1

‘Of course,’ said Orfieu, ‘the sort of time-travelling you read about in books - time-travelling in the body- is absolutely impossible.’

There were four of us in Orfieu’s study. Scudamour, the youngest of the party, was there because he was Orfieu’s assistant. MacPhee had been asked down from Manchester because he was known to us all as an inveterate sceptic, and Orfieu thought that if once he were convinced, the learned world in general would have no excuse for incredulity. Ransom, the pale man with the green shade over his grey, distressed-looking eyes, was there for the opposite reason - because he had been the hero, or victim, of one of the strangest adventures that had ever befallen a mortal man. I had been mixed up with that affair - the story is told in another book - and it was to Ransom I owed my presence in Orfieu’s party. With the exception of MacPhee, we might be described as a secret society: that sort of society whose secrets need no passwords, oaths, or concealment because they automatically keep themselves. Unconquerable misunderstanding and unbelief defends them from the public, or, if you will, shelters the public from them. Much more work of this kind goes on than is commonly supposed, and the most important events in every age never reach the history books. All three of us knew, and Ransom had actually experienced, how thin is the crust which protects ‘real life’ from the fantastic.

‘Absolutely impossible?’ said Ransom. ‘Why?’

‘I bet you see,’ said Orfieu, glancing towards MacPhee.

‘Go on, go on,’ said the Scot with the air of one refusing to interrupt children at their play. We all echoed him.

‘Well,’ said Orfieu, ‘time-travelling clearly means going into the future or the past. Now where will the particles that compose your body be five hundred years hence? They’ll be all over the place - some in the earth, some in plants and animals, and some in the bodies of your descendants, if you have any. Thus, to go to the year 3000 ad means going to a time at which your body doesn’t exist; and that means, according to one hypothesis, becoming nothing, and, according to the other, ‘becoming a disembodied spirit.’

‘But half a moment,’ said I, rather foolishly, ‘you don’t need to find a body waiting for

you in the year 3000. You would take your present body with you.'

'But don't you see that's just what you can't do?' said Orfieu. 'All the matter which makes up your body now will be being used for different purposes in 3000.' I still gaped.

'Look here,' he said. 'You will grant me that the same piece of matter can't be in two different places at the same time. Very well. Now, suppose that the particles which at present make up the tip of your nose by the year 3000 form part of a chair. If you could travel to the year 3000 and, as you suggest, take your present body with you, that would mean that at some moment in 3000 the very same particles would have to be both in your nose and in the chair - which is absurd.'

'But aren't the particles in my nose changing all the time anyway?' said I.

'Quite, quite,' said Orfieu. 'But that doesn't help. You'll have to have some particles to make a nose in 3000 if you're going to have a body then. And all the particles in the universe by 3000 will already be employed in other ways - doing their own jobs.'

'In other words, sir,' said Scudamour to me, 'there are no spare particles to be had in the universe at any given moment. It's like trying to get back into college after you've gone down: all the rooms are occupied as they were in your time, but by different people.'

'Always assuming,' said MacPhee, 'that there is no real addition to the total matter of the universe going on.'

'No,' said Orfieu, 'only assuming that no appreciable addition of new matter to this planet goes on in the very complicated way, and at the great pace, which would be required by Lewis's hypothesis. You agree with what I've been saying, I suppose ?'

'Oh certainly, certainly,' said MacPhee slowly, and rolling his r's. 'I never thought there was any kind of travelling in time except the sort we're all doing already - I mean, travelling into the future at the rate of sixty minutes an hour whether you like it or not. It would interest me more if you could find a way of stopping it.'

'Or going back,' said Ransom with a sigh.

'Going back comes up against the same difficulty as going forward, sir,' said Scudamour. 'You couldn't have a body in 1500 any more than in 3000.'

There was a moment's pause. Then MacPhee spoke with a slow smile.

'Well, Dr Orfieu,' he said, I'll be away back to Manchester tomorrow and tell them that

the University of Cambridge has made a remarkable discovery; namely, that a man in 1938 can't get to 1939 in less than a year, and that dead bodies lose their noses. And I'll add that their arguments completely satisfied me.'

The jibe recalled Orfieu to the real purpose of our meeting, and after a few moments of keen but not unkindly chaff between the two philosophers we settled ourselves to listen again.

'Well,' said Orfieu, 'the argument that we have just gone through convinced me that any kind of "time machine", anything that would take your body to another time, was intrinsically impossible. If we are to have experience of times before our birth and after our death it must be done in some quite different way. If the thing is possible it must consist in looking at another time while we ourselves remain here - as we look at the stars through telescopes While we remain on the earth. What one wants, in fact, is not a sort of time flying-machine but something which does to time what the telescope does to space.'

'A chronoscope in fact,' suggested Ransom.

'Exactly - thanks for the word; a chronoscope. But that wasn't my first idea. The first thing I thought of, when I had abandoned the false trail of a time machine, was the possibility of mystical experience. You needn't grin, MacPhee; you ought to cultivate an open mind. At any rate I had an open mind. I saw that in the writings of the mystics we had an enormous body of evidence, coming from all sorts of different times and places - and often quite independently - to show that the human mind has a power, under certain conditions, of rising to experience outside the normal time-sequence. But this, too, proved to be a false trail. I don't mean merely that the preliminary exercises seemed extraordinarily difficult and, indeed, involved a complete abandonment of one's normal life. I mean that the further I looked into it the more clearly I saw that the mystical experience took you out of time altogether - into the timeless, not into other times, which was what I wanted; now - and what's amusing you, Ransom?'

'Excuse me,' said Ransom. 'But it is funny, you know. The idea of a man thinking he could become a saint as a minor detail in his scientific training. You might as well imagine you could use the stairs of heaven as a short cut to the nearest tobacconist's. Don't you see that long before you had reached the level of timeless experience you would have had to become so interested in something else -or, frankly, Someone Else- that you wouldn't be bothering about time-travel?'

'Um-well, perhaps,' said Orfieu. 'I hadn't thought of it hi that light. Well, anyway, for the reasons I've just mentioned, I decided that mysticism was useless for my purpose. It was only then it occurred to me that the real secret was much nearer home. You know the enormous difficulties in any physiological explanation of memory? And you

may have heard that on metaphysical grounds there is a good deal to be said for the theory that memory is direct perception of the past. I came to the conclusion that this theory was right-that when we remember, we are not simply getting the result of something that goes on inside our heads. We are directly experiencing the past.'

'In that case,' said MacPhee, 'it is very remarkable that we remember only those bits of it which fall within our own lives and have affected our own physical organisms.' (He pronounced it 'arganism'.)

'It would be very remarkable,' replied Orfieu, 'if it were true. But it isn't. If you'd read the story of the two English ladies at Trianon with an open mind, MacPhee, you would know that there is on record at least one indisputable instance in which the subjects saw a whole scene from a part of the past long before their birth. And if you had followed up that hint, you would have found the real explanation of all the so-called ghost-stories which people like you have to explain away. And by that time it might have dawned on you that there is a great deal in your mental picture of, say, Napoleon or Pericles, which you can't remember reading in any book but which agrees in the oddest way with the things that other people imagine about them. But I won't go on. You can look at my notes for yourself after dinner. I, at any rate, am perfectly satisfied that our experience of the past —what you call "memory" — is not limited to our own lives.'

'At least you'll admit,' said I, 'that we remember our own lives much more often than anything else.'

'No, I don't admit even that. It seems that we do, and I can explain why it must seem so.'

'Why?' said Ransom.

'Because the fragments of our own lives are the only fragments of the past which we recognize. When you get a mental picture of a little boy called Ransom in an English public school you at once label it "memory" because you know you are Ransom and were at an English public school. When you get a picture of something that happened ages before your birth, you call it imagination; and in fact most of us at present have no test by which to distinguish real fragments of the past from mental fictions. It was by a bit of amazing luck that the ladies at Trianon were able to find objective checks which proved that what they had seen was part of the real past. A hundred cases of the same kind might occur without such checks (in fact, they do) and the subjects merely conclude that they have been dreaming or had an hallucination. And then, naturally, they keep quiet about it.'

'And the future?' said MacPhee. 'You're not going to say that we "remember" it too?'

‘We wouldn’t call it remembering,’ said Orfieu, ‘for memory means perception of the past. But that we see the future is perfectly certain. Dunne’s book proved that -‘

MacPhee gave a roar like a man in pain.

‘It’s all very well, MacPhee,’ Orfieu continued, ‘but the only thing that enables you to jeer at Dunne is the fact that you have refused to carry out the experiments he suggests. If you had carried them out you would have got the same results that he got, and I got, and everyone got who took the trouble. Say what you like, but the thing is proved. It’s as certain as any scientific truth whatever.’

‘But look here, Orfieu,’ said I, ‘there must be some sense in which we don’t see the future. I mean - well, hang it all, who’s going to win the boatrace this year?’

‘Cambridge,’ said Orfieu. (I was the only Oxford man present.) ‘But, to be serious, I’m not saying that you can see all the future, nor that you can pick out those bits of the future you happen to choose. You can’t do that with the present-you don’t know what money I have in my pocket at this moment, or what your own face looks like, or even, apparently, where your matches are.’ (He handed me his own box.) ‘All I mean is that of the innumerable things going through your mind at any moment, while some are mere imagination, some are real perceptions of the past and others real perceptions of the future. You don’t recognize most of the past ones and, of course, you recognize none of the future.’

‘But we ought to recognize them when they arrive; that is, When they become die present,’ said MacPhee.

‘How do you mean?’ asked Ransom.

‘Well,’ said MacPhee, ‘if I’d had a mental picture last week of this room and all you fellows sitting there, I grant you I should not have recognized it then as a picture of the future. But now that I’m really here, I ought to remember that I had a prevision of it last week. And that never happens.’

‘It does happen,’ said Orfieu. ‘And that explains the feeling we often have that something which we are now experiencing has all happened before. In fact this occurs so often that it has become the basis for the religion of half the world - I mean, the belief in reincarnation - and of all theories of the Eternal Recurrence, like Nietzsche’s.’

‘It never happens to me,’ said MacPhee stoutly.

‘Perhaps not,’ said Orfieu, ‘but it does to thousands of people. And there is a reason why we notice it so little. If there is one thing that Dunne has proved up to the hilt it is that there is some law in the mind which actually forbids us to notice it. In his book he

gives you a series of examples of an event in real life resembling an event in a dream. And the funny thing is that if the real event comes first, you see the resemblance at once; but if the dream comes first, you just ignore it until it is pointed out to you.'

'That,' said MacPhee drily, 'is a very remarkable law.'

'Try his examples,' said Orfieu. 'They're irresistible.'

'Obviously,' said Ransom, 'there must be such a law if we are going to have the experience of living in time at all. Or, rather, it's the other way round. The fact of having minds that work like that is what puts us into time.'

'Exactly,' said Orfieu. 'Well, if we once agree that the mind is intrinsically capable of perceiving the past and the future directly - however much it suppresses and limits the power in order to be a human mind and to live in time - what is the next step? We know that all the mind's perceptions are exercised by means of the body. And we have discovered how to extend them by means of instruments, as we extend our sight by the telescope or, in another sense, by the camera. Such instruments are really artificial organs, copied from the natural organs: the lens is a copy of the eye. To make a similar instrument for our time-perceptions we must find the time-organ and then copy it. Now I claim to have isolated what I call the Z substance in the human brain. On the purely physiological side my results have been published.' MacPhee nodded.

'But what has not yet been published,' continued Orfieu, 'is the proof that the Z substance is the organ of memory and prevision. And starting from that, I have been able to construct my chronoscope.'

He turned round and indicated an object which had, of course, engaged no small part of our attention ever since we first entered the room. Its most obvious feature was a white sheet about four feet square stretched on a framework of canes as if for a magic-lantern performance. On a table immediately before it stood a battery with a bulb. Higher than the bulb, and between it and the sheet, there hung a small bunch or tangle of some diaphanous material, arranged into a complicated pattern of folds and convolutions, rather reminiscent of the shapes that a mouthful of tobacco smoke assumes in still air. He gave us to understand that this was the chronoscope proper. It was only about the size of a man's fist.

'I turn on the light, so,' said Orfieu, and the bulb began to shine palely in the surrounding daylight. But he switched it off again at once and continued. 'The rays pass through the chronoscope on to the reflector and our picture of the other time then appears on the sheet.'

There was a pause of a few seconds and then MacPhee said, 'Come on, man. Are you not going to show us any pictures?'

Orfieu was hesitating, but Scudamour, who had risen, came to our aid.

‘I think we might show them something right away,’ he suggested, ‘provided we warn them not to be disappointed. You see,’ he added, turning to us, ‘the trouble is that in the alien time which we’ve succeeded in striking the days and nights don’t synchronize with ours. It’s now six o’clock with us. But there, or then, or whatever you like to call it, it is only about an hour after midnight, so that you will see hardly anything. It’s a great nuisance to us because it means that all our real observation has to be done at night.’

I think that all of us, even MacPhee, were a bit excited by now, and we urged Orfieu to go on with his demonstration.

‘Will you have the room darkened or not ?’ he asked. ‘If you don’t, you’ll see even less. If you do, of course, anyone will be able to say afterwards that Scudamour and I were up to some tricks.’

There was an embarrassed silence.

‘You’ll understand, Orfieu,’ said MacPhee, ‘that there’s no personal imputation—’

‘All right, all right,’ said Orfieu with a smile. ‘Ransom, you won’t be able to see there, you’d better come to the sofa. Now, have you all got a clear view of the screen?’

2

Except for a faint buzzing there was complete silence in the room for some moments, so that noises from without became noticeable and the memory of that first glimpse through the chronoscope is for ever associated in my mind with the distant roar of traffic from beyond the river and the voice of a newsboy, much nearer, crying the evening paper. It is strange that we were not more disappointed, for what appeared on the screen was not in itself impressive. It darkened a little in the centre, and above the darkness there came the faint suggestion of some round object slightly more luminous than the surrounding whiteness of the sheet. That was all; but it took us, I think, nearly ten minutes to get tired of it. Then MacPhee gave in.

‘You can darken your room, Orfieu,’ he grunted.

Scudamour instantly rose. We heard the curtain-rings rattle on the rods; the curtains were heavy and close-fitting; the room vanished and we became invisible to one another. The only light was now the light that flowed from the screen.

The reader must understand at once that it was not like looking at a cinema screen. It

was far more real than that. A window seemed to be opened before us, through which we saw the full moon and a few stars; lower down, the mass of some large building. There was a square tower in the building and on one side of this the moonlight shone. I think we made out the billowy shape of trees; then a cloud passed across the moon and for a few moments we were in utter blackness. No one spoke. The cloud passed on, driven by night wind, and the moon shone out again, so bright that some of the objects in the room became visible. It was so real that I expected to hear the noise of the wind in the trees and almost imagined that the temperature had fallen. The cheerful, unimpressed voice of Scudamour broke in upon the awe which was beginning to creep over me.

‘There’ll be nothing more to see for hours,’ he said. ‘They’re all asleep there.’

But no one suggested that we should pull the curtains and return to daylight.

‘Do you know when it is?’ asked Ransom.

‘We can’t find out,’ replied Orfieu.

‘You’ll observe,’ said MacPhee, ‘that in terms of astronomical time it can’t be very far away. The moon’s just the same, and so are the trees, from what we can see of them.’

‘Well, that’s very difficult,’ said Orfieu. ‘In daylight it looks as if it ought to be in our own latitude. And theoretically the chronoscope should give us a different time in the very same place - I mean the place the observer is in. But then the days and nights don’t coincide with ours.’

‘They’re not longer, are they?’ asked MacPhee suddenly.

‘No, they’re the same. It’s 2 a.m., about, in their time, which means that noon for them will come about 4 a.m. tomorrow morning.’

‘Do you know what time of the year it is there?’

‘Early autumn.’

And all the while the clouds kept moving over the face of the moon and parting to reveal the towered building. I do not think that any revelation of some distant place, not even a peep at the landscape of the planets that wheel round Sirius, could have awakened in me quite such a spectral sense of distance as the slow, harmless progress of that windy night, passing we knew not when.

‘Is it in the future or the past ?’ I queried.

‘It is in no period known to archaeology,’ said Orfieu.

Again we were silent and watched.

‘Have you any control over its direction- I mean, its direction in space ?’ asked MacPhee.

‘I think you’d better answer that one, Scudamour,’ said Orfieu. ‘You’ve really had much more practice with the thing by now than I have.’

‘Well,’ said Scudamour, ‘it’s not very easy to explain. If you try to twiddle the screen round so as to try to get a bit of the landscape, say, to the left of the Dark Tower—’

‘The what?’ said Ransom.

‘Oh- Orfieu and I call this big building the Dark Tower - out of Browning, you know. You see, he and I have had to talk about these things a good deal and it’s convenient to have names. Well, if you tried to see what was further to the left by turning the whole thing round, you wouldn’t succeed. The picture just slides off the screen and you get nothing. On the other hand, the view does change of itself every now and then, following what Orfieu and I call “interest lines”. That is to say, it will follow a single person up the stairs and into the Dark Tower - or a ship along a river. Once it followed a thunderstorm for miles.’

‘Whose interest does it follow?’ asked MacPhee, but no one answered this because Ransom at the same moment said, ‘You mention people. What sort of people are they?’

‘No, no,’ said MacPhee. ‘Don’t let them start describing. We want our observations to be perfectly independent.’

‘Quite right,’ said Orfieu.

‘You say it follows a man into the Dark Tower,’ said I. ‘You mean, do you, it follows him till he disappears inside?’

‘No,’ said Scudamour. ‘It sees through walls and things. I know that sounds rather startling, but you must remember this is an external or artificial memory and prevision - as the lens is an external eye. It behaves just like memory - moving from place to place and sometimes jumping, in obedience to laws we don’t yet know.’

‘But all roughly in the same place,’ added Orfieu. ‘We don’t often get more than ten miles away from the Dark Tower.’

‘That’s not very like memory,’ said I. ‘Well, no,’ said Orfieu; and silence fell. The wind

seemed to be blowing up for a storm in the land we were looking at. The clouds followed one another in ever swifter succession across the face of the moon, and on the right of the picture the waving of the trees became distinctly noticeable. Finally, heavy banks of cloud came up, the whole scene disappeared into a monochrome of dark grey, and Scudamour switched off the light and drew the curtains. We blinked in the sudden inrush of daylight and there was a general shifting of positions and intaking of breath, as among men whose attention has been strained.

‘Quarter to seven,’ said Orfieu. ‘We’d better think about getting ready for dinner. Everyone except old Knellie is down for the vac., so we ought to be able to get away fairly soon afterwards.’

During the whole of our stay in College witfh Orfieu, his aged colleague Knellie (Cyril Knellie, the now almost forgotten author of Erotici Graeci Minimi, Table-talk of a Famous Florentine Courtesan and Lesbos: A Masque) was a great trial to us. It would not be fair to mention him in a story about Cambridge without adding that Oxford had produced Knellie and indeed nurtured him till his fortieth year. He was now a shrunk, pale man with a white moustache and a skin like satin that had been badly creased; very carefully dressed; nice in his eating; a little exotic in gesture; and very anxious to be regarded as a man of the world. He was the affectionate type of bore, and I was his selected victim. On the strength of having been at my old college - some time in the nineties - he addressed me as Lu-Lu, a sobriquet I particularly dislike. When dinner was over and Orfieu was just beginning to make his apologies to the old man for withdrawing us on the ground of urgent work, he held up his forefinger as prettily as if he had newly learned the trick.

‘No, Orfieu,’ he said. ‘No. I’ve promised poor Lu-Lu some of the real claret, and I’m not going to let you take him away now.’

‘Oh, don’t bother about me,’ said I hastily.

[Here folio 11 of the manuscript - about 475 words -is missing.]

any words of mine could describe.

Drunk with fatigue, and perhaps a little drunk with claret too, Ransom and I emerged into the open air. Orfieu’s rooms lay on the far side of the court. The starlight, and the sweet summer coolness, sobered our mood. We realized afresh that behind certain windows, not fifty yards away, humanity was opening a door that had been sealed from the beginning, and that a train of consequences incalculable for good or evil was on foot.

‘What do you think of it all ?’ I asked.

‘I don’t like it,’ said Ransom. After a short pause he added, ‘But I can tell you one thing. I’ve seen that building - what Scudamour calls the Dark Tower - before.’

‘You don’t believe in reincarnation ?’

‘Of course not. I’m a Christian.’

I thought for a minute. ‘If it’s in the past,’ I said, ‘then, on Orfieu’s theory, there’s no reason why lots of people shouldn’t “remember” the Dark Tower.’

By this time we had reached Orfieu’s staircase.

I suppose that our experience at the moment of entering the room must have been rather like that of entering a cinema; there would have been the same general darkness, the lighted screen, and the groping for unoccupied seats. But it would have been unlike a cinema because of the ghostly silence in which the ‘picture’ proceeded. All this, however, I can only conjecture in the light of later experiences with the chronoscope; I remember nothing of our entry on this particular evening. What followed has effaced it, for destiny chose this night to pitchfork us brutally, and with no gentle gradations, into something so shocking that, if I had not had the business of recording it always before my mind, it would by now perhaps have been dropped out of my consciousness altogether.

I am going to tell you what we saw in the order which will make it clearest, not in the order which my attention actually followed. At first I had no eyes except for the Man; but here, the room in which he sat will be described first.

We were looking at a chamber of greyish-brown stone which seemed to be lit by morning daylight from windows that were not in our field of vision. The room was about the width of the screen so that we could see the walls on each side as well as the wall that faced us, and each of these three walls was covered down to the floor with decorations in low relief. There was not so much plain surface as you could lay the point of a penknife on. I think it was this intense crowding of ornament that chiefly produced the disagreeable effect of the place, for I do not recall anything specially grotesque or obscene in any single figure. But no figure was single. You would get a floral pattern, but the individual flowers were repeated till the mind reeled. Above that there might be a battle-piece, and the soldiers were as numerous as those of a real army; and above that a fleet, whose sails could not be counted, riding on a sea in which wave rose behind wave for ever and each wave was done in the same relentless detail, up to where at last a regiment of beetles appeared to be marching down to the coast, every beetle distinct, the very joints in their armour traced with an entomologist’s accuracy. Whatever one looked at one was aware of more, and still more, to the left of it and the right of it, above it and below it, all equally laborious, reiterative, microscopic, and all equally clamorous for an attention which one could

not hope to give and yet had difficulty in withholding. As a result, the whole place seemed to be bursting, I cannot say with life (the word is too sweet), but with some obscure kind of fertility. It was extraordinarily disquieting.

About four feet from the front a high step ran right across the room so that the further part of it formed a kind of dais, and in the side walls at each end of the dais there were doors. One half of this dais - that on our left - was protected by a kind of half-wall or balustrade, which rose about four feet from the surface of the dais and five feet from the lower, and nearer, part of the floor. It came out to the middle of the room and there stopped, leaving the rest of the dais visible. The chair in which the Man was seated was placed on the lower floor in front of the balustrade. He was therefore invisible to anyone who should walk into the room along the dais from the door on the left.

Against the right-hand wall, well forward and opposite the Man, there was a squat pillar surmounted by a curious idol. At first I could hardly make out what it was, but I know it well enough now. It is an image in which a number of small human bodies culminate in a single large head. The bodies are nude, some male and some female. They are very nasty. I do not think they are meant wantonly, unless the taste of the Othertime in such matters differs remarkably from our own. They seem rather to express a savagely satiric vision, as if the sculptor hated and despised what he was making. At any rate, for whatever reason, shrivelled or bloated forms predominate, and there is a free treatment both of morbid anatomy and of senile sexual characteristics.

Then on top there is a huge head — the communal head of all those figures. After full discussion with my colleagues I have decided not to attempt a description of the face. If it were not recognizable (and it is difficult to convey the effect of a face in words), it would be useless; on the other hand, if many readers, especially of the less balanced sort, recognized the face, the results might be disastrous. For at this point I must make a certain statement although the reader will not be able to understand it till he has read further into the book. It is this: that the many-bodied idol is still there in that room. The word ‘still’ is in some ways misleading, but I cannot help it. The point I want to make is that the things I am describing are not over and done with.

All this description of the room I believe to be necessary. MacPhee, who is beside me as I write, says that I am lengthening it out simply in order to postpone the moment of describing the Man. And he may be right. I freely admit that the memory from which I write is an extremely disagreeable one and that it struggles in the most obstinate manner not to be set down in words.

Yet in the general appearance of the Man there was nothing to shock one. The worst you can say of his face is that it was, by our standards, singularly unattractive. He had a yellowish complexion, but not more so than many Asiatics, and he had lips at once

thick and flat like those of a carved Assyrian king. The face looked out from a mass of black hair and beard. But the word ‘black’ is inadequate. The stiff heavy masses — again reminiscent of carving -could not have been attained in our race without the use of oil, and hair so black would, among us, be lustrous. But this hair showed neither natural lustre nor the gleam of oil. It was dead black, like the darkness in a coal-cellar, a mere negation of colour; and so were the heavy robes in which the Man was swathed down to the feet.

He sat perfectly still. After seeing him, I think I shall never describe anyone in our own time as ‘perfectly still’ again. His stillness was not like that of a man asleep, nor like that of an artist’s model: it was the stillness of a corpse. And oddly enough, it had the curious effect of making one think that it must have begun suddenly- as if something had come down like the blade of a guillotine and cut short the Man’s whole history at a moment. But for what followed, we should have thought that he was dead or that he was a waxwork. His eyes were open, but the face had no expression, or none that we could interpret.

MacPhee says that I am again drawing out my description needlessly; going round and round while the most important thing about the Man remains to be described. And he’s right. The anatomical absurdity - the incredible thing -how can I write it down in cold blood? Perhaps you, reader, will laugh. We did not, neither then, nor since, in our dreams.

The Man had a sting.

It was in his forehead, like a unicorn’s horn. The flesh of the forehead was humped and puckered in the middle, just below the hair, and out of it stuck the sting. It was not very big. It was broad at the base and narrowed quickly to its point, so that its total shape was rather that of a thorn on a rose-branch, or a little pyramid, or a ‘man’ in the game of halma. It was hard and homy, but not like bone. It was red, like most of the things in a man, and apparently lubricated by some kind of saliva. That is how MacPhee tells me I ought to describe it. But none of us would have dreamed of saying ‘lubricated’ or ‘salivation’ at the time: we all thought what Ransom thought — and said :

‘Dripping with poison. The brute — the dirty, dirty brute.’ ‘Has this appeared before ?’ I asked Orfieu. ‘Over and over again,’ he answered in a low voice. ‘Where is it?’ ‘Inside the Dark Tower.’ ‘Hush!’ said MacPhee suddenly.

Unless you had sat with us in the dark room and seen the Stingingman, you could hardly imagine with what relief, with what shiftings in our chairs and releases of breath, we saw that the door on the left of the Othertime room had opened and that a young man had entered on the dais. Nor will you understand how we loved that young man. More than one of us confessed afterwards that we had felt an irrational impulse

to warn him of the horror sitting silent in the chair- to call out as if our voices could have reached him across whatever unknown centuries lay between us and the Dark Tower.

The young man was concealed from the waist downwards by the balustrade; what was visible of him was naked. He was a fine muscular fellow, bronzed from the open air, and he walked slowly, looking straight before him. His face was not very intelligent, but it had an open and agreeable expression, sobered, apparently, by something like religious awe. So he appears, at least, when I try to analyse my memory: at that moment he appeared to me like an angel.

‘What’s the matter?’ said MacPhee to Orfieu, who had suddenly risen.

‘I’ve seen this done before,’ he replied curtly. ‘I’m going out to take a turn in the open air.’

‘I think I’ll come with you,’ said Scudamour, and both of them left the room. We did not understand this at the time.

While these words were being spoken, the young man had already advanced to the open part of the dais and stepped down on to the lower floor. We now saw that he was barefoot and dressed only in a sort of kilt. He was obviously engaged in some ritual act. Never looking behind him, he stood motionless for a moment with his gaze fixed on the idol. Then he bowed to it. Then, when he had straightened himself, he took three paces backwards. This brought him to a position in which his calves almost touched the knees of the Stingingman. The latter sat still as ever and his expression did not change; indeed neither of them gave any sign that he was aware of the other’s presence. We saw the young man’s lips moving as if he were repeating a prayer.

Then, with a movement as much too swift, as his previous immobility had been too still, for humanity- with a movement like the dart of a dragonfly - the Stingingman had shot out his hands and gripped the other by the elbows; and at the same time he put down his head. I suppose it was the sting which made this movement seem so grotesquely animal; the creature was so obviously not letting his head sink in thought as a man might; he was putting it into position like a goat that means to butt.

A frightful convulsion had passed through the victim’s body when he first felt himself seized; and as the point of the sting entered his back we saw him writhe in torture, and the sweat gleamed on his suddenly whitened face. The Man had stung him apparently in the spine, pressing in the needle-point of the sting, neither quickly nor slowly, with a surgeon’s accuracy. The struggles of his victim did not last long; his limbs relaxed and he hung limp in the grip of the operator. I thought he had been stung to death. But little by little, as we watched, life came back to him — but a different life. He was standing on his own legs again now, no longer hanging, but his

stance was stiff. His eyes were staringly open and his face wore a fixed grin. The Stingingman released him. Without once looking behind him, he hopped back on to the dais. Strutting with sharp, jerky movements, lifting his feet unnecessarily high and swinging his arms as if in time to the blaring swagger of some abominable march, he continued his walk along the dais and finally left the room by the door upon our right.

Almost at the same moment the door on the left opened and another young man came in.

In order to avoid telling over and over again what I hope, when once this book is finished, to efface for ever from my memory, I may as well say here and now that I saw this process carried out about two hundred times during our experiments with the chronoscope. The effect on the victims was always the same. They entered the room as men, or (more rarely) women; they left it automata. In recompense - if you call it a recompense - they entered it in awe, and left it all with the same clockwork swagger. The Stingingman displayed neither cruelty nor pity. He sat still, seized, stung, and sat still again with the passionless precision of an insect or a machine.

At this session we saw only four men poisoned: after that we saw another thing which I am afraid must be told. About twenty minutes after his last patient had left the room, the Stingingman rose from his chair and came forward — came to what we could not help regarding as the front of the stage. We now saw him full-face for the first time; and there he stood and stared.

‘Great Scot,’ said Ransom suddenly. ‘Does he see us?’

‘It can’t be, it can’t be,’ said MacPhee. ‘He must be

looking into the other part of that room - the part we can’t see.’

And yet the Stingingman slowly moved his eyes, exactly as if he were taking stock of the three of us one by one.

‘Why the hell doesn’t Orfieu come back?’ said I, and realized that I was shouting. My nerves were badly jangled.

And still the Stingingman went on looking at us, as it seemed, or looking at people in his own world who for some reason occupied just the same places in relation to him as we did. It lasted, I suppose, ten minutes or so. What followed must be described briefly and vaguely. He - or it - began to perform a series of acts and gestures so obscene that, even after the experiences we had already had, I could hardly believe my eyes. If you had seen a mentally deficient street-urchin doing the same things at the back of a warehouse in Liverpool docks, with a grin on his face, you would have shuddered. But the peculiar horror of the Stingingman was that he did them with perfect gravity and

ritual solemnity and all the time he looked, or seemed to look, unblinkingly at us.

Suddenly the whole scene vanished and we saw once more the exterior of the Dark Tower, the blue sky behind it, and white clouds.

3

Next day, as we sat in the fellows' garden, we arranged our programme. We were languid from insufficient sleep and from the sweetness of late summer all about us. Bees murmured in the foxgloves and a kitten, which had placed itself unasked on Ransom's knees, stretched out its paws

in a vain effort to catch, or touch, the smoke of his cigarette. We drew up a time-table according to which we were to take our turns as observers at the chronoscope. I forget the details, for those of us who were off duty so frequently dropped in to share the watch, or else were called up to see some specially interesting phenomenon, that the whole of that fortnight is confused in my mind. College was so empty that Orfieu had been able to find bedrooms for us all on his own staircase. The whole thing, except the scenes on the chronoscope itself, comes back to me as a vague chaos of midnight calls and noonday breakfasts, of sandwiches in the small hours, baths and shaves at unaccustomed times, and always, as a background, that garden which, whether by starlight or sunlight, so often seemed our only link with sanity.

'Well,' said Orfieu, as he finished reading out the corrected time-table, 'that's settled. And there's really no reason why you shouldn't take a couple of days off at the end of next week, Scudamour.'

'Going away ?' said I.

'No,' said Scudamour. 'My fiancee is coming down-of course I could put her off till October.'

'Not at all, man, not at all,' said MacPhee. 'If you've been watching those devils all this term, you'll want a change. Send him away for the weekend, Orfieu.'

Orfieu nodded and then smiled. 'You don't like them?' he queried.

'Likes and dislikes ought not to be brought into science, I confess,' said MacPhee; and then after a pause, 'Man, I wish we knew whether it's in the future or the past. But it can't be the past. There'd be bound to be some traces of that civilization left. And if it's the future - God, to think of the world coming to that, and that nothing we can do will prevent it.'

'I don't believe,' said I, 'that archaeologists know half so much as you make out. It is

only by chance, after all, that pots and skulls get left behind for them to dig up. There may have been dozens of civilizations that have left no trace.'

'What do you think, Ransom?' said Orfieu.

Ransom was sitting with his eyes cast down as he played with the kitten. He was very pale and did not look up as he replied.

'If you want the truth, I'm afraid the things we were looking at last night may be in the future for any of us.' Then, seeing that we did not understand, he added with visible reluctance, 'I think that Dark Tower is in hell.'

The remark might have passed, at least with some of us, for a harmless eccentricity, but I suppose that the experiences of the preceding night had left us in a slightly abnormal condition. For my own part, I remember feeling at that moment-and it has proved an unforgettable moment -an intense anger against Ransom combined with an uprush of wildly unusual and archaic thoughts; thoughts without a name, and sensations which seemed to rise from a remote, almost a pre-natal, past. Orfieu said nothing, but knocked out his pipe on the frame of his deck-chair so violently that it broke, and then flung the fragments away with a curse. MacPhee gave one of his guttural growls and shrugged his shoulders. Even Scudamour looked down his nose as if something indecent had been done, and began to hum a tune. There was rank hatred in the air. Ransom continued to stroke the kitten.

'Mind you,' said MacPhee presently, 'I'm not admitting that those things are in the past or future at all. The whole business may be a hallucination.'

'You are at liberty to make any investigations you like,' said Orfieu with what appeared to me such unnecessary rudeness that I said (much louder than I meant), 'Nobody's talking about investigations. He said a hallucination, not a trick.'

'It was not we who first insisted on having the room darkened, sir," said Scudamour to me with icy politeness.

'What on earth are you suggesting?' I asked.

'It is you who are making suggestions, sir.'

'I'm doing nothing of the sort.'

'What the devil is the matter with you both?' said Mac-

'You're like a pack of children today.'

‘It was Mr Lewis who first used the word “trick”,’ said Scudamour.

MacPhee was about to reply when Ransom suddenly remarked with a smile, ‘I’m sorry.’ Then, quietly setting down the kitten, he rose and walked away. The device worked admirably. The remaining four of us at once fell to discussing Ransom’s peculiarities and in a few minutes we had once more talked ourselves into good humour.

A continuous narrative of our lives and observations from this point to the night on which our real adventures began would serve no purpose. I shall content myself with recording two or three things that now seem of importance.

In the first place, we became familiar with the outside of the Dark Tower by daylight. We learned - what night had concealed during my first view of it - that the building was incomplete. The scaffolding was still up and gangs of labourers were busily employed upon it from sunrise to sunset. They were all of the same type as the young man whom I had seen automatized by the Stingingman, and like him wore no clothing but a short kilt of some red material. I have never seen more energetic workers. They seemed to rush at their task like ants and the rapid complexity of their moving crowds was the most noticeable feature of the whole scene. The background of their activities was the flat, well-timbered country about the Dark Tower; there were no other buildings in sight.

But the workers were not the only characters in the scene. Every now and then it would be invaded by what seemed to be soldiers or police - strutting and grinning columns of men whose clockwork movements made it clear that they had undergone the stinging operation. At least they behaved just as the young worker had behaved after the sting, and we inferred that their behaviour had the same cause. Besides the marching columns, there were invariably a few small pickets of these ‘Jerkies’ as we called them, posted here and there, apparently to superintend the work. The midday meal for the workmen was brought by a company of female Jerkies. Every column had its flags and its band, and even the small pickets usually boasted some instrument of music. To us, of course, the whole Othertime world was absolutely silent: in reality, what between the bands and the noise of the workmen, it must have been dinning with sound. The pickets carried whips but I never saw them strike the workmen. Indeed the Jerkies seemed to be popular and the arrival of one of their larger companies was usually greeted with a short cessation of work and with gestures that suggested cheering.

I cannot remember how often we had studied this scene before we began to notice the man whom we called ‘Scudamour’s double’. It was MacPhee who gave him that name. Two men, near the front of our field of vision, were engaged in sawing a block of stone, and I think all of us had been puzzled for some time by something indefinably familiar in the face of one of them, when the Scotsman suddenly cried out, ‘It’s your

double, Scudamour. Look at it, man. It's your double.'

Once the thing had been stated there was no denying it. One of the workmen was more than like Scudamour: he was Scudamour, nail for nail, hair for hair, and the very expression of his face as he looked up to make a remark to the other sawyer was one we had all seen on Scudamour's face a dozen times that very morning. One or two of us tried to treat the thing as a joke, but I think Scudamour himself was uncomfortable about it from the very beginning. It had, however, the advantage of making these busy scenes (which often occupied the chronoscope for hours at a time) more interesting. To pick out the Double in the crowd and follow him wherever he went became our amusement; and when anyone returned to our sessions after an absence, his first question was usually 'How's the Double been getting on?'

Every now and then the scene changed, just as it changes in imagination. We never discovered why. Without any power of resistance we would suddenly find ourselves back in the chamber of the Stingingman, and thence be whisked away to barrack-like rooms where we saw Jerkies eating, or perhaps to some little cell-like cubicle where a tired workman lay asleep, and out again to the clouds and the tree-tops. Often we looked for hours at things which repetition had already staled, and were tantalized with hurried glimpses of what was new and interesting.

And all this time none of us doubted that we were looking either at the far future or the far past, though MacPhee sometimes felt it his duty to point out that this was not yet proved. And still none of us had noticed the most obvious thing about the scenes we were looking at.

For this discovery we were indebted to MacPhee; but before it can be told there is one more scene to be recorded. As far as I am concerned it began with my looking into the 'observatory', as we now called Orfieu's smaller sitting-room, before I went to bed at about five o'clock one morning. Scudamour was on duty there and I asked him as usual how the Double was getting on.

'I think he's dying,' said Scudamour.

I glanced at the screen and saw at once what he had meant. Everything was very dark but by the light of a single taper I could see that we had before us the interior of one of the small cells in the Dark Tower. There was little more in it than a low bed and a table. On the bed there sat a naked man who was bowing his head till it almost touched his knees and at the same time pressing both his hands to his forehead. As I looked he suddenly straightened himself like one in whom a period of dogged endurance has given way to intolerable pain. He rose and looked wildly about him; his face was white and drawn with suffering but I recognized him as the Double. He took two or three turns about the room and presently stopped at the table to drink greedily from a jug that stood there. Then he turned and groped at the back of his bed. He

found a rag there, dipped it in the jug, and pressed it, dripping with water, against his forehead. He repeated the process several times but apparently without gaining relief, for he finally flung the rag from him with a gesture of impatience and stretched

himself on the bed. A moment later he was doubled up again, clasping his forehead, and rolling to and fro, while his shoulders shook as if he sobbed.

‘Has this been going on long ?’ I asked.

‘Yes, a long time.’

There was a pause.

‘The poor devil,’ Scudamour broke out. ‘Why can’t they do something for him? Why doesn’t he go and get help? Leave him like that - what a filthy time that Othertime is.’

It was certainly extremely painful to have to watch a fellow creature, however many centuries remote, suffering like that, and to be unable to do, or even to say, anything for his comfort. It was all so real, so like something happening in the same room, that we both felt a certain guilt in being merely passive spectators. At the same time the unusual energy of Scudamour’s voice-even a hint of hysteria in it - surprised me. I dropped into the chair beside him.

‘I wish to God we’d never started this infernal chrono-scope,’ he said presently.

‘Well,’ said I, ‘I expect you and Orfieu have had about enough of it.’

‘Enough-!’

‘Look here, you mustn’t let it get on your nerves. As we can’t do anything for that poor fellow, I can’t see that there’s any point in watching him all night.’

‘The moment I knocked off the scene might change.’

‘Well, I’ll stay. I’m not particularly sleepy.’

‘Nor am I. And there’s nothing wrong with my nerves, only I’ve got such a splitting headache. Thanks all the same.’

‘Well, if you’ve a headache you’d certainly better knock off.’

‘It isn’t exactly the headache … it’s nothing to make a fuss about. Not really. But it’s just here.’

He forgot that in the darkness I could not see his gesture; for all this time we could not see each other, but only (and that by the light of a taper burning in another world) the Double, shut up alone with his pain in some cell of the Dark Tower. Yet I hardly needed Scudamour's next words.

'It's just where his is,' he whispered. 'Here in my forehead. Like his. I've got his pain, not my own. You don't think-'

What both of us thought was hardly capable of being put into words. What I actually said was, 'I think if we allow our imaginations to run away with us over this chronoscope, we'll go off our heads. We're all dead tired, you most of all, and we've seen enough of the Othertime to show that D.T. is a game in comparison. It's no wonder you've got a bad head. Now look here. With the curtains drawn we can see just enough of what's going on on the screen to notice whether it shifts to somewhere else.' I got up and pulled back the curtains, and the blessed daylight and the noise of the birds came pouring in. 'Now,' I continued, 'go and get some aspirin and make a pot of strong tea for the pair of us and let's sit it out together and be comfortable.'

It was hours later, when the room had been darkened again and Scudamour and I were both (fortunately) in bed, that dawn came into the Double's room in Othertime. What it revealed I learned from Ransom. He said that the taper had apparently burned itself out, and that when there was enough daylight to see things by, they found the bed empty. It took them some time to discover the Double; when at last they made him out, he was sitting on the floor in one corner all hunched up.

He was not now writhing or showing any signs of pain - indeed he was unnaturally still and stiff. His face was in shadow. He sat like that for a long time while the room grew lighter and nothing happened. At last the light fell on his face. At first they thought he had a bruise on his forehead and then they thought he had a wound. The reader will understand that they began with the knowledge that he had passed the night in great pain, and that is doubtless why they did not guess the truth sooner. They did not guess it until a Jerky had come into the room swaggering and cracking his whip, and then, after a glance at the Double, had fallen flat on his face. He went out backwards covering his eyes with his hands. Other Jerkies, and some workmen, came in. They also fell flat and went out backwards. At last female Jerkies came in. They crawled on their bellies, dragging a black robe, and laid it on the bed, and crawled out again. A number of people, all flat on their faces, waited just inside the door of the cell. The Double had watched all this without moving. Now he rose and came into the centre of the room (his worshippers grovelled closer to the floor and Ransom says they did not kiss, but licked, it) and the truth became visible to our observers. He had grown a sting. The pains of the night had been birth pains. His face was still recognizable as that of Scudamour's double, but it had already the yellow pallor and immobility of the man we had seen in the carved room. When he had put on the black robe he was unmistakable : he had gone to bed a man and risen a Stingingman.

Of course this could not be concealed from Scudamour and, equally of course, it did not help to ease the nervous tension in which he was living. We all of us agreed afterwards that from this time on he was increasingly strange in his behaviour; and even at the time Ransom urged Orfieu to persuade him to give up his work immediately and not to wait for his fiancee's visit. I remember Ransom saying, 'That young fellow may blow up any moment.' We ought all to have taken more notice of this. In our defence I may plead that Miss Bembridge was expected in a very few days (three, I think), that we were very much preoccupied with our observations, and that what happened on the following day was startling enough to drive all other considerations out of our heads.

It was MacPhee who released the bomb. We were all together in the observatory, watching the usual busy scene outside the Dark Tower - and watching it inattentively because it was so usual - when he suddenly swore and then stood up.

'Orfieu!' he said.

All our heads turned in MacPhee's direction. His voice had not sounded exactly angry, but it had a note of solemn adjuration in it that was more compelling than anger.

'Orfieu,' he said again, 'once and for all. What game are you playing with us ?'

'I don't know What you mean' said Orfieu.

'Understand,' said MacPhee, 'I'm not going to quarrel with you. But I'm a busy man. If all this has been a hoax, I'll not call you a humbug-you can have your joke-but I'm not going to stay here to be hoaxed any longer.'

'A hoax?'

'Aye. I didn't say a trick, so you need not get angry. I said a hoax. But I'm asking you now, on your word and honour is it a hoax?'

'No, it isn't. What on earth do you mean?'

MacPhee stared at him for a moment almost, I think, in the hope of detecting some sign of embarrassment in his face; but there was none. Then, plunging his hands into his pockets, the Scotsman began pacing to and fro with an air of desperation.

'Very well,' he said. 'Very well. But if it's not a hoax, we're all madmen. The universe is mad. And we're blind as bats too.' He suddenly paused in his stride and wheeled round to address the whole company. 'Do you mean to tell me that not one of you recognizes that building?' -here he flung out a hand towards the Dark Tower.

‘Yes,’ said Ransom, ‘I thought it familiar from the very first, but I can’t put a name to it.’

‘Then you’re less of a fool than the rest of us,’ said MacPhee. ‘You’re the one-eyed man among the blind.’ He stared at us again as if awaiting some response.

‘Well,’ said Orfieu at last, ‘how should we recognize it?’

‘Why, man,’ said MacPhee, ‘you’ve seen it hundreds of times. You could see it from here if the curtains were drawn.’ He walked to the window and pulled them. We all came crowding behind him to look out, but after a glance he turned back into the room. ‘I’m wrong,’ he said. ‘The houses get in the way.’

I was beginning to wonder whether MacPhee were out of his wits, when Scudamour said, ‘You don’t mean -?’ and paused.

‘Go on,’ said MacPhee.

‘It’s too fantastic,’ said Scudamour, and at the same moment Orfieu suddenly said, ‘I’ve got it.’

‘So have I,’ said Ransom. ‘The Dark Tower is an almost exact replica of the new university library here in Cambridge.’

There was complete silence for several seconds.

Orfieu was the first who attempted to pick up the fragments of our previous tranquillity and see if they could be fitted together again..

‘There certainly is a resemblance,’ he began, ‘a distinct resemblance. I’m glad you have pointed it out. But whether-‘

‘Resemblance, your grandmother,’ said MacPhee. ‘They’re identical, except that the tower in there’ (he pointed to the screen) ‘is not quite finished. Here, Lewis, you can draw. Sit down and do us a wee sketch of the Dark Tower.’

I cannot really draw very well, but I did as I was told and succeeded in producing something fairly recognizable. As soon as it was finished we all went out into the town except Ransom, who volunteered to stay behind and watch the chronoscope. It was after one o’clock when we returned, very hungry for our lunch and very thirsty for the tankards of beer which Orfieu provided. Our investigations had taken us a long time because it was not easy to find a place from which we could get the university library at just the same angle as the Dark Tower - and that, by the by, may explain our failure

to recognize it at the outset. But when at last we had found the right position MacPhee's theory became irresistible. Orfieu and Scudamour both fought against it as hard as they could - Orfieu coldly, like an esprit fort, and Scudamour with a passion which I did not then fully understand. It was almost as if he were begging us not to accept it. In the end, however, the facts were too strong for both of them. The library and the Dark Tower corresponded in every detail, except that one was finished and the other was still in the hands of the builders.

We were so thirsty that we did not think about lunch till we had drunk our pints. Then, having been assured by Orfieu's servant that Mr Knellie had had his lunch and gone out of college, we stole into the cool darkness of the combination room and tackled our bread and cheese.

'Well,' said Orfieu, 'this is a most remarkable discovery and you certainly have the laugh of us all, MacPhee. But when one comes to think it over, I don't know why we should be very surprised. It only proves that the time we're looking at is in the future.'

'How do you mean?' said I.

'Well obviously, the Dark Tower is an imitation of the university library. We have an imitation of the Colosseum somewhere in Scotland and an imitation of the Bridge of Sighs in Oxford - ghastly things they both are. In the same way, those Othertime people have an imitation of what to them is the ancient British Library at Cambridge. It's not at all odd.'

'I think it is very odd,' said MacPhee.

'But why?' asked Orfieu. 'We have always thought that What we see on the screen is in the same place as ourselves, whatever time it may be. In other words, those people are living-or will be living-on the site of Cambridge. The library has survived for centuries and at last fallen, and now they are putting up a replica. Probably they have some superstition about it. You must remember that to them it would be almost infinitely ancient.'

'That's just the trouble,' said MacPhee. 'Far too ancient. It would have disappeared centuries - millions of centuries, maybe - before their time.'

'How do you know they are so far in the future?' asked Ransom.

'Look at their anatomy. The human body has changed. Unless something very queer occurs to speed up the evolutionary process, it will take nature a good time to produce human heads that can grow stings. It's not a question of centuries - it's a question of millions, or thousands of millions, of years.'

‘Nowadays,’ said I, ‘some people don’t seem to agree about evolution being necessarily so very gradual.’

‘I know,’ said MacPhee. ‘But they’re wrong. I’m talking of science, not of Butler and Bergson and Shaw and all those whigmaleeries.’

‘I don’t think Bergson-‘, I was beginning, when Scuda-mour suddenly broke out, ‘Oh we may as well chuck it, chuck it, chuck it. What’s the good of finding all those explanations why the university library should be in Other-time when they won’t explain why I’m there? They’ve got one of our buildings; and they’ve got me too, worse luck. They may have hundreds of people in there-people who are now alive - and we haven’t recognized them. And that brute, the first Stingingman - the only one till I grew my sting - do you remember how he came to the front and looked at us? Do you still think he didn’t see us? Do you still think it’s all only in the future? Don’t you see, it’s all … all mixed up with us somehow - bits of our world in there, or bits of it out here among us.’

He had been speaking with his eyes on the table, and as he looked up he caught us exchanging glances. This did not mend matters.

‘I see I’m making myself unpopular,’ he went on, ‘just as Dr Ransom did the other day. Well, I dare say I am rather poor company at present. You wait till you see yourselves in Othertime, and we’ll find how you like it. Of course I oughtn’t to complain. This is science. And who ever heard of a new scientific discovery which didn’t show that the real universe was even fouler and meaner and more dangerous than you had supposed? I never went in for religion, but I begin to think Dr Ransom was right. I think we have tapped whatever reality is behind all the old stories about hell and devils and witches. I don’t know. Some filthy sort of something going on alongside the ordinary world and all mixed up with it.’

Ransom was able to meet him on this ground with perfect naturalness and obvious sincerity.

‘As a matter of fact, Scudamour,’ he said, ‘I’ve changed my mind. I don’t think the world we see through the chronoscope is hell, because it seems to contain quite decent, happy people, along with the Jerkies and the Stinging-men.’

‘Yes, and the decent people get automatized.’

‘I know, and very bad luck it is. But a world in which beastly things can happen to people through no fault of their own- or, at least, not mainly through their own fault - isn’t hell: it’s only our own world over again. It only has to be faced, like our own world. Even if one was taken there-‘

Scudamour shuddered. The rest of us thought Ransom was being very unwise, but I now think he was right. He usually is.-

‘Even if one was taken in there - which would be worse than merely seeing one’s double there-it wouldn’t be essentially different from other misfortunes. And misfortune is not hell, not by a long way. A man can’t be taken to hell, or sent to hell: you can only get there on your own steam.’

Scudamour, who had at least paid Ransom the compliment of listening to him with great attention, now asked him, ‘And what do you think the Othertime is ?’

‘Well,’ said Ransom, ‘like you, I am extremely doubtful if it is simply the future. I agree that it is much too mixed up with us for that. And I’ve been wondering for several days whether the past and the present and the future arc the only times that exist.’

‘What do you mean ?’ asked Orfieu.

‘I don’t know yet,’ said Ransom. ‘In the meanwhile, have we positive proof that what we are seeing is a time at all ?’

‘Well,’ said Orfieu after a pause, ‘I suppose not. Not irrefutable proof. It is, at present, much the easiest hypothesis.’

And that was all that was said at lunch. Two more things happened this day. One was that MacPhee, who had been observing in the afternoon, told me at dinner-time that the ‘new Stingingman’ or ‘Scudamour’s double’ was now ensconced in the carved room. We did not know what had become of the old Stingingman. Some thought the Double must have defeated him as a new bull defeats an old bull and becomes master of the herd. Others imagined he might have succeeded him peacefully according to the rules of some sort of diabolical civil service. The whole conception of Othertime was altering now that we knew there could be more than one Stingingman. ‘A whole stinging caste,’ said MacPhee. ‘A centrocracy,’ suggested Ransom.

The other event was, in itself, unimportant. Something went wrong with the college electric light and Orfieu, on the morning watch, had to use candles.

4

It must have been a Sunday, I think, when the lights failed, or else all the electricians in Cambridge were engaged - at any rate, we were still using candles when we assembled in Orfieu’s rooms after dinner. The little lamp in front of the chronoscope, which worked off its own battery, was of course unaffected. The curtains were drawn, the candles blown out, and we found ourselves once more looking at the carved room - and almost immediately I realized with a faint sensation of nausea that we were in for

another of the stinging scenes.

This was the first time I had seen the Double since his transformation, and it was a strange experience. He was already very like the original Stingingman - in some ways more like him than he was like Scudamour. He had the same yellowish pallor and the same immobility; both, indeed, were more noticeable in him than in his predecessor because he lacked the beard. At the same time, however, his resemblance to Scudamour was quite undiminished. One sometimes sees this paradox on the faces of the dead. They look infinitely changed from what they were in life, yet unmistakably the same. A resemblance to some distant relation, never before suspected, may creep into the corpse's face, but under that new resemblance the pitiful identity between corpse and man remains.

He looks more and more like his grandfather but no less like himself. Something of this sort was happening with the Double. He had not ceased to look like Scudamour: rather, if I may so express it, he looked like Scudamour-looking-like-a-Stingingman. And one result of this was to show the characteristics of the Stingingman face m a new light. The pallor, the expressionless calm, even the horrible frontal deformity itself, now that I saw them induced upon a familiar face, acquired a different horror. I had never thought of pitying the original Stingingman, never suspected that he might be a horror to himself. Now I found that I thought of the poison as pain: of the sting as a solid promontory of anguish bursting out of a tortured head. And then, as the Double put down his head and coolly transfixed his first victim, I felt something like shame. It was as if one had caught Scudamour himself - Scudamour in the grip of madness or of some perversion equivalent to madness -at the moment of performing some monstrous, yet also petty, abomination. I began to have an inkling of how Scudamour himself must feel. Believing him to be at my side, I turned with the vague idea of saying something that might make him feel more comfortable, when to my surprise a quite unexpected voice said, 'Charming. Charming. I had no idea that our age was producing work of this quality.' It was Knellie. None of us had had any idea that he had I followed us into the observatory.

'Oh, it's you, is it?' said Orfieu.

'I hope I do not intrude, my dear fellow,' said the old man. 'It will be very kind of you, very kind indeed, if you allow me to remain. It is a privilege to be present at the performance of so great a work of art.'

'This is not a cinematograph, you know, Mr Knellie,' said MacPhee.

'I did not for a moment suggest that dreadful name,' said Knellie in a reverential voice. 'I fully understand that work like this differs toto caelo from the vulgarities of the popular theatres. And I understand, too, the reticence - might I say the secrecy? - of your proceedings. You cannot at present show such work to the British philistine. But I

am hurt, Orfieu, that you did not take me into your confidence. I trust I, at least, am pretty free from prejudices. Why, my dear fellow, I was preaching the complete moral freedom of the artist when you were a child. May I ask who is the supreme genius to whom we are indebted for this fantasia ?'

And while he talked two human beings had come in, had worshipped the idol, been seized and stung, and strutted out again. Scudamour could stand it no longer.

'Do you mean to say you like it?' he cried.

'Like it?' said Knellie thoughtfully. 'Does one like great art? One responds - perceives - intuits -sympathizes.'

Scudamour had risen. I could not see his face.

'Orfieu,' he said suddenly, 'we must find a way of getting at those brutes.'

'You know it's impossible,' said Orfieu. 'We've been into that all before. You can't travel in time. We'd have no bodies there.'

'It's not so obvious that I shouldn't,' said Scudamour. I had been hoping for some time that this point would not occur to him.

'I am not sure that I understand either of you,' said Knellie, making the assumption that the conversation had been addressed to him with such security that no one could accuse him of interrupting. 'And I don't think time has much to do with it. Surely art is timeless. But who is the artist? Who invented this scene - these superb masses - this splendid, sombre insolence? Who is it by?'

'It's by the Devil, if you want to know,' shouted Scudamour.

'Ah-,' said Knellie very slowly, 'I see what you mean. Perhaps in a certain sense that is true of all art at its supreme moments. Didn't poor Oscar say something like that-?'

'Look out!' cried Scudamour. 'Camilla! For God's sake!'

It took me the fraction of a second to realize that he was shouting not at us but at someone on the screen. And after that everything happened so quickly that I can hardly describe it. I remember seeing a girl - a tall, straight girl with brown hair - coming into the carved room from the left along the dais as dozens of other victims had come in, both men and women. I remember, at the very same moment, a shout from Orfieu (the words were something like 'Don't be a fool!') and the sight of Orfieu rushing forward, like a man about to tackle at football. He was doing this to intercept Scudamour who had suddenly and inexplicably plunged forward, with his head down,

straight at the chronoscope. Then, all in an instant, I saw Orfieu reeling back under the impact of the younger and heavier man, I heard the deafening noise of a broken electric light bulb, I felt Knellie's tremulous hands grab me by the sleeve, and found myself sitting on the floor in absolute darkness.

The room was perfectly still for a moment. Then I heard the unmistakable sound of dripping - someone's drink had apparently been overturned. Then came a voice, MacPhee's.

'Is anyone hurt ?' it said.

'I'm all right,' said Orfieu's voice in the tone of a man who is considerably hurt. 'Got my head a nasty knock, that's all.'

'Are you hurt, Scudamour?' asked MacPhee.

But instead of Scudamour's voice it was Knellie's that replied - in a sort of silvery whine, if a whine can be silvery - 'I'm a good deal shaken. I think if someone could bring me a glass of really good brandy I should be able to get to my own rooms.'

Exclamations of pain burst simultaneously from Orfieu and MacPhee who had struck their heads smartly together in the darkness. The room was full of noises and movements now as we searched for matches. Someone or other was successful. Blinking as the light flared up, I had a momentary vision of a dark figure - presumably Scudamour's - rising from amidst the wreck of the chronoscope. Then the match went out.

'It's all right,' said MacPhee. 'I've got the box now. Oh damnation-'

'What's wrong?' said I.

'Man, I've opened it upside down and they're all away out on the floor. Wait a bit now, wait a bit. Are you all right, Lewis?'

'Oh yes, I'm all right.'

'And are you all right, Scudamour?'

There was no answer. Then MacPhee found a match and succeeded in lighting a candle. I found myself looking at the face of a stranger. Then, with something of a shock, I realized that it was Scudamour's face. Two things had, I think, prevented me from recognizing him at first. One was the odd way in which he was looking at us. The other was the fact that the candlelight found him engaged in retreating towards the door. 'Retreating' is exactly the word: he was moving backwards as quickly as he

could without exciting attention, and at the same time keeping his eyes fixed on us. He was, in fact, behaving exactly like a man of iron nerves suddenly placed among enemies.

‘What’s the matter with you, Scudamour?’ said Orfieu.

But the young man made no reply, and now his hand was on the door handle. The rest of us were still staring at him in bewilderment when Ransom suddenly leaped from his chair. ‘Quick! Quick!’ he cried. ‘Don’t let him go,’ and with that he flung himself on the retreating figure. The other, who had by this time opened the door, put down his head - the gesture had now a ghastly familiarity for us all-butted Ransom in the stomach, and disappeared.

Ransom was doubled up and could say nothing for some minutes. Knellie was beginning to murmur something about brandy when MacPhee turned to Orfieu and me.

‘Are we all mad?’ he said. ‘What’s happening to us? First Scudamour and then Ransom. And where’s Scudamour gone to?’

‘I don’t know,’ said Orfieu contemplating the wreck of the chronoscope, ‘and I’m tempted to say I don’t care. He’s made hay of a year’s work, bloody young fool, that’s all I know.’

‘Why did he go for you like that ?’

‘He wasn’t going for me, he was going for the chronoscope. Trying to jump through it, the young ass.’

‘To jump into the Othertime, you mean?’

‘Yes. Of course you might as well try to jump on to the moon through a telescope.’

‘But what set him off ?’

‘What he saw on the screen.’

‘But that’s no worse than he’s seen dozens of times.’

‘Ah, but you don’t understand,’ said Orfieu. ‘It’s much worse. That girl who came in - she’s another double.”

‘What do you mean ?’

‘It took my breath away. She’s as like a certain real woman -1 mean, a woman in our time - as the old double is like Scudamour. And the woman she is like is Camilla Bernbridge.’

The name meant nothing to us. Orfieu sat down with a gesture of impatience. ‘I forgot, you wouldn’t know,’ he said, ‘but Camilla Bembridge is the girl he’s going to marry.’

MacPhee whistled.

‘You can’t blame the poor devil, Orfieu,’ he said. ‘It’s enough to loosen a screw in the soundest head. To see a copy of yourself first, and then to see it doing that to a copy of your sweetheart … I wonder where he’s gone.’

By this time Ransom had recovered his speech.

‘So do I,’ he said. ‘I wonder very much. Why on earth did none of you help me to stop him ?’

‘Why should he be stopped ?’ said I.

‘Come on,’ said Ransom, ‘don’t you see? No, there’s not a moment to spare. We’ll talk about it afterwards.’

I think MacPhee saw what was in Ransom’s mind from the first. I certainly did not, but when I saw the other two leaving the room I followed them. Orfieu remained behind, absorbed, apparently, in investigating the ruin of his chronoscope. Knellie was still nursing his bruise and murmuring about good brandy.

Ransom led us at once to the great gate of the college. It was only about nine o’clock and the light showed in the porter’s lodge. As I caught up with the others the porter was just telling Ransom that he had not seen Mr Scudamour go out.

‘Is there any other way out of college?’ asked Ransom.

‘Only the St Patrick gate, sir,’ said the porter, ‘and it’d be shut in the vacation.’

‘Ah - but Mr Scudamour would have a key ?’

‘Well he ought to have a key,5 said the porter. ‘But I reckon he’s mislaid it, seeing as he borrowed one off me the night before last and gave it back to me yesterday morning. I said to myself at the time, Mr Scudamour’s gone and mislaid his key again. Shall I give him any message, sir, if I do see him ?’

‘Yes,’ said MacPhee after a moment’s thought. ‘Tell him all’s well and ask him to go to

Dr Orfieu as soon as he can.’

We moved away from the lodge.

‘Quick,’ said Ransom. ‘I’ll try his rooms and you two go to the other gate.’

‘Come on,’ said MacPhee. I wanted to question him but he was running now, and in a few seconds we were at the St Patrick gate. I am not sure what he expected to find there, but he was certainly disappointed.

‘What on earth is the matter?’ I asked him as he turned away from it. But at the same moment I heard the sound of hasty footsteps and Ransom appeared at the other end of the path.

‘His rooms are empty,’ he shouted.

‘He might be in any of these rooms then?’ replied MacPhee, indicating with a wave of his hand the rows of windows which gazed down on the little court with that peculiarly dead expression familiar to all who have lived in a college during the vacation.

‘No,’ said Ransom. “Thank heaven they lock them up.’

‘Are you never going to tell me,’ I began, when suddenly MacPhee seized my arm and pointed.

Ransom had reached us by now: all three of us stood in a bunch together, holding our breaths, and looking up.

The block of buildings which shut off our view towards the west was of a type common in university towns- two storeys of full-sized windows, then a row of battlements, and then dormer-windows behind the battlements projecting from a high-pitched roof. The sky behind it was clear and tinted with the greenish-blue that sometimes follows sunset. Against this, clear as a shape cut out of black paper, a man was moving on the ridge-tiles. He was not crouching, or going on all fours, or even spreading out his arms to balance himself: he was walking with his hands clasped behind his back as easily as I might walk on level ground, and he was turning his head slowly from left to right like one who takes stock of his surroundings.

‘That’s him, all right,’ said MacPhee.

‘Mad?’ I suggested.

‘Oh worse, worse,’ replied Ransom, and then, ‘Look, he’s going down.’

‘And on the outside,’ added MacPhee.

‘Quick,’ said Ransom. ‘That’ll bring him down into Pat’s Lane. There’s just a chance.’

Once more we dashed back to the great gate, all of us, this time running as fast as we could, for I had seen enough to convince me that Scudamour must be captured at all costs. The porter seemed to move with maddening slowness as he came out of his lodge to open the postern. I felt the seconds ticking past as he fumbled for his key - talking, always talking - and as Ransom and I for very haste impeded each other at the narrow opening, MacPhee behind growled at us to get on. Then we were out at last and racing along the front of the college and round into Pat’s Lane - a silent little alley between two colleges, defended from wheeled traffic by a couple of posts. I do not know how far we ran down it: over the bridge, anyway, and far enough to see the buses and cars on a big thoroughfare beyond the river. It is difficult to run seriously when you have no certainty whether your quarry is ahead of you or behind you. We tried several directions. From running we came to quick walking; from quick walking to slow walking; from slow walking to indeterminate hanging about. Finally, at about half past ten, we were all standing still (in Pat’s Lane again) mopping our foreheads.

‘Poor Scudamour,’ I panted. ‘But it may be only temporary.’

‘Temporary ?’ said Ransom in a voice that made me pause.

‘What’sthat?‘I asked.

‘You said “temporary”. What hope is there of getting him back ? Specially if we’ve lost the other one?’

‘What are you talking about ? What other one ?’

‘The one we’ve been chasing.’

‘You mean Scudamour.’

Ransom gave me a long look. ‘That!’ he said. ‘That wasn’t Scudamour.’

I stared at him, not knowing what I thought but knowing that in my thoughts there was something horrible. He went on.

‘That wasn’t Scudamour who winded me. Did it look like him ? Why did it not answer ? Why was it backing out of the room? Why did it put down its head and butt? Scudamour wouldn’t fight that way if he wanted to fight. Don’t you see ? When it put down its head it was relying on something it thought it had - something it had been in the habit of using. Namely, a sting.’

‘You mean,’ said I, resisting a strong feeling of sickness, ‘you mean that what we saw on the roof was … was the Stingingman ?’

‘I thought you knew,’ said Ransom.

‘Then Where’s the real Scudamour ?’

‘God help him,’ said Ransom. ‘If he’s alive he’s in the Dark Tower in Othertime.’

‘Jumped through the chronoscope ? - but this is fantastic, Ransom. Didn’t Orfieu explain all along that it’s only like a telescope? The things we’ve been seeing weren’t really close to us, they were millions of years away.’

‘I know that’s Orfieu’s theory. But what is the evidence , for it? And does it explain why Othertime is full of replicas of things in our own world ? What do you think, MacPhee?’

‘I think,’ said MacPhee, ‘that it is now perfectly certain that he is working with forces he does not understand, and that none of us knows where or when the Othertime world is or how it is related to our own.’

‘Except,’ said Ransom, ‘that it contains these replicas - one building, one man, and one woman so far. There may I be any number of others.’

‘And what, exactly, do you think has happened ?’ I asked.

‘You remember what Orfieu said the first evening about time-travel being impossible, because you’d have no body in the other time when you got there. Well, isn’t it obvious that if you got two times that had replicas that difficulty I would be overcome ? In other words I think that the Double we saw on the screen had a body not merely like poor Scudamour’s but the same: I mean, that the very same

matter which made up Scudamour’s body in 1938 made up that brute’s body in Othertime. Now if that were so I -and if you then, by any contrivance, brought the two times into contact, so to speak … you see?’

‘You mean they might … might just jump across ?’ ‘Yes, in a sense. Scudamour, under the influence of a strong emotion, makes what you might call a psychological, leap or lunge at the Othertime. Ordinarily nothing would result-or perhaps death. But as bad luck would have it on this occasion, his own body - the very same he’s used all his life in our time - is there waiting for him. The Other-time occupant of that body is caught off his guard - simply pushed out of his body-but since that identical body is waiting for him in 1938, he inevitably slips into it and finds himself in Cambridge.’

“This is getting very difficult,’ said I. ‘I’m not sure that I understand about these two bodies.’

‘But there aren’t two bodies. There’s only one body existing at two different times - just as that tree existed yesterday and today.’

‘What do you think of it, MacPhee ?’ I asked.

‘Well,’ said MacPhee, ‘I do not start with the simple theory of an entity called the soul as our friend does, and that makes things more complicated for me. But I agree that the behaviour of Scudamour’s body, since the crash, is just what we should expect to see if that body had acquired the memory and psychology of the Stingingman. I am therefore ready, as a scientist, to work on Ransom’s hypothesis for the present. And I may add that, as a creature of the passions, emotions, and imagination, I don’t feel - I’m speaking of feeling, ye understand - any doubt about it. What’s puzzling me is something else.’

We both turned to him with the same question.

‘I’m wondering,’ said MacPhee, ‘about all these replicas. It’s long odds- in fact it’s all but infinite odds - against getting the same particles organized as a human body in two different times. And now we’ve got that happening twice, the boy and the girl. And then there’s the building. Man, there’s too much coincidence about this affair.’

There was silence for a few moments, and then, wrinkling his brow, he proceeded, half to himself,

‘I don’t know at all. I don’t know. But could it be the other way round? Not that we happen to have reached a time that contains replicas of our own, but that it’s the replicas that are bringing the times together- a sort of gravitation. You see, if two times contained exactly the same distribution of matter, they would become simply the same time … and if they contained some identical distributions they might approach … I don’t know. It’s all daft.’

‘On that view,’ said Ransom, ‘the chronoscope would be of quite secondary importance.’

‘Ach!’ ejaculated MacPhee. ‘What’s the chronoscope got to do with it? It produces no phenomena, it only lets you see them. This was all going on before Orfieu made his instrument and would have been going on whether or no.’

‘What do you mean by “this” ?’ I asked.

‘I hardly know,’ said MacPhee after a long pause, ‘but I think we’re in for more than Orfieu supposes.’

‘In the meantime,’ said Ransom, ‘we must get back to Orfieu and make some plans. Every minute that creature may be getting further away.’

‘He can’t do much harm without his sting, I suppose.’ said I.

‘I shouldn’t be too sure even of that,’ said Ransom. ‘But I was thinking of something else. Don’t you see that our only chance of ever getting Scudamour back is to bring him and the Stingingman together again - with a chronoscope between them ? Once we lose touch with the Stingingman our last hope is gone.’

‘In that case,’ said I, ‘he ought to have the same motive for sticking to us, if he wants to get back to his own time.’

We were now in sight of the college gate and already instinctively turning over in our minds what we would say to Orfieu, when suddenly the postern opened and Orfieu himself appeared-an Orfieu I had not yet seen for he was in a towering rage. He wanted to know where - where the hell - we’d all been and why we’d left him to face the music. We inquired, not in the best of tempers ourselves, what music he meant.

‘That infernal woman,’ snapped Orfieu. ‘Yes, Scudamour’s fiancee. The Bembridge woman. On the telephone. And now, what are you going to tell her when she comes round tomorrow?’

5

At this point it will be convenient if my narrative turns to Scudamour. The reader will understand that the rest of us heard his story much later; that we heard it gradually and with all those repetitions and interruptions which arise in conversation. Here, however, it will be straightened out and tidied up for your benefit. No doubt I lose something from the purely literary point of view by not leaving you for the next few chapters in the same uncertainty which we actually endured for the next few weeks, but literature is not here my chief concern.

According to Scudamour’s account he had no plan of action in his mind when he rose and leaped upon the chronoscope. Indeed he would never have done so if his excitement had allowed him to reflect, for, like the rest of us, he regarded the instrument as a kind of telescope. He had no belief that you could get through it into Othertime. All he knew was that the sight of Camilla in the clutches of the Stingingman was more than he could bear. He felt that he must smash something - preferably the Stingingman, but at any rate something - or go mad. In other words, he ‘saw red’.

He remembers dashing forward with outstretched hands, but he does not remember the sound of the breaking bulb. It seemed to him that as his hands went out he just found them closing on the girl's arms. His impression was one of incredulous triumph he thought in some confused way that he had pulled Camilla out of Othertime - right through the screen into Orfieu's room. He thinks that he shouted out something like 'It's all right, Camilla. It's me.'

The girl's back was towards him and he was holding her by the elbows. She twisted herself and looked back over her shoulder as he spoke. He still thought that it was Camilla and was not surprised that she was pale and looked terrified. Then he felt her grow suddenly limp in his hands and realized that she was going to faint.

He sprang up at this—for he found that he was sitting — and laid her in his chair, at the same time shouting to the rest of us to help. It was at this moment that he became aware of his novel surroundings. Up to that point there had been a certain strangeness in the whole experience. It had been more like meeting Camilla in a dream than like meeting her in real life; but, like a dream, it was accepted without question. But as he shouted to us a number of facts were forced upon him all at once. In the first place he realized that the language in which he had shouted was not English.

Secondly, that the chair in which he was laying the girl (whom he still thought of as Camilla) was not one of the chairs in Orfieu's room- and also that he was not in his ordinary clothes. But what startled him far more was that in the very act of setting the girl down he found his whole mind reeling under the effort of resisting a desire which horrified him both by its content and by its almost maniacal strength. He wanted to sting. There was a cloud of pain in his head so that he felt his head would burst if he did not sting. And for one horrible moment it seemed to him that to sting Camilla would be the most natural thing in the world. For what other purpose was she there?

Of course Scudamour has read his psychoanalysis. He is perfectly well aware that under abnormal conditions a much more natural desire might disguise itself in this grotesque form. But he is pretty sure that this was not what was happening. The pain and pressure in his forehead, as he still remembers them, leave no room for doubt. This was a desire with a real physiological basis. He was full of poison and ached to discharge it.

As soon as he realized what his body was urging him to do he fell back several paces from the chair. He dared not look at the girl for a few minutes, whatever assistance she might need: certainly he must not go near her. As he stood thus, with clenched hands, fighting down the riot of his senses, he took in his surroundings without much immediate attention. He was certainly in the carved room of the Dark Tower. On his right was the dais with the balustrade which he already knew so well. On his left was that part of the room which none of us had ever seen. It was not very large- perhaps

about twenty feet long. The walls were completely covered with such decorations as I have described before. There was another door in the far wall and, on each side of this, a low stone seat running the width of the room. But between him and that seat there was something that took his breath away; it was a broken chronoscope.

In all essentials it was identical with Orfieu's instrument. There was a wooden frame from which, at this moment, the shreds of a torn screen were hanging. On a table in front of this there hung a grey convoluted object which he had no difficulty in recognizing. With a sudden gleam of hope he bent to examine it. It was torn in two places and quite useless.

I think it is greatly to Scudamour's credit that he retained his self-control. His own account of the matter is that the terror which arose in his mind was so great that the mind simply refused it and left him comparatively cool and resolute. He realized in an abstract sort of way that he was cut off from all hope of ever regaining our world, surrounded on every side by the unknown, and burdened with a horrible physical deformity from which horrible and, perhaps in the long run, irresistible desires would pour into his consciousness at every moment. But he did not apprehend all this emotionally. That, at least, is what he says. I myself still believe that he showed extraordinary manhood.

By this time the girl had opened her eyes and was staring at him with an expression of terrified wonder. He tried to smile at her, and realized that the muscles of his face- the face he now had- were very unused to smiling.

'It's all right,' he said." 'Don't be afraid. I will not sting you.'

'What is that?' said the girl almost in a whisper. 'What do you mean?'

Before I go any further I had better explain that as long as he lived in Othertime Scudamour found no difficulty in speaking and understanding a language which was certainly not English, but that he did not succeed in bringing a single word of this language back with him. Orfieu and MacPhee both regard this as confirming the theory that what occurred between him and his double was a real exchange of bodies. When Scudamour's consciousness entered the Othertime world it acquired no new knowledge in the strict sense of the word 'knowledge', but it found itself furnished with a pair of ears and a tongue and vocal chords that had been trained for years in receiving and making the sounds of the Othertime language, and a brain which was in the habit of associating those sounds with certain ideas. He thus simply found himself using a language which, in another sense, he did not 'know'. This view of the matter is borne out by the fact that if, in Othertime, he ever attempted to think what he was going to say, or even paused to choose a word, he at once became speechless. And if he failed to understand what an Othertimer said to him he could never lay his finger on any one word and ask what it meant. Their utterances had to be taken as a whole.

When all went well, and when he was thinking hard of the subject-matter and not at all of the language, he could understand; but he could not take their talk to pieces linguistically or pick out nouns and verbs or anything of that sort.

‘It’s all right,’ Scudamour repeated. ‘I said I will not sting you.’

‘I don’t understand,’ said the girl.

Scudamour’s next remark failed. He had meant to say ‘Thank God you don’t,’ but presumably there are no words for this in the language he was using. At this time he did not, of course, understand the linguistic situation which I have just described, and was astonished to find himself stammering. But his mind was racing on to other aspects of the situation.

‘You know me, don’t you ?’ he said.

‘Of course I know you,’ said the girl. ‘You are the Lord of the Dark Tower and the Unicorn of the Eastern Plain.’ ‘But you know I have not always been this. You know who I am really. Camilla, don’t you know me? You are Camilla still, aren’t you, whatever they have done to us both?’

‘I am Camilla,’ said the girl.

Here I must interrupt again. It is not in the least likely that Scudamour really uttered the word ‘Camilla’ or that the girl uttered it in replying to him. Doubtless, he used whatever sound was associated with that woman in Othertime and got the same sound back from her. It would, of course, appear to him as the familiar name when he remembered the conversation after he got back to us, having recovered his English-trained ears, brain, and tongue. But all this he did not understand at the time. Her reply confirmed him in his belief that the woman before him was the real Camilla Bembridge, caught like himself into the Othertime world.

‘And who am I ?’ he asked.

‘Why are you trying to entrap me?’ said the girl. ‘You know it is unlawful to speak to any unicorn as he was before - when he was only a common man.’

‘I know nothing about their laws, Camilla. How can their laws change what is between you and me ?’

She said nothing.

Scudamour came a step nearer. He was greatly bewildered and Camilla’s replies seemed to be taking away the one thing that had been left him, for his sanity, in the

wreck of his known world.

‘Camilla,’ he said, ‘don’t look at me like that! I have no idea what has happened to us both; but it can’t mean that you no longer love me.’

The girl looked at him in amazement.

‘You are mocking me,’ she said. ‘How can you love me now that you are what you are ?’

‘I don’t want to be— this,’ said Scudamour. ‘I only want us both to get back, to be as we were. And if I stayed like this for a hundred years it would make no difference to my love for you - though I haven’t much right to expect you to love me while I am … a unicorn. But can you not endure it for a time, till we get back? There must be a way back. We must be able to get across somehow.’

‘Do you mean into the forest?’ said the girl. ‘You mean you would run away? Oh, but it is impossible. And the White Riders would kill us. But you are trying to entrap me. Leave me alone. I never said I would go. I never spoke your old name. I never said I still loved you. Why should you want me to be thrown into the fire ?’

‘I cannot understand a thing you are saying,’ answered Scudamour. ‘You seem to think I am your enemy. And you seem to know so much more than I do. Have you been here longer than I ?’

‘I have been here all my life.’

Scudamour groaned and put his hand to his head. A second later he drew it away with a scream of agony. If any doubt had lingered in his mind as to whether he bore a sting on his forehead, here was proof positive. Only a tiny drop of blood appeared on his hand, but he was dizzy with the pain and he felt the poison tingling under his skin. The terrible expectation that he would become a Jerky arose in his mind; but apparently the body of a Stingingman is immune from the full effects of its own virus. His hand was sore and swollen for several days but he was otherwise unharmed. In the meantime the accident had one result which he counted cheap at the price of the pain. The tension in his head was relaxed, the throbbing grew less, and the desire to sting disappeared. He felt once more master of himself.

‘Camilla, dear,’ he said, ‘something horrible has happened to us both. I’ll tell you what it seems like to me, and then you must tell me what it has been like to you. But I am afraid they have done something to your memory which they haven’t done to mine. Don’t you remember any other world-any other country-than this? Because I do. It seems to me that until today you and I lived in a quite different place where we wore different clothes and lived hi houses not at all like this. And we were lovers there and

were happy together. We had plenty of friends and everyone was kind to us and wished us well. There were no Stingingmen there and no Jerkies, and I had not got this horrible thing in my head. Do you not remember all this?'

Camilla shook her head sadly.

'What do you remember ?' he asked.

'I remember being here always,' she said. 'I remember being a child, and I remember the day we first met, by the broken bridge out there where the forest begins, and you were only a boy and I was a little girl. And I remember when Mother died and what you said to me the day after. And then how happy we were, and all we thought we were going to do, until the day when you changed.'

'But you remember me in all this, the real ME. You know who I am ?'

The girl rose at this and looked him straight in the face.

'Yes,' she said. 'You are Michael."

Once again, I do not suppose that the syllables she pronounced were really those I have written; but it seemed to Scudamour that he heard his own name. And it seemed to him that she spoke with the steadiness of a martyr, that she was putting her life in his hands. He partly understood then, and understood fully before he left that world, that if he had been the real Stingingman her mention of his name would have meant death to her. I gather that it was these words and her look while she spoke them that first raised in him any serious suspicion that she was not the real Camilla. He himself, as a loyal lover, could not explain why. The nearest he ever got to it was to say that the real Camilla was 'so sensible'. The rest of us, who had opportunities during his absence of getting to know the real Camilla pretty well, would put it more bluntly. She was not the sort of young woman who was likely to risk her life, or even her comfort, for the sake of truth in love or in anything else.

'You are right,' he said. 'You are Camilla and I am Michael, for ever and ever, whatever they do to us and however they confuse our minds. Hold fast to that. Can you believe what I have been telling you - that we don't belong here, we come from a better world and have got to go back there if we can?'

'It is very hard,' said the girl. 'But I will believe it if you tell me.'

'Good,' said Scudamour. 'Now tell me what you know about this world. You didn't seem to know why you had been brought here.'

'What do you mean? Of course I knew. I was coming here to drink of the fuller life, to

be made a servant of the Big Brain. I was coming because my name had been called, and now that I had lost you I was glad enough.'

Scudamour hesitated. 'But, Camilla,' he said, 'when I told you I wasn't going to … to sting you-you didn't seem to understand.'

She started at his words and then stared at him with a face full of troubled wonder. You could see that the conceptions of a whole lifetime had been overturned. At last she spoke, almost in a whisper.

'So that is how it is really done!' she said.

'Do you mean to say they don't know?' he asked.

'None of us knew. No one sees a Stingingman when once he has been given his robe, or at least none of us common people. We do not know even where he is, though many stories are told. I did not know when I came into this room that I should find you here. We are told to come in never looking behind us and to make our prayer to … Him.' Here Camilla pointed over Scudamour's shoulder, and looking back he found himself face to face with the many-bodied idol which he had almost forgotten. Glancing at Camilla, he saw that she was bowing to it and moving her lips.

'Camilla, don't, don't,' said Scudamour hastily, moved by an impulse which he supposed to be irrational. She stopped and looked at him. Then gradually a blush came over her face and she dropped her eyes. Neither of them, perhaps, understood why.

'Go on,' said Scudamour presently.

'We are told,' said Camilla, 'to pray to his image, and then he himself will come from behind us and lay his hundred hands upon our heads and breathe into us the greater life so that we shall live no longer with our own life but with his. No one has ever dreamed it was the Unicorn-man. We were told you bore stings not for us but for our enemies.'

'But do those who have been through it never tell ?'

'How could they tell?'

'Why not?'

'But they don't speak.'

'You mean they are dumb?' said Scudamour.

“They are— I don’t know how it is with them,’ said the girl. They go about their business needing no words because they live with a single life higher than their own. They are above speech.’

‘Poor creatures,’ said Scudamour half to himself.

‘Do you mean they are not happy ?’ said the girl. ‘Is that a lie too ?’

‘Happy?’ said Scudamour. ‘I don’t know. Not with any kind of happiness that concerns you and me.’

‘We are told that one moment of their life is such bliss that it surpasses all the best and sweetest that we others could experience in a thousand years.’

‘You don’t believe that?’

‘I don’t want it.”

She looked at him with eyes full of love. He thought to himself that Camilla had not loved him so well in the old world. He did not dare to draw near and kiss her, his sting forbade him. No doubt he could turn his head aside - the thing could be managed, but he felt a certain horror at the idea of bringing his face, as it now was, close to hers.

There was silence between them for a minute or so. He saw that he must learn much more of this strange country and that they must make plans; but the very depth of this ignorance and the number of questions he wanted to ask kept him from beginning. As he stood thus he gradually became aware that there was a great deal of noise going on outside the Dark Tower and that it was rapidly increasing. Ever since he had entered Othertime there had, indeed, been a good deal of distant noise - noises of hammering and workmen’s calls, as he now realized, though he had not hitherto attended to them. But these had disappeared. What he now heard was more like confusion and riot. There were shouts and cheers mixed with sudden silences and then the tread of many feet moving in haste.

‘Do you know what is happening?’ he said, at the same time glancing quickly round the room and noticing that the windows - unglazed, oblong windows-were high above his head and gave him no chance of seeing out.

Before Camilla could reply the door was suddenly flung open - not one of the doors on the dais, but the door at the far end where the stone seats were. A man dashed into the room, and sinking on one knee with such haste that he seemed to have fallen, cried out, “The White Riders, Lord! The White Riders are upon us!’

Scudamour had no time to consider his reply, and that was what saved him. Almost without the co-operation of his will he found himself answering in the firm, cold voice of one accustomed to command, ‘Well. Do you not know your duties?’

His body was repeating some lesson that its nerves and muscles had learned before he had entered it; and it was a complete success. The newcomer flinched a little like a scolded dog and said in a humbler voice, ‘Yes, Lord. There are no new orders ?’

‘There are no new orders,’ answered Scudamour with perfect outward composure, and the man, bowing low, instantly disappeared. For the first time since he had passed through the chronoscope Scudamour felt inclined to laugh; he was beginning to enjoy the gigantic game of bluff which would apparently be forced on him. At the same time he was greatly puzzled by the appearance of this man, who did not seem to fall into any of the categories of the Othertime society Which he already knew. Scudamour could only describe him as a stingless Stingingman. He had all the appearances of the stinging caste except the sting - black robes, black hair, and pallid face.

He would have asked Camilla who and what the man was, but the sounds from without were such as now claimed all his attention. He heard more cheering, angry voices, cries of pain, tinkling of steel on steel, and, above all, the thunder of hoofs. ‘I must see this,’ he said. ‘Perhaps if I stood on the chair-‘, but the chair was either fixed to the floor or else too heavy to move and he could not drag it under the windows. He went to the far end of the room and stood on the stone seat; then back to the dais and stood on it. He stood on tiptoes and craned his neck, but could see nothing but the sky. The noise was increasing. Clearly something like a full battle was in progress. There were great thudding shocks now as if the enemy were battering the door of the Dark Tower itself.

‘Who are these White Riders?’ he said.

‘Oh, Michael,’ said Camilla with a gesture of despair, ‘have you forgotten even that? They are the savages, the man-eaters, who have destroyed nearly all the world.’

‘Nearly all the world ?’

‘Of course. And now they have come here too - half the island is in their hands. But you must know that. That is Why more and more of us must give ourselves to the Big Brain, and why we must work longer and live harder - we are only a remnant. Our backs are to a wall. When they have killed us they will have destroyed the whole world of man.’

‘I see,’ said Scudamour. ‘I see. I knew nothing about this.’ It was indeed a wholly new light to him. In studying Other-time through the chronoscope he had been absorbed in

the sheer evil, as it seemed to him, of What he saw; it had not occurred to him to inquire into its origins - perhaps, its excuses.

‘But, Camilla,’ he said, ‘if they are only savages why have we not defeated them ?’

‘I don’t know,’ she said. ‘They are so many, and so big. They are harder to kill than we are. And they grow so fast. We have few children, they have many. I do not understand much about it.’

“The noise seems to be dying down. Do you think our men are all killed?’ He was horrified to find that he had called the Othertimers ‘our men’.

‘There would be more noise if the Riders had got into die Tower,’ said Camilla.

‘That’s true,’ said Scudamour. ‘Perhaps they are beaten.’

‘Perhaps they were not very many. This is the first time they have come here. Next time there will be more of them.’

‘Listen!’ said Scudamour suddenly. There seemed to be almost complete silence in the outer world now, and hi the silence a single voice, crying out very loud and somewhat monotonously as if a proclamation were being made. He could not catch what it was saying. Then came again the noise of trampling hoofs, this time gradually diminishing.

‘They have gone,’ said Camilla.

‘It sounds like it,’ said Scudamour, ‘and that may be as bad for you and me, dear, as if they had won. That man will be back any minute. Now what am I to do about you? Will they let me keep you here now that I haven’t stung you?’

‘If you tell them I am not fit to be made a servant of the Big Brain they will put me into the fire.’

The words recalled Scudamour sharply to reality. He would not call such creatures ‘our men’ a second time.

‘But what if I say you are to be kept here - just as you are?’

She looked at him wonderingly.

[Here folio 49 of the manuscript is missing.]

be a sad people.’

‘I dare say, I dare say. And perhaps a jealous, envious, malicious people too.’

‘You are teaching me all the time to say things that we do not dare to think.’

‘Listen!’ said Scudamour. The door opened again and the same black-robed attendant appeared.

‘Hail, Lord,’ he began, sinking on his knee. ‘As no one doubted, you have overcome the barbarians and spread the terror of your name among them.’

Tell your story,’ said Scudamour.

‘They came out of the wood from the north,’ said the man, ‘galloping so fast that your scouts were hardly here before them, and they were on us before the troops could well be ordered. They came straight to the north door and some of them dismounted; they had a felled tree for a battering-ram. They seemed to take no notice of the workmen who caught up what they could for weapons and came at them. The Riders were more ready to threaten them than to fight, and when the workmen would not be kept back by threats they struck feebly and like fools-even using the butts of their lances. They killed very few. When the troops came, it was another matter. The Riders charged them with lances and drove them back twice. Then they seemed to lose heart and would not charge a third time. They left off battering the door and drew together and then their leader shouted out a message. Then they fled.’

Scudamour gathered from the appearance of the messenger that he had not been in the engagement himself. He also began to think that the Othertimers had odd ideas of what constituted a victory.

‘What was the message ?’ he asked.

The man appeared embarrassed. ‘It is not fit …’ he began. ‘It was full of vile blasphemies.’

‘What was the message?’ Scudamour repeated in the same tone.

‘The Lord of the Dark Tower would doubtless like to hear it in secret,’ said the man, who had already glanced several times at Camilla. Then, as if taking his courage in both hands, he added, ‘And this woman, Lord? She has not yet drunk of the fuller life? Doubtless the Lord was interrupted by the coming of the Riders.’

‘She is not going to taste of that life at present,’ said Scudamour boldly.

‘She goes to the fire, then?’ said the man carelessly.

‘No,’ replied Scudamour, carefully keeping all emotion out of his voice. ‘I have other work for her to do. She must be lodged here in my apartments, and, listen, she is to be treated no worse than myself.’

He regretted the last words as soon as he said them - it would have been wiser, he thought, to show no particular solicitude. He could not read the man’s face. He supposed it would be thought he intended Camilla for his mistress, and had little fear lest her wishes in the matter might count for anything in the Othertime social system; but he did not know whether such things were in the character of a Stingingman.

‘To hear is to obey,’ said the attendant, and rising, opened the door, and motioned to Camilla to follow him. It was not what either of them wished and there was no opportunity to exchange words. At all costs, he must arouse no unnecessary suspicion. Camilla hesitated and went.

Left alone, Scudamour suffered a sudden reaction from the strain of the last hour. He found that his legs were trembling and sank into his chair. He tried to think out his next move. It would have been easier if his head had not ached so.

The respite lasted only a few minutes and then the attendant returned. He knelt as before but there was a subtle change in his voice as he began.

‘It went roughly, as I have already told you. They tried to spare the workmen as they always do, and the workmen had no taste for coming within the reach of their lances. When the Jerkies came, it was as always. They do not seem to know how to get out of the way of the horses. Do what we will, we cannot make them move like real men and change their direction. They go on as they are set all right.’

‘And what of the message ?’

‘Oh it was the same they have given elsewhere, that whoever comes to them-the Lord of the Tower will forgive me - whoever comes to them with a sting in his hand, cut from a Unicorn’s head, shall have a good welcome, he and all his party, and be a great man among them. I am afraid many of the people heard it.’

‘It is no matter,’ said Scudamour. That cryptic remark came readily off his tongue and served well enough, but he found himself very much at a loss for something more to say when the attendant began again.

‘And the woman, Lord ?’ he said tentatively.

‘Well,’ said Scudamour, ‘what of the woman?’ ‘Surely she was not wrongly chosen for stinging. All care was taken. They are very like.’

The last words electrified Scudamour. They bore to him an obvious sense—that the Othertime woman was like Camilla Bembridge in his own time, or, as he preferred to think, that there had once been two such doubles, though now, somehow or other, Camilla was imprisoned with him in the wrong world. It had not occurred to him that the Othertimer would know this. The intense complexity of the problem rushed suddenly upon his mind and made him ipeechless. But he must not stop to think now - at all costs ne must avoid a silence. At last he said sternly, 'There are other things to be done before that.'

The man looked hard at him. 'The Lord will remember that such things do not end well for the Unicorn who tries them.' Then, after a short pause, he added, 'But the Lord need not fear me. I will keep his secret. I am his son and his daughter.'

In our world the words would hardly have been uttered without some sort of confidential leer, but even the mask-like gravity of the speaker's face could not conceal his meaning. It is, I think, a rather curious fact that Scudamour felt a quite old-fashioned desire to hit the man hard in the face-an old-fashioned, if you will a Victorian, indignation as at an insult to Camilla. For the real Camilla Bembridge was what is called 'modern'. She was so free to talk about the things her grandmother could not mention that Ransom once said he wondered if she were free to talk about anything else.

There would have been no difficulty about suggesting to her that she might become your mistress; I do not think you would have succeeded unless you offered very good security, but there would have been no tears or blushes or indignation. And Scudamour, one gathers, had taken his tone from her. But here he felt different. Perhaps he had never been so very 'modern' in his heart. At all events he now felt a strong desire to hit that man. The idea of sharing a secret, and such a secret, with him was infuriating. He relapsed into his haughtiest manner.

'You are a fool,' he said. 'How should you know what is in my mind? It is more a question how long I shall keep your secret, or whether I am ready to forget that you have spoken thus.' At this moment an inspiration came to Scudamour. It was very risky and if he had had time to weigh the risks he might not have acted on it. He turned to the broken chronoscope. 'Does this mean nothing to you?' he said. 'Do you think nothing out of the ordinary is now to be planned and done?'

The man opened his eyes wider- perhaps he was genuinely impressed. 'I am your son and your daughter,' he said. 'Have they broken it ?'

Scudamour made a motion of his head which, he hoped, might at need be interpreted as a sign of assent or as a mere pensive refusal to answer.

'Have I the Lord's leave to speak?' said the man. 'Speak,' said Scudamour.

‘Does the Lord think of using the woman’s brain? Would it not be wasteful? Would not any common brain do as well?’

Scudamour started. He knew that Orfieu had had great trouble in finding a preparation equivalent to the Z substance in the human brain-a necessary element in his chronoscope. Obviously the Othertimers had a simpler method.

‘You do not understand in the least what is to be done,’ he said coldly. All through the conversation he had been reminding himself that it was foolish to begin by insulting and antagonizing the first Othertime man he had met, but he was continually being forced to do so. His only asset in this new world was his official superiority as a Stingingman and the only means of disguising his ignorance was to play that superiority for all it was worth. But he felt that he was now very nearly at the end of his tether. ‘Bring me some food,’ he said.

‘Here, Lord?” said the attendant, apparently in some surprise.

Scudamour hesitated. His chief purpose in asking for food had been to get a few moments alone, but it now occurred to him that he had better begin as soon as possible to explore - to find out what rooms and passages surrounded him.

‘Set me food in the usual place,’ he said.

The attendant rose and opened the door, standing aside for Scudamour to pass. Much as he hated the carved room, he did not cross the threshold without a tremor, for he had no idea what he might encounter. He found himself in a much larger room - an oblong hall of patterned stone with many doors. At one end of it some dozen or fifteen of the stingless Stingingmen were seated close together on the floor. They rose and bowed low, or even prostrated themselves, as he appeared, but he had time to notice that they had all been whispering with their heads close together and busily examining a miscellaneous litter of objects which strewed the floor about them as toys strew the floor about a child. Indeed they were such things as a child might well have used for playing shop. There were little boxes and jars and bowls, bottles, tubes, packets, and tiny spoons.

Scudamour learned much later what all this meant, but it may as well be mentioned here. The truth is that the stingless relatives of the Stingingmen - the Drones, as we may call them - have only one interest in life. They are all hoping to grow stings. They spend nearly all their spare time in the laboratory, concocting every kind of nostrum which they think may produce the coveted deformity. Sometimes it is drugs to drink, sometimes powders and plasters for the forehead, sometimes incisions and cauterizations. One depends on diet, another on some kind of exercises. Scudamour says they reminded him of nothing so much as of the inveterate gamblers whom one

finds living in the neighbourhood of any big continental casino-every one with an infallible private recipe for making his fortune. And like the gamblers they seemed to have a hope which no experience could overthrow.

Very few of them, perhaps none, as far as he could learn, had ever succeeded year after year they watched young men on whom the caprice of nature had lavished the sting succeeding to the seats of power while they themselves grew old amid their experiments. Often if Scudamour came suddenly into the anteroom he heard fragments of their whispered conversation - ‘When my sting has grown,’ ‘Now that I have found the real treatment,’ ‘Of course it is almost certain that I shall not be with you next year.’

The attendant led him through this hall and into another, smaller, room, where he noted with disappointment the same high windows. The food was brought him here. To his relief, the attendant showed no tendency to remain and wait on him.

Presumably the body which Scudamour now animated had not fed for some time, and he found himself turning to his meal with alacrity. He was thirsty as well as hungry and raised eagerly to his lips a silver cup which appeared to be full of water. A moment later he set it down in astonishment. There may have been some water in it, but most of the mixture was some kind of spirit, a raw, fiery liquid that left the mouth parched. He was surprised that he did not dislike it more. He then found that he had taken up a fruit from the plate before him and was beginning to eat it with the ease of long habit. It was rather like a persimmon and he could not at first understand the relish with Which he ate it, for he had always disliked persimmons. From this he proceeded to a dry, grey concoction in a wooden bowl. It consisted of small grey particles, many of them gritty in texture. The whole meal, indeed, was of a dry, choleric, and adust nature; and all the time he enjoyed what he ate with a curious feeling that it was unnatural to enjoy it. Only when his hunger was three parts satisfied did he realize the explanation. He was experiencing the pleasures of an alien body; the palate and stomach which liked these foods and were habituated to them, did not belong to him. And with the discovery there came a sense of horror. Perhaps this was the very diet on which the venom of a Stingingman was maintained. Perhaps … he was not sure that there might not have been insects, or worse, in that grey mixture. He pushed his chair back from the table and rose. He was trying to remember something - some warning in a fairy tale heard long before he went to school. He could not quite recapture it, but it was borne in upon him that he had better eat as little of such food as he could. He wondered how much suspicion it would arouse if he asked for something else. In the meantime he must find out where they had put Camilla.

He came out into the oblong hall, and the same attendant rose from where he had been sitting among the other Drones and came to him. In answer to his questions the man explained, as far as he could make out, that he had put Camilla in Scudamour’s own bedroom. He spoke almost in a whisper and the desire to put himself on a

confidential footing with his master was clearer than before. His manner was a shade less deferential and more insinuating. Scuda-mour again took a high line. He made the man lead him to Camilla - and thus incidentally discovered his own room - and then find other lodging for her. They were not able to speak to one another alone or even to exchange incautious glances, but at least each now knew where the other was housed. Scudamour was surprised at the number of sleeping chambers and wondered who the usual guests of a Stingingman might be.

After he had given fresh orders that Camilla should be well cared for and not molested he made a tour of all the rooms. He was followed everywhere by his attendant and by the eyes of all the Drones. This was not pleasant and he felt that what he was doing might raise their wonder. But it had to be risked, since the first condition of any possible plan was a knowledge of his surroundings. What he mainly wanted to find was the way out of his own apartments - at any moment it might become desirable to leave the Dark Tower in haste. In this he was not successful: room opened into room interminably and long before he had exhausted the possibilities he decided that, on this occasion at any rate, he dared not continue the search any further. In the meantime, however, he had found a library - a room as large as the anteroom and lined with books to the ceiling. He did not suppose at this stage that he would be able to read them, but he welcomed the library as a pretext for shaking off the Drone, and he wanted to rest.

7

‘I wish Ransom were here,’ said Scudamour to himself. Ransom is a philologist. Scudamour knows little about languages and scrips, and a glance at the characters on the backs of the books convinced him that he would never be able to decipher them. He had not expected that he would, and sat down at once to consider his situation. Two ideas were, at this stage, contending in his mind. The first was the possibility of repairing the chronoscope and returning by the way he had come. This was beset with difficulties. He knew it would take Orfieu, on our side, a long time to make a new chronoscope and he rightly assumed that two instruments, one in each time, were necessaiy. Nor was he at all clear how he could get Camilla through with him. His other idea was much nearer to despair - a vague hope that if return were impossible, escape, and escape with Camilla, from the Dark Tower into the territories of the White Riders might be managed. He was fairly certain that these barbarians were more human than the Stinging people, and that some life not utterly detestable might be lived among them. But then he remembered their proclamation and thought that what he bore in his forehead would exclude him, of all people, from any alliance with them. And with that reflection a rebellious horror at the monstrosity he had now become surged over him anew, and he rose and paced the silent room in his anguish.

Then came a surprise. He had taken perhaps six or seven turns in this fashion when, hardly noticing that he had done so, he paused at one end of his walk, took a volume

from the shelves, and to his astonishment found that he had read a line or two with ease. Of course he ought to have anticipated this. The body which he was using had already so paced in that library, so paused, and so taken down a book; and Scudamour's mind, using the Stingingman's eyes, could read his books for the very same reasons which enabled him to use the Othertime language. It was only his own doubts and his own conscious efforts which had prevented him from understanding their titles when he first entered the library.

The lines he had read were as follows: 'It must be remembered that even the instructed had, at this period, no conception of the real nature of time. The world, for them, had a unilinear history from which there was no escape, as it has for the common people to the present day. It was therefore very natural that —'

The passage went on to some historical matter that did not interest him. Hastily he turned over several pages, but the book seemed to be all historical and he saw no more references to the subject of time. He was beginning to wonder whether he should sit down and read the book from the beginning when he discovered that it had an index. Fortunately he was now too excited to stop and ask himself whether he knew the Othertime alphabet. He found the word 'time' easily enough, but the only passage mentioned under it turned out to be the one he had already read. For a moment his researches were at a standstill. Then he discovered that the book he held in his hands was one of a series, a history in many volumes. He put it back and tried the volume on his right, but a few minutes of comparison convinced him that it dealt, not with a later, but with an earlier period. Perhaps the Other-timers put books on a shelf in what we regard as the wrong order. He tried a volume to the left and could not at first discover whether his surmise was correct. The business was going to take him longer than he thought, and he had to master the concluding pages of the original volume fairly thoroughly. They dealt with a history absolutely unknown to him. Some people called the Darkeners were being suppressed 'with great but necessary severities', though whether they were a sect, a nation, or a powerful family he could not discover. He learned enough, however, to enable him to decide that the volume to the left was the sequel. He went to its index and found about twenty references to 'time,' but all of the same cryptic character. The reader was constantly reminded that 'complete ignorance on this fundamental subject still prevailed', that 'the monistic view of time which immediate experience seems to suggest had not yet been called in question', or that 'the detestable superstitions of the Dark Age still found a foothold in the pessimistic view of time then current', and this sent him post-haste to the next volume. Feeling sure that he was now approaching the heart of the mystery, he carried it to a table in the centre of the room and sat down to read in earnest.

The index to this volume bristled with entries under the heading that interested him. He tried the first and learned that 'the new conception of time was destined to remain for centuries of purely theoretical interest, but this should not lead us to underrate its effects'. He turned on: 'As has already been pointed out, the revolution in our

knowledge of time had as yet given us no power to control it, but it had profoundly modified the human mind.' There were dozens of similar statements and Scudamour, more accustomed to laboratories than to libraries, began to feel impatient. In despair he turned back to the first page of the book and after reading a few lines flung it from him in anger; for he had seen that it began with the statement that 'this was not the place' for an account of those discoveries with Whose historical results die following pages were mainly concerned. "They expect you to know,' said Scudamour drily. Then he picked up the volume, replaced it, and began studying other tides. Many of them were unintelligible to him. He realized that any of them, or none of diem, might contain what he wanted to know, and tiiat he would not have time - at least he hoped he would not have time - to read die whole library.

A book with a title like The Nature of Things looked promising, and the contents held his attention for some time, not because they proved helpful but because they amazed him. Whatever these people knew about time, they knew very little about space. He read that the earth was the shape of a saucer, and that you could not reach the edge of the saucer because you slipped down the incline 'as the experience of sailors shows," that the sun was twenty miles high, and that stars were 'inflammations of the air.' Somehow this ignorance comforted him. The next book - Time Angles - had the opposite effect. It began: 'An uncontrolled time proceeding in the backward-forward direction is subject, as is known, to fluctuations during which small extensions of it (say .05 of a second) will make a measurable angle with the backward-forward direction. If, now, we suppose this increased to a right angle, this time will proceed from eckward to andward' - so the words appeared to Scudamour's memory when he told us the story - 'and will cut an ideally normal time at right angles. At the B moment of intersection the whole series of events in each of these times will then be contemporary to those living in the other.'

Was this nonsense? The childishness of Othertime geography suggested that it might be little better, but then a disquieting thought struck him. How if this race had specialized hi the knowledge of time, and ours in the knowledge of space? Might not our conceptions of time, in that event, be as erroneous as the Othertimers' saucer earth and airy stars? Scudamour's own astronomical conceptions would appear as absurd in Othertime as this strange doctrine of temporal angles and fluctuations appeared to him; it would not therefore be untrue. He read on.

'Let the moment of intersection be X. X will then be a historical moment common to both the times; in other words the total state of the universe in time A at moment X will be identical with the total state of the universe in time B at moment X. Now like states or events have like results. Therefore the whole future of time A (that is, its whole content hi the forward direction) will duplicate the whole future of time B (that is its whole content in the andward direction).'

Scudamour fancied that he already knew something about duplications; eagerly he

turned the page. ‘Here,’ said the book, ‘we are speaking of uncontrolled tunes; the reader will naturally seek elsewhere for an account of those controlled times which are, of course, of more obvious practical importance.’ Scudamour was only too ready to seek elsewhere. If the library were systematically arranged, the book he wanted must be somewhere near. He took down several volumes. All were concerned with the same subject and in all of them a meaning which he could not seize was implicit. He had almost turned away from this section of the library in despair when at last he took down a book apparently somewhat older than its fellows which stood in the highest shelf and which he had more than once already passed over as unpromising. It had some such title as First Principles.

‘It was anciently believed,’ he read, ‘that space had three dimensions and time but one, and our fathers commonly pictured time as a stream or a thin cord, the present being a moving point on that cord or a floating leaf on that stream. The direction backward from the present was called the past, as it still is, and the direction forward the future. What is a little more remarkable is that only one such stream or cord was believed to exist, and that the universe was thought to contain no other events or states than those which occupied, at some point or other, the stream or cord along which our own present is travelling. There were not lacking, indeed, philosophers who pointed out that this was merely a fact of experience and that we could give no reason why time had only one dimension and why there was only a single time; indeed more than one of the early chronologists hazarded the idea that time might itself be a dimension of space - an idea which will seem almost fantastically perverse to us, but which, in their state of knowledge, deserved the praise of ingenuity. In general, however, such interest as the ancients took in time was diverted from fruitful inquiries by their vain efforts to discover means of what they called “time-travel”, by which they meant nothing more than reversal or acceleration of the mind’s movement along our own unilinear time.

‘This is not the place’ (here Scudamour groaned again) ‘to describe the experiments which, in the thirtieth year of the tenth era, convinced chronologists that the time in which we live has lateral fluctuations; in other words that the cord or stream is not to be represented by a straight but by a wavy line. It is difficult for us to realize how revolutionary this discovery at first appeared. So deeply rooted were the old conceptions that we read of thinkers who could not conceive such fluctuation. They inquired in what, or into what, the time cord deviated when it deviated from the straight; and their reluctance to allow the obvious answer (that it deviated in, or into time, in an eckwards or andwards direction) gave a new lease of life to the perverse doctrine we have already noted, which was now called the doctrine of Space Time.

‘Not until the year 47 do we find any clear understanding of the truth, but by 51—’

What followed was a proper name which Scudamour has been unable to tell us, though he recognized it as a proper name while he read. It was one doubtless as familiar to

Othertime ears as those of Copernicus and Darwin are to ours; but ‘X’ is the best I can do for it here.

‘—by 51 X had produced a map of time which was essentially correct as far as it went. His time is two-dimensional - a plane which he represented on the map as a square but which he then believed to be of infinite extension. The backwards-forwards direction was from left to right, the eckwards-andwards from top to bottom. Across this our time is shown as a wavy line running predominantly from left to right. Other times, which to him were merely theoretical, are represented by dotted lines running in the same direction above and below-that is to the eckwards and andwards of our time. This diagram was at first the cause of dangerous misunderstandings, which X himself did his best to combat when he published his great Timebook in 57. In it he pointed out that though all the times were diagrammatically represented as starting from the left-hand or backward side of the square, it must not therefore be assumed that they had a beginning in something timeless. To do so would, in fact, be to forget that the left-hand side of the square must itself represent a timeline. Let the square which represents the plane of two-dimensional time be ABCD, and let XY and OP be two timelines traversing it in the eckward-andward direction. It is clear that if AB and DC represent any reality- that is, if the square is not infinite as he had at first supposed - they also will be timelines. But it is no less clear that the same is true of AD and BC. There will be times proceeding either from eckwards to andwards or from andwards to eckwards. In that case X and O, which from our point of view are the beginnings of time itself, are in fact simply moments, successive to one another in the AD time. And if the directions of all the four times run the right way-i.e. from A to B, B to C, C to D, D to A-then a consciousness which succeeded in passing, say at Y, from the XY time to the BC, and at C from the BC time to the CD, and so on, would attain to endless time, and the Time Square, though finite, would be endless or perpetual…’

‘I don’t believe a word of it!’ ejaculated Scudamour suddenly, looking up from the book, and then checking himself in some surprise. He had not been prepared for the distaste which had been aroused in him by the kind of immortality which the Othertimers apparently welcomed with enthusiasm. ‘I’d sooner be snuffed out,’ he found himself thinking. ‘I’d sooner go to a heaven of harps and angels like what they used to tell me about when I was a boy.’ (No one had, in fact, told him any such thing, but he was under a not uncommon delusion on this subject.) ‘I’d sooner have anything than go round and round that way like a rat in a bucket of water.” ‘But it might be true all the same,’ whispered his scientific consciousness. He turned once more to the book and read on. After a few pages he found the following.

‘It was left to X’s successors to find the practical bearing of his discovery. In the year 60 Z, who had come to chronology from the study of folklore, propounded the theory that certain fabulous creatures, and other images which constantly appeared in the myths of widely separated peoples and in dreams, might be glimpses of realities which exist in a time closely adjacent to our own. This led to his famous experiment with the

Smokehorse. He selected this familiar horror of the nursery because it is almost unique among such images in having arisen in historical times -no evidence having been found of its existence before the last century. By the psychological technique which has since become famous he found that he could produce the Smoke-horse, first as a dream, and later as a waking hallucination, in his own consciousness and that of the children on whom he experimented. But he also found that it had altered in various ways from the Smokehorse of tradition, and even from that of his own earliest memories. The old Smokehorse-still favoured in popular art-consists essentially of a small cylindrical body supported on four wheels, and the conspicuous tall spout which emits the smoke. But the Smokehorses seen by Z had very much larger bodies, usually of green, and eight or ten wheels, while the spout had been reduced to a tiny protuberance on the front of the cylindrical body. By 66 he had discovered a feature of which tradition and uncontrolled dreams had given no hint, and which therefore put it beyond doubt that he was dealing with some objective reality. He was able to observe that the Smokehorses in drawing their gigantic loads of wheeled vehicles proceeded not along the earth, as had been supposed, but along parallel rods of smooth metal, and that this was the real explanation of their prodigious speed.' Scudamour, in spite of himself, was now reading too rapidly to take in the full sense of what he read. The next passage that he can remember was something like this.

'By 69 Z had succeeded in making something like a map of certain portions of our native land as they are in Othertime. The steel roads on which the Smokehorses travel, and which could be comparatively easily traced, gave him his first bearings. He detected the huge Othertime city which occupies what, in our time, are the marshes at the beginning of the Eastwater estuary and traced a complete Smokehorse road from this to our City of the Eastern Plain. More than this he was unable to do because of the conditions under which he worked. He had rightly chosen children as his chief instruments for the inspection of Othertime, because in them the mind is less preoccupied by the ideas and images of our own existence. The experiences of these children had very disagreeable effects, leading to extreme terror and finally to insanity, and most of those whom he used had to be destroyed before they reached maturity. The morals of the period were low - the White Riders had not yet reached even the continental coast-and the government was weak and short-sighted: Z was forbidden to use any children of the more intelligent stocks, foolish restrictions were placed on his disciplinary control of those allotted to him, and in the year 70 this great pioneer fell a victim to assassination.'

'Thank -' said Scudamour and then stopped short. The word he had intended was not to be found. He read on.

The honours of the next stage in this great discovery are divided between K and Q. K, who worked in the Southwestern region, concentrated his attention entirely on stationary Smokehorses, of which large collections could be experienced in his area. At first he used adult criminals rather than children, but already the possibility of a

different method had occurred to him. He decided to construct in our own time the nearest replica he could of an Othertime Smokehorse. He failed repeatedly because the Other-timers invariably moved their Smokehorse before his model was completed. By this time, however, K had been able to observe the Othertime building in which the stationary Smokehorses were usually kept. With indefatigable patience he set himself to duplicate it in our own time - of course in the exact space occupied by the Othertime building. The results surpassed all expectation. Smokehorses and even Othertime human beings now became faintly, but continuously, visible even to untrained observers. The whole theory of time attraction was thus brought into being, and formulated in K's law that "Any two time-lines approximate in the exact degree to which their material contents are alike." It had now become possible, as it were, to bring ourselves at will within sight of an alien time; it still remained to find whether we could produce any effect on it -whether we were within striking distance. K solved the problem by his celebrated "Exchange". He succeeded in observing an Othertime girl, aged about ten, and living with her parents, under the conditions of extraordinary indulgence which, in Othertime, both the state and the family seem to allow. He then took one of our own children, of the same age and sex, and, as nearly as possible, of the same physical type, and caused it to become conscious of its Othertime counterpart - specially at times when the experiences of the latter would be likely to attract it. At the same time, he treated it with the greatest severity. Having thus produced in its mind a strong wish to change places with the Othertimer, he juxtaposed them, while the latter was asleep, and simply ordered the this-time child to escape him if it could. The experiment succeeded. The child fell asleep and woke with, apparently, no knowledge of its surroundings, and, at first, no fear of K. It continued to ask for its mother, and to beg that it might be allowed to "go home".

Every kind of test was applied, and no doubt need be felt that a real exchange of personalities had taken place. The alien child thus taken from Othertime proved unamenable to our educational methods and was finally used for scientific purposes.'

Scudamour got up and took a turn or two up and down the room. He noticed that the daylight was beginning to fade, and he felt tired, but not at all hungry. His mind was curiously divided - on one side a raging torrent of curiosity, on the other a deep reluctance to read further. The curiosity won, and he sat down again.

'Meanwhile,' the book continued, 'Q had been experimenting with the possibilities of some inanimate instrument which might give us a view of Othertime without the need of the old precarious psychological exertions. In 74 he produced his

[The manuscript breaks off here at the foot of folio 64.]