Soon another army lorry came bumping along behind him. Alfred thought: " If this one is going up to Bulfort, I'd better take it even if it is a German. Or I'll get on it and go as far as Salisbury with him anyway." He stopped it.

" Where are you going to? " he asked in German.

" Bulfort, you son of a million pig-dogs," said the driver in good Wiltshire English. " Jump up, Alfred, and don't talk German to me, please."

" Oh, what luck, Johnny! I couldn't see you properly. Oh, that's grand! Now I can go to sleep. Wake me up at Amesbury, will you? "

" Won't you tell us about your pilgrimage? " the driver's mate asked.

" Any time you like but now," said Alfred, yawning. " I was sick all the way from Hamburg. I'm short of sleep."

He wedged himself comfortably between the driver and the youth, his mate, with his precious sack down on the floor where he could feel it with his feet. He leaned towards the youth in order not to interfere with Johnny's driving, and was almost instantly fast asleep. The lorry noisily sped on through the darkening landscape. Johnny presently switched on his headlights. When they got to Amesbury it was quite dark. Johnny woke Alfred up with a dig in the ribs.

" Amesbury, Alfred. D'you want to get down here? "

" Please. I've got an appointment with some ghosts up at Stonehenge."

Johnny laughed, and threw Alfred's bulky sack down to him.

" Hitler! What've you got in that sack, Alfred? "

" Stones from the Holy Mountain. Good night, Johnny. Good night, Charles. See you soon."

The lorry drove on, and Alfred turned his face to the west. Charles said, " He can't really be going up to Stonehenge this time of night."

" Not he," said Johnny. " Though I know he likes the old place. He's probably going to see a man in Amesbury and walk up. And I bet it isn't stones from the Holy Mountain in that sack, either. Alfred's a damned old hypocrite.

I'm twice as religious as he is, and I don't get pilgrimages chucked at me."

Charles laughed. " The pious ones don't need pilgrimages," he said. " They think Alfred's faith wants strengthening."

" It does, and how," said Johnny.

At four o'clock in the morning Alfred reached his own house in Bulfort where he lived with Fred and James, his two eldest sons, and Thomas, his younger brother. His sack was considerably lighter. He went quietly into the room he shared with his boys, pulled off his boots and coat and lay down. Fred heard the little narrow bed creak.

" Father, is that you? "

" Yes, my lad. Don't wake Jim up."

" I was afraid you were going to be late on report," Fred whispered. " We've been expecting you any time all day. Young Jim's been as nervy as a cat about you. Just let me wake him up and tell him. He's probably having bad dreams."

" Bosh," said Alfred. But he got up and went over to the younger boy's bed. " Guess who's here, Jim," he said, shaking the boy's shoulder.

Jim woke up, and greeted his father so demonstratively in the dark that he managed to give him a hard box on the ear.

" Damn you," said Alfred. " There, go to sleep again." He kissed Jim and went back to his own bed.

" Why are you so late, father? " Fred asked.

" Tell you some time. Not now. Go to sleep, Fred. We've got to get up in less than three hours."

Next day Alfred did his work with only half his mind. He did it automatically well, but he could not keep his whole attention really on it. He had meant just to leave von Hess's book in the inner chamber of the dug-out and go straight home, but when he got to his secret place, and found everything undisturbed, the dead soldiers still on guard in their accustomed positions, the pile of flints and crumbled chalk he and Tom had scraped out of the back tunnel the same as it had been, he had succumbed to the temptation to sit down on the old pile of sacks he and Tom had brought there years ago to rest on and read a little in

the book by the light of his torch. He had read until the torch began to dim, and he came to himself with a terrible headache. He decided to bring candles up for general use. There was a draught through the dug-out when both ends of the runs were open, but he could sit and read in the inner room where they would not gutter, and keep the hinged wooden shield open to have some air. He put the book away, crawled down the tunnel and stopped up the end of it with the old piece of stone. He stumbled back across the downs to Bulfort with his knees failing and his head full of confusion and glory, and the wonder of the vistas, like jewelled fairy caverns, faintly revealed by the little light von Hess had been able to leave still burning. And to-day how could a man think whole-heartedly of mechanism, even though it was his proper and satisfactory job, when by walking a mile or two and crawling down a hole, he could get in touch with lost civilisations and the thought-mechanism of complex human beings?

At dinner-time in the English mechanics' mess his absorption did break up. The meal was finished and the men were idling about ostensibly listening to the news on the loudspeaker until the whistle should blow that would send them back to work. A man called Alfred aside from the group he was addressing on the subject of his pilgrimage, which everyone found more interesting than the news.

"Alfred," said the man, "your woman, Ethel, has had her baby, and it's only a girl. It's about three weeks old now."

"Oh, I'd forgotten about that. Well, can't be lucky every time, I suppose. Thanks, Henry. Have you taken your son away yet?"

"No. Margaret'll have him for another six weeks."

Alfred said no more, but he grew thoughtful and unresponsive to the other men.

When his work was finished and he had taken his evening meal at home with Thomas and Fred and Jim, he put on his coat again. He had been sitting comfortably in his shirt sleeves.

"You're not going out, father?" young Jim pleaded. "You haven't told us anything hardly yet."

Fred said nothing. He was a patient lad, a tall lanky fair creature, not at all like his father, with deep-set intelligent blue eyes.

"I am going out," Alfred said. "I'm going to be here the rest of my life, Jim. You'll hear my tales so often you'll be sick of them."

"If you're going to be here the rest of your life you can stay with us this evening," said Thomas reasonably. "Where are you going?"

"To the Women's Quarters."

"Oh, well," Thomas sounded resigned. "Did anyone tell you that baby of yours is only a girl?"

"It was born three weeks ago," snapped Alfred. "I suppose I can go and see Ethel if I like?"

"Certainly, certainly," said Thomas, peaceably. "No one is trying to stop you."

Alfred grunted and went out. The Women's Quarters was a large cage about a mile square at the north end of the town. The women were not allowed to come out of it without special permission, which was very rarely granted. They had their hospital inside it, and their house of correction, where they were sent if they injured each other or failed in perfect humility. Their rations were brought to them every day, and once a day all women and girls who were not in late pregnancy or ill were made to do some gentle feminine physical exercises under bored male instructors. Otherwise they could do what they liked, but they had nothing to do except nurse their small children, cook their little rations, and quarrel. Their clothes were made for them and doled out like the rations. Once a month they were driven out of their enclosure and up to the church, and that was the only time they were allowed to walk in the streets of the town like the men. They did not relish this privilege at all, because the Worship made them cry. They got on better living their stupid lives in little groups of two or three women with their daughters and very tiny sons, who lived each group in the small wooden separate houses. They hardly knew that there were women who could move about freely, the Christian women; because they never saw a Christian. They knew vaguely that there were some horrible things called Christians, and that they were not

required to be submissive to the male monsters among them, but temptation was kept out of their way. No Christian would come within half a mile of the sentry at the gate of the Women's Quarter in any town or village. Other men were allowed to go in at any time, so long as they were over the age of sixteen. To prevent incest, which was considered weakening to the race, a certain house (or houses) was pointed out to the son by the father as barred. The women in those houses were not for him. The sense of taboo was so strong on the sons that they usually avoided that part of the cage altogether. None of the women found their lives at all extraordinary, they were no more *conscious* of boredom or imprisonment or humiliation than cows in a field. They were too stupid to be really conscious of anything distressing except physical pain, loss of children, shame of bearing girls, and the queer mass grief which always overtook them in church.

Alfred made his way through the girls' playground where a crowd of small children, too young for the dullness which overtook all women at puberty, were playing like puppies; not a recognisable game—there was no one to teach them any games—but just chasing and fighting and tumbling. If they got in his way, Alfred moved them out with his foot or hand, not ungently.

He came to the house where his woman, Ethel, lived with her sister Margaret, who belonged at the time to the man called Henry. He walked straight into the living-room. Henry was not there, neither was Margaret, unless she was in one of the bedrooms. Ethel was there, looking dully unhappy and not well. The new baby was nowhere to be seen. When Ethel saw Alfred she got up weakly, bowed before him, and began to move towards the door of one of the inner rooms. She would not speak unless he did.

"Stay here, Ethel," Alfred said. "I don't want that."

Ethel began to cry.

"Master, I am ashamed," she said. She was about as unhappy as a woman could be. She had offended Alfred by bearing him a girl, now he would take the white armlet off her jacket which showed she was one man's present

property, and some other man would take her. Alfred was never unkind; he never beat her or kicked her or even cuffed her. She might do so much worse. She might even have to go to the big house where the Nazis went, and though that would mean a long rest from child-bearing, for the German men were taught how to prevent racial calamities of this kind, the prospect never rejoiced any woman's heart. They had no national feeling, all men were equally lords, but they could not understand the Nazis, and the Germans were also inclined to be physically more brutal than some, at any rate, of their own men. Ethel would cheerfully have borne Alfred a child every year till she died, in order to be kept by him away from the Nazi house. But Ethel felt all this in a vague dull way, as she felt her weakness and a dragging pain in her back. She was wretched and she was ill, but she knew it hardly more than an animal would have done.

"Sit down, Ethel," Alfred said, seeing her begin to shake as well as cry. "You're not well yet."

Ethel sat down. Alfred looked at her, and thought of the German girl in the photograph.

"I shall find it easy enough to leave you alone till you're quite strong," he said, more to himself than to Ethel.

"Master, I am ashamed," Ethel sobbed.

"It's not your shame," said Alfred. "It's ours."

Ethel didn't even try to understand this, but she felt a little happier. Alfred had not touched her armlet yet.

"Woman," said Alfred after a long silence, "where is my daughter?"

Ethel stared at him. Alfred had used the form of words spoken by a father fetching his holy male child, and had applied them to a girl!

"Well, where is she? You haven't drowned her, I hope?"

"No, master. She's asleep in the bedroom."

"Fetch her."

"You—you want to *see* her, master?"

"Ethel, if you don't get up and fetch my girl quickly I'll clout you one over the head. If I get her myself I may break her."

Ethel threw herself on her knees before him and clasped her hands.

" Oh, master, I am a shameful woman, but I have borne two sons. Do not hurt the girl, oh, do not hurt her! "

" You want to have one to keep, eh? I'm not going to hurt her. *I want to see her.*"

Ethel, completely bewildered but obedient, went to fetch her baby-girl. She hesitated half inside the door of the living-room with the little bundle clutched in her arms.

" Bring her here," said Alfred.

Ethel came a little closer.

" Put her in my arms."

" Master, oh please——"

" I'm not going to hurt her. There, that's right. Is that the way to hold her? She seems quite placid. Is it a strong baby? "

Ethel hovered near with a terribly anxious look in her eyes, like a bitch whose new-born puppies are being handled.

" Yes, Master. For a girl. Please, could I—could I have her now? "

" No, sit down. She's quite happy with me."

Ethel sat down. Her anxiety was beginning to abate. Alfred's actions were wholly incomprehensible, but she was at last aware that he did not mean to hurt the child. Alfred sat with the little ugly still new-born thing in his arms, thinking very strange thoughts. The baby had quite a crop of dark brown hair, which would, of course, fall off, to be replaced by baby down. Then, when she was older, and had some real hair, it would be shaved off and kept shaved like Ethel's ugly little head. This was the only skill the women were allowed to acquire, shaving each other's heads with a safety razor, because of course no man would undertake such a humiliating job. But it had to be done under supervision, and the women were not allowed to keep the razors. They might use the little blades in fights. Alfred was thinking, if I took this baby away from Ethel and from all other women and never let her see a man or a boy and brought her up by myself, and taught her to respect herself more than she respected me, I could turn her into a real woman. Something

utterly strange. Beautiful perhaps, like the Nazi girl, but something more than just being beautiful. I could make a new kind of human being, one there's never been before. She might love me. I might love her. Or would she by heredity be like Ethel? No, because Jim and Robert aren't like Ethel, dull and stupid. It's not in the womb the damage is done. Ethel can't despise the child in the womb because she doesn't know what kind it is. This little thing could be made into a woman, but it'll grow up to be exactly like Ethel.

" Ethel," he said, " how would you like it if I took this child away and brought her up myself, and she turned into something quite different from you? "

Ethel only understood that Alfred was for some utterly incomprehensible male reason threatening to take her girl away from her.

" Oh, Master, no," she whimpered. " I am a shameful woman but not wicked. I swear to you she's only a girl. I can keep her, dirt though she is."

" No more dirt than you are," said Alfred sharply, and of course stupidly. But he was upset. The feel of the baby in his arms, its very tiny weight, its placidity (it was still sound asleep), and the queer longing he had to give it a different kind of life from all others of its sex made him feel almost as if he and his little daughter were a unit, belonging together, while Ethel was an outsider.

" Of course, Master, no more dirt than I am," said Ethel, in meek apology. " We are all dirt."

" Well, I can't really take her away," Alfred said regretfully.

He sat silent again, very still on his hard primitive wooden chair, in order not to move his arms and wake the baby. He was thinking about family life. In past times he might have been sitting as he was now, with this little thing——

" Have you called her anything yet? " he asked.

" Edith, Master."

And there would be Fred and Jim and Robert, as well as this very small Edith, and Ethel, all sitting in one room like Christians. Alfred could not imagine it. Even now, though he liked to hold the baby, he was feeling restless at being so long in the same room with Ethel. A man could sit with a dog quite indefinitely, but he could not stay with a woman except

to satisfy his natural needs. When the boys had been old enough to recognise him and take some notice of him he had always taken them out into the open or sent Ethel away somewhere while he played with them. He had never thought of the unfairness of robbing a woman of precious half-hours of the short time she could keep her sons with her. He wondered why women made men restless. They did not criticise any more than a dog would. They were quiet. They never spoke unless the man spoke first. And yet one couldn't stand it. One had to get out by oneself or go back to man's company. "We are all ashamed," he thought. "We don't know it, at least only the Knight and I know it, but all of us are ashamed of this low vile pattern that has been set them to live. Their appearance and their manner are criticism as loud as if they screamed at us, and we can't stand it. Men could perhaps have sat with that Nazi girl without wanting to rush away. But even that was only a pattern, not women themselves. I could take notice of Edith when she gets a little older. Play with her like I did with the boys. Then Ethel wouldn't despise her so much, and she wouldn't despise herself so much, and she'd be bound to grow up different. *Different*. Unfit for the Women's Quarters. Unfit for the cage. Oh, God, I wish I'd never had to think about women! I can't do anything for her at all, if I ever take any notice of her it'll make her consciously unhappy. It doesn't matter holding her like this because she'll never know about it. It is the same as with the boys. The women may love them so long as they're young enough to forget about it. I can love Edith—love Edith—love a little girl? How strange that is! As long as she never knows. I couldn't love Ethel. No. It's impossible to love women as they are. But *this* thing isn't anything yet. It's just Edith, my child. Ah, von Wied, a million years in the Christians' fiery lake wouldn't be too long for you." Alfred unconsciously gripped the child tighter at the thought of von Wied, who had driven girls like the Hitler maid off the face of the earth and had made it impossible for a man to love his own daughter. Edith began to whimper, then burst into a little thin angry cry like the impatient mewing of a cat.

"Master!" said Ethel, jumping up quickly in spite of her weakness.

"Sit down!" Alfred said sharply. "She's quite all right. She'll stop in a minute."

But Edith did not stop. She went on mewing, and waving her small arms about in feeble protest. Alfred rocked her gently, as he had seen Ethel do with the boys. Edith went on crying.

Ethel stood it in silence as long as she could, then, with agonising audacity, gasped, "Master, forgive me, but I think she's hungry. She's been asleep a long time. If I might have her—just for a little while. She doesn't take very long."

Alfred surrendered the baby. He walked up and down the room while Ethel fed her. He could not bear to see this natural process. He was in a fantastically upside-down state of mind. He ought to have taken no notice whatever of Edith; he ought to have been disgusted at her sex. In the morning when he heard she was a girl he had been disappointed, but then all the afternoon he had wanted to see her. And now he was far more advanced in his unmanly doting, for he was furious with Ethel for being able to do something for the baby he could not do himself. Edith, he felt, was entirely his, no one else ought to touch her. For he alone knew what Edith was *now*, not dirt at all, but the embryo of something unimaginably wonderful. Ethel was not fit to touch her.

"Master," said Ethel presently, "do you—do you want to have her back?"

But Alfred's mood had changed again. A black despondency had come over him, and he wanted now to get away. He put his finger into Edith's palm, and the baby's hand curled itself round weakly, but with a noticeable little pressure.

"You keep her now. Look after her well, Ethel."

"Yes, Master. And you will not take off my armlet?"

"What?" thought Alfred, "have some other man coming in here and making Ethel neglect the baby because he wants her so often and for so long at a time? Not likely!"

"No," he said. "I've nothing to complain of."

"Oh, thank you, Master. I am not worthy, but I swear our next child shall be a son."

"It shan't then!" snarled Alfred. "I'll see you don't have another child at all till Edith's three years old. I know how

the girls are kicked about and neglected when a boy comes along."

"Master, how can it be otherwise?" asked Ethel, in such amazement that she even dared to seem to argue with him.

"I don't *know*!" shouted Alfred, "but it's bloody well got to be otherwise *some time*, and if you don't take proper care of Edith I'll beat you till you can't stand up!"

"Master, I will. I—I will care for her always as if she were—were a boy," said Ethel, greatly daring.

"All right then," said Alfred more gently. "I'll come again soon."

He went out, and crossed the now dark and empty playground towards the gate. There were a few lights, not on the playground, but between the little rows of houses, and as he passed a certain small street, or rather a little square, for the houses were built round an open space as broad as it was long, he saw a Knight leave a house and cross the square towards him. Alfred saw his face for a second under a lamp. It was one of the Army Knights. The most vigorous and healthy of the young girls were picked out for the Knights, and become Knights' women. After that, when the Knights were tired of them, Englishmen could have them, or they could go to the Nazi house. Knights' women carried a small swastika on their white armlet, and it was very perilous for any Englishman or Nazi to interfere with them. But few girls really liked to go to the Knights' square. They could not have children, and they were more afraid of their noble lusters than of common Germans or Englishmen. They lived in a terror which was spiritual as well as physical, because the Knight they lay with at evening, might bellow and storm at them in the morning in church, if it was the right day of the month.

When Alfred saw this man striding across the Knights' square towards him he fell into such a reckless rage that he trembled and the blood sang in his ears. Here was the enemy who had done all this to him and Edith, here was the descendant of a man who had helped von Wied to put his filthy plan into action, here was *Germany*, to be loathed now for a new reason, one he had never dreamed of before he had started to think seriously of women and had held in his arms a girl of his own. The Knight came closer and Alfred grimly waited

for him. He even moved towards him, into the Knights' square. He forgot about the book, and that he had not yet told a soul in England where it was; he forgot all old von Hess's solemn warnings about the stupidity and evil of violence; he forgot even his own genuine inner conviction that the forceful way is not the way to get good things done. He had no thought in his mind except that the Knight was alone, and that he, Alfred, could, if he were quick and clever, severely mangle him, perhaps even kill him, before help would come. He gripped his stick and waited. But as the Army Knight came swinging along towards him, Alfred was reminded, with deplorably weakening effect, of that other Knight, who wore a tunic like this Knight's with silver swastikas gleaming on the collar, whose cloak had shaken so gracefully back from his shoulder when he played the violin. Alfred groaned inwardly in despair. "Now, even their clothes, the clothes that mean all that is bad to me, must remind me *of him*." Alfred sank his stick to the ground. It was almost as if old von Hess were standing behind him, saying in his pleasant way, "Alfred do not get so heated." The Army Knight, who seemed preoccupied, suddenly looked up and saw Alfred standing quite close to him, inside, well inside the Knights' square.

"What are you doing here, Kerl?" he asked harshly. "Are you a stranger?"

"No, highly-born."

"Get out," said the Knight, and with no more words passed on his way. He never looked round to see if Alfred followed him, so certain was he of instant obedience. Alfred did follow him with no more thought of violence, much relieved now that he had been saved from committing so vast and irremediable a folly. "It's this place," he thought. "Once you've started to think about women, it's intolerable. It has the atmosphere of a stinking bog, heavy and evil and sickening. And Edith must live here all her life. I hope she'll die." But he felt better when he had passed through the gate and was in the men's world once more. He realised how little and unimportant was his personal emotion about the baby girl compared with the task von Hess had set him. Truth, first guarding it and then spreading it, must come before everything. "All this woman business will be broken up once the German idea, the force idea, is smashed. I

must be more careful when I go there again and try to think straight." He went home, thinking now about Hermann.

When he reached his home, Jim, the thirteen-year-old, had gone to bed. He worked long hours in the Technical School and was generally very tired at night. Thomas had gone out somewhere. He never went to the Women's Quarters. His whole sexual and emotional life was lived among men. No stigma attached to it, and the German government had nothing to say against a whole-time homosexuality for Englishmen. If they had no children it was their own look-out. Alfred, who was as normal as it was possible for a man to be in such a society, had never blamed or envied Thomas for his way of living, but now when he came into the kitchen and found Fred alone, reading a book on engineering, he did suddenly wish he had grown up like Thomas. *He* wouldn't be in the sickening atmosphere of the Women's Quarters, worrying about his baby daughter and being sorely tempted to beat up Army Knights. He'd be off with the friend of the moment, free to go where they would, with the whole clean night-country before them. But then as he looked at Fred, studious, absorbed, patient, with only his father knew what a solid gritty character behind his intelligence, he ceased to envy Thomas entirely. A son like Fred was worth any frets and difficulties.

" I suppose a Red German didn't turn up while I was out? " Alfred asked, sitting down.

" No. Have a cigarette, Father." Fred pushed one little cigarette across the table.

" Where did you get it? "

" A fellow gave it to me."

" Nazi? "

" No, English."

" Smoke it yourself, lad."

" No, do have it, Father. I meant to try to buy some for you but I simply couldn't save the money. Thomas doesn't manage the food like you do. We went pretty short at times. Jim always had enough, though. Now smoke it, Father. I don't really care about it."

" Thank you, Fred. Well, it's nice to have a whiff."

" What do you mean by a Red German? "

" A German in a red uniform. A Permanent Exile."

" I've never seen one."

" Well, you'll see one soon. It's Hermann. Do you remember a Nazi, a young soldier, who used to come here a lot about five or six years ago? "

" I remember Hermann, of course. What's he done? "

" He hasn't really done anything. But we've got to pretend that he has, because no decent Englishman would have anything to do with a man who tried to ruin a boy for life maliciously."

" But what did he really do? "

" Oh, he really killed the boy. But I'd better start and explain properly. Shut the door."

Alfred told his son about Hermann, the chorister, von Hess, the flight in the aeroplane, and the book. Fred was utterly absorbed. He made no comment at all, but occasionally put a question.

" When can I see it? " he asked, when Alfred had given a very concise *résumé* of his adventures, and had stopped to get a drink of water.

" To-morrow I must go and see Andrew, the foreman up at Long Barrow farm. He'll be glad to do me a favour if he can. I want him to take Hermann on. He's got a bargain in that boy. He can work any two Englishmen to a standstill. Then, though I may be allowed for sentiment's sake to keep a disgraced Nazi who was once a friend of mine from starving to death on an old woman's ration, after that we mustn't see him, not publicly, I mean. Of course we shall see him. I must do that to-morrow, because Hermann may turn up any time, but the night after to-morrow we can go up to Stonehenge and you shall see the book. But at present I shall have to read to you, translating as I go, because you can't manage the black letter or grammatical German yet. I can see I've got to get out of my sleepy ways. There's another fund of information I haven't half worked properly yet and that's the Christians. I was interested in them, but I always thought their old tales were primitive superstitious nonsense. But now we shall be able to compare their legends with what von Hess says. We must go down to Amesbury one night and see my old friend Joseph Black. You know I used to think he and his family were called "black' because they're so dirty, but

it isn't, it's a surname like a Knight's. We all had them once. Now only Knights and Christians have. Hullo, is that Thomas?"

But the step outside the house, after pausing a moment, went on down the street. Alfred went to look, thinking it might be Hermann.

"No, it's nothing. Just a fellow looking for a number," he said, when he came back. "But I don't want Thomas told, yet. It isn't that he isn't with us against the Germans, and a stout unbeliever, and all that, but von Hess told me not to hurry. I want you to understand thoroughly first. And don't say a word in front of Jim. He'd be as loyal as you or me, but he's too young and excitable. Some boast might slip out. So don't say anything except to me and carefully, at present. And don't talk much to Hermann. He'll be in a queer mood, I've no doubt."

"That isn't a safe place, Father," Fred said after a long silence. "Not really safe."

"Did *you* ever know or guess that lump had a dug-out under it?"

"No. I dare say no one does, and no one but us ever will. But it's not safe, for all that. Because someone *may* find it. And you can't *absolutely* trust to the terror Nazis have of Stonehenge and ghosts generally."

"But what would you do, Fred? Where in all England could you put a book where the Germans *couldn't* get at it?"

"I don't know," said Fred. "There is no place. Only it's terrible trusting to such a lot of chances like we shall have to."

"Well, it's no manner of use worrying," said Alfred, philosophically. "Von Hess couldn't keep it, and so we must. God will look after it so long as we do our best."

"Do you believe in God?" Fred asked dubiously.

"More and more. But not to say He's German or this and that. And now I'm going to bed. We must sleep while we can."

Chapter Nine

The foreman up at Long Barrow was a practical man. When Alfred next evening put his proposition before him he said that if the four arch-fiends in the Creed knew anything about farm work he would employ any two of them.

"I'm so short of labour I don't know which way to turn," he said. "I've complained to the Knight's Marshal, and he says that labour is to be sent up from the East, where they've got a few more than they want, but the labour ain't *come* yet. Nor will it for a few weeks. The government is sure enough, but it isn't always as fast as a hare. So send your wicked Nazi up to me as soon as he comes, and I'll see that he sweats some of it out. There are too many boys being let into the Technical Schools, Alfred, and they're starving the land."

Alfred nodded gravely at this ages-old complaint.

"It suits me they are," he said. "I wouldn't like this fellow actually to starve. He's a great big hulk; he can't exist on an old woman's ration. And you might drop a hint to the other men that he'll be in a desperate mood, not caring much whether he lives or dies, and he's very strong. If they pick on him he's liable to kill a few before they down him."

"They'll let him alone," said Andrew. "They'd be ashamed to fight him. Civilised men ought to stick together about Christians. If one doesn't—well, then," Andrew spat on the ground contemptuously. "But work! He shall have that."

In three days more Hermann arrived. Alfred found him in the kitchen, alone with Fred, when he came back from work to his supper. Neither man was speaking. Hermann looked up. He still did not speak. He looked huge in his red uniform—red breeches, red coat, red cap—but older, and ill. His broad shoulders sagged despondently, his eyes looked dull and lifeless.

"He has been through it," Alfred thought. "Worse than I thought. Oh, my poor silly Nazi, it's I that brought you to this."

He laid his hand on Hermann's shoulder.

"I've got you work, Hermann."

Hermann's eyes did not brighten. He mumbled something Alfred could not hear. Fred brought his father's soup and Alfred sat down to eat it in silence. When he had finished he got up.

" Come on, Hermann. Back to the farm."

" Can't he stay here to-night, Father? " Fred asked.

" No. Officially we can't sleep in the same house with him."

Hermann got up and followed Alfred out without a word. His head nearly touched the top of the doorway. Such a large man had probably never been through it before. And yet he was no giant. He fell seven inches short of the legendary Hitler. Presently they were out of the town and walking up to Long Barrow farm, out of step, as usual. When they turned in to the lonely downs road that led to the farm, Alfred took his arm.

" I'm sorry I brought all this on you, Hermann."

Hermann said nothing.

But when they were very near the farm Hermann said, very slowly, " How shall I see you again? "

" Go down to the end of the lane to-morrow night after your supper, when it's dark, I mean, and we'll come. We go up to the dug-out where the book is. Only Fred and me. The others know we're doing something, but they don't know what. And pull yourself together, man. You've done nothing you think's wrong, and von Hess is trusting you to help us."

" I shall be all right," said Hermann, still in that slow voice, " when I can work. You stay here now. I'd rather go in alone."

Alfred watched him go to the farmyard gate and swing it open, then shut it carefully and go round the corner of some barns.

" Why is red their colour of disgrace? " he wondered. " Christian crosses are red, and Permanent Exiles wear red. There must be some old reason they don't know themselves. Perhaps I shall find it out."

Alfred found out this and many other interesting things during the end of the summer and the autumn and the winter, in session with old von Hess, the Knight of the Inner Ten.

He and Fred and Hermann went up to the dug-out roughly one night out of every three. As autumn came on they could go up earlier, but the dug-out began to get very cold and they could not stay such long hours. They all three spent every penny they could scrape together for candles, and Hermann was as single-minded in this as the others who could read the book. Alfred took up a little stool each for himself and Fred, and a tiny rough table was transported up in pieces to hold the book and the candles. Hermann usually stretched himself on the pile of sacks, which he added to whenever he could conveniently steal an old one from the farm, and went to sleep. He was tired out after his day's manual labour, and he had no absorbing interest, as the other two had, to keep him awake. Sometimes they woke him up to ask the meaning of a German phrase or word, or to tell him a really interesting piece of news about his country.

" I say, Hermann, wake up. Now what do you think of this? Do you know what the Teutonic Knights *really* were? "

" Hitler's Knights."

" They weren't. They were much older than that. They were German Knights who went to convert the heathen Slavic Prussians to *Christianity*. Now what do you think of that? "

But Hermann was too tired to think. So long as he might stretch his huge form between Alfred and the entrances whence might come an enemy to him and the book, Hermann was content. He was unhappy in the daytime because the other men on the farm, though they let him alone, despised him without concealment, and sometimes it was hard to believe that he was not really what he seemed to be, a Permanent Exile in a red uniform, or shortly, a Red. But on one night in every three he was happy, as whenever he woke from a doze he could see Alfred's dark head and Fred's fair one bent over the book, and hear the mumble of German and English in Alfred's voice. They never heard a sound from outside except sometimes wind. They took endless precautions, going separately and meeting at different places. No man was allowed to wear his boots within two hundred yards of the entrance, in case a track was left. Smothered curses were constantly heard, every time someone trod on a

thistle. There seemed to be more thistles than grass on that particular bit of down. Sometimes one member of the reading party did not come at the appointed time. That meant he had met a poaching Christian or someone else too near Stonehenge and had walked on in some other direction and had then gone home. But no catastrophe happened, and through coldness and weariness and eye-strain, because they had to be careful about candles, Alfred acquired knowledge and translated it to Fred. Fred pretty soon began go be able to read a lot of the book for himself. Then Alfred just read on in German until Fred stopped him. It was a great night when they had got once all through the book, having carefully considered every sentence to try to draw from it its deepest meaning. Alfred suggested they should have a rest from reading for a little while, and spend more time with old Joseph Black, the head Christian of the Amesbury community.

" No, don't do that," Hermann pleaded. " I can't see you then."

Alfred thought it better not to take Hermann to Joseph Black's house, though since the enlightenment in Germany he had let Fred know that he was acquainted with Christians and had taken him two or three times to see Joseph. But Alfred had not had much leisure in the last four months. If he were not struggling to understand von Hess he had to see his friends, visit little Robert in the Boys' Nursery, go to see Ethel and brood unhappily for a little while over the baby Edith, and pay some fatherly attention to his adoring second son, young Jim. He had to do his work and have some time for sleep. So Joseph, who was a mine of interesting but mostly inaccurate information, had been rather neglected. Alfred's acquaintance, or really friendship, with this Christian had been the result of an accident. He had been returning late one night from a meeting of the Brotherhood of British Heathens, the official name of the anti-Hitler secret society. There were branches all over England, and in Scotland and Ireland and Wales, and though members could not move about freely news of progress did filter through from other branches, so that the leading men had an idea as to how the society was growing. Alfred was returning from this seditious conspiracy across the downs with two other men when at

least three miles from Amesbury they heard something crying, and found a very small Christian boy of not more than five years old, quite alone and half-frozen. The other two men, who included in their anti-Hitler feelings no toleration at all for any other kind of religion, and had a rigid conventional contempt for Christians, whom they considered more unclean than ordure, told Alfred to leave the brat, as it was too tough to die, and would certainly be presently found by its own people, and what did it matter, anyway? But Alfred had reacted so strongly and logically against the Hitlerian virtues of bloodshed and brutality and ruthlessness that he was already developing shoots of their opposites. He would not leave the little boy, but parted from the other men and carried him over to Amesbury. Joseph Black, the father, received the child, his youngest son, with unashamed transports of relief and joy, and told Alfred that the boy might well have been out all night in the frost, and possibly the next day too. Owing to a misunderstanding as to the direction in which he had strayed the Christians were all searching the wrong part of the downs. But Joseph, while very grateful, remained aloof and unapproachable, and Alfred, though he was immediately interested in the Christians, whom he had up to then regarded as something quite negligible and rather disgusting, could not make him talk. But he came again, ostensibly to know if the little boy had since died of pneumonia, and let Joseph understand that he was anti-German and did not believe in Hitler as God. On that Joseph opened his heart to him, and talked freely enough about everything except the deeper mysteries of his religion, though, he warned Alfred frankly, " It makes no difference in the Last Day whether you believe in the foul fiend Hitler or no. The Lord will not ask you whether you believed in this evil man or had lost your faith in that one; He will ask you whether you believed in the Lord Jesus, and it's no good thinking you can get out of it by lying, for God can read all hearts." But Alfred was not concerned with the last day, and was much pleased at Joseph's change of attitude. All that was long ago now; the little boy was a sturdy lad of sixteen; Joseph was nearly old, and head of the settlement.

Alfred said to Hermann, " We must stop reading for a bit, old lad. Fred's eyes ache so that he can hardly do his work

next day. We need a rest. You can walk down to Amesbury with us at night if we don't go on the road."

"When will you go on with the reading?"

"We'll start it through again in about a fortnight, or perhaps sooner if our eyes are better. And, Hermann, you mustn't come up here protecting the book by yourself."

"Or looking at the Nazi girl," said Fred gravely.

"I'll clout your head, mein Junker," grumbled Hermann. "I didn't leave Germany to be preached at by a boy who can't grow a beard at seventeen. Well, Alfred, then it must be a fortnight."

"You can have nice warm sleeps every night instead of getting so stiff with cold you can hardly walk home."

"I'd rather be cold," said Hermann.

So Alfred and his son put in a few secret visits to Joseph, at night, going and coming carefully, for they were most anxious not to lose their reputations as normal English people.

Joseph always received them with pleasure in his filthy hovel, and immediately turned all the women out of the room, for they were not fit to listen to men's conversation, even though two of the men were condemned unbelievers. Joseph's father, a very old man and rather deaf, generally stayed there, polishing a newly made whistle or some such old man's job. The sons were usually out of the way, setting or taking up snares, stealing vegetables from the fields, or getting a nice chicken from some outlying run. Alfred often had a better meal with Joseph Black than he could afford to buy with his wages. The Christians were allowed no rations by the government, and they could do no work. They lived on the country or starved on the small proceeds of their illicit sales, and most times of the year they lived fairly well.

Joseph would sit on his stool and talk for hours in the most dogmatic way about everything on earth and in heaven. His expression was an extraordinary mixture of religious fanaticism and humorous slyness; his person was very dirty; his long hair was greasy, grey, never washed and rarely combed; his teeth were perfect and very white, and his small dark eye could see stars in the sky where Alfred could see none.

Alfred would question him, "Why do you think women have their heads shaved, Joseph?"

"I don't know why *your* infidel women, whom you keep shut up in pens like bitches on heat, have their heads shaved, for a superficial following of the blessed Paul the brother of our Lord will not save any of you in the Judgment. But *our* women are shaved because the blessed Paul said, 'A woman's hair is her shame, therefore let her be shorn.' And its truth is evident in the fact that a man's hair is his glory and his strength lies in it, like Samson in the den of lions."

"What would happen if men cut their hair off or shaved their heads?"

"They could beget no children and would come to a deserved extinction."

Alfred looked at Fred's solemn young face, and caught the ghost of a twinkle in his eye. Both of them knew the truth about the shaving of women's heads, and the consequent pride men took in their hair and beards.

"If a woman grew her hair as long as it would grow would she be barren?" Fred asked.

"A woman's hair *cannot* grow beyond the bottoms of the ears," Joseph stated. "But even that is a shame to her. Women are hairless. Why, if they were meant to have hair on their heads they would have it on their faces. Have you ever seen a woman with a beard like mine? Sometimes they grow a little hair, but only when they are past child-bearing. But this is a very trivial matter for talk between men, even between Christians and unbelievers, whose fate is worse than a woman's. For she merely parts and disperses asunder, atom from atom, drop from drop, in a wholly painless fashion. Nothing she is and nothing she must become."

"But men must burn for ever in the fiery lake."

"That is so, Alfred. In that day before the eyes of the faithful remnant then alive, and all the glorious hosts of the Christian dead, Hitler the foul fiend and all other false gods shall plunge at the head of their reprobate followers into the lake of fire."

"Joseph, if you could, would you overthrow the Germans by violence?"

"By violence the Jews killed our Lord. By violence we, the disobedient, persecuted and killed the Jews, forgetting

the commandment, ' Christians, forgive them, they know not what they do.' By violence the Germans and all other followers of Hitler have persecuted us. Shall we then add sin to sin, and calamity to calamity? "

" But then," said Alfred, " if you were to forgive the Jews for not knowing what they were doing, ought not you also to forgive the Germans? For just persecuting Christians can't be such a great crime as killing the son of God."

" It is not for us to forgive *them*. We have not been told to forgive them, and disobeyed. We have not persecuted the Germans, nor offered them any violence. It is for God to forgive them, but *He will not*," Joseph said very firmly. " We have sinned, and they are the instruments of our punishment, but they are willing instruments, bloody and deceitful men."

" They *were* deceitful, certainly," Alfred murmured. " Joseph, what was there in the world before there were Germans? "

" Jews and Christians. But first there were only Jews. The whole world of men descended from the blessed race of Jesus. Why, how could it be otherwise? "

" But the Japanese are yellow, and Africans are dark, and we are white," said Fred, looking at Joseph's grey and filthy skin.

" And why should not Jews and the descendants of Jews be of different colours? Your hair is nearly yellow, Fred. Alfred's is brown. Are you not his son? "

" I believe so."

" Then there is no difficulty. There is no difficulty about anything unless the eyes and the mind are made filthy and dark by unbelief."

" Joseph, do you think Christians could ever read? " Alfred asked.

" No. Reading and writing are heathen. The truth must always be passed on by the words of the mouth. Does God *write* to us to tell us what He wills? Do you think that in the Last Day God will send you little notes to let you know of your damnation? He will *tell* you, in a voice louder than the thickest thunderclap. You mock, Alfred. You think I don't know why you come here, to mock and tease the old Christian."

" Joseph, you know perfectly well I come here because I like you. So does Fred."

Joseph smiled, his sly humorous smile. " I know it, Alfred. You saved my child, you are a very good man for a damned one, but I shall crow over you in the Last Day like the best cock in the yard——" Joseph stopped, looking a little confused.

" Why, what's the matter? *I* won't mind, Joseph. If you're right, well you are right I shan't blame *you*."

" It's not that. I was inadvertently speaking not *of* holy things, but rather near them."

" Oh, dear," said Alfred to himself, " now we shall never know about the cock. But I don't suppose it is important. Joseph, what is there besides this world? "

" This world is a round ball with the shell of the sky outside it. The stars are all the other worlds."

" And what is on them? Christians, Germans? "

" Angels and spirits and ministers of flaming fire."

Joseph went to a box by the wall and drew from it a bottle, very black and dirty on the outside, and after a little searching among the litter of the untidy room he found four earthenware mugs. He poured the contents of the bottle into the four mugs and took one to his father. There was a low mumble of words Alfred could not catch, then Joseph came back to the table, made the sign of the cross on his breast and picked up his mug.

" Now drink, Alfred, and Alfred's son."

They drank. It was something very potent, and a very little of it made Fred's head swim. He had never drunk anything but water. Even Alfred who occasionally had beer did not want more than half the contents of the mug.

" What is it? " Alfred asked. " It's very powerful, Joseph."

" It is a wine we make out of sloes and wild honey, but the strength comes with keeping it in the cask. Is it good? "

" Very good."

" All the fruits and beasts of the earth are for man's use," said Joseph, taking a good sip of the wine. " The Lord Christ came eating and drinking, not like the fiend Hitler upon whom the rich and blessed viands of this world had such a

retching effect that he could keep none of them in his foul stomach. Now, because *he* was so unnaturally wicked that even the dead flesh of beasts and the wine of grain or fruit had to shrink from him and eject themselves from his company, the heathen say that if a man would please God he must eat little or no meat and drink nothing but watery beer. It is not *those* questions the Lord will ask in the Last Day."

"But surely the Germans would be worse if they were drunken?" Alfred suggested.

Joseph took another sip.

"Nothing could make them any worse," he said. "Neither can anything ever make them any better. The Lord's mercy is not extended to them. Now if you, Alfred, were convinced of sin and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, I could receive you into the fold of Christianity and in the Last Day you would be saved." Joseph looked across the table a little wistfully. "But I am not at all hopeful, because I am not a fool. But as to the Germans and the Japanese they are damned already. If their highest Knight, the man whom they call der Fuehrer (though he leads them nowhere), if he were to come to me in sincerity and humility to be absolved and blessed and received into the arms of Christ, I could not do it. We have no power to turn back the judgments of God."

"It is extraordinary, Joseph, you despise him, and he despises you. No, it isn't extraordinary. It's right."

"It is right. His contempt for me is part of our Atonement, and is the will of God. Mine for him is because we are the Lord's people, though suffering and sinful, while he is one of the damned."

"Joseph, what happened *before* Jesus was killed? How did the world start?"

"God made it to be the habitation of the Jews. They lived a thousand years without sin. Then Cain killed Abel his brother."

"Why?"

"Because they both wanted to be the King of the Jews. Then sin was there, the sin of pride and power, and all the other sins sprang from that one, and the Jews lived in sin for a thousand years."

"How did they manage to *think* of the sin when

there was no sin there before?" asked Fred, deeply interested.

"It is a mystery," said Joseph, shaking his head.

"You mean it's a religious mystery and you can't tell heathens."

"No. I mean it's just a thing no man can ever understand, why there should be sin when God is good. At the Last Day *we* shall understand that mystery, you of course will not. But that was how sin started, with a killing. With violence between man and man. Then they lived for a thousand years in sin, and then Jesus was born to save them from their sins and make the world as it had been before Cain and Abel. But the world was only half of it willing to forgo sin, which they had come to like. Half the Jews wanted to do without sin, and half of them wanted to go on with it. The half that was unwilling to part with it crucified Jesus, through their leader who was called the Pontifical Pilot—which is a name of a certain though not really holy mystery," Joseph added, again looking a little worried. "But the others who accepted Jesus and wished sin to depart were called Christians. So the Second Great Sin was committed, and Jesus was killed. Then the Christians being enraged at the death of this just man——" Joseph paused. His eyes neither shone with fanaticism nor twinkled with slyness. His face was quiet and strangely ennobled. He was in a dream, and he saw something better than himself, and yet approachable. Alfred thought, "I'm sure Joseph has all this Christianity muddled up. I *know* he has. He's a superstitious ignorant old Christian, and yet something of the real Jesus still reaches him. Ah, there was a Man."

"Yes," said Joseph, coming to himself, "they chased the Jews to the ends of the earth, wherever they stayed, wherever they had their houses and set their snares, the Christians chased them out of it, and spat on them and killed them and tortured them. All in Disobedience, for they had been told to forgive the Jews. And that was for a thousand years. Then came the Punishment. The Christians had persecuted the less stalwart Jews into the extreme filthiness of becoming Germans or Japanese, and the more courageous among them became French or English or Russians or what you will. But because a snake is more dangerous in its bite than a dog, these

very low Jews became our chief persecutors, while the more bravely born among you, that is the descendants of slightly less cowardly Jews—you, Alfred—have never been so apt at rubbing in our transgression as the Germans. Not that that will save you in the Last Day."

"And that will be when you have been despised for a thousand years."

"Yes," said Joseph. "There are three hundred and five more years of the Punishment."

"But we say it is now 721 years after Hitler."

"Your times are wrong. There are three hundred and five years and some months still to go."

"Then the world altogether only lasts four thousand years?"

"Yes. And the third thousand was by far the most evil and unhappy. For besides the Disobedience, the Christians in those days were given over utterly to terrible sins, worse than the sins of the old Jews, to witchcraft and magic and idolatry and dissensions among themselves so that they tore each other limb from limb."

"But you sell charms now, Joseph?"

"We do not. We sell herbal remedies which you could very well make for yourselves if you were not all so ignorant, and if they sometimes work like magic it is either that the heathen really has the disease he thinks he has, and so the remedy fits it, or else he has such faith in the remedy that it will cure any illness that springs from a disordered mind. That is a thing you cannot understand, but half your heathen ailments are caused by the deep wretchedness of being cut off from God, and by your sins. Faith in a Christian remedy has in itself a healing power, and some of you will overcome partially your contempt for us, being driven by distress, and take our physics with a sturdy faith worthy of a better object. But the Lord will not ask, 'Did you believe in Christian *medicines*?' any more than He will ask, 'Did you have a hare or only potatoes in the pot?'"

"What was the idolatry the Christians went in for?" Alfred asked.

"They worshipped images, and idols of unworthy substance in exactly the same way as the Hitlerians do. It is hard to believe it," said Joseph meditatively. "It seems impossible

that they should have fallen so low as to crawl on their bellies in front of idols. But they did."

"And what was their magic?"

"It was worse still. For it was only a pretence. Now when I say I could receive you into Christianity, Alfred, I do not mean that only I in this Amesbury Settlement could do it. I am head of the settlement because in practical matters there must be one man who in any discussion has the final word. But any man who is beyond childish age, and who is not afflicted like poor young William Whibblefuss, can celebrate the mysteries and receive you among us. The power is the power of Jesus, and no mere man is more holy than another. Such a thing is heathenish, as when Germans conceit themselves to be more sacred than the English, or when the Knights in their vanity and blindness think themselves of different clay from the common Nazis. But in the thousand years of Error some Christians were set high above others in the mysteries and dared to say, 'Ours alone is the power, the Lord Jesus Christ will come to you only through us.' Which error was the end of all brotherhood and love between Christians, and led to the most bloody and cruel dissensions among them."

"So that as well as killing the Jews they killed each other?"

"In the thousand years of Error, yes. Since then no Christian has ever killed another."

"Not even in personal private fights?"

"We never have fights," Joseph said.

"But how do you manage not to?"

"We never have fights because we love each other. Why, see, Alfred, if you have some kind of dispute with Fred, do you fight him? You argue, you finally agree, or you leave the matter unsettled, each holding to his own opinion. You do not rush at each other like two cats and tear each other's eyes out. All Christians are like father and son, brother and brother, because they are purified, not in Error, and though under Punishment and with no hope that their chastisement will be abated by a single day they have now nothing to cause anger one with another. Killing men, like reading and writing, is a heathen activity, and that it was once a Christian pursuit is our constant shame."

"I wish I could bring you acquainted with an old German I know," said Alfred. "You have so much in common."

"Impossible," said Joseph, without resentment but inexorably. "Unless of course he is a Christian you met in Germany. But then you should not call him a German."

"No, he is a real German. But if you should meet a Christian who had been born and brought up in Germany, would he be as much your brother as the Amesbury people?"

"Of course. Every man who wears the cross is my brother, and until he could speak English or I German we should exchange in love the holy words we both know."

"Are they in a language you both know?"

"Yes."

"And do any of *us* know it?"

"God forbid! It is the language of Christ Himself. No one knows the holy words but Christians."

"Could you say some?" Alfred asked tentatively.

"No. It is blasphemous to say any of them before heathens."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Joseph. I didn't mean to be offensive. But where is the rest of the language gone to? Why are there only a few words left?"

"It was lost," said Joseph sadly. "For our great Sin the most part of the blessed language of Jesus is lost. Not till the release and glorious enlightenment of the Last Day shall we recover the rest of it. Then these heathenish tongues which we have to use will disappear like the women, and we shall great each other and praise God in His own speech. Ah!" cried Joseph, quite carried away by enthusiasm, "O death, where is thy sting, O grave, thy victory? *Then* we shall sing *Laus Deo* and many many other things besides. Er—h'm." He coughed as he realised his blasphemy.

Alfred hastily passed on to something else.

"Joseph, is even the mother of Jesus to disappear?"

"She *has* disappeared, one thousand six hundred and fifty years ago. Women," Joseph stated firmly, "are nothing but birds' nests. What use is an old bird's nest? Does anyone value it, would anyone preserve it? Does the bird even care about it? And what can you say even of Mary

except that in her nest was laid an exceptionally divine egg? How could Mary be alone in heaven? If she were there all the other women would have to go too."

"Yes, I see. But what do you mean when you say they're birds' nests? You think they contribute nothing towards the physical child?"

"Nothing at all. The whole child, whether male or female, is complete in the seed of man. The woman merely nurtures it in her body until it is large enough to be born."

Alfred was very much interested, as von Hess had mentioned this very ancient biological error as one of the causes of the lower patterns of behaviour which had been imposed on women.

"*We* don't believe that," he said. "Whether we believe in Hitler or not. The mother contributes part of the child."

"None of the child," said Joseph stolidly. "You are in error, but why should you not be? If the child is to be male, it has its soul from the father in the moment of conception, but if it is to be female it has none. It is born nothing, like all other women, even Mary. In Christian families we call our eldest girl Mary, in remembrance of her, but no Mary is presumptuous enough to think she is any more *something* than any other woman."

"Why should sons sometimes grow up to look like their mothers?"

"Because the food the mother gives him affects his physical shape."

"Oh."

"And why," asked Joseph, carrying the attack into the disputant's country, "if you hold such a fantastic belief as that women actually help to form the child, do you treat your women so badly? Keeping them shut up in pens and robbing them of their little sons, which is the most ghastly cruelty that any man can do to a woman?"

"I think it is wrong, Joseph. I like the way you treat your nothings better than our way. Before you turn the women out of here to go to one of the other huts I've seen them laughing and talking with you. And not only the little girls. Our grown women never laugh."

"Our women are treated as if they were good and well-

loved dogs. We are fond of them, they play with us and are happy with us. If we have food they never go short while we are filled, they obey us and they love us. Our hands are never lifted against them unless they transgress, and like all decent and trustworthy dogs they are free to come and go where they will when they are not working. And they repay us for our care of them, in picking all our herbs and making our medicines and our wine, in getting wood for the fires and cooking our food, and even the preparing of the wood for whistles is not beyond one or two of the cleverest. Whereas your women are like ill-bred weakly and half-witted puppies which any sensible man would drown."

"But you've never seen any, have you, Joseph?"

"I have seen them in Bulfort driven to your heathen temple like cattle from one field to another. And I know they can do nothing, and that they are not happy. The Christian way of treating women is the only possible way. It was laid down once and for all by the blessed Paul, brother of our Lord, and even in the thousand years of Error Christians did not depart from it."

"Didn't they?"

"Never."

"That's rather curious."

"Why, Alfred? The Error and the Disobedience were among men. Such matters are too high for women, who can only err as a dog does against his master, but not against God. So, as the Error was not their fault, why should they be punished for it? God cannot be unjust."

"But then why should our women be unhappy for what is not their fault, either?"

Joseph was rather gravelled for once. Then he said, "They suffer as a dog does with a bad master, but you cannot say that it is *God* Who plagues and beats and starves the dog. It is the man. Your women are plagued because you are all filthy heathens, but the time of *their* suffering has an end. It ends with their death, and even for those who are alive at the Last Day the Dispersal is painless. Your suffering has no end, for at the Last Day all of you must come up out of your graves to be judged."

"Well, it is late," said Alfred with a sigh. "We must go, Joseph. I should like to talk to you for hours."

"And when will you come again?"

"Not for a little while, I think. Perhaps in another three months."

Joseph nodded, his eyes intelligent and sly, without any gleam of fanaticism.

"You must come and go as you will, Alfred. My house is always open to you, day or night, but of course night is best for you, as you are ashamed to be seen coming."

"I'm sorry, Joseph. If I could do what I like I'd come in broad daylight and march straight up to the Settlement under the eyes of Englishmen and Nazis."

"I understand."

Joseph let them both out and then called Fred to come back.

"Fred," he said, "your father is doing something dangerous."

"How did you guess that, Joseph?"

"I am a man of God, but besides that I am a man of perception, and I never cloud my natural abilities of mind with reading and writing. A Christian child of any intelligence would know it from his manner. And I want to tell you, Fred, that I love Alfred as much as it is possible for me to love a heathen. He saved my son, he has long ceased to despise us, neither has he ever gone to the other extreme and cast lustful eyes on our girls. He has eaten our bread and meat and drunk our wine, and I would put my body between him and his enemies, and between them and anyone who was dear to him, or anything which he wanted to keep safe, even weapons of war. If he wants a refuge it is here, with me or with my sons, or my sons' sons to the twentieth generation. There is friendship between my family and his family, I swear it before God. Ingratitude is not a Christian sin, Fred, but if I tell your father all this he is likely to laugh, as he is in a way modest, and not take it seriously. Now you understand."

"Yes, Joseph. I shan't forget it."

Fred ran after Alfred and presently caught him up.

"What did he want?" Alfred asked.

"He was telling me he loved you and was gratcful to you."

"He's a nice old man, Joseph is."

"Do you trust him, Father?"

"As far as *he* can see *me*," said Alfred laughing. "That's a long way, but not right round the world."

"I believe you could trust him."

"You can't really trust any man who is religious. If your interests conflict with the religion the man breaks his word and betrays you and thinks he's right to do it. But Joseph's a good man all the same."

Fred was silent and thoughtful and he said nothing more about Joseph.

Presently Alfred said, "That language they've lost nearly all of must be Latin, the Romans' language. Von Hess says it was dead long before Hitler except as a written language and in the Christian Church. They must have some of the old Church bits which have come down from mouth to mouth. Then that's interesting that he knows about the priests and the religious wars. Fred, we must get back to von Hess again in a day or two. I'm sure we'll get more out of it the second time through. And Hermann'll be so pleased to be on guard again, poor old lad."

"I hope he'll never have to do anything except sleep," said Fred. "Father——" he began, but he changed his mind, and kept his own counsel.

Chapter Ten

Five Nazis in the charge of a corporal were returning to Bulfort from a job on the telephone wires a little way down the Amesbury–Exeter road, about two miles west of Stonehenge. They had worked till it was nearly dark, and then had piled into the small lorry that carried their kit and tools, to drive back to Bulfort. The lorry would not start, and on investigation was found to have a broken connection in the feed pipe. It was tiresome and difficult to manage a makeshift in the dark by the light of torches, so the corporal ordered the party to march home. None of them minded the walk, it was a mere trifle to tough young German soldiers, but they

did mind the course of this particular evening stroll. They must go right past Stonehenge, in the dark, on their feet. However, they strode along singing, until they got near the stones. Then they fell silent. The corporal did not urge them to start again; he would not have admitted it aloud for gold or torture, but he too felt that there was no reason for making a loud German noise outside that peculiar English place. Marching quietly past Stonehenge was not against any army order that he had ever heard. So they marched quietly, and had nearly reached the angle of the rough stone wall which enclosed the place when a terrible loud high screaming, just behind the wall, only a few yards from the nearest man, made everyone jump and shiver and earnestly desire to hurry on. But their discipline was fairly good. They only quickened their pace just a little. The screaming went on, and with it a sort of chuckling leering sound, like a very inhuman laugh.

"Ach, Hitler!" burst out one of the men. "It's the ghosts! The ghosts of Stonehenge!"

"Halt!" said the corporal. "You fools, it's only a hare! There's someone there killing it."

He was over the wall in a second and, in the light of the moon just rising, the party saw something jump up and rush away, with the corporal after it, towards the stones. The lust of catching and seizing was so strong on the corporal that he would probably have followed it right into the circle, but he didn't need to, he was a noted runner, and he caught it before it got there, took something away from it, and dragged it back to his party of Nazis. They flashed torches on it to see it better. It was a Christian lad, obviously half-witted. The noise he had allowed the hare to make as he took it out of its snare, when he must have heard the feet of the soldiers on the road just by him, proved that. The hare, which he had finally killed the second before the corporal sprang at him over the wall, hung limp and peaceful, its troubles done, in the corporal's hand. The lad was dressed in nothing but a filthy woollen shirt and breeches, though it was a sharp spring night of east wind. The cross on the breast of his shirt was plain enough, though. The corporal gripped him tightly and he rolled his eyes in terror.

"We'll have the hare, scum," he said. "Fall out, men,

get round him. We'll teach him something about poaching our hares. You know all the hares belong to Germany, don't you, scum? "

"Nein verstehen," gasped the poor lubber. "Ich sprech Deutsch nicht!"

"No, I should say not. German wouldn't come well out of that mouth," and he gave it a light flick. "Do you understand English then? The hares belong to us. All the hares, all the rabbits, all the everything."

The men roared with laughter at the poor half-wit's terrified expression. They were relieved from fright, but they were angry, a little angry, with the Christian boy for causing it. If their discipline had failed they might have killed him, but as it was they just gave him light stinging little taps on his face and ears, pushing him from one to another across the circle. It was only horse-play and teasing, and they would soon have got tired of it and marched on, but the poor lout got more and more frightened. His mouth hung open and dribbled, his eyes shone wildly in the increasing moonlight.

"Mein Herren! Mein Herren!" he screamed. "Oh, nicht, oh, nicht. Oh, let me go! Oh, let me go. I'll show you where the ghosts are, Mein Herren! And the guns—the lovely guns to shoot hares with, but I daren't take them. I'm afraid of the ghosts."

"What!" cried the corporal. "Leave him alone. Now, you, what do you mean about ghosts and guns? How many guns?"

The idiot began to count on his fingers. "Five, six, seven, ten, sixty, *a thousand*!"

"He's not all there. He's making it up to get away."

"He's too half-witted to make a tale up, I think," said the corporal. "I think we'd better look into it. Though if it is anything it's probably only some old truck that was never cleared away. Where are these ghosts and guns, Kerl? Over there? In Stonehenge?"

"Nein, nein, Herren. This way, over there. Now let me go!"

"Not on your life. You come too and show us the ghosts and guns. And if we don't find any you're for it. Bring him along, Karl."

The Christian boy led them to the chalky face of the dug-out lump. His wits were more astray than usual, but he had a vague idea that if he could induce the Germans to enter the tunnel the ghosts would eat them up. Then he could run away very fast in case the ghosts came right out and ate him up too, though he knew a man with a cross on his breast was far more ghost-proof than an unbeliever. Still he thought the ghosts might be a little angry with him for sending a party of infidels into their shrine, as angry as they would have been if he'd taken the guns, which to his uncritical eye were sound and useful property. So when he had all the Germans round the entrance to the tunnel and was explaining that they must go in there, and all were leaning forward to look he wriggled furiously and broke his jailor's grasp. The man made a clutch at him but got nothing but a piece of shirt which tore like cobweb. The boy was off, half-naked, running at a pace none of them except the corporal could emulate in their thick boots and heavy clothes and equipment.

"Oh, never mind him," said the corporal, when he saw what had happened. "This is a tunnel all right. It goes round the corner. Give me your torch, Karl. Has any other man got a torch?"

"I have, but it doesn't always work."

"Then forward into the earth, single file," ordered the corporal, laughing. "We'll find these ghosts and guns or stick in the runway."

Inside the dug-out Alfred and Fred were so utterly absorbed that they heard nothing, no murmur of voices. Perhaps the bitter east wind was snatching them up and carrying them away. They heard nothing until the scraping sound of the first man coming along the tunnel on his belly and feet and elbows struck on Fred's sharp ear.

"There's someone coming, Father."

Alfred woke Hermann, who was as usual asleep on the pile of sacks, with one kick.

"Someone coming, Hermann, Be quiet. Fred, take the book—here, put the photograph in—go out the back way and put the stone over." Alfred blew out the candles.

Fred breathed in his ear. "Can't you come too?"

"No. We'll never all get down there before they see us. Go, Fred, quick."

"Make them think you and Hermann are here because you wouldn't like to be with him where anyone might find you," whispered Fred very rapidly, but quite unflustered.

He was gone. Alfred listened to scraping sounds in the front of the dug-out, but he could hear nothing of Fred's exit. He stood with his back to the hole in the corner of the dug-out to wait what happened next. There was no time to pull the door over the inner room. There was no time to do anything. He could just hear Hermann's breathing. Perhaps the ghosts would stop whoever it was at the entrance. A light flashed on and someone said, "Ach, Hitler!" Then someone else said, "Ach, Himmler!" and there was a sound of confusion. Alfred for all his anxiety and tension could not help wanting to laugh. He imagined Germans, not knowing what was there, pressing on in the tunnel, and Germans knowing what was there, wanting to get back. And it was true that even the corporal, for a second or two, very much wanted to retreat before those grim skeletons. Then, being a brave man, he pushed one of them, and it fell down on the concrete floor with a bony clatter.

"Come on, you fools!" he roared, his voice echoing queerly in the hollow place. "They're only old corpses. And, by Hitler, someone's been putting them here like this."

"All up, Hermann," Alfred breathed, gripping Hermann's arm. "That fellow's not afraid. Fred said you couldn't trust to it."

Hermann's arm swelled inside Alfred's hand. The muscles felt like living things, things with a fierce uncontrolled life of their own. Alfred thought, "Now Hermann will go mad. But I mustn't."

The corporal strode round the machine-gun party and flashed his torch on Alfred and Hermann, who were standing together at the back of the dug-out.

"Ach," he said, "there's something here besides those bones!"

Hermann went into action. He seized a large flint from the pile of chalk and flints and hurled it with perfect aim and tremendous force at the torch. There was darkness and hubbub. Hermann was fighting, there was no doubt about that, for there were grunts and groans and gasps. Skeletons crashed about, the snapping of their dry bones making a

staccato macabre accompaniment to the more homely and human noises. Alfred did nothing. If he went into the fight Hermann would be confused. As it was he could hit, kick, bite and gouge anything that was not himself, and know that he was doing well for his side. There was a constant stream of oaths from someone who seemed to be enough outside the fight to have some breath. Then, after what seemed an eternity of confusion, a light flashed on. The corporal was standing quietly out of the fight with his revolver drawn, unwounded except for a bad cut on his right hand. Hermann was still on his feet, streaming with blood. The corporal shot him, twice. Hermann collapsed, like a great red tower, and lay so still that Alfred wondered at it. The next minute he had to laugh at poor King Nosmo, who had fallen over the machine gun in the attitude of one who is very sick indeed. His shattered head had in the fight become still more shattered, his head was just an open bowl, and yet he looked like a person overcome with sickness. Hermann was dead; he looked dead, and yet King Nosmo, who had been dead no one knew how long, looked just sick.

"It's their positions," thought Alfred. "A man ought to lie down when he's dead."

Hermann had downed two of his enemies. One lay quite still but breathed stertorously. The other was sitting against the wall of the dug-out, dazed. Two were on their feet, both bleeding copiously, and the only uninjured Germans were the man who had been struggling with the obstinate torch, and the corporal, who had only been cut by the flint. He had waited coolly for the light when he could safely use his weapon. The smoke from the revolver cleared away and the stunning reverberations died down, leaving every man with a sensation of deafness. There was dead silence except for the panting of the Germans. The corporal kept Alfred covered with his revolver, but he took no notice. He was looking at Hermann, and thinking of him and von Hess. "*With his heart's blood.*" Poor brave, stupid, sentimental Nazi. But that last wild fight must have been a tremendous relief to him after his tragically peaceful short life. For a few minutes he must have been completely happy.

"It's the Red!" someone said at last, in a tone of surprise.

"I knew that," said the corporal. "You there, who are you?"

"Alfred, aerodrome ground mechanic. I've got some candles here, corporal. Shall I light them?"

"Yes. Keep the torch on him, Adalbert. I have you covered, Alfred. Don't do anything funny."

Alfred, followed by the torch beams, lighted the candles. All was well. There wasn't a trace of the presence of a third man. Two stools, the little rough table and the long pile of sacks. Fred had got a splendid start. When Alfred had lit the candles the corporal moved up to look. He took in the arrangements at a glance.

"Anything under those sacks?" he asked.

"They're just to lie on," Alfred said.

"Search them, Karl," the corporal ordered the uninjured Nazi. The sacks were scattered and nothing was found but one minute cigarette butt and a couple of match-ends.

"A boy told us there were some guns here."

"So there are," Alfred said. "There's that machine gun in the entrance, and those men by the wall there have rifles."

"That's old stuff."

"Very old," agreed Alfred.

"Where does that chalk come from?" the corporal asked, looking at the big pile.

"From the other tunnel. There's the hole."

"Does it go right out?"

"Yes, but you can't go that way. It's got a stone over the end."

"Karl, take the torch and go down the tunnel till you come to the stone. Feel about well. You other two poke this chalk about a bit with your daggers."

"Karl won't be able to turn round," Alfred said.

"Don't be funny, Alfred. It'll be best for you not to speak unless I speak to you perhaps."

No guns were found hidden in the chalk, and presently Karl came painfully back out of the tunnel hind end first.

"Nothing there, corporal, except the big stone. You can't move it from this end."

"You and the Red always used the front entrance?"

"Yes."

"Who made the back tunnel and this false wall here and put the skeletons in position?"

"Someone who hadn't much else to do, I should think."

"You found the place like this?"

"It's always been like this since Hermann and I have been using it."

"Who told you about it?"

"A Christian," said Alfred, guessing at his betrayer.

"And you came here with this Red because you thought some decent Englishman or Nazi might catch you above ground?"

Alfred looked ashamed.

"I knew him a great while ago, when he was doing his military training. He wasn't a Red then."

"You've got filthy tastes, Alfred. Filthy even for an Englishman. But that's nothing to do with us. Karl, bring those candles down here and we'll see to these men."

The corporal put his revolver in its holster, and the whole party moved down to the entrance of the dug-out with the candles to see how badly injured were the victims of Hermann's berserker rage. All the Germans were quieting down after the nervous excitement of the fright by Stonehenge, and the stimulation of the struggle in the dark with such an adequate foe. There is little doubt that the affair would from then have passed off peacefully had not the six old soldiers at stand easy by the wall chosen this moment of all their years of duty to fall down. One, touched perhaps in the fight, slipped and fell against his comrade, he against the next, and with the added weight of their rifles—which were bound to their right hands—they made a loud and ghastly Quakers' wedding. The sight and sound of these frightful, half-dressed skeletons moving and falling about in the dim light, without any human agency empowering them, was too much for the most highly strung and nervous among the Germans. He jumped and screamed. The other men laughed at him, a roar of laughter, with more than a touch of hysteria in it, and he, to relieve his feelings of shame and fury, kicked savagely at Hermann's dead face which lay conveniently close to his heavy boot. Alfred lost control completely for the first time since his boyhood, and taking his hand from his pocket

he dealt the Nazi a smashing blow on the mouth. After that as far as he could make out the dug-out collapsed on him.

He came to himself on a bed, in great pain. There seemed to be no part of him that did not hurt, but the worst pain was in his chest when he breathed. He thought each breath must kill him with its agony, and yet he went on breathing. Once he tried to stop, but couldn't, and only made the next breath a more fiery hell than those that had gone before. After what seemed a year when he could do nothing at all but suffer, the pain got a little better or he became more used to it. He found he was thinking. He was in hospital and therefore must be in a bad way. He remembered everything. He must see Fred. He must call someone and ask if he would be allowed to see Fred. He tried to make a sound. Some blood came up in his mouth, and the sound was not very loud. But a Nazi orderly with a handsome wooden face like an old rough carving presently was bending over him. Alfred had one eye out of bandages, which could still see, though mistily.

" Am I going to die? " Alfred whispered, articulating each word with incredible effort.

" Ja," said the Nazi. Then he added, " Probably."

" Then I want to see—Fred, my eldest—son. Can I? "

" I don't know. I'll see."

The orderly went off and Alfred again concentrated on breathing as little as possible. He felt a lot of strength had gone out of him just with those few whispered words. But he was still conscious and carrying on pretty well when Fred came. He sat beside his father and took his right hand which by some miracle was whole except for a cut on the knuckles.

" You talk, Fred," Alfred whispered.

" All right. I must talk very low. If you can't hear me, move your hand a little. The Nazis went mad when you hit that man and beat you up. The corporal didn't try to stop them. He helped them. Now everyone's rather sorry, in spite of your bad behaviour with the Red. The ground-foreman at the aerodrome is furious, and all your German friends are upset. You've been unconscious for two days and they've had time to think it over. No one has the faintest

idea I was there. People are—are very sorry for me and poor little Jim."

Alfred moved his hand.

" Can't you hear, Father? I daren't speak much louder. There's a man only three beds away."

" Can hear. Sorry for you and Jim—Robert—give them—my love."

" Of course. The book is in a safe place. Much better than the dug-out, I think. It's with Joseph Black."

Alfred's one eye looked worried.

" Christian—gave us away."

" I expect so. But that was accidental. Joseph knows the book is something precious to you and to me. But he can't read it. And there are just two kinds of people who are free from search. The Knights and the Christians. We ought to have had it with Joseph all along. If I hadn't been such a *fool*—oh, well. But, anyway, Father, that's the place for it. The Germans despise the Christians so much that they won't sully their noble hands with turning over their bits of belongings. I asked Joseph if the Germans ever searched their huts, ever had been known to, and he looked at me as if I were mad. Then he said, in his sly way, not his religious way, ' The Lord protects us from search of any kind. Do you search hedgehogs? And if you did, what would you find but lice? ' So you *must* understand," Fred whispered very earnestly, " that the book's safe as long as there are Christians in the land. It's the very place for the Truth. *They* can't understand it, and yet no one else would dream of looking for it among them. And I shall train the men who are to spread it when the time comes. It'll be difficult, but I shall be able to do it."

" Write your name—under mine. And be—less stupid and less—violent."

" Yes, Father."

" Edith," whispered Alfred.

" Who's that? "

" My baby girl."

" But what do you want me to do about her? " Fred was almost convinced his father was wandering, and yet his one eye looked still intelligent.

" Don't know. Nothing—to be—done. Must be left.

In time——" Alfred's whisper died away. He shut his eye. The pain was dull now. He opened his eye again and was quite sure that the old Knight von Hess was sitting there instead of Fred. The Knight did not speak; his fine hooked nose was bent kindly down on Alfred; his eyes looked pleased. Alfred tried to greet him, but it was too much trouble and after all it was Fred sitting there. So that was all right. He drifted off into unconsciousness. No one disturbed them. For hours Fred sat there till his father's hand began to get cold.

THE END