes were focused on mine. From him emanated a fluidic, fresh and powerful aura A mystery bound us together and I thought: Here we are gathered in the "Name of Someone."

He spoke in a toneless voice:

"You are going to call upon so and so...." and he named a carpenter from the Batignolles district and a great lady known in the social whirl of Paris for her elegance and her grand receptions. "You will ask them both, in my name, to pledge to three things: Not to slander anyone; not to defend themselves, no matter who attacks them; to pray for everything they think is needed, until their demands are heard, should they even have to spend entire nights doing so; and you, you will pledge yourself along with them. And if you three hold steady from now until the

feast of St. John, your country will be spared some calamities -It is Heaven that promises it.

XXXIV THE CHINESE GENTLEMAN

The inundation had not receded, but Andreas never spoke of it. He was waiting for an expected visitor, an old Chinese gentleman whose celebrated name I really was surprised to learn.

I did not know how this high dignitary, who was renowned, rich and powerful happened to be Andréas' guest. One evening after dinner, he arrived in a very democratic hackney-coach, accompanied by a taciturn small mandarin and a soldier of the Marine infantry, who was on sick leave. I was invited to those delightful reunions, where an Asiatic, master after his Emperor, of four hundred million men; a man powerful enough to hold the entire European diplomacy in check, came to spend casual evenings with an ordinary soldier, an unknown doctor and an antiquarian.

To honor his guest, Andréas' wife had arranged one of the bedroom according to Chinese style. A wide ebony bed, mats, embroidered panels, shelves full of jades and bronzes and a magnificent perfume-burner placed on the floor totally transformed this little room.

"You went to a lot of trouble!" I told Andréas.

"Of course, my Doctor! An Oriental appreciates etiquette, and we must not offend anyone. Years ago, when I visited this prince, his entire Yamen was mobilized. You are not accustomed to their formula of politeness, are you? Well, just watch me and do the same. One must respect the habits of the old. Also, this man is far above us, socially speaking. Let us keep to our level -it is up to him to indicate the level on which he wants to meet us. You too, Marius," he told the colonial soldier. "Imagine you are the orderly of the General chief of staff."

When we heard the cab, all three of us went to the door to greet the prince. He came in after the reciprocal compliments, kow-towing from the waist and agitating his sleeve up and down signifying joy, according to the Confucian rite. He spoke French quite well, with a deep rumbling voice. He had a fat poker face, crackled with a multitude of little lines which denoted, in spite of the graciousness of age and the desire of being courteous, the immense pride of a man who knows of his unbroken genealogy for forty-five centuries. In spite of the flowery eloquence of his compliments, too many things kept us apart, for me not to feel uneasy under the clear and piercing glance that came through the slit of his heavy-lidded, colorless eyes.

He sat upon the low bed and courteously accepted the pipe which Andréas offered him. Then Marius prepared his opium pipe after the tenth of which Tsoung-Ring began asking questions on multiple subjects. He also answered mine. He possessed an extraordinary memory and following the scholar's habit would ceaselessly quote his country's poets, indicating through intentional asides, the hidden, secret meanings to be found under the literary style. In turn, Andréas borrowed from the classics unexpected symbolism from the wealth of his sources.

That night, Tsoung-Ring spoke of the floods. Addressing Andréas he said, "What do the mandarins of your country say, Brother, when your dragons get into a fury?"

"Venerable friend, our scholars here do not know what a dragon is. For them, he does not exist, save as something sleeping in the deep."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the prince, without one line of his face changing. "If you will forgive my stupid question, what do your mandarins do when the calamity is upon them and when it has left? Although... is it possible when you say that they cannot even predict its coming?"

"They do just what your Manchu officers do in your numerous villages. They give orders to build dikes and they raise money to rebuild the destroyed homes. The people of the adjoining countries send pecuniary help -and so this calamity has been beneficial to the extent that it has permitted the white-race nations to perform a fraternal act."

"They do need it," said the Ancient. "But who can sound the will of 'THAT' which has no will?"

"My left, where my heart is," answered Andréas, "is on the right of my brother and his left is on my right and we have but one heart between us."

"Great is your wisdom," answered Tsoun-Ring smiling with pleasure. He let his pipe go out, his slit eyes lit up - but he kept quiet.

"Kindly remember that I am not a mandarin," Andréas went on, and designating me: "This one, is one in the art of healing. But in these lands, men who are wise in the wisdom without words are rarely high dignitaries as it should be. So the law of Tao is fulfilled: merit among us lives in the shadow, sheltered from honors or renown...."

"I am aware of that, watching you live," the prince interrupted with deference.

"Hence those who are aware of the existence of dragons do not wear insignia, they are not clothed with authority and only command in their home. Among them, some have felt the wind from the unfurling of wings; others, fewer still, think that these divine animals live above the clouds. But alas, I do not know of any man among these people with reddish faces who can follow the six movements of the Dragon with Five Claws."

"You do not know such a man, oh you Truth-sayer?" murmured Tsoun-Ring, rising in one leap.

"Ying and Yang never are separated," answered my Teacher, rising also, and he added: "I know the man."

The old prince bent his tall frame in half. Andréas went to him. They remained silent, one forehead close to the other, their eyes lowered, while their fingers exchanged the secret signs which are the passwords of the most secret Asiatic fraternities.

Then each returned to his seat. The pipes were lit again, rare liqueurs were served and Andreas, turning toward me said:

"About a hundred cycles ago, if we measure according to the astronomers of the Celestial-Empire, our European people knew that Gods, Goddesses, Genii and Fluids existed. Man is the same everywhere. Our ancestors worshiped these spirits, violating the Law of the Supreme Ruler, just as the majority of people do in the empire of our esteemed friend. And so the world goes -from extreme left to extreme right. It calls it recompenses or sorrows and if a few people following the example of Kong-Tse conceive of or accept the 'unchangeable,' or 'stability in the Center,' they seek it within the chaos of the five elements instead of finding it in the spiritual equilibrium of the Way."

"Your people," said Tsoun-Ring, "run haywire in the five elements and in the twenty-four asterisms."

"You are right, acute minded Elder," answered Andreas looking intently at his guest who seemed to be asleep. "But remember the days when I shared your gracious

hospitality without being worthy of it. During those years, I entered temples without doors... and I came out of them all."

"I remember, older Brother."

"Do not the lamas of the Roof of the World say that Tsong-Kapa came from the Occident?"

"Yes," answered the prince while watching me, as he noticed my increased interest. "You speak like a very old man and I try to give you the answer -with the same sapience. But I don't seem to succeed To the babe one gives milk, to the elderly a gourmet dish, to the man in his prime, healthy rice and fish! Would our younger brother tell us what he thinks of the dragons which cause rivers to overflow the banks and the clouds to burst?"

"I only know what I find in printed books, in which I found that all nations believe such things as these. The subjects of the Celestial-Empire also know of unicorns, lions, strange birds and weird fish. Their Aryan brothers have their vulture Garouda and their swan Hamsa, their multicephalous serpents besides the Gandharvas and so many other tribes of beings who come and visit the contemplations of the naked ascetics in the forest. Then the people of Tibet - those of the iced plateaus, as well as the followers of the Crescent in their torrid deserts, all see at night all sorts of creatures passing by.... What can I tell you, venerable Fathers besides what you already know? I have only to read ancient manuscripts. All people who remain close to nature know that dragons exist, plus other animals and beings that our veiled eyes cannot see. There are many in the oceans, in the straits, in the gulf, the lagoon, the lake, the pond. There are some in Mountains, at the summits and in the precipices; others in the desert, the forest and the city; on the stone, the plant and the tree. Some in clouds, in the air and under the sun, in thunder, wind and rain; in the continent, the nation and the people. Some are in the sun and the moon and the stars; in the eclipse, the comet and in the meteor; in the night, the day and in the twilight as well as in the month and finally in the cycle and the year. Is this not true, I ask you, you knights who ride the Dragon?"

"The Tao-Sse mentions that there are erring forms or creatures."

"However," asked Andréas, "hasn't the old Lao-Tzu written that each being has a name, which is not the Name, although contained in the Name?"

Tsoun-Ring agreed and recited in a rumbling tone a poem to which Andreas was referring.

"Could this ancient sage have been able to say that indefinite things have a name? All is then individualized? What is your opinion, thou wise and prudent one?"

"You have entered the temple 'without doors,'" answered the Chinese.

"Look at this rock, for example," Andreas went on, addressing me. "Look at it with all your might, in such a way that none of your forces be occupied elsewhere. Free your immobile body from any quivers remaining from the action which it has just accomplished, and free it even from the souvenir of that act; remove from your fluids all preceding polarizations, from your heart all sentiment, and from your intelligence any thought other than that of this rock. Look, eyes downcast; listen with closed ears; feel with immobile hands. You will not see the spirit of this rock at first, but different types of beings which are envelopes, guardians or travelers. only after having pushed them aside will you see the genii and if your virtue is equal to your strength, you may be able to converse with him. Because your spirit knows all idioms."

"Via a somnambulic subject, or via magic?" I asked

"Magic is forbidden, you know that," answered Andreas. "You will never find a medium sufficiently advanced to penetrate as far as that."

"So?" But Andréas went on without seeming to have heard me.

"Yes, all exists; the fauns, satyrs, aegyptians, sylphs, nymphs, dryads, hamdryads and the demigods; Hercules and others, the goddesses Aphrodite and her sisters, the Muses, the Parques and the Furies, Zeus and his equals. Also the djinns, the houris, the kobolds, the trolls, the gnomes, the nixies, the fairies, the elves, imps and goblins are not hallucinations of our superstitious small folk. There is also Teutad, and Thor and the Valhalla; the Hindu gods with four and ten arms and their saktis. Also the Egyptian gods with animal forms; the catoblépas, the basilic and the rock and all the bestiary of the Middle Ages.... All that and many other beings exist; all of that once upon a time lived on this solid earth, in the plains, in the forest and cities, or will come to live here."

"Do you mean to say that these were or are real, individual creatures, such as a dog or a horse? That they are not the symbols of meteorological, astronomical, philosophical or natural forces? You mean that they would be animals or humanimals? What about the demonologists, Pierre d'Aban, Agrippa, Sinistrari, the Rosicrucian legends and de Guaita?"

"Nature makes the beings; it is man who makes the symbols," answered Andréas smiling. "Do you think that the human-headed Bull of Assour and the Sphinx of Thebes are nothing but wisely

combined images? When the Rishi chants, 'The soul of the Yogi mounts the divine bird Hamsa, which takes him in flight as fast as lightning up to the abode of the supreme Brahma,' don't you know that he simply tells what he has seen? Do you think that he amuses himself to become a rhetorician? You are neither a professor of philosophy nor a member of some mysterious fraternity, so-called Rosicrucian, Buddhist or Templar? But...." and as he ceased smiling and bowing to the old prince, Andreas added, "If my respected guest would condescend, we could learn from his eloquent lips many things which his people know but withhold from the red-faced people."

"I am ignorant," said Tsoun-Ring modestly and gravely. "If I speak, it is only in obedience to my older brother, and because such things must be revealed at times, even by so unworthy a person. I have forgotten many of the characters which I admired and copied with a respectful though awkward brush, years ago. Ah! How wise were the sages of long ago! And how just it was for them to be recompensed if, during my long career thanks to their invisible presence and their constant aid, it has been my privilege to do something useful for the people in conformity with the Supreme Will! But, do forgive a feeble old man, who trembles at the thought of arriving naked at the abode of his beloved Ancestors!...."

"And what could I tell you," he went on after a short silence, "that our younger brother has not read in our old books? The ten thousand beings, the animals of the air, those of earth, of the waters, of the woods and fire appear on the rice-fields, they grow, decrease, then disappear...."

"Thus the cruelty of men evokes the demons in the world Below, and these demons suborn their evocators; then when many crimes have been committed, these demons take the blood that was shed and the tumefied flesh and from them their princes build bodies and thus the tiger appears -the very one who will kill the very men, thanks to the evils of whom the door of the earth was opened to him. And when the man-eater has killed all of those who bear his mark, his force decreases, his body shrinks and in the course of cycles, he becomes a cat, elegant, selfish and timorous. Once upon a time there were gigantic lizards and crustaceans as large as steers, and many other creatures who have vanished into the reverse side of this visible world."

"Hidden science flows from your lips, oh Ancient One," said Andréas. "Tell us some more."

"Such are the ten-thousand beings," the prince continued. "The hundred families appear on earth, but they have already appeared on a thousand earths. First of all they inhabit the dreams of wise men, then these creatures are born with scales, feathers or hair, with or without bones; they decrease and disappear from the sight of wise men. Their gods then take them and conduct them to other lands. Thus this world is a sea with innumerable waves. Look at it well, Younger Brother, look at it with a pious and a strong heart. No being should be feared, none should be despised, and you yourself, know that you are nothing so that you will become all; but if you want to be all, you will be reduced to nothing, just like a ball of earth being crushed in a mortar.

"Speak again, my very wise Father," I asked the old mandarin, because I had felt that his discourse had been animated by emotion and I was feeling a growing thankful sympathy toward him.

"I shall keep quiet," he answered, agitating his pipe while the colonial soldier was rounding out the expected opium bead over the flame. "Yes, I shall keep quiet," he repeated, addressing Andréas; "because you have fought the dragon, you alone can act; I only know how to speak. You are the father of this younger brother; open for him one of the white doors; close his ears on this side that he might hear on the other; close his eyelids to this darkness that he might see the torches held by the lions with short manes. Wen-Wang is coming with us."

Then turning to the wall, he remained silent.

"Have you heard, do you want to try?" Andréas asked me.

"Try what?" I asked. Then having immediately understood I added, "Yes, provided you are there and that it won't take too long."

"One or two minutes. Lay down your pipe and sit comfortably."

Hardly had he pronounced the last syllable than the room disappeared from my sight. I saw myself -standing, Andréas holding my arm. Tsoun-Ring seated, was looking at us. A part of the Far East flashed before us and disappeared, then a large river covered with malodorous junks; then rice fields, a mountain, shrubs and a cavern. All of that flashed by as fast as a movie film being changed, yet every detail distinct. Suddenly I found myself in the Nave of Notre-Dame de Paris; then in the first crypt which everyone knows; then in the second which I definitely knew to have been the ground upon which a temple of Jupiter had stood. Finally, in the third subterranean level, I saw large stones, a Gaullic spear, a rusty sickle, the white phantom of a Druid. I heard a heavy sound similar to that of a large wave breaking on a sandy beach; then thick, rattling yet voluminous breathing. Two steps further I saw the most monstrous body lying in slimy shadows. It seemed to be fifteen meters (approximately 50 feet) long; its short twisted legs with thin and hairless thighs covered with a sickening skin did not permit it to rise. This monster was gray, shiny, viscous; its back was squamous, and surmounted by a scaly backbone with pointed thorns. Its ferocious head grooved by deep wrinkles ended in the enormous beak of an octopus paved with several rows of teeth. Filament-like antennas trembled out of this open beak, trying to stretch far enough to reach Andreas and me. But my Master contented himself with raising an arm, such as one does to calm a surly dog. This monster glistened with a chatoyant-play of livid and poisonous colors, its shuddering membranous wings hung down on the soil. Its eyes, large, protruding, naked, with greenish squalid lids had a human but unbearable expression. The beast was definitely furious and its rage augmented its fear, because Andréas fascinated it.

"You see," Andréas told me suddenly, "one word from us would be sufficient for him to become angry. He would demolish something here, something elsewhere,

and in three days the Seine would have disappeared and up above us Paris would be in ruins. You will remember? You will try to understand, won't you?"

I made an affirmative sign. All disappeared. We were once more in the Chinese room, with the three assistants seated in the same poses.

"So, my Doctor friend," said Andréas, answering my silent demand, speaking slowly as his face froze and the fire of his eyes became unbearable, yet retaining his fraternal love: "Work, work, work! And will!"

"Ah!" And the thick rawkish voice of Tsoun-Ring fell without echo in the heavy laden air. "We, the sons of Heaven, we remain immobile and through its secret essence, the Way comes to us. But you, the red-faced men, your hearts are ablaze. Who has taken the shortest route?"

"Powerful Brother, ancient and very wise," Andréas said, "Tell me what is the Name? It is the Word - What is the Way? It is Motion -What is Motion? It is Life - What is the result of the Way? The innumerable number of human beings, which means Truth."

Tsoun-Ring lifted his hand asking for a pipe. But midnight had just rung. The young secretary entered. As I bowed and said goodnight, the old prince slowly turned facing the wall while Andreas went on smoking in the opaque atmosphere.

XXXV
THE PYRAMID

I had always thought that whatever might be the number of divergences among the doctrines manifesting during a given time, there must certainly be among them enmical sisters, a common link, a secret architecture and a profound armature which would prove that seemingly they are merely the discordant resonances of the same teaching which is inaudible to the masses, but perceptible to a few.

That evening, I was trying to obtain from Andreas the indication which would permit my understanding at least one example of this secret unity which is the organizer in the metaphysical world. Between Alfred Fouillee, Secrétan and Henri Bergson for example; between Taine, Péguy and the Baron Seilliere; between the *Action Francaise*, the *Democratie* and *Clarté*, a totally impartial mind first finds similarities, then beneath them one finds some points of contact situated in the penumbra region where the classic disciplines of the intellect, the romantic bursts of passion and the regimes of the will fade out but from whence the Sun of the Spirit slowly rises. I was attempting to systematize the diverse arguments of thinkers, and Andreas listened to me patiently while here and there he interpolated a few clarifying remarks.

"Any rule," said he among other things, "is outwardly bitter but sweet within; on the other hand any caprice gives the opposite sensations. Any passion wears one out, while an act regenerates according to the quality of its motives and everything vacillates alternatively from one extreme to the other. Consequently, truth does not belong only to the intellectual order. A brute can grasp it at the moment when it escapes from an open-minded thinker. Truth does not dwell here or there; it is neither this nor that; it is not this combined with that; neither can analysis, synchresis, synthesis nor analogy describe or grasp it with infallibility. The total picture of a tree is neither obtained from top to bottom, nor from root to top; neither by turning around it, not even if it were possible to be in its vital core. The prehension of truth consists of a series of experiments on phenomena and on concepts which do closely resemble those of chemical manipulations. So, there is a psychological catalyst as well as a philosophical catalyst; an affinity exists between sentiments and between ideas; a passionate crisis resembles the struggle of ions in the atom, and inspiration is the spark which combines heterogeneous bodies.

"In what part of the Gospel would I find insights concerning this point?"

"Here and there," answered Andréas. "In the parable of the virgins, the one of the wedding of Cana, and perhaps the one regarding the story which happened to the Holy Family during their sojourn in Egypt. Let me tell it to you.

"You know that because of the hostility of the inhabitants, the Family had to change their residence several times, finally settling in the vicinity of a small fisherman's village near the Great Pyramid. At the base of this monument, nomads of a totally distinct type from the natives were camping. They spoke a strange idiom among themselves, and they did not mix with the villagers, though they did succor their sick. It was believed that they originated from the Numidian West where the Bedouins live, though they did bear more resemblance to the ancient Nineveh invaders

"They were constantly observing the stars, and the peasants had noticed that whenever they left a place or returned to it, no trace of their camels' tracks could be found in the sands. It was believed that they had discovered ancient subterranean caves. They were feared.

"Their servants who went to the village daily to draw water at the well and to buy grain or fruits had soon heard of the arrival of the poor Jewish family. Both the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph on his way to work, had met a few of these nomads and told them their story during an exchange of conversation.

"One evening our exiled Family had gone out to the Pyramids. The sun was setting. In the shadow of these enormous stone triangles the fires in the Bedouin tents were shining red. This was on the fringe of the desert. The world where immensity is petrified, where thunder and wind hold sway, where solitude engulfs the traveler, leaving him denuded face to face with himself. Black kites hovered in the glorious sky whose declining splendour colored the old patched robes with royal pomp. The tall, bearded Bedouins one after another would stand and salute the elderly Joseph and his taciturn young wife and to play with the little blond child.

"This youngster had already surprised them. One day, from afar, they had seen a lioness lick his feet; and at other times, the usually timorous fennec would come out of his hole in full daylight to follow him. They had noticed that najas and cerastes had left their thorny bramble retreats, and other peculiar things. Finally, one of them asked Joseph for the birth date of this bewitching child.

"While his father and mother were visiting, the little Jesus, in the shelter of a rock, seemed to amuse himself sketching lines in the sand with the help of a reed; then he ran to the eldest Bedouin and brought him over to admire his handiwork as so many children do when they have achieved a fragile masterpiece. Hardly had the old man with the impassive face looked at the design than he paled and quickly bent down toward the abstruse geometry. There he saw within an isosceles triangle, the plan of the inner chambers existing in the Pyramid. The crypt, the King's Chamber and the Queen's Chamber; the passages, the well and everything else. These nomads were the only ones who knew of this inner and secret construction. Heir to the antediluvian traditions, they knew that the Pyramid and the Sphinx are the stone books within which the patriarchs of old had consigned the key to all knowledge. Its geodesic position, its orientation, its outer and inner measurements, the angles of its intersections and its corridors, the actual place of its chambers -all give the elements of general and terrestrial astronomy, of geography and of sociology; also those of philosophy and psychology...."

"But," I interpolated, "the writings of Bruck, those of Piazzini-Smith and of Lagrange give us all that information." "Yes," Andreas answered, "but these scientists have not told everything. Besides which, at the time of the Ptolemys, no one had even an inkling of those things. So when our nomad saw, perused, and measured the sketch of the little child and found it to be exact, he was dumbfounded. He felt awed and frightened." "Yes, I can understand it," I exclaimed. "I can well imagine how a man who has thrashed ideas all his life, who has had to overcome passion, who has met and conquered various gods, finally having attained Certitude, finds his treasure to be in the grasp of a little child who possesses the miracle, when for

him any miracle is but the result of secret formulae. How his entire being must have crumbled!"

"Yes," Andréas went on. "It is always to the most solid mountain that an earthquake causes the greatest damage. And, to finish my story, when the little child had considered his work to have been sufficiently admired, he completed his sketch by tracing within the triangle, new lines which showed a cross, identical to the one which would be erected thirty years later by the Jewish executioners on the Mount of the Skull. Without a word, he went on pointing out certain guiding marks to the Bedouin. After having measured and calculated them, the dark face of the adept blanched and he bowed low, kneeling at the feet of the mysterious babe. But he, just like an ordinary child, sat next to the frightened man and began playing with the fringe of his coat."

"Your story is extraordinary," I said. "Does it not concern the ancestors of the Rose-Croix of the 17th Century, the particular school which claims its direct lineage from Enoch, son of Cain; the strong centralizer: the one who belongs to Elias, which means 'he who tends toward the Heights,' the growth which develops between hope and self-mastery?"

"That," answered Andreas, "is another legend. What I wanted you to understand is how this Libyan solitaire, possessor of all the combined elements from which truth is made, was able to apprehend and see that truth. Think it over!"

"Just think, on the one hand here was Nature, the sunset, the secular monuments, and a few men who study them; and then three strangers who studied nothing -and who never spoke. Two of them are there to protect the third. This one is the smallest, the least detected of all three, and yet it is while he is playing that he shows the way to Truth. Then what?" I asked.

"Your analysis is complete," answered Andréas. "That is the way one finds Truth. When you do not understand me it is because you cannot stop your reasoning. There are times when one must cease to reason in order to simply see.¹ That is why woman understands better than man the intuitive truths from which the original or basic ways of Truth are formed. May God grant that she does not lose this privilege, that she may not start reasoning as men do. Yes, one must use one's reason, but with measure and at times only. Moreover, one must prevent self-blindness. One must stop the mental machine from spinning around; start looking, probing, feeling, sensing Life and begin to live and love. This is the method, Doctor, which is not a method; the one which is utilized only by those who have exhausted all other methods."

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¹ T.N.: to see in depths

XXXVI
AVE MARIA

Andréas and Stella had recently returned from a trip to Poland. They had been the guests of a grand seigneur who had taken them through his vast land holdings. Andréas had brought back various rare plants, also a certain kind of mistletoe from which he wanted to extract some yet unknown medicaments. He spoke to me at length about their preparation and then our conversation deviated to discussing the Polish people, whom he praised highly.

"Have you noticed, Doctor," he tells me, "how much these people love the Holy Mother of God ... the 'swienta Matka Boza'?" "In fact," Stella interpolated, "all classes of society are very devoted to the Virgin except among the intellectuals who have been going to Germany to study. It is also curious to note that the popular cult, the one which springs from the masses, almost always finds its birth in the plains or in the forests where there are a great many oak trees."

"Yes," I answered. "They have their famous Czenstochowa pilgrimage as we had the Black Virgin of Chartres, in the now extinct Beauceron forest in ancient times. In Brittany, where the Virgin is really loved, there are numerous groves of oak. At Meudon, where the seminarists of Fleury erected a statue of the Virgin, they placed it inside an oak."

"But," objected Stella, "what about Lourdes, La Salette, le Puy-en-Velay. They are mountain sites."

"Yes," answered Andréas, "but these centers were created from Above. They do not spring from man."

"Besides, all the miraculous virgins of the plains are black; and they are usually worshipped in caverns. What is the reason?" I asked.

"My dear Doctor. You know that oak, mistletoe and crypts all go together. You well know that it is from the most nocive substances that one extracts the finest medicines. The mistletoe is a parasite -the oak is a tormented tree; for instance the olive tree suffers a lot while growing and yet it is the tree which gives the oil that we use as a symbol of peace."

"What do you mean, the olive tree suffers?"

"Of course; haven't you ever looked at an olive tree? Electricity is made from coal. When the ancients wanted to bring one or another of the heavenly fires down, they operated in crypts. You must know it as well as I do, being that you have studied the mysteries. Here, do tell us about your concepts about the Virgin; you certainly know a lot of theories."

"I do know many, but not one which satisfies me," I answered.

"Please tell us anyway. Then Andréas will inform you," Stella said encouragingly.

Upon receiving a sign of approbation from Andréas, I said, "There are two kinds of theories. The one where the Virgin is conceived as a symbol and the ones where she is considered as a living force, personal or impersonal. The first theories are philosophical systems which are derived more or less from Platonism and are of no interest to me. For me, ideas are not abstractions, they have a form, a substance, an energy. So I shall stick to the second theories.

"You must have noticed that all popular beliefs concerning either the Virgin or the forces of nature give to all forms of the Invisible, a personality. For instance, there is a religious legend which exists on earth and which is prevalent in all religions: A virgin giving birth to a Saviour.

"Yes, the people have always accepted this belief; but some scholar declared it to be merely a symbol. Then each school of initiation has wanted to retain this symbol for its exclusive use...."

"Oh, Doctor...." Andreas interrupted. "The initiates don't possess the whole Truth, and luckily there are some among them who are impartial and tolerant. One must give justice where justice is due. Please continue," he said, noticing my stupefaction.

"I have read in books written by alchemists that they considered the Philosopher's stone as the image of the Word within the mineral; also that their real primary matter was according to them, the Virgin. Robert Fludd explains it. A Brahman from the Dekkan taught me that the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and the virgin exist within man. According to him, the Father is the root of the will; the Son is the point of the projected will; the Virgin is the form which in the imagination nourishes this exteriorized point; and the Spirit is the vibration of the whole system."

"I know this theory," Andreas told me. "It is approximately the same as the one by Sri Srimat Sankaracharya in his *Ananda Lahari* regarding the relationship between Siva and his spouse."

"Among the orthodox Brahmans one finds the Maya, the universal illusion," I added pedantically. "Maria is Maya having received the R -which is the sign of one's very own existence."

"This is an opinion which I think comes from Fabre d'Olivet," Andreas said. "but how does he explain why the Brahmans want to run away from Maya while the Christians on the contrary, want to rush into the arms of Maria?"

"I haven't read anything about this," I answered.

"My opinion is, Doctor, that the oriental wants to escape from evil by escaping from life, from change, from the state of becoming; that he finds refuge or tries to find refuge in the zero, the naught. The Christian, on the other hand, tries to escape from evil by ascending to another state of being or level of existence."

"That is true," I exclaimed. "I understand. Although Mariah signifies celestial space, place of absolute life, she is the mother of the Word, though His creature, since it is she who furnishes Him (as one might say) the substance for His unfoldings. In the grammar of d'Olivet the name is the Father; the Word is the Son; the tie or relationship is the Spirit; and the visible sign is the Virgin."

"Oh! It really was not necessary to bother about learning Sanskrit, Hebrew, and making calculations to find that out. What you have just said is to be found in every French prayer book!" Stella said.

Andréas chided her, smiling. "How demanding you are! Haven't you looked for a long time for what was right before you? And I, haven't I traveled thousands of miles instead of just reaching out? Let him be -nothing is wasted."

And turning toward me:

"This is what I would do, if I were you. I could of course tell you lengthy stories about all the Mayadevis, the Kouan-Yins, the Saktis, the Hiram and all Myriams imaginable. If I do not do it, you know that it is not because I want to play the role of initiator or to keep you in suspense; it is because I want to save you time. So, look about you, find what Nature and the crowds who obey the vital instinct have elaborated upon. Nowhere else in the world is the Virgin venerated more than in Europe. How is this cult expressed? Through the Ave Maria, which is extracted from the Gospels; through the litanies and several items which are special parts of the liturgical feasts."

"It is true," I answered. "The *Ave Maria* includes the salutation of the Angel and the salutation of Elizabeth already found in the liturgy of Saint James the Minor as well as in the Antiphonal of Saint Gregory the Great. Baronius tells us that the third part dates from the Council of Ephesus in 431, except the words: "Now and at the hour of our death," which are attributed to the Franciscans. I believe the prayer has been imported from Alexandria; and to have been introduced in France by King Louis-leGros. The *Ave Maria* really springs from apostolical Christianity."

"How erudite you are!" Stella smiled.

"Scholarly erudition only! But what is the real reason for the suppression of the worship of the Virgin in Protestantism? Why did Cromwell forbid the reciting of the Ave? I believe it has a vital importance since Jacob Boëhme, king among Protestant mystics, has brought her back to life under the name of Sophia. It is true that the pastors persecuted him."

"Protestantism," Andréas stated as usual without a word of criticism, "Protestantism is excellent because due to the spirit of liberty which animates it, it goes forward; but -there is a big but -its founders, while cultivating self-examination, have also cultivated rationalism and rationalism per se slowly undermined-the belief in the divinity of Christ. All the Reformation followers of the 16th century had this conviction; today a great many among them, those versed in Exegesis deny it and they see Jesus as the most advanced man, a social reformer, an adept, a student of the Egyptians or Hindus, and even as a myth. This actual state of blindness has been prepared underhandedly by certain beings for the past three centuries, due to the misapprehension of the true dignity of the Virgin. That answers the how of your question, Doctor, but the why is much too difficult to comprehend."

I was rather startled to find that a man as wise and as learned as Andréas would profess the common popular version on Christ and the Virgin. But while Stella was serving tea, he said in answer to my unvoiced thoughts:

"Don't think, Doctor, that I would dare express or affirm mere simple opinions. If I tell you these things it is because I know them to be absolutely true."

I wanted to ask: How do you know them? What is your criterion? But he added:

"All is alive, nothing dies. Truth comes to him who seeks it with all his might!"

We drank our tea in silence. He offered me some tobacco and asked me to give him an outline of the orthodox doctrine regarding the Virgin Mary as taught by the Roman Catholic church.

"According to them," I answered, "the Virgin is the first among all creatures; she is queen of angels and of men, conceived without sin by the grace of the Almighty, in view of the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and she is still a Virgin. She is Mother of God because her Son is God, though He does not derive His divinity from her. Her Assumption to Heaven took place on the same day as she was crowned by Her Son, in soul and body. She receives the cult of hyperdulia, the veneration which she deserves. She is the canal of all descending graces, consequently of all ascending prayers too. Her Son never refuses her anything. The Greek Church teaches the same doctrine."

"I remember having read many books about it," Stella said. "It was at the time I knew Eliphaz Levi, about 1872. That sort of dates me, doesn't it! Poor Eliphaz already had dropsy; he liked to go out with me. He lived at the end of the Rue de Sevres which was still country like at that time. Plaisance was all swampland; there were roadside inns along the road to Meudon where one used to lunch and drink white wine. I ordered some Clavicules from him; he would make them in color, design the letters and make the sketches. As soon as I had been able to sell one of these manuscripts at a profit for him, he would quickly invite me and spend some of those Louis; he remained a bohemian student though his beard was now white. What wonderful hours of relaxation these were!" And Stella smiled at her husband as she recollected these old memories.

"And now, I'm just doting -how old I must be! But I wanted to tell you that Eliphaz Levi had been a deacon; the enfant terrible of the seminary. Under the name of Abbe Constant when he was about thirty or thirty-four years old, he had published his book, *The Mother of God*, which he had loaned me."

"Oh, forgive me for interrupting you, but do you mean to say that you possessed some of Eliphaz Levi's manuscripts? Do you still have some?"

"I saw him illuminating a dozen Clavicules calligraphically, but I don't know what became of them. You know," and she turned adoringly toward Andréas, "it's been a long time since any of these things have meant a thing to me. Anyway, in this book, Eliphaz deacon, made a synopsis of the theological doctrines on the Mother of God. He quoted Saint Bonaventure and Galatinus. Making use of an oratorical style, he explained everything you just mentioned, in detail; he described the Virgin from the historical angle, in her theological essence; commenting on the 8th chapter of *Proverbs* and showing her in her mysterious role of intercessor, and along with Marie d'Agreda, he referred to her as the Jerusalem of the *Apocalypse*, as the bride in the *Song of Songs*, and as the symbol, 'model' of the Church."

"It is Saint Epiphanius in the 4th century who was the first to make the correlation between the Virgin and the Bride of the *Song of Songs*. Saint Bernard developed the theme. Marie d'Agreda more or less copied Saint Bonaventure who wrote on the Virgin:

The Commentary on the Salve Regina, A Little Psalter, The Praises, and The Mirror. The latter treatise is a commentary on the *Ave Maria*. *The Louanges* (Praises) give the explanation of the Figures of the Ancient Testament: The Fountain of Paradise, the Tree of Life, the Paradise, the Ark of the Covenant, the Rainbow, the Dove, Jacob's Ladder, the Burning Bush, the Vase of Manna, the Tau

of the Brazen Serpent, Aaron's stick, the Star of Balaam, the Temple, Judith, Esther, etc....."

"All of these of course are figures of the Celestial Virgin," Andréas said. "If you are curious, Doctor, you may go on studying these from the symbolic standpoint as well as from the hieroglyphics of the letter. However, remember that any knowledge acquired through reason alone vanishes."

Stella added: "I have read the *Mystic City* of Marie d'Agréda in Spanish. It is beautiful, while the French translations are mere sweetish marshmallows. This Dominican nun sings dithyrambic praises of the Virgin...."

"Which only satisfied you halfway," added Andréas. "You have Huguenot blood in your veins. That which Marie d'Agreda relates is quite true, but one should give her vision its true value.

But, do go on enumerating your facts. I will tell you my ideas later."

Stella continued: "Still, *The Mystic City* has its uses. It shows the ideal life to be led by a young girl, a wife or a mother; it also indicates how Heaven can be brought into our daily life...."

"Have you any other ideas?" Andréas asked.

"No," I answered. "They are mere repetitions. Saint Ambrose and St. Epiphanius are the first ones who teach the Immaculate Conception from the two standpoints of 'original sin' and of actual sin. St. Bernard, Jacques Sanazar and Mr. Olier only repeat one another."

"What about the non-Catholic mystics?"

"I only know Boëhme and his school: Law, Gichtel, Pordage and Frankenberg. They hardly mention the Virgin. According to them, she merely furnished the material substance for Christ's body and His human nature; and that her soul was an emanation of the Virgin Sophia, part of the Nature-essence, but only after the conception of her Son. As of her self they state she is only a holy woman, who does not participate in any of the divine prerogatives -And now, won't you please tell me something?" I asked, after a minute's silence.

"Listen, Doctor, permit my not judging any of the theories you have exposed. I shall simply tell you my opinion. It is up to you to compare, judge and decide. It is your duty to do so; these are grave matters. But this is how I see it. When the Word took upon Himself a body, in sheer kindness, out of compassion, He had to measure the weakness of physical matter. They say that the sword wears out the scabbard. If this applies to men, how much more does it apply to the body destined to become the instrument of the Almighty, which had to be tempered, oh, so purely! It was absolutely necessary for the physical Mother of Christ destined to be the instrument of this miracle, to be exempt from any taint of ordinary organic matter. Thus she is 'The Queen of the Saints' as she is the 'Queen of Angels' for having remained pure after having crossed the mire."

"I am getting a new perspective!" I added as if in answer to Andreas' silent query. Andréas went on. "As far as we are concerned, it is of no consequence, that, as the Church teaches, for Mary to have been created pure at the moment of her first contact with the Earth fifteen years before the birth of the Word, nor that, as the protagonists of reincarnation claim, she came many, many times on Earth living repeatedly a pure, saintly life in preparation for the high glory of her last incarnation."

"Now I can understand why Boëhme calls her 'Salvation in the Valley of Tears' and another calls her 'Purified Affliction.'" Andréas pursued as if he had not heard my comments.

"That is why she is the road that leads to Christ. Regardless of the theory that one follows, the fact remains that the Virgin has wholly and always fulfilled the Law."

"The Fathers of the Church and Vintras also give her the title of 'Gate of Heaven,'" Stella added.

"I surmise that the title conferred upon her in the Litanies as well as those in the liturgical hymns are something more than poetical praises?"

"Certainly!" Andréas answered as he stood up. "I repeat, everything is true, but on its own level. The reasons for these titles are to be found implicitly in the Angelic salutation. I will tell you about them later."

He then went into his study to write a belated note. Stella meanwhile continued instructing me. "You see, there are three parts in this prayer. One said by the angel, another by a privileged person, the Mother of the Precursor, and the third invented by pious men.... Each of these three parts is divisible into two sentences, and the Amen terminates the septenary. Thus, the number seven which has played such a role in her life is found here once more."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Andréas told me that at seven she received the intuition of her mission in life, that at fourteen she married, and at sixty three she was crowned."

"I see that it is a complete planetary cycle. '*Hail Mary, full of grace*' -is the prostration; *The Lord is with thee* -is the divine radiation; *Blessed are thou* -is multiplicative energy. *The fruit of thy womb*, Jesus is the solar heart of the planetary system. *Holy Mary, pray for us* - calls for celestial kindness; *at the hour of our death* -brings back the conducting guides of death: Anubis, the psychopomp Hermes, and Yama. Amen, is the form of the number seven which according to Boëhme incorporates all desires and...."

Andréas' sudden return into the room stopped short my hermetic recapitulation. He sat down and resumed the conversation from where his wife had left off.

"The seven is the number found most often on this earth. It has the closest rapport with the law of human life -but that does not concern us for the moment. Please observe first of all that it is the Angel who salutes the Virgin; then it is the worthy woman who bestows the praise due her, and it is the sinners who elect her. If you prefer, it is the Angel who shows us what she is before God (from God's standpoint). Elizabeth tells us where she stands among humans, while the third part is the irresistible conclusion of the two previous ones."

"In that case, you do advise the cult of the Virgin, or hyperdulia?" I asked.

"My dear Doctor, I never prescribe. Those who feel that they should ask the Virgin to transmit their prayers are not wrong. That is all I know."

"Why don't you tell us the rest," Stella asked.

"The *Ave Maria* has a different interpretation and a different meaning in Latin, French, Italian or in any other language; but please note, Doctor, only in the sense of the human speech. In the kingdom of divine speech there is but one meaning. The language of that kingdom is taught by the Spirit. We must prepare ourselves to

receive His teachings through works and by actions. This is the whole mystery simplified. The Virgin was not a feminist; she never presided over a Masonic lodge, neither did she furnish copy to daily newspaper columns. She had been an obedient child; was married quite young without having been asked her opinion. As a woman she was suspected by her husband -a victim of the neighbors' whispering campaigns and subjected to domestic work. As a mother she was condemned to deep anxieties crowned by the most frightful dolours. As a widow she remained active and charitable, still maintaining a home for the apostles. Her life was obscure, ordinary, and anti-intellectual.

"Hence those who can best be heard by her are those of the same caliber; the poor workers, whose pitiful lives are spent between fatigue and the worries of the morrow's bread. Those people never study numbers nor mantrams. Their prayers are a cry from their poor crushed hearts. It is they who are close to the kingdom of the Word, and Heaven listens to their prayers much better than to those of initiates."

"Then Catherine Emmerich is right when she states that the Virgin is the model of womanhood?" Stella asked.

"She is the model of humanity. It is difficult to speak of someone without judging him. May she forgive me for saying something not quite true or which might shock you, Doctor."

"I think I am wise enough to reject that which is beyond my comprehension. But why does the Angel Gabriel call her by name and say '*full of grace*'?"

"Regarding her name, I shall not say a thing, Doctor. That is a science best left alone and anyhow I don't know much about it. But her title: *full of grace*, means that anything within Mary had been renovated, recreated by Heaven. She did not pass through a physical death, as you know. And, from the central light of her soul, through the marvelous organs of her spirit down to the smallest molecules of her physical body, everything within her had been cleansed of any taint of selfishness."

"How could that be?" I asked.

"As an example, when a man gives in to anger and hits another, the muscles of his arm which gave the blow worked, fulfilled their purpose and are strengthened. But, as St. Martin stated, the intention or the desire which propelled them being wrong, their response had dangerous consequences which permeated and contaminated all the successive motions fulfilled by these muscles. In order to purify that man, it is necessary for Heaven not only to provoke a moral conversion, but also to 'convert' all these muscular fibers. Now, coming back to the Virgin -if she spoke little and if amiability, simplicity and her natural dignity reached the stage of beauty, - it is because all the evil which can be caused by verbosity or an unbecoming attitude had been removed and replaced by grace, through the gratuitous light descended from heaven."

"I now understand, Maitre, why the Litanies name her Mirror of the Trinity, Seat of Wisdom, Mother of Divine Grace, and also why Saint Bernard calls her Gate of Heaven and Ark of the Covenant."

"There are many other subtle reasons for these titles, Doctor, but believe me, don't become entangled in those far-flung speculations. Of what use would it be for you to know how she is a star above the universal sea; to which invisible ceremonies these titles of Gate of Crystal, Hall of Feasts, Mystical Rose appertain; and in which cosmic drama she plays the role of 'Tower of David,' 'Tower of Ivory'

and of 'House of Gold'? One should not be too curious, that is a lesson I have learned at my expense."

"Then we should not even study?"

"Don't go to extremes! But do that which is within your possibilities. Keep your studies confined to what concerns your present life; the field is vast enough. But referring again to our present discussions, you must understand that if the Angel tells her: *The Lord is with thee*, it is because he sees her as the humblest among all creatures...."

"I read something to that effect, a long time ago in a Janseniste manuscript which states the same thing," interrupted Stella.

"It is also because, in essence, she is indissolubly tied to her Son by her love. Also because, not only during her known terrestrial life, but now and always she is in constant communication with Him, not through some magnetic or mental effort but because of her love. It is this presence of God which has permitted her to bear such sorrows and to overcome so many material as well as moral tests. I believe, Doctor, that you have not yet read the Gospels as one should."

"Gracious me! The Gospels, as do all sacred books, hold several meanings, which one can discover by means of literary and numerical calculations on words, the numbers of letters, chapters and verses. As each language has its own hieroglyphics aspect, the ordinary translations are susceptible to these manipulations, but the Latin, the Greek and Aramaic versions are still better...."

"You are going too fast, Doctor," interrupted Andréas. "For such a study to give true results, it would be necessary for you to know the science of numbers or that of letters. No one, do you understand, no one even among the most reputed scholars has more than just an inkling of the alphabet of these sciences. Can you gauge the certitude in the Theosophical operations, the transpositions, the magical squares and others...?"

As I remained silent, quite downcast, Andréas went on.

"The Gospels do not have several meanings, as you occultists understand that term. The different meanings found in sacred works are comparable to new phrases which would appear in a cryptographic text read with various cipher keys.

"The Gospel is ever *One*, always centralized. In it, we find the center of the plane wherein our spiritual life unfolds. The significance of the words of Christ appears to use more or less elevated, either profound or universal, according to the distance which separates us from the true center."

"Do you now understand, Doctor, why every word of that book is absolute?"

"That's true," Stella said. "When I am slightly tired, I say: I am terribly tired! That is not exact. We constantly apply extravagant, hyperbolic terms to insignificant things. The Gospel, on the other hand, gives each sentiment, each idea and each fact its exact connotation. That is what men of letters refer to, as its simplicity."

As I acquiesced, nodding my head, surprised at not having thought of these things before, Andréas continued.

"The Angel salutes her. That is politeness. Do you know what politeness is, or rather what it should be?"

Laughingly I answered, "It is feigning concern when asking a bore how he feels."

Andreas continued seriously: "It also means pretending sham interest to someone who annoys you and whom you don't like; your politeness then is a lie, it comes from the powers of darkness and engenders darkness. Of course it is not dreadful, but if we do not watch over little things, how shall we attempt doing the big ones? The salutation of Gabriel is really animated by a truly sincere sentiment. What are the qualities of angels? Obedience and innocence. Otherwise they would not be angels. Since Gabriel salutes her, it is because he recognizes in that young woman a purity and an obedience greater than the ones he is endowed with. In fact the spirit of Mary was pure when she came to this world and remained pure all her life."

"Then you do accept the Immaculate Conception?"

"Now, Doctor, if a sick woman were to have a child, would he be healthy? Being that the character, the temperament, the mentality and the human nature of Christ were perfect, could the one who was to be the laboratory of this perfect diamond be sullied in the least degree?"

"What about the words: *full of grace*, what do they mean? They certainly do not refer to her physical attributes?"

"Why not, Doctor? The blessed Virgin was very beautiful, not as one conceives that term usually, but as it is perceived by a few rare artists. The intensity of her inner life molded her features which were extremely mobile, and as she performed everything with her whole heart, her face reflected in each of her actions, the ideal model of the faculty she was using. Do I make myself clear?"

"Yes, I think so. For instance, when she prayed, to an artist she would have represented the living incarnation of Prayer; when she gave alms, she became the image of Charity, is that it?"

"That is what I meant, Doctor. There is something else, though. That which the Church calls grace is a force which Heaven sends us gratuitously, even when we think we deserve it because of some good works we have formerly done. For you, Doctor, grace is the operation through which Heaven replaces a physical, mental, astral or any other kind of cell within us which is sick, by a pure cell originating from its Treasury. In the Virgin all the visible and invisible organisms had thus been renovated; there remained nothing, if I may express myself so, except the usual woof or thread of Nature's work."

"I remember having read something to that effect in Henricus Madathanus," I said.

"Very likely, Doctor. The Protestants, the first Rose-Croix loved the Virgin."

"And isn't there some tie-in between the graces she was endowed with and the nine Choirs of Angels?"

"Yes, there is one according to Catholic beliefs. Saint Bonaventure spoke of it. But, may I repeat, it is only a detail still too difficult for us to understand."

"But, you haven't told me a thing regarding the name of Marie."

"Oh, Doctor! You know as well as I do about all the various Mystico-Hebraic glossologies which this name brought about. I don't want you to waste any time. So believe me, we will discuss this a few centuries hence."

"If only Providence grants me the joy of finding you again!" I replied.

"Ah, that would be a great favor!" he snorted laughingly. "Why speak of it! Let's not have such ideas, Doctor."

"Oh," Stella softly injected with a reproachful tone. "Why do you say that? You only hurt his feelings."

But he, standing up, went over to her and held her tightly. "All right, Doctor," he said gravely. "I promise you, since you want to go along with me, that I shall ask Heaven to give you, or rather to give us the strength to always do its will. That is the surest way I know that we may always remain together."

I stood up. Something filled the room -something lighter than air. It was as if effluvias of spring were dilating my being. I became insensible to thought. I relaxed as if I were in a bath of rejuvenating light. It was not the first time that similar sensations had unexpectedly pierced my whole being. The purity and strength derived therefrom surpassed all I had even imagined upon reading the account of ecstasies. I was not the only one to experience the charm of these inexpressible feelings. And always, after having experienced one of these too brief paradisaic moments, I noticed that I had acquired a sort of prestige and held some sort of indefinable influence upon others. My patients remarked that they felt much better, that they felt both a physical and moral relief, the cause of which neither they nor myself could explain. A few minutes later, Andréas began smoking again and continued his instructions.

"The blessing which the Angel Gabriel attributes to Mary, was the special grant of which she was the recipient. She was the first creature in whom was fulfilled the mystery which the Church calls: the inner birth of Christ. She is the perfect prototype of the obedient, humble and loving being. In reality, women or rather the entire feminine side of the universe lives much more in conformity with the Law than the masculine. So, the life of the Virgin always and in all phases conformed wholly to this law. In short, properly speaking, it is not in the imitation of Christ that we should live; the model is far too perfect; but rather live as His Mother did."

I opened my mouth to ask the reason for such an exceptional elevation when Andréas forewarned me: "In any case, all that I tell you, are but approximations - believe me. Christ and the Virgin are mysteries; their stature surpasses our intellect. Their secret is that of creation itself. We could only discover it by discovering the wherefore of Life itself. It may be that one day the Word will reveal Himself. We shall never be worthy of that favor but if ever we do receive it, it will always be for us a gratuitous grace."

"Then the benediction of Jesus as celebrated by Elizabeth must be the expression of gratitude and love from those He saves?" "Yes, quite simply so, Doctor. And yet so few think about such a simple thing! Pious people, or rather the so-called pious, know how to ask for something when they are in need, but they almost always forget to offer thanks. We must do so. Not that Heaven takes offense at our impoliteness, but because gratitude finds grace in its eyes, and always because it shows a good example to the beings it is our mission to educate."

"The third part of the *Ave Maria* seems very clear to me," I said. "The holiness of the Virgin is understood from the titles with which the Angel Gabriel greets her. But, is the role of intercessor attributed to her, real?"

"Yes, Doctor. You know that everything which takes place on Earth leaves a trace. The Virgin having lived here; the elements of her body having been derived from physical matter and the luminous trail which her departure produced, permits us

to find her tracks much easier than those of her Son, for example, whose physical body was foreign to this planet."

"A Druidic-Triad makes a similar statement regarding the body of the Word."

"That is an old intuitional belief," retorted Andreas. "But we will speak of it at another time."

"You are right, it is late, but before I leave may I ask a final question? Why has the Third Order added: 'Pray for us, poor sinners, now and at the time of our death?'"

"You do not know your true self, Doctor. The actual field of our conscience is quite limited. It only comprises a small part of our being. So when we pry, our physical body participates in the act; the spirit of its material cells goes out here, and there, in search of light, just as a dog begs a morsel, or as a sleepwalker tries to find a lost object. So, our spirit finds much quicker the traces of light which emanated once upon a time from a physical body similar to ours. Hence, our prayer to the Virgin is more easily heard."

"But, what about 'at the hour of our death?'" Stella asked.

"You of course know that after death, an individual judgment takes place. Justice is thereby represented at this trial by the various genii whose mission it was to rule us, protect us and help us. They tell whether we have used their help or not. But Heaven always intervenes to alleviate our mistakes or to make excuses for our negligences. So, the form of Heaven, or the ray from the Absolute closest to the Earth is the Virgin. That is why religions represent her as the helper of the dying."

I thanked my hosts and said farewell.

The noise of the milk-wagons descending from Montfermeil to Paris announced the approach of dawn. I slowly wended my way home in the cinder-tinted morn via streets which were glistening under the rain, and reflected the many silhouettes of the street sweepers at work.

XXXVII THE VIRGIN

We were still under the spell of the peculiar charm of this December day. Andréas and I were walking back and forth in his garden, watchfully protected by the dog, in the midst of the clamor of bickering little sparrows. We had been discussing Olive Schreiner who had just passed away in the Transvaal. We also had discussed the feminists, the so-called 'modern girl,' and the 'old-regime' grandmothers. We concluded that the adamant amazon of this day, regardless of her diplomas, her harangues, her congresses, her newspapers and leagues was headed toward a very superficial kind of influence, more incoherent and external rather than lasting. While the woman of the past, whose recognized kingdom extended only from the cellar to the attic had a far more reaching, more effective and healthier influence. Once again, women seemed to mistake the shadow for the prey.

"Yet," I objected, "there is a lot of abuse of authority such as legal abuse on the part of fathers, guardians, and husbands. What about the unwed mothers? What about illegitimate children?"

"I am well aware of that," Andréas answered, shaking his head. "A lot of tears have been shed, a lot of lives have been wrecked by prejudices, by cupidities and by the powers that be. Yet, all those distressing facts have been of some use, all of them without exception. Ah, if only men could see what women really are! If women could understand men; if they could weigh each other without any preconceptions of hate or love, how much pain they would be safeguarded from!"

"How could it be done?" I asked.

"All they need do, is to look at the Virgin!" and Andréas steeped in thoughts walked a few steps away. "You cannot imagine what a marvelous creature the Virgin was! No artist, in truth none, has seen her; no artist has had a sufficiently awakened soul to see her. In her body were united all the beauties of the Hebraic race in which, contrary to the ethnographic opinions, the vast historical Orient had amalgamated its multiple types of beauty; the slender Egyptian figure, the desert nomad's vigor, the Chaldeic strength, the light grace of exiled maidens, the Syrian languours, all of that slumbered within her, yet each facet, perceptibly apparent, shone forth at times, according to the accelerated palpitations of the most vibrant, the most endowed inner life.

"Doubtless Cimabue has portrayed her mystery; Giotto painted her nobility; Fra Angelico gave us her ardent fervor, Lippi and Botticelli, her warm grace; Leonardo caught the subtleness of her intelligence; Bellini, her sadness; Michelangelo, her strength; Van Eyck, her suffering, while the French artists of the Middle Ages expressed her heroic virtues, and Raphael, the one who could the better comprehend: her virginity. Yet, all these were but approximate portrayals.

"You cannot conceive the unbelievable dynamics of her vitality. In the purple shadows of the little house, she shone as an ardent topaz, all the flames of enthusiasm and of intellect blazed from her eyes in those rare minutes before her long lids descending veiled the radiant rose-windows of her soul from our view. Like a tall flower-stem poised over an oil jar by the hearth or when kneading dough; no matter what lowly tasks she performed, the Virgin magnified everything and the fragrance of her presence permeated them all.

"You must have noticed that there are some people who in spite of being dressed in the cheapest mass production of ready-to-wear clothes still give the impression of being aristocrats. There are others whose hands remain expressive in spite of having been deformed by hard labor; and others whose features marked by misery or by the inclemencies of the weather and the seasons, still remain noble and rich in multitudinous expressions.

"The Virgin was like that. With her hand semi-raised and her head slightly tilted, in her sinuous smile, one saw hope, despair, poetry, despondency, fatigue or ecstasy portrayed and unfolding their infinite drama before the spectator. But her eyes, Doctor, her large profound eyes, so pure! Her eyes in which all other eyes seemed to be massed just as ships are in a port! And her voice which remained light, aerial, transparent, limpid and winged until her death, except in those rare moments when opening a door to her soul she would permit intonations of the most perfect harmonies to permeate some words with sensibilities as exquisite as they were profound! No, my friend, one cannot conceive what a marvel this woman was and I know that outside of her Son, no one has understood her. I have been given the opportunity to measure the width and breath and depth of her humility. I was permitted to understand what the motives were which kept her from ever opening her mouth to complain or to defend herself and the reason why she has constantly buried in silence all the treasures of grace, of sensibility and of tenderness with which the Father had endowed her.

"Just think, Doctor, she remained silent when scorned; silent when undergoing pains; silent in the midst of praises, veneration and admirations. No one has ever seen the Virgin shed a tear, she the Virgin; and what a Virginity! She a Mother and of what a Son! And of how many ungrateful and adopted children! And when after that, I hear women complain, and men who never suffer as much as women grumble querulously, I must take in consideration the untiring pity of our spiritual Mother so that compassion toward the sorrow of other people may rise within me. Never! No, never will anyone understand that woman!"

I ventured, "Yet, we suffer, we weep and we almost kill ourselves trying to escape from the tortures of life."

"I often tell myself that. I am well aware that the identical trouble which leaves one person unmoved may be martyrdom to another. I also know that we suffer because we do not want to suffer and in order not to suffer, we would have to trample upon our precious pride. Ah! When God grants to one of His children the redoubtable gift of reading within consciences, He should take him away from this Earth which is the vestibule of Hell! And yet, what God does is well done."

I did not know what to answer. I saw a precipice filled with floating clouds, and caught a glimpse of what terrible conflicts must have occurred between the two natures -the human and the divine -of the Master of Andréas -the Master of us all. Minutes went by; no conciliation seemed to solve these incompatibilities. Finally Andréas stood up, walked to and fro, saying:

"It is absolutely essential that we do our utmost; that sooner or later we live as Mary has done. When unhappy people will come and cry on your shoulder, do not repulse them, but neither precipitate your efforts. Superficial compassion is worthless; touching phrases are worthless too. Listen to their complaints in silence and speak only after having felt in the depths of your heart the same plough share

which tears its victims. And only then will the three words you say carry and have an effect. All problems are real and an illusion at the same time. Touch them only with clean hands and a pure heart."

"How true!" I exclaimed softly. "All our worries result from our haste. We want to possess this or that immediately, we cannot admit that our desires could be erroneous. A mother, for instance, cannot understand why her son loves a certain girl who does not appeal to her; the son cannot understand either why his mother, who is not blinded by love, checks the financial aspect or her social position. Some wives cannot imagine that their husbands would like to be loved some other way than the one they take for granted. We each think ourselves as possessing a perfect intelligence...."

"Yes, Doctor," Andréas interrupted. "We ought to sit in the last row of the school of Life, all of our life. We do not even know the alphabet of that language, far less know how to speak it. Ah! To be silent, and speak only to feed courage and spread joy around us -that is the recipe. Never domineer, never make claims!" he added with a smile.

"And, as for me," I too laughed, "not to bother others with harsh sermons on the needlessness of sermonizing...."

XXXVIII THE LOUVRE

One morning, Andreas had taken me to the Louvre to see the Camondo collection before the official opening. There was a Buddhist statue, remarkable because of a particularly rare gesture. While looking for it, we walked by an open window. In front of it an antique blue-green bronze Siamese bust stood upon a pedestal; behind it the sky of Paris in the spring spread its changing silken hues, between the classic perspectives of the Carrousel and the elegant trees of the Tuileries. And way beyond and above the end of the gray-mauve incline, the jade tinted silhouette of the robust Arc de Triomphe stood detached against the rosy mother-of-pearl of the Occident. Delightful landscape, smile of Paris! French grace, orderly, full of unexpected charms made from the nuances and inspirations clearly outlined -which arrested reveries and forced them to become thoughts.

"Look," Andréas said to me, "look at the soul of France." "Yes, I am drinking it in...."

"You still do not look deeply enough. Ah, Doctor, I have known a lot of countries - but France! Men are not aware of all that Heaven has given France!"

"Yet one wonders how it is that France seems to lead Europe into all sorts of disorders, violence or scandals?"

"First of all, Doctor, it means that by God's grace when France does anything wrong, she does it much more openly than other nations. It is a great privilege to be able to do so. Also, you do remember your alchemy, don't you? Forces must be brought to the extreme left for them to swing to the extreme right. In the athanor of the white race, France is the blood of the lion."

"Would this be the reason why, in our times and especially in our country, all the political, philosophical, religious and social groups irritate one another and become antagonistic? Would this be an example of what Boehme describes as the world of Wrath which boils over with furor till it crackles up even to the lightning Fire Flash?"

"You may use these symbols, if they suit you; they are rather true! Take a look at your own domain of medicine. Don't the most advanced tests in research seem to you to result in violating the laws of Nature?"

"You do not mean to infer that Carrel's -because those are the most hardy -are anti-vital? I see them as having surpassed the alchemists' dreams; I can even visualize a future of frightful splendour They are...."

"I see you, my dear Doctor, as going through another of your esoterism crises," Andréas interrupted with a smile. "Truth according to Nature, and truth according to God are two truths. You know very well that alchemy as seen from the standpoint of Nature brings about true scientific results; but from the standpoint of Higher-Nature, they are false."

"Yes, but Carrel's experiments are not alchemy."

"Oh, but yes, my dear Doctor. Alchemists force the mineral kingdom to live as a vegetable; today we force animal tissues to live as vegetables. Spiritually, it is a theft. What about the ensuing complications of those violated cells? How much

suffering for the sick people and for the animals! How many cries of anguish will be on the other side when they will die!"

"Ah -that must be what is meant by," and I lowered my voice, "'Do not patch an old cloak with a new piece of goods.' Isn't that so, Maitre?"

"Of course; it is all so simple. If only men were willing, Heaven would constantly send them miracles. The Father is so good, if you only knew."

And the elderly Andreas nodded his head and rounded his shoulders. The subtle breath of the Spirit of peace wafted over us in these rooms, upon the wall of which hung the splendour of the greatest efforts of superlative human culture. What a difference between these two atmospheres!

XXIX COMPIEGNE

Then one year it happened that the European political situation became terribly embroiled. One of my friends who was attached to a certain bureau in Foreign Affairs insisted that these complications had been provoked by the wife of a celebrated banker for the profit of her lover who was a cosmopolitan adventurer. He had an insatiable need of money. To satisfy him, the woman began quite an intrigue with the mistress of a sovereign. All of which resulted, after a lot of campaign by the press, in a state of highly taut public opinion to such a degree that the Chambers of three Kingdoms had to vote credits for national defense at the same time. The large bank was able to profit and cash in some hundreds of millions, and the adventurer received his money. But war had become imminent.

Andreas confirmed the truth of this story.

"Great historical catastrophes, as you must have observed, have always had insignificant, futile causes. We must give them all the attention they deserve when we are in a position to help. We French people, we have more than others the right and the duty to love our country with all of our heart. If you have been given occasional glimpses into the Invisible realm, Doctor, you must have seen how much light and generous beauty have come to Europe through France, in spite of the follies of her sons and all the mistakes of her princes. No other people has given as much uplift or elan to younger nations as ours. And also with none other has Heaven been more closely concerned than with our affairs. It is then up to us to love France not only because we are her children but because we are the children of Heaven."

"Yes, Maitre ... but what rapport is there between what you are telling me and the bedroom scandal we were discussing?"

"Let us talk medically, Doctor. If, for instance, the TongSeng of Annam establishes his diagnostics upon the relationship existing between the red globules and the light which emanates from life, from mental light with the light which emanates from the will; and if the spagyrist for the same cause seeks the rapports between mercury, salt, and sulfuric oil; and if Van Helmont analyses the tensions of archées, or principle of life; and if today the search is on the fermentation of microbes; if the magnetizer dissects fluids and if the spiritualist probes among invisible entities, that does not prove that either one or the others are entirely wrong or entirely right, because each judges from his standpoint. All of which proves that a physical phenomenon is the last link of a very long chain. It also goes to prove that the same-said phenomenon starts at the conjunction of a series of immaterial causes. To conclude, it also proves that all phenomena are developed from an imperceptible seed...."

Andreas carefully emptied his pipe and continued " ..and what you will be able to notice is that the human being is always the ground wherein all these seeds are nurtured." "What about this scandal?"

"That is quite simple. Ingratitude does not only belong to man. The beings that our grandiloquent Eliphaz Levi called *égregores* also possess that fault. The *égregores* of other peoples do not have any feeling of gratitude for the one of our country. To the contrary, they would like to enslave and kill "him" in order to enrich

themselves with his remains. The Adversary who watches for all chances to hurt, helps them all he can. They found in the three individuals we were discussing a marvelously fertile ground. These three have neither country nor religion; their god is self; and the invisible forces are going to do all in their power to make use of the selfish passions of these three people who hold the most powerful levers of social life in hand in order to reduce our country to nothing."

"I think I am beginning to understand. But, pardon my indiscretion, are you expecting to intervene in this coalition?" "Naturally, Doctor. Isn't it my duty as long as Providence has given me the means?"

I was beginning to understand Andréas. The fantastic character of such ideas formulated so placidly by a man who that evening represented so well the prototype of a retired builder, left me quite perplexed.

"Do you have three or four days at your disposal?" he asked me.

"When shall we leave?"

"Tomorrow evening at five, Gare du Nord."

"All right, I shall arrange my consultations. Half of them tomorrow and the other half next week."

The next day, I met Andréas at the station.

"Forgive me for taking a third class compartment," he said. "They are uncomfortable, but we are only going as far as Compiagne and I think I shall find the information I want on this train."

I replied as politeness decrees and we went onto the platform. As usual, Andréas walked to the end of the train, examined the locomotive, spoke to the motorman and chose an empty compartment. A peasant woman and her son climbed in, then a heavysset man with his little daughter and suitcases. The train left. It was raining. The man and Andréas exchanged compliments. The conversation covered the weather, the doubtful crops, the wheat shortage, and the badly allocated taxes. The man was a wine merchant from Epinettes. He was taking his daughter for a visit to his cousin, a farmer. It came out that he had some relatives in Compiègne.

"We are going hiking through the forest for a few days. I have heard that there were some old churches and old Roman ruins," Andréas said.

"Of course, and there also remains an old tower on the property of one of my cousins, almost on the bank of the Oise. We'll go if you want."

"Fine, but we'll have dinner together, first," Andréas said. "It is the tower where Jeanne d'Arc suffered the first stages of her calvary," he said on an aside to me.

"I cannot have dinner with you because of the child. It is a five kilometer walk to my relatives and we'd be there too late," said the wine merchant.

But Andréas pressed him to accept. We passed Chantilly with its white fences, its green meadows and comfortable houses; Coye and its factories; by the large fields and lovely copses and the amiable horizons of the Ile-de-France. We crossed the gray, tranquil Oise and reached our destination.

We dined at the Hotel de la Cloche. Appetizing cuisine, welcoming hosts and sprightly wine. Our guest was delighted, gossiped at length with his old cronies. Andréas invited everyone, passed cigars, made merry and never lost a chance of giving a word of advice or a recipe.

"You see we are lucky," he said to me. "If we had taken a second class compartment, we would not have met this man who has been for twenty years a bank messenger of the Israelite we were speaking about yesterday. He is giving me information without realizing it."

"I still do not understand what the old tower has to do with the European political situation; but you have accustomed me to incomprehensible plans. Is there a thread binding this banker, the tenor, the two women, politics, the heroine of Vaucouleurs and the places that you and I are going to hike through?"

"It is almost 481 years to the day that Jeanne d'Arc has been incarcerated where we are going in a little while," Andréas answered.

It was not very clear to me, but I kept quiet. After dinner, Andréas made his excuses, found a pretext to leave the wine merchant and promised to go and see him one of these days.

"You understand, I had to find out if Jeanne d'Arc really had been a prisoner in that tower. I had to find someone of this region and this man is a native from here and has been here for a much longer time than he could ever imagine. Now, we must be alone in this tower."

We went back to the town. It was almost eleven o'clock. We took the direction of the house that our traveling companion had pointed out to us. Just as Andréas opened the door, a dog barked, but he whistled very softly and as soon as we had entered, the watchdog, feeling secure, came to be petted.

"Keep him close to you," Andréas told me. "Hide behind these casks; do not fall asleep; don't move under any pretext, no matter what you hear or what you see; and don't smoke. There is no danger anyway."

That said, he went up in the tower. Complete silence reigned. The town clock, a teamster's cart, and an express train's whistle were the only sounds to break the peaceful quietude of the night. From time to time I felt myself dozing off, but I quickly shook myself as I had promised to keep awake.

A half hour went by.

The dog had stretched out at my feet. All of a sudden I felt him tremble. Looking around for the cause of his fright, I did not see the house, the chicken pen nor the sheds anymore. Old graystone walls had risen from the ground; in their scabbards torches were hanging from the wall. People wearing costumes of the 15th century were walking to and fro, knights, clergymen, lawyers and flunkeys. They were speaking a language difficult to understand; I recognized some Burgundian intonations and English words. I understood. Andréas was recreating in a much more difficult manner the famous "banquet of the dead" of Cagliostro. This man had turned over the wheels of time; we were 450 years back! Without preparations, without any rites, without help, only with one formidable act of will he had succeeded in invoking Jeanne d'Arc.

In fact, a few minutes later, the vision changed and in a vaulted room, I saw Andréas speaking with a young woman in the costume that painters always depict the heroine as wearing. It was not a vision because I could feel the cold stones under my hands, I could hear the voices of the interlocutors and I too joined in the conversation.

One hour later, all had vanished. The house, the courtyard, the dog were all back again. Andréas' first word was to make me promise to keep the secret about everything I had seen and all I would see or hear the following day and on succeeding days.

No need of trying to find a hotel room in this little town at 2:00 a.m. We started to walk following narrow paths through the forest and we took a rest in a clearing that Andréas discovered. In the morning, we easily found an inn and had breakfast. Andréas spoke to a few patrons, a gamekeeper, a teacher, a peasant, and I realized that he was trying to find out the site where there were the ruins of a chateau which no guidebook mentions.

After getting a supply of matches, we left the inn, taking roundabout roads, as they call it in the vernacular, in order to waylay any curiosity seekers, and we started to explore. We went to the Cistercian Priory of Saint Jean-aux-Bois, to the Benedictine convent, and to the Renardiere; all without success. The following day we visited Pierrefonds but Andréas stated that there was too much of a crowd. It was only two days later that as we emerged from the Chemin des Plaideurs, he declared that we might be nearing the end of our search. We came upon a large circular plateau or clearing -one kilometer long -strewn with silent tall ash-trees. The ground packed with moldy decaying leaves deadened the sound of our footsteps. The short phrases of the orioles hidden under the high timber, the angry screams of a jay bird flying among the lower branches and the call of the magpie perched within the foliage broke the silence intermittently.

The agrestic odor of the morel blended with the tonic perfume of the wood overflowing with sap. Through the intercolumnation of the large smooth trunks, light filtered from the blue sky while the low sun rays of the setting sun flashed like gold javelins in the hands of warring angels.

"Here is an assembly of the ancients of the forest world. Wiser than men, they do not speak much; they have seen so many pygmies appear and vanish down at their feet; they kindly receive the weak and puny creatures. Just as it happens to the Sannyasi seated in the jungle over yonder, awaiting Nirvana, so do these birds nest in their tufted hair which provides shelter and food for the little ones. Immersed in the great hospitable soul of their fatherland, their spirit contemplates and looks at the wheels of generations turning around. Days following days, snows following summers, storms following zephyrs and peoples following peoples -all of that happens around them. They know the law; they know that all obeys the great god time; the same time which permitted their being born of a tiny seed, the time which saw them grow and which at the prescribed hour already written in its invisible book will fatally send the executioner-woodcutter."

It was noon. It was siesta time for the entire forest. All of a sudden Andréas held me back. He had noticed some unusual movement in the copse three meters away. I saw something move too.

"It is a deer and two hinds," he murmured low. "They are coming back from the water hole, because the deer is behind them; or else it may be that something has frightened them out of their lair? Let us go to where they come from; we shall find water or something else."

As expected, a few minutes later, we found a little stream which widened into a pond, only to follow its capricious flow further on.

"Do you see any iris?" my teacher asked me.

"Yes - one, a little to the left."

"Fine, then I have my antidote."

Two minutes later he gave me handfuls of serpentaria, root and all to keep in my knapsack.

"Wow," said he, "we must find the ruins. We cannot see a thing in this undergrowth. We must find a strategic vantage ground, so let's follow a bridle path."

Slowly inspecting the trees attentively, he veered to the left, hit the ground with his cane and once in a while picked up some dirt.

"You see, we are searching for brushwood and snakes; hence it means dry, sandy or rocky soil, some heather and tough grass; probably some juniper, oak and birch trees. Look! There in back of you, maybe behind this fern bed. Anyhow, I think I caught sight of the barrel of a gun shining in front of us. Let's hasten...."

We hurried and eventually a gamekeeper crossed our path. Andréas acknowledged his salute and said, "Have you seen the deer near the creek a while back?"

"No," answered the man.

"He was going up the little pond while bearing to the left; he had two hinds with him."

"Ah, yes," the keeper answered. "He must have come a long ways. Some poacher must have startled him this morning."

While speaking, Andréas had taken a few steps back and run as if haphazardly into a few bunches of twigs drying on the side of the road. While regaining his equilibrium, he shouted: "Oh, a viper!" as he showed the faggots.

"Ah! They don't usually come so far," the keeper explained. "There is a whole colony of them about one kilometer from here. But we cannot see it because of the full grown trees; but over there is a large round circle of stones, all covered with brushwood. They were quarries, once upon a time. I personally never go in that direction."

"Neither shall we." Andréas sat down, offered the man tobacco, and having lit his own pipe asked about the road back to Compiègne. We exchanged civilities a little longer, then the man

saluted, touching his kepi and left us.

"Now it's up to both of us," Andréas said rubbing his hands together. "Let us go to the copeswood." As we reached it, he took the bunch of grass he had picked by the brook, gave me half of it and having tucked his trouser legs into his shoes, he twined a wreath around his ankles after having pressed the leaves.

"That way," he said, "the vipers won't bite us. But take care, watch your step; anyhow we cannot walk very fast through this."

In fact, we were stepping through such a conglomeration of nettles, hawthorn, acacias, brambles and thistles that each step seemed to be the last one we could take. Snakes of all sizes were constantly slinking away. I felt overwrought from the blistering sunlight and the heat emanating from the sun; the tall silent trees resembled battalions with immobile spears and with innumerable eyes watching our every move.

The heavysset body of Andréas weaving in and out silently frayed a path through the bramble. I was following along bathed in sweat when I heard him cry out. The terrain suddenly descended vertically and beyond the ravine we saw some ruins totally covered over with vines.

"Let us go on instead of down, there must be some remains of a postern."

We spent about three quarters of an hour making the circle and just as we were coming back to our starting place we found the remains of the pins of a drawbridge. We had to descend via the disjointed stones and come up again scaring numerous lizards. I sat down. Andréas was cutting dry branches and made several bundles of them.

"We will use them as torches."

"You mean, you intend to go down into the cellars?" I asked with apprehension.

"Of course! And if my nose tells me right, according to the odor which floats around here, we shall find something very rare indeed. Now, behave yourself, Doctor. Let us search for the stairways. Follow me."

Some enormous sections of walls remained but they were so well hidden beneath humus or covered with climbing vines; so well defended by old trees that we had to touch them to make sure. The fauna was rare and the flora unexpected. Enormous coleopters; large wasps' nests; bees having reverted to their wild stage; enormous foxgloves; prairies of ferns as tall as men; some euphorbiae, and oak trees with mistletoe.

"That is rare in France," Andréas told me. "There only remains oak-mistletoe in Menez, Brittany and the peasants guard it preciousely."

I was too busy watching my step to keep up a conversation; but he was going hither and thither without any signs of weariness, just as if he were strolling in the Tuileries.

"Now -here is the courtyard; there is the well which we won't take. The dungeon is evidently not in the center but ahead of us on the periphery, and this was the way they used to go down into the oubliettes. Let us investigate...." Halfway down the stairway Andréas took a narrow corridor hewn out of the width of the wall and we found ourselves in a subterranean chapel where we sat down.

There -a scene, similar to the preceding one, but much more dramatic, was enacted. I will not say any more. All I am permitted to tell is that a few years later, Europe entered into the most frightful cyclone that its people had ever endured.

XL
NOEL

As it sometimes happens I had done a favor for a young cosmopolitan couple, the boring consequence of which was the necessity of accepting their thanks, seemingly with delight. My hosts had decided to invite me for the *Christmas Réveillon* in one of those places in Paris where luxury is on par with good taste. The savory delicacy of the cuisine and the elegance of the diners did not shorten for me the tedious evening. As I was taking leave of my hosts, I caught sight of the powerful frame of Andréas amidst a group of men who were on their way out, too. He was in evening clothes. His companions, among whom I recognized the faces of celebrated men, accorded him the courtesies due to a very important person.

He saw me, took leave of his companions, came to me, and proposed that we might spend the next two or three hours before dawn together. He had to visit an interesting sick case, very early. Meanwhile we would go to his home and I could accompany him later. I accepted and off we went.

Andréas had lost weight. The beauty of his handsome face which was usually bathed in a halo of physical vigor was more apparent in this denuded state - due to extreme exhaustion. His hair, which he now wore long, accentuated the superhuman character of his face whose lines and planes radiated more power and more kindness than ever. The wrinkles had made deeper furrows on his noble brow around his vigilant eyes, and around his mouth with the stirring smile. But the look in his eyes remained luminous, limpid and magnificent. As usual, he questioned me in clipped, short sentences which at the first appeared to be unrelated.

"What do you think, Doctor, of the swamp in which the world is wallowing? What do your acquaintances say?"

"Nothing else than what you must know, surely," I answered, "if I gauge the diversified social levels of the people with whom I find you. Everyone complains or is irritable. It is the discouraged, the disheartened state of men of good will which appears significant to me and worries me most."

"No need to be discouraged," Andréas answered lighting his pipe, "unless the people you call of good will are not the servants of Heaven. Maybe you wonder who is a true servant of Heaven? You are right to wonder as to who serves Heaven. I ask myself the same question: 'Do I serve?' Where there is so much to do, so much...."

"It is you who utters the most discouraging words!" I remarked. "If you think that this work surpasses your strength, then what can we -what can I say?"

"You will say," Andréas replied with a smile, "that I am an old dotard. You see, I know that events seem to be going all wrong, and I am distressed. But I also know that things go as they are supposed to be going, and I have faith. You -you are a young and simple person, everything for you is either white or black; I, I am a complicated old grumbler."

"It is you who says so; but I think and I say you are kind and helpful. In fact, I think that I have too simplistic a view on people and life. I am not simple, I am simplistic - while you, you are simple it is not quite the same thing at all."

"Yes, life unfolds with innumerable nuances. That is the reason why no system has ever yet been found which can encompass the whole; it is also the reason why no one's destiny is definite. None of the followers of the Adversary is buried in Darkness to the same degree. None of the servants of Heaven possesses exactly the same degree of Light. The majority in each camp is usually an incoherent mass

floating undecisively among the gray clouds of a lukewarm twilight. It is the reason that if you want to take upon yourself to speak of God to men, you must first acquire prudence, then some more prudence and again much prudence."

"With so much prudence, doesn't it mean that I should comfortably remain at home?"

"Never!" Andréas declared energetically. "You would be wrong. One must go forth." And after a pause, he said, "Don't you think that when I meet someone, I am not shown his future and what he will do with the Light that I gave him? Don't you know that among a hundred people who ask me for help, I know that perhaps only two will fulfill their work to the end? But knowing it -can I refuse to give a little Light to the other ninety-eight? Do I have the right of refusing it?"

"Doubtless, treachery, or if you prefer to call them defections of conscience neither surprise nor move me," I said. "But what about the involuntary cowardice? The unconscious abandonments of the hearts we cherish, those to whom we would like to give our all? Those who cannot receive, who go to the left when they think they go to the right; they who think they are working while actually they are living off the labor of others?"

"Why should you care, my dear Doctor?" Andréas answered. "If someone asks, you give. When one offers his services, you must accept it; if they throw your gift away, you must pick it up preciously; they leave, you must pray God to protect the wayfarers. If you really want to help your brothers, let none of their fantasies surprise you. You cannot hold anyone in spite of himself. What is essential is that when anyone is listening to you, your voice truly enunciates a word of Life. As to your friends who want to work, let them carry a double load: one for themselves, one for the novices who, believing themselves to be your friends, are not working. Someday the scale will balance between the courage of the ones and the indolence of the others. Nothing is ever lost. As long as they do not abandon you, they still remain nearby, isn't that so? Hence, do not worry about anything except to give each one the Light he seeks that day. Tomorrow is another dawn for you, for them and for me."

"Thank you. I accept your kind words with all my heart. But, please let me ask you this indiscreet question. Don't you ever make a mistake in your choice of people? Don't you know whom you are dealing with?"

"Of course and so do you at first sight. You don't admit it to yourself, because Heaven has given you humility, but you do know. I too, I know or rather we do not know; it is the Light within us which give us the information. Didn't Jesus from the day when He first met Judas in His youth know that he would betray Him? Did He not accept it? What about Peter - he too?"

We had finally reached the Belleville cemetery. The hues of dawn were piercing through the dark blue obscurity of the vanishing night. The cold was intense. Reaching us were isolated songs, which seemed so unbecoming to the Being they claimed to honor. The entire city keeping its vigil lights aglow resembled a large ship afloat in the fog of an indefinite septentrional ocean. A mysterious spectacle closely corresponding to my irresolution. The profound voice of Andreas broke the spell:

"Yes -we are nothing but ignorance -the blind leading the blind. Omniscience sometimes transpierces us. Its brief, unexpected flash should suffice us. It always coincides with an important possibility. Let us not expect a regular harvest from

our actual labor. No matter how rare will the fruitful kernels or seeds be, their worth shall always surpass our efforts.

"When you consider the immense solicitude of the Father and the small number of hearts which accept Him, doesn't it seem as if He were always mistaken? Yet, He never makes a mistake. So, dear Doctor, strengthen your soul, steady it, mold it into an immovable rock. The defections, the betrayals are nothing but a step back from which one springs anew. Are there not a few of us which nothing daunts? The others who walk away will surely return someday and the strong and solid tie which binds them to us anyhow is the very welcome which you wrongly reproach yourself as having given them through lack of clairvoyance or vigor. Go forth, I promise you in Truth that you are walking on the right path; but remember how uneven it is at times...."

Then resuming his fatherly attitude he invited me to join him in drinking a cup of coffee which his wife brewed so well.

XLI
ANTIBES

That particular morning, the mistral was blowing away the rain clouds which had for several days with their blessed water drenched the fields that had been parched for months. On the Septentrional horizon the Italian snow covered summits shone rosyhued under the rising sun. The hills were awakening out of the amethystine fog rising from the valleys. By contrast, the sea accentuated the metallic blues of bright sunlit days, while in the little port tartans were slowly approaching the docks weighing anchor; their old tan and red patched sails unfurling under the watchful eyes of the immobile old fishermen.

On the aft of a Leghorn barque stood a man speaking with sailors. His silhouette seemed familiar to me. As I approached I was rather surprised to see that it was Andreas. He looked at me as I passed by and indicated that he would join me a little later. I strolled about the little canoe-building yard while waiting for him. The barque loosened its mooring-lines and a few minutes later Andreas came toward me with the same quiet pace, the same paternal smile and the same look of power and kindness in his eyes.

But his face was furrowed with lines of exhaustion. He had aged; I immediately told him of my concern for him.

"It is nothing," he said, "nothing at all. Do not worry. You know that if I asked Him, the Father would grant me the victory within three days; but we have enough time to win, do you understand? We are not in a hurry to end it all; we should only be in a hurry to spread the Light. The longer the fight lasts, the higher will the beings climb."

"Ah!" I replied. "You are just as you used to be, immutable, as if standing at the threshold of Eternity."

With a deprecatory gesture, he smiled. "Now, now, Doctor, don't you become lyrical! I am just a man like anyone else.

Don't get excited, life is sufficiently complex as it is. We each have our own work to do; let us do it simply but wholly. What about you, what have you been doing?"

"You are well aware of it. I am not very happy...."

"Who can be? Here, look at the barque, it sails with the wind; she will dock at Porto Maurizio as expected. You see, all things go well when one has faith. Last night, everything went haywire; tomorrow all will go well if God wills. You, my dear Doctor, you worry too much. Have patience, patience. Each day unto itself. When you will have reached sainthood, then will your troubles really begin. For the time being your work is easy."

"You call it easy?" I interrupted with surprise. "Doubtless it is, yet it has to be accomplished. How difficult it is for me to live the twenty-four hours of a day, so that they be perfect and I won't have to live them over again."

"You are quite right, there is nothing more difficult!" Andréas affirmed gravely. "We are wrong when we live today, while thinking of the day after tomorrow. Not that I criticize foresight, but the foresight used today - though it take the next month in consideration - still belongs to this day's work."

"To completely give oneself to the work at hand might be possible for you, but what about us?"

"It is the same for everyone, my dear Doctor, because since I have a Friend, and you are my friend, then you too have Him as Friend. Your friends may also have Him and all of your friends who came out of the war safely were those who knew how to remain simple. And I can assure you of this, that if they continue to remain simple they will be able to also traverse peace -that which is called peace. All they have to do is to keep away from using phraseology, in their hearts, with God. You see, everything is so simple. Christ is simple. His orders are clear; it is we who complicate...."

"Nevertheless," I ventured, "to find money for the poor, to find strength for the afflicted, to find how to heal the sick, that does not seem at all simple to me. Meanwhile, how to earn one's bread honestly, amidst all the cupidities isn't simple either!"

"Oh, but yes, it is simple. Except that all of you seek simplicity via all sorts of complicated means. It would be far better to reach simplicity via simplicity, which means by becoming small, oh so small. Take a look at the great literary figures and the great painters, there are many here at the present; we will go someday and make them talk. When they began, they all started by writing pedantic books, painting exuberant canvasses, involving processes of implications, using rare words or choosing clever techniques. Then they noticed that they had been merely working at their trade, but not at Art. So they crossed words out, simplified their vocabulary or their palettes; but more important they became more sensitive, they broadened their comprehension and ennobled their soul. Now, they are almost simple. They could have been so thirty years earlier if they had read the Gospel. You too ... do become simple in your heart and you will find the simple means needed to heal and to help."

Here Andréas showed the signs which precede his usual long periods of silence. But as I was afraid that I might not have a chance of seeing him again for several months, I asked him to advise me on how to reach this state of inner strength or poise which permits us to be intensely active while giving free rein to our noble desires and our enthusiasm. These were his words: "You see, those who believe that because they have dedicated themselves to Christ, their lives will be tranquil and monotonous are mistaken. Those who believe that their lives must be all martyrdom because they dedicated themselves to Christ are also wrong. Both are right on one point only, that of having dedicated themselves to Christ. But because they have given themselves to Christ Whom they know to be all-power and all-kindness, why do they worry? Since they are in the hands of the Father, let them fulfill their duty up to the hilt, let them ask Him for anything; that is all. If He grants it -fine. If he refuses -fine. If He sends trials -fine; if He sends happiness - fine. Here, look, do you see this elderly gentleman who is just now getting out of his car and coming toward us; do you recognize him?"

The fact was that it was a great personage whose name was known the world over. He had stopped walking, awaiting a sign from Andreas just as I had done on the docks.

"You see, your comrades in five years have risked death one thousand times and they are still alive. He, for the past three years has been hunted by thousands of men who tried to ferret him out. He has no money, no refuge. He is believed to be in a fortress or buried under the snows somewhere toward the East. Here he is. He

has known how to remain simple. Let us go and shake hands with him since you have recognized him; and we will have lunch together."

XLII THE BATTLE

A telegram called me urgently to Nyon; I barely reached the station in time to catch the train. As I was rushing to the ticket window, someone standing in line in front of me saluted and said: "Don't hurry so, Doctor, we still have ten minutes. I suppose you are taking the Pontarlier train? They are having some difficulty with the engine and must change it."

It was Andréas. Not giving me time to get over my surprise, he said: "I must go to the telegraph office. Take a second class ticket and wait for me. You don't mind journeying with me until Dijon? I am going to the Creusot."

In fact, the train was delayed as he had prognosticated. We found an empty compartment. Andréas offered me a newspaper and asked my permission to work. He would be busy for an hour, then we could talk. I understood why the locomotive had had trouble and how in this crowded train we had been lucky to find an empty compartment. I settled in the opposite corner, facing the door and paid no attention to Andreas. Whenever, Andréas is not 'working' by himself, he wants to be ignored, absolutely. I was able to fully enjoy this fortuitous meeting, recalling how one evening, he had left me suddenly, diving into the milling crowds which enfolded over him just as the sea engulfs a sinking ship.

Since the bloody cataclysm which had devastated Europe, how many times had my thoughts and heavy heart turned to him! What had he been doing during this holocaust? Forgetting the rule imposed by Christ upon all His followers, I was surprised that Andréas' name had never been mentioned in the secret grapevine. I would have so wanted him to be on the council with the great heads of state. But here he was again; as calm and affectionate as ever, with his habitual fatherly smile. I knew that he had never given up his mysterious activities; I felt it.

As before, the air around him vibrated with all sorts of presences; I could feel, or breathe in strength and immutability. He was the same, always the same.

Just after Fontainebleau he broke the silence.

"And what have you to say about all this, Doctor?"

"I have a lot of questions and many requests! You can see what I am lacking in and what others lack too. What can I do?" "France possesses all the elements necessary for Victory. Heaven will grant it as soon as it wants to. As far as you are concerned, you are in the tempest; stay where you are; accept it to the end; one must...."

"But accepting is not sufficient. I am not doing anything. I am useless."

"No one is useless, Doctor, have patience. You know that I do not like to give advice; it increases difficulties, specially for us who are always under the observation of the invisible followers of the Adversary. Because it is in the Invisible plane that the real battle is fought. This war has been remarkable, being military, political, ethnographic and spiritual all at once. The physical armies were the prolongation of the two mystical armies of Light and Darkness. How happy we should be to be living at such a time!"

"Yes - for those who fought; but what about the others?"

"Let them fight now. The civilian battle is on. All the writers have signalized it. Yet we could do more."

"What? Tell me what?"

"Nothing else than what we are doing but to do that thoroughly, such as social aid, moral behavior, propaganda via the press and in conversation, and in many other ways, because there are other kinds of battles," Andréas added after having thrown me a scrutinizing glance.

I collected my thoughts, then hazarded: "Listen. I know that you do not want to give me any orders. But that which you think me capable of attempting, explain it to me and I shall think it over."

"Yes," Andréas went on as if he had not heard me, "the trenches, the grenades, the bombs, the asphyxiating gases, the hand-to-hand fights, all of these frightful horrors are but the shadow of what goes on beyond the Veil. If in order to face these and to just fulfill the role of a good citizen one must be heroic, then who is capable of facing the spiritual war? What man can ask for that? Where is the man to order that?"

"But Christ is looking for such men. He wants me, I know; and I am well aware that it is not by chance that I ran across you again."

After a short interval, Andréas proceeded: "Brilliant exploits are precious, but the acts that only God sees surpass them. The first are the flowers, the latter the seeds; and Christ is the gardener. Only those who know how to keep silent can accomplish them. Do you know anyone who can keep mum?"

"I know people who are discreet."

"Oh! Everyone is discreet; on condition that the neighbor be aware that one possesses sensational information -" and Andréas laughed a bit.

"Would this mean that there is an inner discretion, a mental taciturnity? That one should be able not only to keep silent, but also never to let anyone surmise that one could talk? That one should be able to 'forget' effectively and remember at will? To prevent the most penetrating eye from reading on our faces that we are hiding something? So that the subtle demons may not even surmise that we do know?"

"That is the first command, Doctor. You know that on the battlefield an order may sanction death. For the soldier of Heaven imagine his risks! That is only justice, because an action in itself has little value, but depends mostly upon the one who performs it. Needless to give you examples, isn't it? That is why trifling things such as not to slander are for us terribly important. Hundreds of beings around us regulate their behavior on ours and hundreds of others want to make us fall."

"Yes. I recall your telling me this long ago. But one never pays enough attention to simple matters. In the future...." Andréas stopped me.

"Good. That's enough. You know your duty, execute it to the end with stubbornness. If you die from fatigue, what does it matter?"

"Agreed," I answered. "And also there is prayer."

"Which one? The opportunistic prayer? The economical prayer in ready-made formats? The pusillanimous and the selfish prayer? Oh no, Doctor. It must be a perpetual prayer which encompasses the smallest details and the vastest objects; a prayer of overflowing tenderness which still remains impassible; a naked, true, totally abandoned prayer which relies upon Jesus; that's what we need. From an incandescent heart falls the refreshing rain of God upon a soil parched by Hell. To our King, nothing is childish, nothing is irremediable. To you, may everything seem to be a seed of eternity. For the one who at this hour assumes the office of prayer, there should be neither vigil nor sleep nor repose nor reading nor relaxation, but only prayer and work. Let him force his self to the breaking point. Let his body bend or fall. And if the body fails the spirit will carry on the work onto the other side."

This is the substance of what Andreas told me in a conversational manner. But underneath his quiet tone of voice I could feel an avalanche of forces surging. I could fathom sovereign certitude, wisdom, and the vastest of conceptions. No instinctive enthusiasm suscitated by fanaticism exuded from it; but my will rose to new modes. New lights were certainly rising within me; I felt that I had become different.

I was still listening inwardly to the echo of his last words, when Andréas resumed: "Besides which, there are reactions and that is the hardest part of prayer. Among our enemies there are intelligent men, men of powerful magnetism. That is self-evident since they serve the Prince of this world, the one who governs magnetisms among other things. The spirits of these men attack our spirits by force or by ruse. If a soldier of Christ were to ask a crook to be arrested, for instance; immediately the genii of all the administrative wheels reached by this extortion, the spirits of the accomplices, those of the enemy, that of all his corresponding formations, of his sciences, of his factories, his intellectual centers and all the false angels of his religion; in short, all the servants of the Beast would react and try to overcome the servant of Heaven. It would be the Army of Matter against the Army of the Spirit. Let the soldier of Christ, seeing all his efforts provisionally be in vain, become critical, discouraged, let him lose his calm and become irritated -then all has to be started again. A general, in the midst of his staff can lay out plans in relative calm. The soldier of Christ is both fighter and strategist. He must suffer, remain lucid. On top of that, he must have some kind of bread-earning occupation."

"I can see that no one can really say: 'I shall be a soldier.'"

"No, Doctor - at least, yes and no...." "Good, I understand."

"In that case, march," Andréas concluded, "and see that others go along with you. Heaven helps the helpless. Have no fear, my friend," he added smilingly, staring right into my eyes with a clear and strong gaze, while a singular sensation of calm joy permeated my body making it lighter, as well as illuminating my faculties.

"There must be in the inner purifications of the mind some which are specifically apt to make our prayers answered," I added after due reflection.

"First there is charity. The act of charity is the best of all. On top of which, if one does not fear effort, one must abstain from slandering not only a person but even an animal, an object, even the weather...." Noting my surprise, Andreas added, "of course, an animal has intelligence; an object, the rain, all of them are beings that live. You seem to forget that the disciple of Christ finds himself in the mansion of Christ in spirit where all is life, intelligence and love."

"Yes -I was forgetting it," I murmured.

"You won't always forget," he added as consolation. "You know that we are all servants of Christ, of the Word... of The WORD, do you understand? But the true Word, it is the act itself. That is why during the war it was really the unsung little soldier who held the leading role. The civilian, were he saint or genius, only played a secondary role. Regarding those who stay back -the cowards - too bad for them; they are prolonging their lease on Earth for 6000 years, maybe longer. As you notice, I tell people to keep quiet and here I am chattering away. Goodbye, dear Doctor, au revoir.... Don't bother. Keep your seat."

As the train entered the Dijon terminal, Andréas got ready.

How quickly had the time passed! How many questions left unasked, how many requests left unvoiced, how many wishes left unformulated! Inexorable in spite of his kind smile, Andréas descended from the train. He kept on waving me adieu till

he reached the exit. As he walked away, I understood more and more what he had just told me and how much this small kernel really contained the Only Requisite.

XLIII RESURRECTION

The last episodes that I have just related had left a definitive impression upon me, which I hope my readers will share in spite of my sketchily told stories. With considerable ardor, I entered upon the "narrow path" which I felt I had finally perceived. Not long after, I began harvesting the fruits of my inexperience. I wanted to check the truth of the doctrines of Andréas with facts. I treated patients gratuitously; I gave money and time away, even my nights; my friends imposed upon me; I curtailed my art and literary diversions; I sold my books. People began to make fun of me and spoke of my "weak" character. My remunerated consultations became fewer and fewer. My correspondents whose thirst for magic, divination and phenomena I did not cater to anymore judged me to be timorous; my reputation among the Illuminati circles became negligible. Some desperate cases which I could not cure reawakened doubts which augmented within me till I reached a state of despair.

Little by little I lost courage. Everything became insipid and irksome; I took sleeping pills in order not to think. Going out became a chore; it tormented me to remain at home. Reading became a bore. I barely took enough nourishment to stay alive.

After three months in this state of melancholy, having become resigned to await the end without making an effort; when it became evident that there was no sense nor reason to the universe nor to me, a man came to my door one night. A young woman in the neighborhood had slowly been dying from consumption for a year.... She was in extremis. No doctor wanted to attend her anymore, and her husband explained despairingly how she was choking and that it would be merciful to alleviate her suffering at least during the agony of the last hour. I had become too indifferent to everything even to think of refusing him.

I went with him. It was 2:00 a.m. In the street just ahead of us a man appeared, walking toward us. He was tall, but so well proportioned that I did not realize his height till we came abreast.

Nothing in his appearance made him stand out yet he carried himself as a "grand seigneur." As we passed by, I casually looked up. From his eyes I felt a flame of soft light emanating. He went by. I turned around; he also turned at the same moment. Without thinking, I went to him. Hat in hand he said to me: "Doctor, I think I know you. Pardon my indiscretion, but are you not a friend of Andréas?"

Nonplussed, I too had removed my hat.

"Yes," I answered him. And as I was trying to find some words.... "You are going to visit a sick person, I presume," he continued. "I might be of some help to you if you permit my going along with you."

In a flash, I understood. It was Theophane. It was he. My heart heaved and throbbed. My feelings of despair, rancour, grudge, bitterness and disgust evaporated in heavy rampant volutes while I was explaining to my patient: "He is a doctor friend of mine, a specialist. We shall have him take a look at your wife."

The man steeped in his sorrow did not even answer and we soon arrived at his apartment. It was the usual pathetic abode of the little employee with its banal decor concealing poverty. The woman's mother was there. Her face staring in space, tearless, stupefied. She told her son-in-law in a toneless voice:

"It's too late; she is dead."

I bent over the body. No heartbeat; no breathing; the delicate nose was already pinched; the face had taken on the immobile calm which one cannot mistake. Just a bit of heat remained in the pit of the stomach, but the poor body, so frightfully emaciated, with swelling at the articulations seemed to beg to be left alone in the peaceful darkness of a coffin, from now on.

"Do you think she is dead?" Théophile asked suddenly. His voice tinkled like a bell in the silence.

I nodded affirmation.

"You love her, don't you? You have children?" The questions fell one after another. Without waiting for an answer, he continued:

"If she were to come back to life; if we could awaken her from among the dead, would you be grateful to Heaven, stay with her, never leave her in body or heart?"

The poor man, flabbergasted, dared not understand. He looked at us, speechless...

"Be calm," Théophile told him very softly. "Do not be sorrowful; answer me conscientiously."

"Is it possible?" the man blurted out. "You cannot want to make fun of me.... Yes, if you mean it and she can live... I promise - " and he crumbled, shaken by sobs, while the old mother had collapsed and kept kissing her daughter's body, already cold.

Théophile came close to the body, took its two hands in his left hand, lifted the inert head with his right, and very tenderly spoke into her ear in a low voice - though we all heard him: "My child, my daughter, come, come back; it will be reckoned to your account; they need you!"

And without our having felt a shiver, as though something very natural were happening -that the dead woman had to be resuscitated -the woman opened her eyes, sat up and looked around the room.

"I have been dreaming," she sighed.

Her mother and her husband on their knees, were kissing her hands, while she, leaning upon Théophile's chest, began to cry silently.

"Light a second lamp," said he.

The mother stood up, staggered and came back with a lamp shedding a better light upon her daughter.

"You see," Théophile told us, "she is recovering."

Fifteen minutes later the flesh had revived around the bones; the face was fuller and had more color. Overcome with joy, the husband fell at Théophile's feet, but the latter raised him up as one would a child.

"No, no - it is Heaven you must thank," and stepping back, he added:

"Remember your promises. There is a book in which are written stories about the dead returning to life; do what that book teaches. Now, good-bye!" and with affectionate good fellowship, he kissed the woman, the mother and the husband, and we went out.

I thought I was dreaming. Yet the street we were walking on was familiar. Here was a wooden fence; further on, an empty lot; down below, the bake-house of the baker; on the left, a bar where night owl hoboos were slumming. Yes, I was still on earth, in Paris; I was walking along with a stranger and it was he, Théophile the

Illuminator, the long hoped-for guide whose presence was dissipating my darkness, who was dispelling my doubts and comforting me from so many fatigues.

He explained that he had to take the Brindisi Express at four a.m.; that he could not postpone his trip, as the train only ran once a week. On the other hand, he had a great deal to talk to me about and that if I were free, could I please accompany him as far as Modena.

We would have total privacy in his drawing-room. I was delighted. We proceeded leisurely to the Gare de Lyon and for ten wonderful hours he kept on giving me instructions, while he smoked. It seems as though, just as Andreas did, he followed the ordinary customs of life.

He spoke without haste. His sentences were short, to the point, without trying to make an impression. He seemed to have been the spectator of all he told me. He explained my inner being to me; he laid bare the most hidden wheelworks of my conscience; his glance pierced the opaque darkness of long forgotten centuries.

I cannot reveal all that he taught me that night, there are too many reasons against it; but I want you to conceive the greatest mental concentration functioning on par with the perfect limpidity of intelligence; to imagine an immediate and always correct comprehension of the relation from causes to effects, a clear recall of the smallest details; an exquisite sensitivity pertaining to actual beings as much as, reaching back to those remote beings in time and space. My state of soul that night was calm, intimate, limpid joy, to such a degree that I forgot my fatigue, fever, torpor, and somnolence. Words cannot convey the exquisite ideal freshness, the vigorous vitality and the serene confidence which immersed my tired spirit in their streams.

I estimate that I can never repay what these hours of intense happiness gave me, nor what the ensuing ones brought me, were I, in my being to suffer ceaselessly my whole life long.

Today, my only sorrow is that so many men are unconsciously passing so close to this Heaven without recognizing It, not because It is hidden but because, unable to escape from their self-induced limitations, they are incapable of perceiving It, neither do they want to see It, because they do not focus on, *nor plumb the depths*.

Finis. December 31, 1958 - 2 P.M. . (Z-G)