

**УИЛЪЯМ ХОУП
ХОДЖСОН**

THE NIGHT LAND

Уильям Хоуп Ходжсон

The Night Land

«Public Domain»

Ходжсон У.

The Night Land / У. Ходжсон — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

THE DREAMS THAT ARE ONLY DREAMS	5
I	6
II	15
III	23
IV	31
V	45
VI	52
VII	58
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	65

William Hope Hodgson

The Night Land

THE DREAMS THAT ARE ONLY DREAMS

"This to be Love, that your spirit to live in a natural holiness with the Beloved, and your bodies to be a sweet and natural delight that shall be never lost of a lovely mystery.... And shame to be unborn, and all things to go wholesome and proper, out of an utter greatness of understanding; and the Man to be an Hero and a Child before the Woman; and the Woman to be an Holy Light of the Spirit and an Utter Companion and in the same time a glad Possession unto the Man.... And this doth be Human Love...."

"...for this to be the especial glory of Love, that it doth make unto all Sweetness and Greatness, and doth be a fire burning all Littleness; so that did all in this world to have met The Beloved, then did Wantonness be dead, and there to grow Gladness and Charity, dancing in the years."

I

MIRDATH THE BEAUTIFUL

*"And I cannot touch her face
And I cannot touch her hair,
And I kneel to empty shadows—
Just memories of her grace;
And her voice sings in the winds
And in the sobs of dawn
And among the flowers at night
And from the brooks at sunrise
And from the sea at sunset,
And I answer with vain callings ..."*

It was the Joy of the Sunset that brought us to speech. I was gone a long way from my house, walking lonely-wise, and stopping often that I view the piling upward of the Battlements of Evening, and to feel the dear and strange gathering of the Dusk come over all the world about me.

The last time that I paused, I was truly lost in a solemn joy of the Glory of the Coming Night; and maybe I laughed a little in my throat, standing there alone in the midst of the Dusk upon the World. And, lo! my content was answered out of the trees that bounded the country road upon my right; and it was so as that some one had said: "And thou also!" in glad understanding, that I laughed again a little in my throat; as though I had only a half-believing that any true human did answer my laugh; but rather some sweet Delusion or Spirit that was tuned to my mood.

But she spoke and called me by my name; and when I had gone to the side of the road, that I should see her somewhat, and discover whether I knew her, I saw that she was surely that lady, who for her beauty was known through all of that sweet County of Kent as Lady Mirdath the Beautiful; and a near neighbour to me; for the Estates of her Guardian abounded upon mine.

Yet, until that time, I had never met her; for I had been so oft and long abroad; and so much given to my Studies and my Exercises when at home, that I had no further Knowledge of her than Rumour gave to me odd time; and for the rest, I was well content; for as I have given hint, my books held me, and likewise my Exercises; for I was always an athlete, and never met the man so quick or so strong as I did be; save in some fiction of a tale or in the mouth of a boaster.

Now, I stood instantly with my hat in my hand; and answered her gentle bantering so well as I might, the while that I peered intent and wondering at her through the gloom; for truly Rumour had told no tale to equal the beauty of this strange maid; who now stood jesting with so sweet a spirit, and claiming kinship of Cousinhood with me, as was truth, now that I did wake to think.

And, truly, she made no ado; but named me frank by my lad's name, and gave laughter and right to me to name her Mirdath, and nothing less or more—at that time. And she bid me then to come up through the hedge, and make use of a gap that was her own especial secret, as she confessed, when she took odd leave with her maid to some country frolic, drest as village maids; but not to deceive many, as I dare believe.

And I came up through the gap in the hedge and stood beside her; and tall she had seemed to me, when I looked up at her; and tall she was, in truth; but indeed I was a great head taller. And she invited me then to walk with her to the house, that I meet her Guardian and give word to my sorrow that I had so long neglected to make call upon them; and truly her eyes to shine with mischief and delight, as she named me so for my amissness.

But, indeed, she grew sober in a moment, and she set up her finger to me to hush, as that she heard somewhat in the wood that lay all the way upon our right. And, indeed, something I heard too; for there was surely a rustling of the leaves, and anon a dead twig crackt with a sound clear and sharp in the stillness.

And immediately there came three men running out of the wood at me; and I called to them sharply to keep off or beware of harm; and I put the maid to my back with my left hand, and had my oak staff ready for my use.

But the three men gave out no word of reply; but ran in at me; and I saw somewhat of the gleam of knives; and at that, I moved very glad and brisk to the attack; and behind me there went shrill and sweet, the call of a silver whistle; for the Maid was whistling for her dogs; and maybe the call was also a signal to the men-servants of her house.

Yet, truly, there was no use in help that was yet to come; for the need did be then and instant; and I nowise loath to use my strength before my sweet cousin. And I stepped forward, briskly, as I have told; and the end of my staff I drove into the body of the left-ward man, so that he dropped like a dead man. And I hit very sharply at the head of another, and surely crackt it for him; for he made instantly upon the earth; but the third man I met with my fist, and neither had he any great need of a second blow; but went instant to join his companions, and the fight thus to have ended before it was even proper begun, and I laughing a little with a proper pride, to know the bewilderment that I perceived in the way that the Lady Mirdath, my cousin, stood and regarded me through the dusk of the hushed even.

But, indeed, there was no time left to us, before there came bounding up, three great boar-hounds, that had been loosed to her whistle; and she had some ado to keep the brutes off me; and I then to beat them off the men upon the earth, lest they maul them as they lay. And directly, there was a noise of men shouting, and the light of lanthorns in the night, and the footmen of the house to come running with lanthorns and cudgels; and knew not whether to deal with me, or not, in the first moment, even as the dogs; but when they saw the men upon the ground, and learned my name and saw me proper, they kept well their distance and had no lack of respect; but, indeed, my sweet cousin to have the most of any; only that she showed no intent to keep distance of me; but to have a new and deeper feeling of kinship than she at first had shown.

And the men-servants asked what should be done with the foot-pads; seeing that they were now recovering. But, indeed, I left the matter, along with some silver, to the servants; and very sound justice they dealt out to the men; for I heard their cries a good while after we had gone away.

Now, when we were come up to the Hall, my cousin must take me in to her Guardian, Sir Alfred Jarles, an old man and venerable that I knew a little in passing and because our estates abounded. And she praised me to my face, yet quaintly-wise; and the old man, her Guardian thanked me most honourably and with a nice courtesy; so that I was a welcome house-friend from that time onward.

And I stayed all that evening, and dined, and afterward went out again into the home-grounds with the Lady Mirdath; and she more friendly to me than ever any woman had been; and seemed to me as that she had known me always. And, truly, I had the same feeling in my heart towards her; for it was, somehow, as though we knew each the way and turn of the other, and had a constant delight to find this thing and that thing to be in common; but no surprise; save that so pleasant a truth had so natural a discovery.

And one thing there was that I perceived held the Lady Mirdath all that dear fore-night; and this was, indeed, the way that I had my pleasure so easy with the three foot-pads. And she asked me plainly whether I was not truly very strong; and when I laughed with young and natural pride, she caught my arm suddenly to discover for herself how strong I might be. And, surely, she loosed it even the more sudden, and with a little gasping of astonishment, because it was so great and hard. And afterward, she walked by me very silent, and seeming thoughtful; but she went never any great way off from me.

And, truly, if the Lady Mirdath had a strange pleasure in my strength, I had likewise a constant wonder and marvel in her beauty, that had shown but the more lovely in the candle-light at dinner.

But there were further delights to me in the days that came; for I had happiness in the way that she had pleasure of the Mystery of the Evening, and the Glamour of Night, and the Joy of Dawn, and all suchlike.

And one evening, that I ever remember, as we wandered in the park-lands, she began to say—half unthinking—that it was truly an elves-night. And she stopped herself immediately; as though she thought I should have no understanding; but, indeed, I was upon mine own familiar ground of inward delight; and I replied in a quiet and usual voice, that the Towers of Sleep would grow that night, and I felt in my bones that it was a night to find the Giant's Tomb, or the Tree with the Great Painted Head, or—And surely I stopped very sudden; for she gripped me in that moment, and her hand shook as she held me; but when I would ask her what ailed, she bid me, very breathless, to say on, to say on. And, with a half understanding, I told her that I had but meant to speak of the Moon Garden, that was an olden and happy fancy of mine.

And, in verity, when I said that, the Lady Mirdath cried out something in a strange low voice, and brought me to a halt, that she might face me. And she questioned me very earnest; and I answered just so earnest as she; for I was grown suddenly to an excitement, in that I perceived she knew also. And, in verity, she told me that she had knowledge; but had thought that she was alone in the world with her knowledge of that strange land of her dreams; and now to find that I also had travelled in those dear, strange dream lands. And truly the marvel of it—the marvel of it! As she to say time and oft. And again, as we walked, she gave out word that there was little wonder she had been urged to call to me that night, as she saw me pause upon the road; though, indeed, she had learned of our cousinship before, having seen me go by on my horse pretty oft, and inquired concerning me; and mayhap daintily irked that I had so little heed of Lady Mirdath the Beautiful. But, indeed, I had thought of other matters; yet had been human enough, had I but met her proper before I see her.

Now you must not think that I was not utter stirred by the wonder of this thing, that we had both a dreamful knowledge of the same matters, of which each had thought none other knew. Yet, when I questioned more, there was much that had been in my fancies that was foreign to her, and likewise much that had been familiar to her, that was of no meaning to me. But though there was this, that brought a little regret to us, there would be, time and again, some new thing that one told, that the other knew and could finish the telling of, to the gladness and amazement of both.

And so shall you picture us wandering and having constant speech, so that, hour by hour, we grew gladly aged in dear knowledge and sweet friendship of the other.

And truly, how the time passed, I know not; but there came presently a hullabaloo, and the shouts of men's voices and the baying of dogs, and the gleam of lanthorns, so that I knew not what to think; until, very sudden, and with a sweet and strange little laughter, the Lady Mirdath to perceive that we had missed the hours utter in our converse; so that her Guardian (made uneasy because of the three foot-pads) had ordered a search. And we all that time a-wander together in happy forgetfulness.

And we turned homeward, then, and came towards the lights; but indeed, the dogs found us before we were come there; and they had grown to know me now, and leaped about me, barking very friendly; and so in a minute the men had discovered us, and were gone back to tell Sir Jarles that all was well.

And this was the way of our meeting and the growing of our acquaintance, and the beginning of my great love for Mirdath the Beautiful.

Now, from that time onward, evening by evening would I go a-wander along the quiet and country road that led from my estate to the estate of Sir Jarles. And always I went inward by the hedge-gap; and oft I should find the Lady Mirdath walking in that part of the woods; but always with her great boar-hounds about her; for I had begged that she do this thing for her sweet safety; and she to seem wishful to pleasure me; but truly to be just so oft utter perverse in diverse matters; and to

strive to plague me, as though she would discover how much I would endure and how far she might go to anger me.

And, truly, well I remember how that one night, coming to the hedge-gap, I saw two country-maids come thence out from the woods of Sir Jarles'; but they were naught to me, and I would have gone upward through the gap, as ever; only that, as they passed me, they curtseyed somewhat over-graceful for rough wenches. And I had a sudden thought, and came up to them to see them more anigh; and truly I thought the taller was surely the Lady Mirdath. But, indeed, I could not be sure; for when I asked who she did be, she only to simper and to curtsey again; and so was I very natural all in doubt; but yet sufficient in wonder (having some knowledge of the Lady Mirdath) to follow the wenches, the which I did.

And they then, very speedy and sedate, as though I were some rack-rape that they did well to be feared of alone at night; and so came at last to the village green, where a great dance was a-foot, with torches, and a wandering fiddler to set the tune; and ale in plenty.

And the two to join the dance, and danced very hearty; but had only each the other for a partner, and had a good care to avoid the torches. And by this, I was pretty sure that they were truly the Lady Mirdath and her maid; and so I took chance when they had danced somewhat my way, to step over to them, and ask boldly for a dance. But, indeed, the tall one answered, simpering, that she was promised; and immediately gave her hand to a great hulking farmer-lout, and went round the green with him; and well punished she was for her waywardness; for she had all her skill to save her pretty feet from his loutish stampings; and very glad she was to meet the end of the dance.

And I knew now for certainty that it was Mirdath the Beautiful, despite her plan of disguise, and the darkness and the wench's dress and the foot-gear that marred her step so great. And I walked across to her, and named her, whispering, by name; and gave her plain word to be done of this unwisdom, and I would take her home. But she to turn from me, and she stamped her foot, and went again to the lout; and when she had suffered another dance with him, she bid him be her escort a part of the way; the which he was nothing loath of.

And another lad, that was mate to him, went likewise; and in a moment, so soon as they were gone away from the light of the torches, the rough hind-lads made to set their arms about the waists of the two wenches, not wetting who they had for companions. And the Lady Mirdath was no longer able to endure, and cried out in her sudden fear and disgust, and struck the rough hind that embraced her, so hard that he loosed her a moment, swearing great oaths. And directly he came back to her again, and had her in a moment, to kiss her; and she, loathing him to the very death, beat him madly in the face with her hands; but to no end, only that I was close upon them. And, in that moment, she screamed my name aloud; and I caught the poor lout and hit him once, but not to harm him overmuch; yet to give him a long memory of me; and afterward I threw him into the side of the road. But the second hind, having heard my name, loosed from the tiring-maid, and ran for his life; and, indeed, my strength was known all about that part.

And I caught Mirdath the Beautiful by her shoulders, and shook her very soundly, in my anger. And afterward, I sent the maid onward; and she, having no word from her Mistress to stay, went forward a little; and in this fashion we came at last to the hedge-gap, with the Lady Mirdath very hushed; but yet walking anigh to me, as that she had some secret pleasure of my nearness. And I led her through the gap, and so homeward to the Hall; and there bid her good-night at a side door that she held the key of. And, truly, she bid me good-night in an utter quiet voice; and was almost as that she had no haste to be gone from me that night.

Yet, when I met her on the morrow, she was full of a constant impudence to me; so that, having her alone to myself, when the dusk was come, I asked her why she would never be done of her waywardness; because that I ached to have companionship of her; and, instead, she denied my need. And, at that, she was at once very gentle; and full of a sweet and winsome understanding; and surely knew that I wished to be rested; for she brought out her harp, and played me dear olden melodies of

our childhood-days all that evening; and so had my love for her the more intent and glad. And she saw me that night to the hedge-gap, having her three great boar-hounds with her, to company her home again. But, indeed, I followed her afterwards, very silent, until I saw her safe into the Hall; for I would not have her alone in the night; though she believed that I was then far away on the country road. And as she walked with her dogs, one or another would run back to me, to nose against me friendly-wise; but I sent them off again very quiet; and she had no knowledge of aught; for she to go singing a love-song quietly all the way home. But whether she loved me, I could not tell; though she had a nice affection for me.

Now, on the following evening, I went somewhat early to the gap; and lo! who should be standing in the gap, talking to the Lady Mirdath; but a very clever-drest man, that had a look of the Court about him; and he, when I approached, made no way for me through the gap; but stood firm, and eyed me very insolent; so that I put out my hand, and lifted him from my way.

And lo! the Lady Mirdath turned a bitterness of speech upon me that gave me an utter pain and astonishment; so that I was assured in a moment that she had no true love for me, or she had never striven so to put me to shame before the stranger, and named me uncouth and brutal to a smaller man. And, indeed, you shall perceive how I was in my heart in that moment.

And I saw that there was some seeming of justice in what the Lady Mirdath said; but yet might the man have shown a better spirit; and moreover Mirdath the Beautiful had no true call to shame me, her true friend and cousin, before this stranger. Yet did I not stop to argue; but bowed very low to the Lady Mirdath; and afterward I bowed a little to the man and made apology; for, indeed, he was neither great nor strong-made; and I had been better man to have shown courtesy to him; at least in the first.

And so, having done justice to my own respect, I turned and went on, and left them to their happiness.

Now, I walked then, maybe twenty good miles, before I came to my own home; for there was no rest in me all that night, or ever, because that I was grown deadly in love of Mirdath the Beautiful; and all my spirit and heart and body of me pained with the dreadful loss that I was come so sudden upon.

And for a great week I had my walks in another direction; but in the end of that week, I must take my walk along the olden way, that I might chance to have but a sight of My Lady. And, truly, I had all sight that ever man did need to put him in dread pain and jealousy; for, truly, as I came in view of the gap, there was the Lady Mirdath walking just without the borders of the great wood; and beside her there walked the clever-drest man of the Court, and she suffered his arm around her, so that I knew they were lovers; for the Lady Mirdath had no brothers nor any youthful men kin.

Yet, when Mirdath saw me upon the road, she shamed in a moment to be so caught; for she put her lover's arm from about her, and bowed to me, a little changed of colour in the face; and I bowed very low—being but a young man myself—; and so passed on, with my heart very dead in me. And as I went, I saw that her lover came again to her, and had his arm once more about her; and so, maybe, they looked after me, as I went very stiff and desperate; but, indeed, I looked not back on them, as you may think.

And for a great month then, I went not near to the gap; for my love raged in me, and I was hurt in my pride; and, truly, neither had a true justice been dealt to me by the Lady Mirdath. Yet in that month, my love was a leaven in me, and made slowly a sweetness and a tenderness and an understanding that were not in me before; and truly Love and Pain do shape the Character of Man.

And in the end of that time, I saw a little way into Life, with an understanding heart, and began presently to take my walks again past the gap; but truly Mirdath the Beautiful was never to my sight; though one evening I thought she might be not a great way off; for one of her great boar-hounds came out of the wood, and down into the road to nose against me, very friendly, as a dog oft doth with me.

Yet, though I waited a good time after the dog had left me, I had no sight of Mirdath, and so passed on again, with my heart heavy in me; but without bitterness, because of the understanding that was begun to grow in my heart.

Now, there passed two weary and lonely weeks, in which I grew sick to have knowledge of the beautiful maid. And, truly, in the end of that time, I made a sudden resolving that I would go in through the gap, and come to the home-grounds about the Hall, and so maybe have some sight of her.

And this resolving I had one evening; and I went out immediately, and came to the gap, and went in through the gap, and so by a long walking to the gardens about the Hall. And, truly, when I was come there, I saw a good light of lanthorns and torches, and a great company of people dancing; and all drest in quaint dress; so that I knew they had a festival for some cause. And there came suddenly a horrid dread into my heart that this might be the marriage-dance of the Lady Mirdath; but, indeed, this was foolishness; for I had surely heard of the marriage, if there had been any. And, truly, in a moment, I remembered that she was come one-and-twenty years of age on that day, and to the end of her ward-ship; and this surely to be festival in honour of the same.

And a very bright and pretty matter it was to watch, save that I was so heavy in the heart with loneliness and longing; for the company was great and gay, and the lights plentiful and set all about from the trees; and in leaf-made arbours about the great lawn. And a great table spread with eating matters and silver and crystal, and great lamps of bronze and silver went all a-down one end of the lawn; and the dance constant upon the other part.

And surely, the Lady Mirdath to step out of the dance, very lovely drest; yet seeming, to mine eyes, a little pale in the looming of the lights. And she to wander to a seat to rest; and, indeed, in a moment, there to be a dozen youths of the great families of the country-side, in attendance about her, making talk and laughter, and each eager for her favour; and she very lovely in the midst of them, but yet, as I did think, lacking of somewhat, and a little pale-seeming, as I have told; and her glance to go odd-wise beyond the group of men about her; so that I understood in a moment that her lover was not there, and she to be a-lack in the heart for him. Yet, why he was not there, I could not suppose, save that he might have been called back to the Court.

And, surely, as I watched the other young men about her, I burned with a fierce and miserable jealousy of them; so that I could near have stepped forth and plucked her out from among them, and had her to walk with me in the woods, as in the olden days, when she also had seemed near to love. But, truly, what use to this? For it was not they who held her heart, as I saw plain; for I watched her, with an eager and lonesome heart, and knew that it was one small man of the Court that was lover to her, as I have told.

And I went away again then, and came not near to the gap for three great months, because that I could not bear the pain of my loss; but in the end of that time, my very pain to urge me to go, and to be worse than the pain of not going; so that I found myself one evening in the gap, peering, very eager and shaken, across the sward that lay between the gap and the woods; for this same place to be as an holy ground to me; for there was it that first I saw Mirdath the Beautiful, and surely lost my heart to her in that one night.

And a great time I stayed there in the gap, waiting and watching hopelessly. And lo! sudden there came something against me, touching my thigh very soft; and when I looked down, it was one of the boar-hounds, so that my heart leaped, near frightened; for truly My Lady was come somewhere nigh, as I did think.

And, as I waited, very hushed and watchful; yet with an utter beating heart; surely I heard a faint and low singing among the trees, so utter sad. And lo! it was Mirdath singing a broken love song, and a-wander there in the dark alone, save for her great dogs.

And I harked, with strange pain in me, that she did be so in pain; and I ached to bring her ease; yet moved not, but was very still there in the gap; save that my being was all in turmoil.

And presently, as I harked, there came a slim white figure out from among the trees; and the figure cried out something, and came to a quick pause, as I could see in the half-dark. And lo! in that moment, there came a sudden and unreasoned hope into me; and I came up out of the gap, and

was come to Mirdath in a moment, calling very low and passionate and eager: "Mirdath! Mirdath! Mirdath!"

And this way I came to her; and her great dog that was with me, to bound beside me, in thought, mayhap, that it was some game. And when I came to the Lady Mirdath, I held out my hands to her, not knowing what I did; but only the telling of my heart that needed her so utter, and craved to ease her of her pain. And lo! she put out her arms to me, and came into mine arms with a little run. And there she bode, weeping strangely; but yet with rest upon her; even as rest was come sudden and wondrous upon me.

And sudden, she moved in mine arms, and slipt her hands to me, very dear, and held her lips up to me, like some sweet child, that I kiss her; but, indeed, she was also a true woman, and in honest and dear love of me.

And this to be the way of our betrothal; and simple and wordless it was; yet sufficient, only that there is no sufficiency in Love.

Now, presently, she loosed herself out of mine arms, and we walked homeward through the woods, very quiet, and holding hands, as children do. And I then in a while to ask her about the man of the Court; and she laughed very sweet into the silence of the wood; but gave me no answer, save that I wait until we were come to the Hall.

And when we were come there, she took me into the great hall, and made a very dainty and impudent bow, mocking me. And so made me known to another lady, who sat there, upon her task of embroidering, which she did very demure, and as that she had also a dainty Mischief lurking in her.

And truly, the Lady Mirdath never to be done of naughty laughter, that made her dearly breathless with delight, and to sway a little, and set the trembling of pretty sounds in her throat; and surely she must pull down two great pistols from an arm-rack, that I fight a duel to the death with the lady of the embroidering, who held her face down over her work, and shook likewise with the wickedness of her laughter that she could not hide.

And in the end, the Lady of the Embroidering looked up sudden into my face; and I then to see somewhat of the mischief in a moment; for she had the face of the man of the Court suit, that had been lover to Mirdath.

And the Lady Mirdath then to explain to me how that Mistress Alison (which was her name) was a dear and bosom friend, and she it was that had been drest in the Court suit to play a prank for a wager with a certain young man who would be lover to her, an he might. And I then to come along, and so speedy to offence that truly I never saw her face plain, because that I was so utter jealous. And so the Lady Mirdath had been more justly in anger than I supposed, because that I had put hands upon her friend, as I have told.

And this to be all of it, save that they had planned to punish me, and had met every evening at the gap, to play at lovers, perchance I should pass, so that I should have greater cause for my jealousy, and truly they to have a good revenge upon me; for I had suffered very great a long while because of it.

Yet, as you do mind, when I came upon them, the Lady Mirdath had a half-regret, that was very natural, because even then she was in love of me, as I of her; and because of this, she drew away, as you shall remember, being—as she confessed—suddenly and strangely troubled and to want me; but afterwards as much set again to my punishment, because that I bowed so cold and went away. And indeed well I might.

Yet, truly, all was safe ended now, and I utter thankful and with a mad delight in the heart; so that I caught up Mirdath, and we danced very slow and stately around the great hall, the while that Mistress Alison whistled us a tune with her mouth, which she could very clever, as many another thing, I wot.

And each day and all day after this Gladness, Mirdath and I could never be apart; but must go a-wander always together, here and there, in an unending joy of our togetherness.

And in a thousand things were we at one in delight; for we had both of us that nature which doth love the blue of eternity which gathers beyond the wings of the sunset; and the invisible sound of the starlight falling upon the world; and the quiet of grey evenings when the Towers of Sleep are builded unto the mystery of the Dusk; and the solemn green of strange pastures in the moonlight; and the speech of the sycamore unto the beech; and the slow way of the sea when it doth mood; and the soft rustling of the night clouds. And likewise had we eyes to see the Dancer of the Sunset, casting her mighty robes so strange; and ears to know that there shakes a silent thunder over the Face of Dawn; and much else that we knew and saw and understood together in our utter joy.

Now, there happened to us about this time a certain adventure that came near to cause the death of Mirdath the Beautiful; for one day as we wandered, as ever, like two children in our contentment, I made remark to Mirdath that there went only two of the great boar-hounds with us; and she then told me that the third was to the kennels, being sick.

Yet, scarce had she told me so much; ere she cried out something and pointed; and lo! I saw that the third hound came towards us, at a run, yet very strange-seeming in his going. And in a moment, Mirdath cried out that the hound was mad; and truly, I saw then that the brute slavered as he came running.

And in a moment he was upon us, and made never a sound; but leaped at me in one instant of time; all before I had any thought of such intent. But surely, My Beautiful One had a dreadful love for me, for she cast herself at the dog, to save me, calling to the other hounds. And she was bitten in a moment by the brute, as she strove to hold him off from me. But I to have him instant by the neck and the body, and brake him, so that he died at once; and I cast him to the earth, and gave help to Mirdath, that I draw the poison from the wounds.

And this I did so well as I might, despite that she would have me stop. And afterwards, I took her into mine arms, and ran very fierce all the long and weary way to the Hall, and with hot skewers I burned the wounds; so that when the doctor came, he to say I have saved her by my care, if indeed she to be saved. But, truly, she had saved me in any wise, as you shall think; so that I could never be done of honour to her.

And she very pale; but yet to laugh at my fears, and to say that she soon to have her health, and the wounds healed very speedy; but, indeed, it was a long and bitter time before they were proper healed, and she so well as ever. Yet, in time, so it was; and an utter weight off my heart.

And when Mirdath was grown full strong again, we set our wedding day. And well do I mind how she stood there in her bridal dress, on that day, so slender and lovely as may Love have stood in the Dawn of Life; and the beauty of her eyes that had such sober sweetness in them, despite the dear mischief of her nature; and the way of her little feet, and the loveliness of her hair; and the dainty rogue-grace of her movements; and her mouth an enticement, as that a child and a woman smiled out of the one face. And this to be no more than but an hint of the loveliness of My Beautiful One.

And so we were married.

Mirdath, My Beautiful One, lay dying, and I had no power to hold Death backward from such dread intent. In another room, I heard the little wail of the child; and the wail of the child waked my wife back into this life, so that her hands fluttered white and desperately needful upon the coverlid.

I kneeled beside My Beautiful One, and reached out and took her hands very gentle into mine; but still they fluttered so needful; and she looked at me, dumbly; but her eyes beseeching.

Then I went out of the room, and called gently to the Nurse; and the Nurse brought in the child, wrapped very softly in a long, white robe. And I saw the eyes of My Beautiful One grow clearer with a strange, lovely light; and I beckoned to the Nurse to bring the babe near.

My wife moved her hands very weakly upon the coverlid, and I knew that she craved to touch her child; and I signed to the Nurse, and took my child in mine arms; and the Nurse went out from the room, and so we three were alone together.

Then I sat very gentle upon the bed; and I held the babe near to My Beautiful One, so that the wee cheek of the babe touched the white cheek of my dying wife; but the weight of the child I kept off from her.

And presently, I knew that Mirdath, My Wife, strove dumbly to reach for the hands of the babe; and I turned the child more towards her, and slipped the hands of the child into the weak hands of My Beautiful One. And I held the babe above my wife, with an utter care; so that the eyes of my dying One, looked into the young eyes of the child. And presently, in but a few moments of time; though it had been someways an eternity, My Beautiful One closed her eyes and lay very quiet. And I took away the child to the Nurse, who stood beyond the door. And I closed the door, and came back to Mine Own, that we have those last instants alone together.

And the hands of my wife lay very still and white; but presently they began to move softly and weakly, searching for somewhat; and I put out my great hands to her, and took her hands with an utter care; and so a little time passed.

Then her eyes opened, quiet and grey, and a little dazed seeming; and she rolled her head on the pillow and saw me; and the pain of forgetfulness went out of her eyes, and she looked at me with a look that grew in strength, unto a sweetness of tenderness and full understanding.

And I bent a little to her; and her eyes told me to take her into mine arms for those last minutes. Then I went very gentle upon the bed, and lifted her with an utter and tender care, so that she lay suddenly strangely restful against my breast; for Love gave me skill to hold her, and Love gave My Beautiful One a sweetness of ease in that little time that was left to us.

And so we twain were together; and Love seemed that it had made a truce with Death in the air about us, that we be undisturbed; for there came a drowse of rest even upon my tense heart, that had known nothing but a dreadful pain through the weary hours.

And I whispered my love silently to My Beautiful One, and her eyes answered; and the strangely beautiful and terrible moments passed by into the hush of eternity.

And suddenly, Mirdath My Beautiful One, spoke,—whispering something. And I stooped gently to hark; and Mine Own spoke again; and lo! it was to call me by the olden Love Name that had been mine through all the utter lovely months of our togetherness.

And I began again to tell her of my love, that should pass beyond death; and lo! in that one moment of time, the light went out of her eyes; and My Beautiful One lay dead in mine arms ... My Beautiful One....

II THE LAST REDOUBT

Since Mirdath, My Beautiful One, died and left me lonely in this world, I have suffered an anguish, and an utter and dreadful pain of longing, such as truly no words shall ever tell; for, in truth, I that had all the world through her sweet love and companionship, and knew all the joy and gladness of Life, have known such lonesome misery as doth stun me to think upon.

Yet am I to my pen again; for of late a wondrous hope has grown in me, in that I have, at night in my sleep, waked into the future of this world, and seen strange things and utter marvels, and known once more the gladness of life; for I have learned the promise of the future, and have visited in my dreams those places where in the womb of Time, she and I shall come together, and part, and again come together—breaking asunder most drearly in pain, and again reuniting after strange ages, in a glad and mighty wonder.

And this is the utter strange story of that which I have seen, and which, truly, I must set out, if the task be not too great; so that, in the setting out thereof, I may gain a little ease of the heart; and likewise, mayhap, give ease of hope to some other poor human, that doth suffer, even as I have suffered so dreadful with longing for Mine Own that is dead.

And some shall read and say that this thing was not, and some shall dispute with them; but to them all I say naught, save "Read!" And having read that which I set down, then shall one and all have looked towards Eternity with me—unto its very portals. And so to my telling:

To me, in this last time of my visions, of which I would tell, it was not as if I *dreamed*; but, as it were, that I *waked* there into the dark, *in the future of this world*. And the sun had died; and for me thus newly waked into that Future, to look back upon this, our Present Age, was to look back into dreams that my soul knew to be of reality; but which to those newly-seeing eyes of mine, appeared but as a far vision, strangely hallowed with peacefulness and light.

Always, it seemed to me when I awaked into the Future, into the Everlasting Night that lapped this world, that I saw near to me, and girdling me all about, a blurred greyness. And presently this, the greyness, would clear and fade from about me, even as a dusky cloud, and I would look out upon a world of darkness, lit here and there with strange sights. And with my waking into that Future, I waked not to ignorance; but to a full knowledge of those things which lit the Night Land; even as a man wakes from sleep each morning, and knows immediately he wakes, the names and knowledge of the Time which has bred him, and in which he lives. And the same while, a knowledge I had, as it were sub-conscious, of this Present—this early life, which now I live so utterly alone.

In my earliest knowledge of *that* place, I was a youth, seventeen years grown, and my memory tells me that when first I waked, or came, as it might be said, to myself, in that Future, I stood in one of the embrasures of the Last Redoubt—that great Pyramid of grey metal which held the last millions of this world from the Powers of the Slayers.

And so full am I of the knowledge of that Place, that scarce can I believe that none here know; and because I have such difficulty, it may be that I speak over familiarly of those things of which I know; and heed not to explain much that it is needful that I should explain to those who must read here, in this our present day. For there, as I stood and looked out, I was less the man of years of *this* age, than the youth of *that*, with the natural knowledge of *that* life which I had gathered by living all my seventeen years of life there; though, until that my first vision, I (of this Age) knew not of that other and Future Existence; yet woke to it so naturally as may a man wake here in his bed to the shining of the morning sun, and know it by name, and the meaning of aught else. And yet, as I stood there in the vast embrasure, I had also a knowledge, or memory, of this present life of ours,

deep down within me; but touched with a halo of dreams, and yet with a conscious longing for One, known even there in a half memory as Mirdath.

As I have said, in my earliest memory, I mind that I stood in an embrasure, high up in the side of the Pyramid, and looked outwards through a queer spy-glass to the North-West. Aye, full of youth and with an adventurous and yet half-fearful heart.

And in my brain was, as I have told, the knowledge that had come to me in all the years of my life in the Redoubt; and yet until that moment, this *Man of this Present Time* had no knowledge of that future existence; and now I stood and had suddenly the knowledge of a life already spent in that strange land, and deeper within me the misty knowings of this our present Age, and, maybe, also of some others.

To the North-West I looked through the queer spy-glass, and saw a landscape that I had looked upon and pored upon through all the years of that life, so that I knew how to name this thing and that thing, and give the very distances of each and every one from the "Centre-Point" of the Pyramid, which was that which had neither length nor breadth, and was made of polished metal in the Room of Mathematics, where I went daily to my studies.

To the North-West I looked, and in the wide field of my glass, saw plain the bright glare of the fire from the Red Pit, shine upwards against the underside of the vast chin of the North-West Watcher—The Watching Thing of the North-West.... "That which hath Watched from the Beginning, and until the opening of the Gateway of Eternity" came into my thoughts, as I looked through the glass ... the words of Aesworpth, the *Ancient* Poet (though incredibly *future* to this our time). And suddenly they seemed at fault; for I looked deep down into my being, and saw, as dreams are seen, the sunlight and splendour of *this* our Present Age. And I was amazed.

And here I must make it clear to all that, even as I waked from *this* Age, suddenly into *that* life, so must I—*that* youth there in the embrasure—have awakened then to the knowledge of *this* far-back life of ours—seeming to him a vision of the very beginnings of eternity, in the dawn of the world. Oh! I do but dread I make it not sufficient clear that I and he were both *I*—the same soul. He of that far date seeing vaguely the life that *was* (that I do now live in this present Age); and I of this time beholding the life that I yet shall live. How utterly strange!

And yet, I do not know that I speak holy truth to say that I, in that future time, had *no* knowledge of *this* life and Age, before that awakening; for I woke to find that I was one who stood apart from the other youths, in that I had a dim knowledge—visionary, as it were, of the past, which confounded, whilst yet it angered, those who were the men of learning of that age; though of this matter, more anon. But this I do know, that from that time, onwards, my knowledge and assuredness of the Past was tenfold; for this my memory of that life told me.

And so to further my telling. Yet before I pass onwards, one other thing is there of which I shall speak—In the moment in which I waked out of that youthfulness, into the assured awareness of *this* our Age, in that moment the hunger of this my love flew to me across the ages; so that what had been but a memory-dream, grew to the pain of *Reality*, and I knew suddenly that I *lacked*; and from that time onwards, I went, listening, as even now my life is spent.

And so it was that I (fresh-born in that future time) hungered strangely for My Beautiful One with all the strength of that new life, knowing that she had been mine, and might live again, even as I. And so, as I have said, I hungered, and found that I listened.

And now, to go back from my digression, it was, as I have said, I had amazement at perceiving, in memory, the unknowable sunshine and splendour of this age breaking so clear through my hitherto most vague and hazy visions; so that the ignorance of, Aesworpth was shouted to me by the things which now I *knew*.

And from that time, onward, for a little space, I was stunned with all that I knew and guessed and felt; and all of a long while the hunger grew for that one I had lost in the early days—she who

had sung to me in those faery days of light, that *had been* in verity. And the especial thoughts of that age looked back with a keen, regretful wonder into the gulf of forgetfulness.

But, presently, I turned from the haze and pain of my dream-memories, once more to the inconceivable mystery of the Night Land, which I viewed through the great embrasure. For on none did it ever come with weariness to look out upon all the hideous mysteries; so that old and young watched, from early years to death, the black monstrosity of the Night Land, which this our last refuge of humanity held at bay.

To the right of the Red Pit there lay a long, sinuous glare, which I knew as the Vale of Red Fire, and beyond that for many dreary miles the blackness of the Night Land; across which came the coldness of the light from the Plain of Blue Fire.

And then, on the very borders of the Unknown Lands, there lay a range of low volcanoes, which lit up, far away in the outer darkness, the Black Hills, where shone the Seven Lights, which neither twinkled nor moved nor faltered through Eternity; and of which even the great spy-glass could make no understanding; nor had any adventurer from the Pyramid ever come back to tell us aught of them. And here let me say, that down in the Great Library of the Redoubt, were the histories of all those, with their discoveries, who had ventured out into the monstrousness of the Night Land, risking not the life only, but the spirit of life.

And surely it is all so strange and wonderful to set out, that I could almost despair with the contemplation of that which I must achieve; for there is so much to tell, and so few words given to man by which he may make clear that which lies beyond the sight and the present and general knowings of Peoples.

How shall you ever know, as I know in verity, of the greatness and reality and terror of the thing that I would tell plain to all; for we, with our puny span of recorded life must have great histories to tell, but the few bare details we know concerning years that are but a few thousands in all; and I must set out to you in the short pages of this my life there, a sufficiency of the life that had been, and the life that was, both within and without that mighty Pyramid, to make clear to those who may read, the truth of that which I would tell; and the histories of that great Redoubt dealt not with odd thousands of years; but with very millions; aye, away back into what they of that Age conceived to be the early days of the earth, when the sun, maybe, still gloomed dully in the night sky of the world. But of all that went before, nothing, save as myths, and matters to be taken most cautiously, and believed not by men of sanity and proved wisdom.

And I, ...how shall I make all this clear to you who may read? The thing cannot be; and yet I must tell my history; for to be silent before so much wonder would be to suffer of too full a heart; and I must even ease my spirit by this my struggle to tell to all how it was with me, and how it will be. Aye, even to the memories which were the possession of that far future youth, who was indeed I, of his childhood's days, when his nurse of that Age swung him, and crooned impossible lullabies of this mythical sun which, according to those future fairy-tales, had once passed across the blackness that now lay above the Pyramid.

Such is the monstrous future-ness of this which I have seen through the body of that far-off youth.

And so back to my telling. To my right, which was to the North, there stood, very far away, the House of Silence, upon a low hill. And in that House were many lights, and no sound. And so had it been through an uncountable Eternity of Years. Always those steady lights, and no whisper of sound—not even such as our distance-microphones could have discovered. And the danger of this House was accounted the greatest danger of all those Lands.

And round by the House of Silence, wound the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk. And concerning this Road, which passed out of the Unknown Lands, nigh by the Place of the Ab-humans, where was always the green, luminous mist, nothing was known; save that it was held that, of all the works about the Mighty Pyramid, it was, alone, the one that was bred, long ages past, of healthy

human toil and labour. And on this point alone, had a thousand books, and more, been writ; and all contrary, and so to no end, as is ever the way in such matters.

And as it was with the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, so it was with all those other monstrous things ... whole libraries had there been made upon this and upon that; and many a thousand million mouldered into the forgotten dust of the earlier world.

I mind me now that presently I stepped upon the central travelling-roadway which spanned the one thousandth plateau of the Great Redoubt. And this lay six miles and thirty fathoms above the Plain of the Night Land, and was somewhat of a great mile or more across. And so, in a few minutes, I was at the South-Eastern wall, and looking out through The Great Embrasure towards the Three Silver-fire Holes, that shone before the Thing That Nods, away down, far in the South-East. Southward of this, but nearer, there rose the vast bulk of the South-East Watcher—The Watching Thing of the South-East. And to the right and to the left of the squat monster burned the Torches; maybe half-a-mile upon each side; yet sufficient light they threw to show the lumbered-forward head of the never-sleeping Brute.

To the East, as I stood there in the quietness of the Sleeping-Time on the One Thousandth Plateau, I heard a far, dreadful sound, down in the lightless East; and, presently, again—a strange, dreadful laughter, deep as a low thunder among the mountains. And because this sound came odd whiles from the Unknown Lands beyond the Valley of The Hounds, we had named that far and never-seen Place "The Country Whence Comes The Great Laughter." And though I had heard the sound, many and oft a time, yet did I never hear it without a most strange thrilling of my heart, and a sense of my littleness, and of the utter terror which had beset the last millions of the world.

Yet, because I had heard the Laughter oft, I paid not over-long attention to my thoughts upon it; and when, in a little it died away into that Eastern Darkness, I turned my spy-glass upon the Giants' Pit, which lay to the South of the Giants' Kilns. And these same Kilns were tended by the giants, and the light of the Kilns was red and fitful, and threw wavering shadows and lights across the mouth of the pit; so that I saw giants crawling up out of the pit; but not properly seen, by reason of the dance of the shadows. And so, because ever there was so much to behold, I looked away, presently, to that which was plainer to be examined.

To the back of the Giants' Pit was a great, black Headland, that stood vast, between the Valley of The Hounds (where lived the monstrous Night Hounds) and the Giants. And the light of the Kilns struck the brow of this black Headland; so that, constantly, I saw things peer over the edge, coming forward a little into the light of the Kilns, and drawing back swiftly into the shadows. And thus it had been ever, through the uncounted ages; so that the Headland was known as The Headland From Which Strange Things Peer; and thus was it marked in our maps and charts of that grim world.

And so I could go on ever; but that I fear to weary; and yet, whether I do weary, or not, I must tell of this country that I see, even now as I set my thoughts down, so plainly that my memory wanders in a hushed and secret fashion along its starkness, and amid its strange and dread habitants, so that it is but by an effort I realise me that my body is not there in this very moment that I write. And so to further tellings:

Before me ran the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk; and I searched it, as many a time in my earlier youth had I, with the spy-glass; for my heart was always stirred mightily by the sight of those Silent Ones.

And, presently, alone in all the miles of that night-grey road, I saw one in the field of my glass—a quiet, cloaked figure, moving along, shrouded, and looking neither to right nor left. And thus was it with these beings ever. It was told about in the Redoubt that they would harm no human, if but the human did keep a fair distance from them; but that it were wise never to come close upon one. And this I can well believe.

And so, searching the road with my gaze, I passed beyond this Silent One, and past the place where the road, sweeping vastly to the South-East, was lit a space, strangely, by the light from the

Silver-fire Holes. And thus at last to where it swayed to the South of the Dark Palace, and thence Southward still, until it passed round to the Westward, beyond the mountain bulk of the Watching Thing in the South—the hugest monster in all the visible Night Lands. My spy-glass showed it to me with clearness—a living hill of watchfulness, known to us as The Watcher Of The South. It brooded there, squat and tremendous, hunched over the pale radiance of the Glowing Dome.

Much, I know, had been writ concerning this Odd, Vast Watcher; for it had grown out of the blackness of the South Unknown Lands a million years gone; and the steady growing nearness of it had been noted and set out at length by the men they called Monstruwacans; so that it was possible to search in our libraries, and learn of the very coming of this Beast in the olden-time.

And, while I mind me, there were even then, and always, men named Monstruwacans, whose duty it was to take heed of the great Forces, and to watch the Monsters and the Beasts that beset the great Pyramid, and measure and record, and have so full a knowledge of these same that, did one but sway an head in the darkness, the same matter was set down with particularness in the Records.

And, so to tell more about the South Watcher. A million years gone, as I have told, came it out from the blackness of the South, and grew steadily nearer through twenty thousand years; but so slow that in no one year could a man perceive that it had moved.

Yet it had movement, and had come thus far upon its road to the Redoubt, when the Glowing Dome rose out of the ground before it—growing slowly. And this had stayed the way of the Monster; so that through an eternity it had looked towards the Pyramid across the pale glare of the Dome, and seeming to have no power to advance nearer.

And because of this, much had been writ to prove that there were other forces than evil at work in the Night Lands, about the Last Redoubt. And this I have always thought to be wisely said; and, indeed, there to be no doubt to the matter, for there were many things in the time of which I have knowledge, which seemed to make clear that, even as the Forces of Darkness were loose upon the End of Man; so were there other Forces out to do battle with the Terror; though in ways most strange and unthought of by the human mind. And of this I shall have more to tell anon.

And here, before I go further with my telling, let me set out some of that knowledge which yet remains so clear within my mind and heart. Of the coming of these monstrosities and evil Forces, no man could say much with verity; for the evil of it began before the Histories of the Great Redoubt were shaped; aye, even before the sun had lost all power to light; though, it must not be a thing of certainty, that even at this far time the invisible, black heavens held no warmth for this world; but of this I have no room to tell; and must pass on to that of which I have a more certain knowledge.

The evil must surely have begun in the Days of the Darkening (which I might liken to a story which was believed doubtfully, much as we of this day believe the story of the Creation). A dim record there was of olden sciences (that are yet far off in our future) which, disturbing the unmeasurable Outward Powers, had allowed to pass the Barrier of Life some of those Monsters and Ab-human creatures, which are so wondrously cushioned from us at this normal present. And thus there had materialized, and in other cases developed, grotesque and horrible Creatures, which now beset the humans of this world. And where there was no power to take on material form, there had been allowed to certain dreadful Forces to have power to affect the life of the human spirit. And this growing very dreadful, and the world full of lawlessness and degeneracy, there had banded together the sound millions, and built the Last Redoubt; there in the twilight of the world—so it seems to us, and yet to them (bred at last to the peace of usage) as it were the Beginning; and this I can make no clearer; and none hath right to expect it; for my task is very great, and beyond the power of human skill.

And when the humans had built the great Pyramid, it had one thousand three hundred and twenty floors; and the thickness of each floor was according to the strength of its need. And the whole height of this pyramid exceeded seven miles, by near a mile, and above it was a tower from which the Watchmen looked (these being called the Monstruwacans). But where the Redoubt was built, I know not; save that I believe in a mighty valley, of which I may tell more in due time.

And when the Pyramid was built, the last millions, who were the Builders thereof, went within, and made themselves a great house and city of this Last Redoubt. And thus began the Second History of this world. And how shall I set it all down in these little pages! For my task, even as I see it, is too great for the power of a single life and a single pen. Yet, to it!

And, later, through hundreds and thousands of years, there grew up in the Outer Lands, beyond those which lay under the guard of the Redoubt, mighty and lost races of terrible creatures, half men and half beast, and evil and dreadful; and these made war upon the Redoubt; but were beaten off from that grim, metal mountain, with a vast slaughter. Yet, must there have been many such attacks, until the electric circle was put about the Pyramid, and lit from the Earth-Current. And the lowest half-mile of the Pyramid was sealed; and so at last there was a peace, and the beginnings of that Eternity of quiet watching for the day when the Earth-Current shall become exhausted.

And, at whiles, through the forgotten centuries, had the Creatures been glutted time and again upon such odd bands of daring ones as had adventured forth to explore through the mystery of the Night Lands; for of those who went, scarce any did ever return; for there were eyes in all that dark; and Powers and Forces abroad which had all knowledge; or so we must fain believe.

And then, so it would seem, as that Eternal Night lengthened itself upon the world, the power of terror grew and strengthened. And fresh and greater monsters developed and bred out of all space and Outward Dimensions, attracted, even as it might be Infernal sharks, by that lonely and mighty hill of humanity, facing its end—so near to the Eternal, and yet so far deferred in the minds and to the senses of those humans. And thus hath it been ever.

And all this but by the way, and vague and ill told, and set out in despair to make a little clear the beginnings of that State which is so strange to our conceptions, and yet which had become a Condition of Naturalness to Humanity in that stupendous future.

Thus had the giants come, fathered of bestial humans and mothered of monsters. And many and diverse were the creatures which had some human semblance; and intelligence, mechanical and cunning; so that certain of these lesser Brutes had machinery and underground ways, having need to secure to themselves warmth and air, even as healthy humans; only that they were incredibly injured to hardship, as they might be wolves set in comparison with tender children. And surely, do I make this thing clear?

And now to continue my telling concerning the Night Land. The Watcher of the South was, as I have set to make known, a monster differing from those other Watching Things, of which I have spoken, and of which there were in all four. One to the North-West, and one to the South-East, and of these I have told; and the other twain lay brooding, one to the South-West, and the other to the North-East; and thus the four watchers kept ward through the darkness, upon the Pyramid, and moved not, neither gave they out any sound. Yet did we know them to be mountains of living watchfulness and hideous and steadfast intelligence.

And so, in a while, having listened to the sorrowful sound which came ever to us over the Grey Dunes, from the Country of Wailing, which lay to the South, midway between the Redoubt and the Watcher of the South, I passed upon one of the moving roadways over to the South-Western side of the Pyramid, and looked from a narrow embrasure thence far down into the Deep Valley, which was four miles deep, and in which was the Pit of the Red Smoke.

And the mouth of this Pit was one full mile across, and the smoke of the Pit filled the Valley at times, so that it seemed but as a glowing red circle amid dull thunderous clouds of redness. Yet the red smoke rose never much above the Valley; so that there was clear sight across to the country beyond. And there, along the further edge of that great depth, were the Towers, each, maybe, a mile high, grey and quiet; but with a shimmer upon them.

Beyond these, South and West of them, was the enormous bulk of the South-West Watcher, and from the ground rose what we named the Eye Beam—a single ray of grey light, which came up out of the ground, and lit the right eye of the monster. And because of this light, that eye had been

mightily examined through unknown thousands of years; and some held that the eye looked through the light steadfastly at the Pyramid; but others set out that the light blinded it, and was the work of those Other Powers which were abroad to do combat with the Evil Forces. But however this may be, as I stood there in the embrasure, and looked at the thing through the spy-glass, it seemed to my soul that the Brute looked straightly at me, unwinking and steadfast, and fully of a knowledge that I spied upon it. And this is how I felt.

To the North of this, in the direction of the West, I saw The Place Where The Silent Ones Kill; and this was so named, because there, maybe ten thousand years gone, certain humans adventuring from the Pyramid, came off the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, and into that place, and were immediately destroyed. And this was told by one who escaped; though he died also very quickly, for his heart was frozen. And this I cannot explain; but so it was set out in the Records.

Far away beyond The Place Where The Silent Ones Kill, in the very mouth of the Western Night was the Place of the Ab-humans, where was lost the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, in a dull green, luminous mist. And of this place nothing was known; though much it held the thoughts and attentions of our thinkers and imaginers; for some said that there was a Place Of Safety, differing from the Redoubt (as we of this day suppose Heaven to differ from the Earth), and that the Road led thence; but was barred by the Ab-humans. And this I can only set down here; but with no thought to justify or uphold it.

Later, I travelled over to the North-Eastern wall of the Redoubt, and looked thence with my spy-glass at the Watcher of the North-East—the Crowned Watcher it was called, in that within the air above its vast head there hung always a blue, luminous ring, which shed a strange light downwards over the monster—showing a vast, wrinkled brow (upon which an whole library had been writ); but putting to the shadow all the lower face; all save the ear, which came out from the back of the head, and belled towards the Redoubt, and had been said by some observers in the past to have been seen to quiver; but how that might be, I knew not; for no man of our days had seen such a thing.

And beyond the Watching Thing was The Place Where The Silent Ones Are Never, close by the great road; which was bounded upon the far side by The Giant's Sea; and upon the far side of that, was a Road which was always named The Road By The Quiet City; for it passed along that place where burned forever the constant and never-moving lights of a strange city; but no glass had ever shown life there; neither had any light ever ceased to burn.

And beyond that again was the Black Mist. And here, let me say, that the Valley of The Hounds ended towards the Lights of the Quiet City.

And so have I set out something of that land, and of those creatures and circumstances which beset us about, waiting until the Day of Doom, when our Earth-Current should cease, and leave us helpless to the Watchers and the Abundant Terror.

And there I stood, and looked forth composedly, as may one who has been born to know of such matters, and reared in the knowledge of them. And, anon, I would look upward, and see the grey, metallised mountain going up measureless into the gloom of the everlasting night; and from my feet the sheer downward sweep of the grim, metal walls, six full miles, and more, to the plain below.

And one thing (aye! and I fear me, many) have I missed to set out with particularness:

There was, as you do know, all around the base of the Pyramid, which was five and one-quarter miles every way, a great circle of light, which was set up by the Earth-Current, and burned within a transparent tube; or had that appearance. And it bounded the Pyramid for a clear mile upon every side, and burned for ever; and none of the monsters had power ever to pass across, because of what we did call The Air Clog that it did make, as an invisible Wall of Safety. And it did give out also a more subtile vibration, that did affect the weak Brain-Elements of the monsters and the Lower Men-Brutes. And some did hold that there went from it a further vibration of a greater subtileness that gave a protecting against the Evil Forces. And some quality it had truly thiswise; for the Evil Powers had no ability to cause harm to any within. Yet were there some dangers against which it might not

avail; but these had no cunning to bring harm to any *within* the Great Redoubt who had wisdom to meddle with no dreadfulness. And so were those last millions guarded until the Earth-Current should be used to its end. And this circle is that which I have called the Electric Circle; though with failure to explain. But there it was called only, The Circle.

And thus have I, with great effort, made a little clear that grim land of night, where, presently, my listening heard one calling across the dark. And how that this grew upon me, I will set out forthwith.

III

THE QUIET CALLING

Now, oft had I heard tell, not only in that great city which occupied the thousandth floor, but in others of the one thousand, three hundred and twenty cities of the Pyramid, that there was somewhere out in the desolation of the Night Lands a second Place of Refuge, where had gathered, in another part of this dead world, some last millions of the human race, to fight unto the end.

And this story I heard everywhere in my travels through the cities of the Great Redoubt, which travels began when I came upon my seventeenth year, and continued for three years and two hundred and twenty five days, being even then but one day in each city, as was the custom in the training of every child.

And truly it was a great journey, and in it I met with many, whom to know was to love; but whom never could I see again; for life has not space enough; and each must to his duty to the security and well-being of the Redoubt. Yet, for all that I have set down, we travelled much, always; but there were so many millions, and so few years.

And, as I have said, everywhere I went there was the same story of this other Place of Refuge; and in such of the Libraries of those cities as I had time to search, there were great numbers of works upon the existence of this other Refuge; and some, far back in the years, made assertion with confidence that such a Place was in verity; and, indeed, no doubt did there seem in those by-gone ages; but now these very Records were read only by Scholars, who doubted, even whilst they read. And so is it ever.

But of the reality of this Refuge, I had never a sound doubt, from the day of my hearing concerning it from our Master Monstruwacan, who with all his assistants occupied the Tower of Observation in the apex of the Pyramid. And here let me tell that he and I had always an affinity and close friendship one for the other; though he was full grown, and I but a youth; yet so it was; and thus, when I had come to an age of twenty-one years of life, he opened to me a post within the Tower of Observation; and this was a most wondrous good fortune to me; for in all the vast Redoubt, to be appointed to the Tower of Observation was the most desired; for thereby, even as in these days doth Astronomy, was the natural curiosity of Man eased somewhat, even while thwarted.

Now, let me tell here also, lest it be thought that I was unduly favoured because of my friendship with the Master Monstruwacan, that there was a sound justification for his choice, in that to me had been given that strange gift of hearing, which we called Night-Hearing; though this was but a fanciful name, and meant little. Yet the peculiar gift was rare, and in all the millions of the Pyramid, there was none with the gift to a great degree, saving only myself.

And I, because of this gift, could hear the "invisible vibrations" of the aether; so that, without harking to the calling of our recording instruments, I could take the messages which came continually through the eternal darkness; aye, even better than they. And now, it may be the better understood, how much was to be counted that I had grown to listen for a voice that had not rung in mine ears for an eternity, and yet which sang sweet and clear in my memory-dreams; so that it seemed to me that Mirdath the Beautiful slept within my soul, and whispered to me out of all the ages.

And then, one day, at the fifteenth hour, when began the Sleep-Time, I had been pondering this love of mine that lived with me still; and marvelling that my memory-dreams held the voice of a love that *had been* in so remote an age. And pondering and dreaming thus, as a young man may, I could fancy this aeon-lost One were whispering beauty into my ears, in verity; so clear had my memory grown, and so much had I pondered.

And lo! as I stood there, harking and communing with my thoughts, I thrilled suddenly, as if I had been smitten; for out of all the everlasting night a whisper was thrilling and thrilling upon my more subtle hearing.

Through four long years had I listened, since that awakening in the embrasure, when but a youth of seventeen; and now out of the world-darkness and all the eternal years of that lost life, which now I live in this Present Age of ours, was the whisper come; for I knew it upon that instant; and yet, because I was so taught to wisdom, I answered by no name; but sent the Master-Word through the night—sending it with my brain-elements, as I could, and as all may, much or little, as may be, if they be not clods. And, moreover, I knew that she who called quietly would have the power to hear without instruments, if indeed it were she; and if it were but one of the false callings of the Evil Forces, or more cunning monsters, or as was sometimes thought concerning these callings, the House of Silence, meddling with our souls, then would they have no power to say the Master-Word; for this had been proven through all the Everlasting.

And lo! as I stood, trembling and striving not to be tense, which destroys the receptivity, there came thrilling round and round my spiritual essence the throb of the Master-Word, beating steadily in the night, as doth that marvellous sound. And then, with all that was sweet in my spirit, I called with my brain elements: "Mirdath! Mirdath! Mirdath!" And at that instant the Master Monstruwacan entered that part of the Tower of Observation, where I stood; and, seeing my face, stood very quiet; for though he had not the power of Night-Hearing, he was wise and thoughtful, and took much account of my gift; more-over, he had but come from the Receiving Instrument, and thought vaguely to have caught the throb of the Master-Word, though too faint to come proper through the Instrument, so that he searched for me, in that I, who had the Hearing, might listen for it, I being, as I have said, gifted in that wise.

And to him I told something of my story and my thoughts and my memories, and of that awakening; and thus up to this present happening, and he hearkened with sympathy and a troubled and wondering heart; for in that age a man might talk sanely upon that which, in this age of ours would be accounted foolishness and maybe the breathings of insanity; for there, by the refinement of arts of mentality and the results of strange experiments and the accomplishment of learning, men were able to conceive of matters now closed to our conceptions, even as we of this day may haply give a calm ear to talk, that in the days of our fathers would have been surely set to the count of lunacy. And this is very clear.

And all the while that I told my story, I listened with my spirit; but save for a sense of faint, happy laughter that wrapped about me, I heard naught. And nothing more all that day.

Here let me put down that, because of my memories and half memories, I would time and again dispute with our learned men; they being in doubt as to the verity of that olden story of the Days of Light, and the existence of the Sun; though something of all this was set out, as of *truth*, in our oldest records; but I, remembering, told them many tales that seemed fairy-like to them, and entranced their hearts, even whilst I angered their brains, which refused to take seriously and as verity that which their hearts accepted gladly, even as we receive the wonder of poetry into our souls. But the Master Monstruwacan would listen to aught I had to tell; aye! though I spoke through hours; and so it would be, odd times, that having talked long, drawing my stories from my Memory-Dreams, I would come back again into the present of that Future; and lo! all the Monstruwacans would have left their instruments and observations and recording, and be gathered about me; and the Master so sunken in interest that he not to have discovered them; neither had I noticed, being so full of the things which had been.

But when the Master came back to knowledge of that present, he would rouse and chide, and they, all those lesser ones, would fly swiftly and guiltily to their various works; and yet, so I have thought since, each with a muddled and bewildered and thoughtful air upon him; and hungry they were for more, and ever wondering and setting questions about.

And so it was also with those others—those learned ones who were not of the Tower of Observation, and who disbelieved even whilst they hungered. Listen would they, though I talked from the first hour, which was the "dawn," to the fifteenth hour, which was the beginning of the "night"; for the Sleep-Time was set thus, after other usage and experiment. And, odd whiles, I found that there were among them, men of extraordinary learning who upheld my tellings as tales of verity; and so there was a faction; but, later, there grew more to believe; and whether they believed, or not, all were ready to listen; so that I might have spend my days in talk; only that I had my work to do.

But the Master Monstruwacan believed from the beginning, and was wise always to understand; so that I loved him for this, as for many another dear quality.

And so, as may be conceived, among all those millions I was singled out to be known; for the stories that I told went downward through a thousand cities; and, presently, in the lowest tier of the Underground Fields, an hundred miles deep in the earth below the Redoubt, I found that the very ploughboys knew something concerning my tellings; and gathered about me one time and another when the Master Monstruwacan and I had gone down, regarding some matter that dealt with the Earth-Current and our Instruments.

And of the Underground Fields (though in that age we called them no more than "The Fields") I should set down a little; for they were the mightiest work of this world; so that even the Last Redoubt was but a small thing beside them. An hundred miles deep lay the lowest of the Underground Fields, and was an hundred miles from side to side, every way; and above it there were three hundred and six fields, each one less in area than that beneath; and in this wise they tapered, until the topmost field which lay direct beneath the lowermost floor of the Great Redoubt, was but four miles every way.

And thus it will be seen that these fields, lying one beneath the other, formed a mighty and incredible Pyramid of Country Lands in the deep earth, an hundred miles from the base unto the topmost field.

And the whole was sheathed-in at the sides with the grey metal of which the Redoubt was builded; and each field was pillared, and floored beneath the soil, with this same compound of wonder; and so was it secure, and the monsters could not dig into that mighty garden from without.

And all of that Underground Land was lit, where needed, by the Earth-Current, and that same life-stream fructified the soil, and gave life and blood to the plants and to the trees, and to every bush and natural thing.

And the making of those Fields had taken maybe a million years, and the "dump" thereof had been cast into the "Crack," whence came the Earth-Current, and which had bottom beyond all soundings. And this Underground Country had its own winds and air-currents; so that, to my memory, it was in no ways connected to the monstrous air-shafts of the Pyramid; but in this I may be mistaken; for it has not been given to me to know all that is to be known concerning that vast Redoubt; nor by any one man could so much knowledge be achieved.

Yet that there were wise and justly promoted winds in that Underground Country, I do know; for healthful and sweet they were, and in the corn-fields there was the sweet rustle of grain, and the glad, silken laughter of poppies, all beneath a warm and happy light. And here, did the millions walk and take excursion, and go orderly or not, even as in these days.

And all this have I seen, and the talk of a thousand lovers in the gardens of that place, comes back to me; and with it all the memory of my dear one; and of a faint calling that would seem to whisper about me at times; but so faint and attenuated, that even I, who had the Night-Hearing, could not catch its import; and so went, listening ever the more intently. And oft times calling.

Now there was a Law in the Pyramid, tried and healthful, which held that no male should have freedom to adventure into the Night Land, before the age of twenty-two; *and no female ever*. Yet that, after such age, if a youth desired greatly to make the adventure, he should receive three lectures upon the dangers of which we had knowledge, and a strict account of the mutilatings and horrid deeds done to those who had so adventured. And if, after this had passed over him, he still desired, and if

he were accounted healthful and sane; then should he be allowed to make the adventure; and it was accounted honour to the youth who should add to the knowledge of the Pyramid.

But to all such as went forth into the danger of the Night Land, there was set beneath the skin of the inner side of the left forearm, a small capsule, and when the wound had healed, then might the youth make the adventure.

And the wherefore of this, was that the spirit of the youth might be saved, if he were entrapped; for then, upon the honour of his soul, must he bite forth the capsule, and immediately his spirit would have safety in death. And by this shall you know somewhat the grim and horrid danger of the Dark Land.

And this I have set down because later I was to make huge adventure into those Lands; and even at this time, some thought of the same had come to me; for always I went listening for that quiet calling; and twice I sent the Master-Word throbbing solemnly through the everlasting night; yet this I did no more, without certainty; for the Word must not be used lightly. But often would I say with my brain-elements "Mirdath! Mirdath!"—sending the name out into the darkness; and sometimes would I seem to hear the faint thrilling of the aether around me; as though one answered; but weakly, as it were with a weakened spirit, or by instrument that lacked of its earth-force.

And thus, for a great while there was no certainty; but only a strange anxiousness and no clear answer.

Then, one day as I stood by the instruments in the Tower of Observation, at the thirteenth hour there came the thrilling of beaten aether all about me, as it were that all the void was disturbed. And I made the Sign for Silence; so that the men moved not in all the Tower; but bowed over their breathing-bells, that all disturbance might cease.

And again came the gentle thrilling, and broke out into a clear, low calling in my brain; and the calling was my name—the old-earth name of this day, and not the name of that age. And the name smote me, with a frightenedness of fresh awakening memories. And, immediately, I sent the Master-Word into the night; and all the aether was full of movement. And a silence came; and later a beat afar off in the void of night, which only I in all that great Redoubt could hear, until the heavier vibrations were come. And in a moment there was all about me the throbbing of the Master-Word, beating in the night a sure answer. Yet, before this I knew that Mirdath had called; but now had surety.

And immediately, I said "Mirdath," making use of the instruments; and there came a swift and beautiful answer; for out of the dark there stole an old love-name, that she only had ever used to me.

And, presently, I minded me of the men, and signed to them that they should continue; for the Records must not be broken; and now I had the communication full established.

And by me stood the Master Monstruwacan, quietly as any young Monstruwacan, waiting with slips to make any notes that were needful; and keeping a strict eye upon those others; but not unkindly. And so, for a space of wonder, I had speech with that girl out in the darkness of the world, who had knowledge of my name, and of the old-earth love-name, and named herself Mirdath.

And much I questioned her, and presently to my sorrow; for it seemed that her name was not truly Mirdath; but Naani; neither had she known my name; but that in the library of that place where she abode, there had been a story of one named by my name, and called by that sweet love-name which she had sent out somewhat ruthless into the night; and the girl's name had been Mirdath; and when first she, Naani had called, there had come back to her a cry of Mirdath, Mirdath; and this had minded her so strangely of that olden story which had stayed in her memory; that she had answered as the maid in that book might have answered.

And thus did it seem that the utter Romance of my Memory-love had vanished, and I stood strangely troubled for sorrow of a love of olden times. Yet, even then I marvelled that any book should have story so much like to mine; not heeding that the history of all love is writ with one pen.

Yet, even then in that hour of my strange, and quaintly foolish pain, there came a thing that set me thrilling; though more afterwards, when I came to think afresh upon it. For the girl who spoke to

me through the night made some wonder that my voice were not deeper; yet in quiet fashion, and as one who says a thing, scarce wotting what they say. But even to me then, there came a sudden hope; for in the olden days of this Present Age my voice had been very deep. And I said to her that maybe the man in the book was said to have had a deep tone of speech; but she, seeming puzzled, said nay; and at that I questioned her the more; but only to the trouble of her memory and understanding.

And strange must it seem that we two should talk on so trivial a matter, when there was so much else that we had need to exchange thought upon; for were a man in this present day to have speech with those who may live within that red planet of Mars within the sky, scarce could the wonder of it exceed the wonder of a human voice coming through that night unto the Great Redoubt, out of all that lost darkness. For, indeed, this must have been the breaking of, maybe, a million years of silence. And already, as I came to know later, was the news passing downward from City to City through all the vast Pyramid; so that the Hour-Slips were full of the news; and every City eager and excited, and waiting. And I better known in that one moment, than in all my life before. For that previous calling, had been but vaguely put about; and then set to the count of a nature, blown upon over-easily by spirit-winds of the half-memory of dreams. Though it is indeed true, as I have set down before this, that my tales concerning the early days of the world, when the sun was visible, and full of light, had gone down through all the cities, and had much comment and setting forth in the Hour-Slips, and were a cause for speech and argument.

Now concerning the voice of this girl coming to us through the darkness of the world, I will set out that which she had to tell; and this, indeed, but verified the tellings of our most ancient Records, which had so long been treated over lightly: There was, it would seem, somewhere out in the lonesome dark of the Outer Lands, but at what distance none could ever discover, a second Redoubt; that was a three-sided Pyramid, and moderate small; being no more than a mile in height, and scarce three quarters of a mile along the bases.

When this Redoubt was first builded, it had been upon the far shore of a sea, where now was no sea; and it had been raised by those wandering humans who had grown weary of wandering, and weary of the danger of night attacks by the tribes of half-human monsters which began to inhabit the earth even so early as the days when the half-gloom was upon the world. And he that had made the plan upon which it was builded, was one who had seen the Great Redoubt, having lived there in the beginning, but escaped because of a correction set upon him for his spirit of irresponsibility, which had made him to cause disturbance among the orderly ones in the lowest city of the Great Redoubt.

Yet, in time, he too had come to be tamed by the weight of fear of the ever-growing hordes of monsters, and the Forces that were abroad. And so he, being a master-spirit, planned and builded the smaller Redoubt, being aided thereto by four millions, who also were weary of the harass of the monsters; but until then had been wanderers, because of the restlessness of their blood.

And they had chosen that place, because there they had discovered a sign of the Earth-Current in a great valley which led to the shore; for without the Earth-Current no Refuge could have existence. And whilst many builded and guarded, and cared for the Great Camp in which all lived, others worked within a great shaft; and in ten years had made this to a distance of many miles, and therewith they tapt the Earth-Current; but not a great stream; yet a sufficiency, as was believed.

And, presently, after many years, they had builded the Pyramid, and taken up their refuge there, and made them instruments, and ordained Monstruwacans; so that they had speech daily with the Great Pyramid; and thus for many long ages.

And the Earth-Current then to begin to fail; and though they laboured through many thousands of years, they came to no better resource. And so it was they ceased to have communication with the Great Redoubt; for the current had a lack of power to work the instruments; and the recording instruments ceased to be sensible of our messages.

And thereafter came a million years, maybe, of silence; with ever the birthing and marrying and dying of those lonesome humans. And they grew less; and some put this to the lack of the Earth-Current, which dwindled slowly through the centuries of that Eternity.

And once in a thousand years, maybe, one among them would be Sensitive, and abled to hear beyond ordinary; and to these, at times, there would seem to come the thrilling of the aether; so that such an one would go listening; and sometimes seem to catch half messages; and so awaken a great interest in all the Pyramid; and there would be turning up of old Records, and many words and writings, and attempts to send the Master-Word through the night; in which, doubtless sometimes they succeeded; for there was set down in the Records of the Great Redoubt certain occasions on which there had come the call of the Master-Word, which had been arranged and made holy between the two Redoubts in the early days of that second life of this world.

Yet, now for an hundred thousand years, there had been none Sensitive; and in that time the people of the Pyramid had become no more than ten thousand; and the Earth-Current was weak and powerless to put the joy of life into them; so that they went listlessly, but deemed it not strange, because of so many aeons of usage.

And then, to the wonder of all, the Earth-Current had put forth a new power; so that young people ceased to be old over-soon; and there was happiness and a certain joy in the living; and a strange birthing of children, such as had not been through half a million years.

And then came a new thing. Naani, the daughter of the Master Monstruwacan of that Redoubt had shown to all that she was Sensitive; for she had perceived odd vibrations afloat in the night; and concerning these she told her father; and presently, because their blood moved afresh in their bodies, they had heart to discover the plans of the ancient instruments; for the instruments had long rusted, and been forgotten.

And so they builded them a new instrument to send forth a message; for they had no memory at that time that the brain-elements had power to do thus; though, mayhap, their brain-elements were weakened, through so many ages of starvation of the Earth-Current, and could not have obeyed, even had their masters known all that we of the Great Redoubt knew.

And when the instrument was finished, to Naani was given the right to call first across the dark to discover whether indeed, after that million years of silence, they were yet companied upon this earth, or whether they were in truth lonely—the last poor thousands of the Humans.

And a great and painful excitement came upon the people of the lesser pyramid; for the loneliness of the world pressed upon them; and it was to them as though we in this age called to a star across the abyss of space.

And because of the excitement and pain of the moment, Naani called only vaguely with the instrument into the dark; and lo! in a moment, as it seemed, there came all about her in the night the solemn throb of the Master-Word, beating in the night. And Naani cried out that she was answered, and, as may be thought, many of the people wept, and some prayed, and some were silent; but others beseeched her that she call again and quickly to have further speech with those of their kind.

And Naani spoke the Master-Word into the night, and directly there came a calling all about her: "Mirdath! Mirdath!" and the strange wonder of it made her silent a moment; but when she would have made reply, the instrument had ceased to work, and she could have no further speech at that time.

This, as may be thought, occasioned much distress; and constant work they had between the instrument and the Earth-Current, to discover the reason for this failing; but could not for a great while. And in that time, oft did Naani hear the call of "Mirdath" thrilling about her; and twice there came the solemn beat of the Master-Word in the night. Yet never had she the power to answer. And all that while, as I learned in time, was she stirred with a quaint ache at heart by the voice that called "Mirdath!" as it might be the Spirit of Love, searching for its mate; for this is how she put it.

And thus it chanced, that the constant thrilling of this name about her, woke her to memory of a book she had read in early years, and but half understood; for it was ancient, and writ in an

olden fashion, and it set out the love of a man and a maid, and the maid's name was Mirdath. And so, because she was full of this great awakening of those ages of silence, and the calling of that name, she found the book again, and read it many times, and grew to a sound love of the beauty of that tale.

And, presently, when the instrument was made right, she called into the night the name of that man within the book; and so it came about that I had hoped too much; yet even now was I strangely unsure whether to cease from hoping.

And one other thing there is which I would make clear. Many and oft a time had I heard a thrilling of sweet, faint laughter about me, and the stirring of the aether by words too gentle to come clearly; and these I make no doubt came from Naani, using her brain-elements unwittingly and in ignorance; but very eager to answer my callings; and having no knowledge that, far off across the blackness of the world, they thrilled about me, constantly.

And after Naani had made clear all that I have set out concerning the Lesser Refuge, she told further how that food was not plentiful with them; though, until the reawakening of the Earth-Current, they had gone unknowing of this, being of small appetite, and caring little for aught; but now wakened, and newly hungry, they savoured a lack of taste in all that they ate; and this we could well conceive, from our reasonings and theory; but happily not from our knowledge.

And we said unto them, that the soil had lost its life, and the crops therefrom were not vital; and a great while it would take for the earth within their pyramid to receive back the life-elements. And we told them certain ways by which they might bring a more speedy life to the soil; and this they were eager to do, being freshly alive after so long a time of half-life.

And now, you must know that in all the great Redoubt the story went downwards swiftly, and was published in all the Hour-Sheets, with many comments; and the libraries were full of those who would look up the olden Records, which for so long had been forgotten, or taken, as we of this day would say, with a pinch of salt.

And all the time I was pestered with questions; so that, had I not been determined, I should scarce have been allowed to sleep; moreover, so much was writ about me, and my power to hear, and divers stories concerning tales of love, that I had been like to have grown mazed to take note of it all; yet some note I did take, and much I found pleasant; but some displeasing.

And, for the rest, I was not spoiled, as the saying goes; for I had my work to do; moreover, I was always busied Listening, and having speech through the darkness. Though if any saw me so, they would question; and because of this, I kept much to the Tower of Observation, where was the Master Monstruwacan, and a greater discipline.

And then began a fresh matter; though but an old enough trick; for I speak now of the days that followed that re-opening of the talk between the Pyramids. Oft would speech come to us out of the night; and there would be tales of the sore need of the Lesser Redoubt, and callings for help. Yet, when I sent the Master-Word abroad, there would be no answering. And so I feared that the Monsters and Forces of Evil *knew*.

Yet, at times, the Master-Word would answer to us, beating steadily in the night; and when we questioned afresh, we knew that they in the Lesser Redoubt had caught the beat of the Master-Word, and so made reply; though it had not been they who had made the previous talk, which we had sought to test by the Word. And then they would make contradiction of all that had been spoken so cunningly; so that we knew the Monsters and Forces had sought to tempt some from the safety of the Redoubt. Yet, was this no new thing, as I have made to hint; saving that it grew now to a greater persistence, and there was a loathsome cunning in the using of this new knowledge to the making of wicked and false messages by those evil things of the Night Land. And it told to us, as I have made remark, how that those Monsters and Forces had a full awareness of the speech between the Pyramids; yet could they have no power to say the Master-Word; so had we some test left, and a way to sure knowledge of what made talk in the night.

And all that I have told should bring to those of this Age something of the yet unbegotten terror of that; and a quiet and sound thankfulness to God, that we suffer not as humanity shall yet suffer.

But, for all this, let it not be thought that they of that Age accounted it as suffering; but as no more than the usual of human existence. And by this may we know that we can meet all circumstances, and use ourselves to them and live through them wisely, if we be but prudent and consider means of invention.

And through all the Night Land there was an extraordinary awakening among the Monsters and Forces; so that the instruments made constant note of greater powers at work out there in the darkness; and the Monstruwacans were busied recording, and keeping a very strict watch. And so was there at all that time a sense of difference and awakening, and of wonders about, and to come.

And from The Country Whence Comes The Great Laughter, the Laughter sounded constant ... as it were an uncomfortable and heart-shaking voice-thunder rolling thence over the Lands, out from the unknown East. And the Pit of the Red Smoke filled all the Deep Valley with redness, so that the smoke rose above the edge, and hid the bases of the Towers upon the far side.

And the Giants could be seen plentiful around the Kilns to the East; and from the Kilns great belches of fire; though the meaning of it, as of all else, we could not say; but only the cause.

And from the Mountain Of The Voice, which rose to the South-East of the South-East Watcher, and of which I have made no telling hitherto, in this faulty setting-out, I heard for the first time in that life, the calling of the Voice. And though the Records made mention of it; yet not often was it heard. And the calling was shrill, and very peculiar and distressful and horrible; as though a giant-woman, hungering strangely, shouted unknown words across the night. And this was how it seemed to me; and many thought this to describe the sound.

And, by all this, may you perceive how that Land was awakened.

And other tricks there were to entice us into the Night Land; and once a call came thrilling in the aether, and told to us that certain humans had escaped from the Lesser Redoubt, and drew nigh to us; but were faint for food, and craved succour. Yet, when we sent the Master-Word into the night, the creatures without could make no reply; which was a very happy thing for our souls; for we had been all mightily exercised in our hearts by this one message; and now had proof that it was but a trap.

And constantly, and at all hours, I would have speech with Naani of the Lesser Redoubt; for I had taught her how she might send her thoughts through the night, with her brain-elements; but not to over-use this power; for it exhausts the body and the powers of the mind, if it be abused by exceeding usage.

Yet, despite that I had taught her the use of her brain-elements, she sent her message always without strength, save when she had use of the instrument; and this I set to the cause that she had not the health force needful; but, apart from this, she had the Night-Hearing very keen; though less than mine.

And so, with many times of speech, and constant tellings of our doings and thoughts, we drew near in the spirit to one another; and had always a feeling in our hearts that we had been given previous acquaintance.

And this, as may be thought, thrilled my heart very strangely.

IV THE HUSHING OF THE VOICE

*("Dearest, thine own feet tread the world at night—
Treading, as moon-flakes step across a dark—
Kissing the very dew to holier light ...
Thy Voice a song past mountains, which to hark
Frightens my soul with an utter lost delight.")*

Now, one night, towards the end of the sixteenth hour, as I made ready to sleep, there came all about me the thrilling of the aether, as happened oft in those days; but the thrilling had a strange power in it; and in my soul the voice of Naani sounded plain, all within and about me.

Yet, though I knew it to be the voice of Naani, I answered not immediately; save to send the sure question of the Master-Word into the night. And, directly, I heard the answer, the Master-Word beating steadily in the night; and I questioned Naani why she had speech with me by the Instrument at that time, when all were sleeping, and the watch set among the Monstruwacans; for they in the little Pyramid had their sleep-time to commence at the eleventh hour; so that by this it was five hours advanced towards the time of waking; and Naani should have slept; nor have been abroad to the Tower of Observation, apart from her father. For I supposed that she spoke by the Instrument, her voice sounding very clear in my brain. Yet, to this question, she made no answer in kind; but gave a certain thing into my spirit, which set me trembling; for she said certain words, that began:

"Dearest, thine own feet tread the world at night—"

And it well may be that she set me to tremble; for as the words grew about me, there wakened a memory-dream how that I had made these same words to Mirdath the Beautiful in the long-gone Eternity of this our Age, when she had died and left me alone in all the world. And I was weak a little with the tumult and force of my emotion; but in a moment I called eagerly with my brain-elements to Naani to give some explaining of this thing that she had spoken to the utter troubling of my heart.

Yet, once more she made no direct answer; but spoke the words again to me across all the dark of the world. And it came to me suddenly, that it was not Naani that spoke; but Mirdath the Beautiful, from out of all the everlasting night. And I called: "Mirdath! Mirdath," with my brain-elements, into the night; and lo! the far, faint voice spoke again to my spirit through all the darkness of eternity, saying again those words. Yet, though the voice was the voice of Mirdath the Beautiful, it was also the voice of Naani; and I knew in all my heart that this thing was in verity; and that it had been given to me to be birthed once more into this world in the living-time of that Only One, with whom my spirit and essence hath mated in all ages through the everlasting. And I called with my brain-elements and all my strength to Naani; but there came no answer; neither sign of hearing, though through hours I called.

And thus at last I came to an utter exhaustion; but neither could be quiet, nor sleep. Yet, presently, I slept.

And when I waked, my first memory was of the wondrous thing which had befallen in the sleep-time; for none in all this world could have known those words; save it had been the spirit of Mirdath, my Beautiful One, looking from above my shoulder in that utter-lost time, as I made those words to her, out of an aching and a broken heart. And the voice had been the voice of Mirdath; and the voice of Mirdath had been the voice of Naani. And what shall any say to this, save that which I had in my heart.

And immediately I called to Naani, once, and again twice; and in a little moment there came all about me the throbbing of the Master-Word, beating solemnly in the night; and I sent the Master-Word to give assurance, and immediately the voice of Naani, a little weak as was it always when she had not the Instrument, but sent the message with her brain-elements.

And I answered her, and questioned her eagerly concerning her sayings of the past time of sleep; but she disclaimed, and made clear to me that she had no knowledge of having spoken; but had slept through all that time of which I made to tell; and, indeed, had dreamed a very strange dream.

And for a little while I was confused, and meditated, not knowing what to think; but came suddenly again to a knowledge that Naani's far voice was thrilling the aether all about; and that she would tell to me her dream; which had set strong upon her mind.

And she told the dream to me, and in the dream she had seen a tall, dark man, built very big, and dressed in unfamiliar clothing. And the man had been in a little room, and very sorrowful, and lonesome; and in her dream she had gone nigh to him.

And presently the man made to write, that he might ease him by giving expression to his sorrow; and Naani had been able to read the words that he wrote; though to her waking spirit the language in which they were writ was strange and unknown. Yet she could not remember what he had writ, save but one short line, and this she had mind of in that he had writ the word Mirdath above. And she spoke of the strangeness of this thing, that she should dream of this name; but supposed that I had fixed it upon her, by my first callings.

And then did I, with something of a tremble in my spirit, ask Naani to tell me what she remembered of the writing of that big, sorrowful stranger. And, in a little moment, her far voice said these words all about me:

"Dearest, thine own feet tread the world at night—"

But no more had she memory of. Yet it was a sufficiency, and I, maybe with a mad, strange triumph in my soul, said unto her with my brain-elements that which remained of those words. And my spirit felt them strike upon the spirit of Naani, and awake her memory, as with the violence of a blow. And for a little while she stumbled, dumb before so much newness and certainly. And her spirit then to waken, and she near wept with the fright and the sudden, new wonder of this thing.

And immediately, all about me there came her voice thrilling, and the voice was the voice of Mirdath, and the voice of Naani; and I heard the tears of her spirit make pure and wonderful the bewildered and growing gladness of her far voice. And she asked me, as one who had suddenly opened the Gates of Memory, whether she might be truly Mirdath. And I, utter weak and shaken strangely because of this splendour of fulfilment, could make no instant answer. And she asked again, but using mine old love-name, and with a sureness in her far voice. And still I was so strangely dumb, and the blood to thud peculiar in mine ears; and this to pass; and speech to come swift.

And this way to be that meeting of our spirits, across all the everlasting night.

And you shall have for a memory-picture, how that Naani stood there in the world in that far eternity, and, with her spirit having speech with mine, looked back through the part-opened gates of her memory, into the past of this our life and Age. Yet more than this she saw, and more than was given to me in that Age; for she had memory now and sight of other instances, and of other comings together, which had some confusion and but half-meanings to me. Yet of this our present Age and life, we spoke as of some yesterday; but very hallowed.

Now, as may be conceived, the wonder of this surety which had come into my life stirred me fiercely to its completion; for all my heart and spirit cried out to be with that one who was Mirdath, and now spoke with the voice of Naani.

Yet, how should this be won; for none among all the learned men of that Mighty Pyramid knew the position of the Lesser Redoubt; neither could the Records and Histories of the World give us that knowledge; only that there was a general thought among the Students and the Monstruwacans

that it lay between the North-West and the North-East. But no man had any surety; neither could any conceive of the distance from us of that Refuge.

And counting all this, there was yet the incredible danger and peril of the Night Land, and the hunger and desolation of the Outer Lands, which were sometimes named the Unknown Lands.

And I spoke much with Naani concerning this matter of their position; yet neither she nor her father, the Master Monstruwacan of that Refuge, had any knowing either of our position; only that the Builder of the Lesser Redoubt had come out of the Southward World in the Beginning, as they had knowledge of by the Records.

Also, the father of Naani set that ancient Compass to bear; for, as he made explanation to us through the Instrument, so great a power of the Earth-Current must be ours that, perchance it was our force which did affect the pointer from steadfastness. For, indeed, the needle did swing in an arc, as we heard, that held between the North and the South; within the Westward arc; but this it had done ever with them, and so was a very helpless guide; save that, maybe, as we had thought, the force of the Earth-Current that was with us, had in truth some power to pull the needle towards us. And if this were so of verity, we made a reckoning that set the Lesser Redoubt to the North; and they did likewise, and put us to the South; yet was it all built upon the sand of guess-work; and nothing to adventure the life and soul upon.

Now we, of curiosity; though a million times had it been done in the past ages, set the compass before us, having it from the Great Museum. But, as ever in that age, it did spin if we but stirred the needle, and would stop nowheres with surety, for the flow of the Earth-Current from the "Crack" beneath the Pyramid had a power to affect it away from the North, and to set it wandering. And this may seem very strange to this present Age; yet to that, it was most true to the seeming nature of things; and harder to believe that ever it did once point steadfastly, to prove a guide of sureness, and unailing.

For, be it known, we knew the positions of the Land by tradition, coming from that ancient time when, in the Half-Gloom they had builded the Pyramid; they having known the use of that ancient compass, and with sight of the Sun had named the Positions; though we of that far future day had forgotten the very beginnings of those Names of Direction; and used them but because our fathers did a million years and more. And likewise we did the same with the names of the day and the night and the weeks and the months and the years; though of the visible markings of these there was nothing but only and always the everlasting night; yet the same seeming very natural to that people.

Now, Naani, having heed to my constant questions, craved with an utter keen hunger that I might come to her; but yet forbade it, in that it were better to live and commune in the spirit, than to risk my soul, and mayhaps die, in the foolishness of trying to find her in all the darkness of the dead world. Yet, no heed had I taken of her commands, had I but known of a surety the *direction* in which she might be discovered; and gained some knowledge of the space between, for this might be named by thousands of miles, or but by hundreds; though a great distance it was surely.

Yet, one other thing there was, that has point in this place; for when I sent my speech out into the night, using my brain-elements, I came to know that, whether I had a knowledge of the North, or no knowledge at the moment, yet did I turn oft with a sure instinct to that Direction. And of this, the Master Monstruwacan took very great note, and had me to experiment many a time and way, and so enclosed about with screens, or with bandages across mine eyes, that I could not, save by that inward Knowing, have any knowledge to point me the way. Yet would I turn Northwards very frequent, by a certain feeling; and seemed unable of speech, if I were turned otherwise by force.

But when we asked Naani whether she had an unusualness in this matter, she could discover none; and we could but take note curiously of that which affected my habits; and which truly I set to the attracting of her spirit; for I had mind that she did be somewheres out that way in the darkness of the world; but yet was this no more than to suppose, as you perceive.

And the Master Monstruwacan wrote a study of this matter of the Northwardness of my turning; and it was set out in the Hour-Slips of the Tower of Observation; and so it came to be copied by

the Hour-Slips of the great cities, and made much comment, and much calling up to me through the home instruments; so that with this, and the speech that went about concerning my powers to hear, I was much in talk, and diversely pleased and oft angered by overmuch attention and importunity.

And now, whilst I pondered this matter in all my spirit and being, how that I should some way come to Naani, there befell a very terrible thing. And in this wise must I tell it:

It was at the seventeenth hour, when all the millions of the Mighty Pyramid slept, that I was with the Master Monstruwacan in the Tower of Observation taking my due turn. And sudden, I heard the thrilling of the aether all about me, and the voice of Naani in my soul, speaking. And I sent the Master-Word into the darkness of the world, and presently, I heard the solemn answer beating steadfastly in the night; and immediately I called to Naani with my brain-elements, to know what thing troubled her in her sleep.

And her voice came into my spirit, weak and far and faint, and so that scarce I could make to hear the words. Yet, in a while I gathered that all the peoples of the Lesser Redoubt were in very deadly trouble; for that the Earth-Current had failed suddenly and mightily; and they had called her from her sleep, that she might listen whether we answered their callings by the Instrument; but, indeed, no calling had come to us.

And they who had been of late so joyful, were now grown old with sorrow in but an hour or two; for they feared that the fresh coming of the Earth-Current had been but the final flicker and outburst before the end. And, even in this short while of our speech, did it seem to me that the voice of Naani grew further off from me; and I felt like to have broken my heart with the trouble of this thing.

And through all that remained of that sleep-time, did I converse with Naani, as might two lovers who shall presently part forever. And when the cities awoke, the news went throughout them, and all our millions were in sorrow and trouble.

And thus was it for, maybe, a little month; and in that time had the voice of Naani grown so weak and far-off that even I that had the Night-Hearing, could scarce make real its meaning. And every word was to me a treasure and a touch upon my soul; and my grief and trouble before this certain parting drove me that I could not eat, neither have rest; and this did the Master Monstruwacan take upon him to chide and correct; for that, if any were to help, how should it be done if I that had the Night-Hearing, and heard even now that the recording Instruments were dumb, came to ill-health.

And because of this, and such wisdom as was mine, I made to eat and order my life that I might have my full powers. Yet was this beyond all my strength; for, presently, I knew that the people of the Lesser Pyramid were threatened by the monsters that beset them; and later I had knowledge from faint, far words whispered in my brain, that there had been a fight with an outside Force that had harmed many in their minds; so that in madness they had opened the gate and had run from the Lesser Pyramid, out into the darkness of the Lands about them; and there had their physical bodies fallen to the monsters of those Lands; but of their souls who may know?

And this, we set assuredly to the failure of the Earth-Current, which had robbed them of all force and power; so that, in those few weeks all life and joy of living had left them; and neither hunger nor thirst had they, much, nor any great desire to live; but yet a new and mighty fear of death. And this doth seem very strange.

And, as may be thought, all this made the Peoples of the Great Redoubt think newly of the Earth-Current that issued from the "Crack" beneath the Pyramid; and of their latter end; so that much was writ in the Hour-Slips concerning this matter; yet in the main to assure us that we ourselves might each be free from a disturbed heart; though some went foolishly to the other event, and spoke of a speedy danger to us, likewise; as is ever the way. But the truth of our own case lay, maybe, somewhere between.

And all the Hour-Slips were full also of imaginings of the terror of those poor humans out in the darkness of the world, facing that end which must come upon all, even upon our mighty Pyramid; though, as most would believe, so far away in some future eternity, that we have no cause to trouble.

And there were sad poems writ to the peoples of that Lesser Redoubt, and foolish plans set about to rescue them; but none to put them to effect; and no way by which so great a thing might be done; and doth but show how loosely people will speak out of an over-security. Yet to me, there had come a certain knowledge that I must make the adventure, though I achieved naught save mine own end. Yet, it were better to cease quickly, than that I should feel, as now I did feel.

That same night, in the Eighteenth Hour, there was a great disturbance in the aether about the Mighty Pyramid; and I was awakened suddenly by the Master Monstruwacan; that I might use my gift of the Night-Hearing to hearken for the throbbing of the Master-Word, which they had thought to come vaguely through the Instruments; but no one of the Monstruwacans was sensitive enough of soul to account truly whether this was so.

And lo! as I sat up in the bed, there came the sound of the Master-Word, beating in the night about the Pyramid. And immediately there was a crying in the aether all about me: "We are coming! We are coming!"

And mine inwards leaped and sickened me a moment, so shaken was I with a sudden belief; for the message seemed some ways to come to me from very near to the Great Redoubt; as that they who sent it were nigh to hand.

And, forthwith, I called the Master-Word into the night; but no answer did there come for a while, and then a faint thrilling of the aether about me, and the weak pulse of the Master-Word in the night, sent by a far voice, strangely distant. And I knew that the voice was the voice of Naani; and I put a question through all the darkness of the dead world, whether she were within the Lesser Redoubt, and safe thus far.

And presently, there came a faint disturbance about me, and a small voice in my soul, speaking weakly and out of an infinite distance; and I knew that far away through the night Naani spoke feebly, with her brain-elements; and that she abode within the Lesser Pyramid; but that she too had heard that strange pulse of the Master-Word in the night, and that message: "We are coming! We are coming!" And vastly had this thing disturbed her, waking her within her sleep; so that she knew not what to think; save that we were devising some method to come to them. But this I removed from doubt, saying that she must not build on vain hoping; for I would not have her doubly tortured by the vanity of such believing. And, thereafter, having said such things as I might, though few they were, to comfort her, I bade her, gently, to sleep; and turned therewith to the Master Monstruwacan, who waited in quiet patience; and had no knowledge of that which I had heard and sent; for his hearing was but the normal; though his brain and heart were such as made me to love him.

And I told the Master Monstruwacan many things as I put my clothing about me; how that there had indeed been the calling of the Master-Word; but not by any of that Lesser Redoubt; but that, to my belief, it had come from nigh about the Great Pyramid. Moreover, it was sent by no instrument; as I wotted that he did guess; but, as it seemed to me, by the brain-elements of many, calling in unison.

And all this did I set out to the Master Monstruwacan; and with something uncertain of fear and trouble in my heart; yet with a blind expectation; as, indeed, who would not. Though, no longer was I shaken by that first thought of Her nearness.

And I said to the Master Monstruwacan that we should go to the Tower of Observation, and search the Night Lands with the great spy-glass.

And we did this, and lo! presently, we saw a great number of men pass over the Electric Circle that went about the Pyramid; yet they came not *to* us; but went outwards towards the blackness and the strange fires and hideous mysteries of the Night Land. And we ceased from spying, and looked swiftly at one another, and knew in our hearts that some had left the Mighty Pyramid in the Sleep-Time.

Then the Master Monstruwacan sent word to the Master Watchman that his wardership had been outraged, and that people left the great Pyramid in the Sleep-Time; for this was against the Law; and none ever went out into the Night Land, save the Full Watch were posted to the Great Door; and at a due time, when all were wakeful; for the Opening Of The Door was made known to all the

Millions of the Great Redoubt; so that all might be aware; and know that no foolishness was done without their wotting.

Moreover, ere any had power to leave the Pyramid, they must pass The Examination, and Be Prepared; and some of this have I set out already. And so stern was the framing of the Law, that there were yet the metal pegs upon the inner side of the Great Gate, where had been stretched the skin of one who disobeyed; and was flayed and his hide set there to be a warning in the Early Days. Yet the tradition was remembered; for, as I might say it, we lived very close about the place; and Memory had no room whereby she might escape.

Now the Master Watchman, when he heard that which the Master Monstruwacan had to tell, went hastily with some of the Central Watch from the Watch-Dome, to the Great Gate; and he found the men of the Sleep-Time Watch, with the Warder of the Gate, all bound, and stopt in the mouth, so that none could make outcry.

And he freed them, and learned that nigh five hundred young men, from the Upper Cities, by the bigness of their chests, had come upon them suddenly, and bound them, and escaped into the night through the Eye-Gate in the top of the Great Gate.

And the Master Watchman was angry, and demanded why that none had called by the instruments of the Watch House; but lo! some had made to call thus, and found them unable to wake the recorders which lay in the central Watch-Dome; for there had been tampering.

Now, after this, they made certain new rules and Laws concerning the order of Watching, and made tests of the lesser instruments of the inward Pyramid, nightly, upon the coming of the Sleep-Time, which was, even in that strange age, by tradition called the Night, as I have given hint; though hitherto, until the way of my story was known, I have used a word for the sleep hours that was yet not of that time; but somewhat an invention to make this history free from the confusion of "night" and "day," when, in truth, it was always night without upon the world. Yet, after this, shall I keep to mine use the luxury of the true names of that time; and yet, how strange is it that the truth should be of so little to our thinking.

And so to go forward with my telling; for, though all this care were now taken, it had no force until afterward; and at this moment were those poor foolish youths out in all the danger of the Night Land, and no way by which they might be succoured, or called back; save that Fear or Wisdom should come to them quickly, that they cease from so wild an attempt. For it was to make rescue of those in that other, unknown Pyramid, out in all the darkness of the World's Night that was their intent, as we had speedy knowledge from those boon friends that had been in the secret of their plot, which had seemed to them great and heroic; and was so, in verity, but that neither they who went, nor they who stayed, had a true awareness of the danger they had dealing with, being all naught but raw and crude youths; yet, doubtless, with the makings of many fine and great men among them.

And because some had thus abetted that which they knew to be against the Law, which was framed to the well-being and safety of all, there were certain floggings, which might the better help their memories in the future as to the properness of their actions and wisdom.

Moreover, they who returned, if any, would be flogged, as seemed proper, after due examination. And though the news of their beatings might help all others to hesitation, ere they did foolishly, in like fashion, yet was the principle of the flogging not on this base, which would be both improper and unjust; but only that the one in question be corrected to the best advantage for his own well-being; for it is not meet that any principle of correction should shape to the making of human signposts of pain for the benefit of others; for in verity, this were to make one pay the cost of many's learning; and each should owe to pay only so much as shall suffice for the teaching of his own body and spirit. And if others profit thereby, this is but accident, however helpful. And this is wisdom, and denoteth now that a sound Principle shall prevent Practice from becoming monstrous.

Yet, now I must hasten that I set down how it fared with those five hundred youths that had made so sad an adventure of their lives and unprepared souls; and were beyond our aid to help them,

who might not so much as make any calling to them, to bid them to return; for to do this would have been to tell to all the Monsters of the Land that humans were abroad from the Mighty Pyramid.

And this would have been to cause the monsters to search the youths out to their destruction, and maybe even to awaken the Forces to work them some dread Spiritual harm, which was the chief Fear.

Now, presently, through all the cities of the Great Redoubt, the news had gone how that five hundred foolish Youths had adventured out into the despair of the Night Land; and the whole Pyramid waked to life, and the Peoples of the South came to the Northern sides, for the Great Gate lay in the North-West side; and the Youths had made from there, not straightly outwards, but towards the North; and so were to be seen from the North-East embrasures, and from those within the North-West wall.

And thus, in a while were they watched by all the mighty multitudes of the Great Pyramid, through millions of spy-glasses; for each human had a spying-glass, as may be thought; and some were an hundred years old, and some, maybe ten thousand, and handed down through many generations; and some but newly made, and very strange. But all those people had some instrument by which they might spy out upon the wonder of the Night Land; for so had it been ever through all the eternity of darkness, and a great diversion and wonder of life was it to behold the monsters about their work; and to know that they plotted always to our destruction; yet were ever foiled.

And never did all that great and terrible Land grow stale upon the soul of any, from birth until death; and by this you shall know the constant wonder of it, and that *sense of enemies in the night about us*, which ever filled the heart and spirit of all Beholders; so that never were the embrasures utterly empty.

Yet, many beheld not the Land from the embrasures; but sat about the View-Tables, which were set properly in certain places throughout the cities, and so beheld the Night Land, without undue cranings, or poising of spy-glasses, though less plain-seen. And these same tables were some form of that which we of this age name Camera Obscura; but made very great, and with inventions, and low to the floor, so that ten thousand people might sit about them in the raised galleries, and have comfortable sight. Yet this attracted not the young people, save they were lovers; and then, in truth, were they comfortable seats for quietness and gentle whisperings.

Yet now, as may be supposed, with all the Peoples of the Mighty Pyramid grown eager to look towards one part of the Night Land, the embrasures were hid in the crowds; and such as could gain no view therethrough, thronged about the View-Tables. And so was it in all the hours of leisure; so that women had scarce patience to attend their children; but must hasten to watch again, that lonesome band of foolish youths making so blind and unshaped a trial to come upon that unknown Lesser Redoubt, somewhere out in all the night of the world.

And in this wise passed three days and nights; yet both in the sleep-time and the time of waking did great multitudes cease not to watch; so that many went hungry for sleep, as in truth did I. And sometimes we saw those Youths with plainness; but other times they were lost to our sight in the utter shadows of the Night Land. Yet, by the telling of our instruments, and the sense of my hearing, there was no awaredness among the Monsters, and the Forces of Evil, that any were abroad from the Pyramid; so that a little hope came into our hearts that yet there might be no tragedy.

And times, would they cease from their way, and sit about in circles among the shadows and the grey moss-bushes, which grew hardly here or there about. And we knew that they had food with them to eat; for this could we see with plainness, as some odd, grim flare of light from the infernal fires struck upon one or another strangely, and passed, and left them in the darkness.

And who of you shall conceive what was in the hearts of the fathers, and the mothers that bore the youths, and who never ceased away from the Northward embrasures; but spied out in terror and in tears, and maybe oft with so good glasses as did show them the very features and look upon the face of son and son.

And the kin of the watchers brought to them food, and tended them, so that they had no need to cease from their watching; and beds were made in the embrasures, rough and resourceful, that

they might sleep quickly a little; yet be ever ready, if those cruel Monsters without made discovery of those their children.

Thrice in those three days of journeying to the Northward, did the Youths sleep, and we perceived that some kept a watch, and so knew that there was a kind of order and leadership among them; also, they had each his weapon upon his hip, and this gave to us a further plea to hope.

And concerning this same carrying of weapons, I can but set out here that no healthful male or female in all the Mighty Pyramid but possessed such a weapon, and was trained to it from childhood; so that a ripe and extraordinary skill in the use thereof was common to most. Yet some breaking of Rule had there been, that the Youths had each achieved to be armed; for the weapons were stored in every tenth house of the cities, in the care of the charging-masters.

And here I must make known that these weapons did not shoot; but had a disk of grey metal, sharp and wonderful, that spun in the end of a rod of grey metal, and were someways charged by the Earth-Current, so that were any but stricken thereby, they were cut in twain so easy as aught. And the weapons were contrived to the repelling of any Army of Monsters that might make to win entrance to the Redoubt. And to the eye they had somewhat the look of strange battle-axes, and might be lengthened by the pulling out of the handles.

Now, the Youths made, as I have told, to the Northward; but had first to keep a long way to the North-East, that they might come clear of the Vale of Red Fire. And this wise they journeyed, and kept the Vale about seven miles to the North-West of them, and so were presently beyond the Watcher of the North-East, and going with a greater freedom, and having less care to hide.

And this way, it may be, certain of the giants, wandering, perceived them, and went swiftly to make attack and destroy them. But some order went about among the youths, and they made a long line, with a certain space between each, because of the terror of their weapon, and immediately, it seemed, the Giants were upon them, a score and seven they were, and seeming to be haired like to mighty crabs, as I saw with the Great Spy-Glass, when the great flares of far and mighty fires threw their fierce light across the Dark Lands.

And there was a very great and horrid fight; for the Youths broke into circles about each of the Giants, and many of those young men were torn in pieces; but they smote the Monsters from behind and upon every side, and we of the Mighty Pyramid could behold at times the grey, strange gleam of their weapons; and the jether was stirred about me by the passing of those that died; yet, by reason of the great miles, their screams came not to us, neither heard we the roars of the Monsters; but into our hearts, even from that great distance and safety, there stole the terror of those awesome Brutes; and in the Great Spy-Glass I could behold the great joints and limbs and e'en, I thought, the foul sweat of them; and their size and brutishness was like to that of odd and monstrous animals of the olden world; yet part human. And it must be borne to mind that the Fathers and the Mothers of those Youths beheld all this dread fight from the embrasures, and their other kin likewise watched, and a very drear sight was it to their hearts and their human, natural feelings, and like to breed old age, ere its due.

Then, in a time, the fight ceased; for of those seven and twenty Giant Brutes there remained none; only that there cumbered the ground seven and twenty lumbering hillocks, dreadful and grim. For the lesser dead we could not see proper.

And we that were within the Pyramid saw the Youths sorted together by their leaders, all in the dim twilight of that place; and with the Great Spy-Glass I made a rough count, and found that there lived of them, three hundred; and by this shall you know the power of those few monstrous things, which had slain full two hundred, though each youth was armed with so wondrous a weapon. And I set the word through the Pyramid, that all might have some knowledge of the number that had died; for it was better to know, than to be in doubt. And no spy-glass had the power of The Great Spy-Glass.

After this fight, the youths spent a time having a care to their bodies and wounds; and some were made separate from the others, and of these I counted upon fifty; and whilst the others made to continue their march towards the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, these were constrained by

one who was the Leader, to return to the Pyramid. And in a little, I saw that they came towards us, wearily and with many a halt, as that they suffered great wounds and harm of the fight.

But those others (maybe two hundred and fifty Youths) went onwards into the Night Land; and though we sorrowed at this thing; yet was there come a huge pride into our hearts that those raw ones, who yesterday were but children, had so held themselves in the battle, and done a great deed that day. And I wot that whilst their mothers wept, easeless, their fathers' hearts swelled within them, and held somewhat of their Pain away from them for a time.

And all this while, those wounded Youths came slowly, and rested, and came on again, the better helping the worse; and a great excitement and trouble there was in all the Mighty Pyramid, to learn which were they that came, and they that went, and who lay out there quietly among the slain. But none might say anything with surety; for, even with that great spy-glass in the Tower of Observation, they were not overplain; save when some light from the fires of the Land flared high, and lit them. For they stood not up into the glare of the fires, as had the Giants. And though I saw them with clearness, yet I knew them not; for there was so mighty a multitude in that Vast Redoubt, that none might ever know the half even of their rulers.

And about this time, there came a fresh matter of trouble to our minds; for one of the Monstruwacans made report that the instruments were recording an influence abroad in the night; so that we had knowledge that one of the Evil Forces was Out. And to me there came an awareness that a strange unquiet stole over the Land; yet I knew it not with mine ears; but my spirit heard, and it was as though trouble and an expectation of horror did swarm about me.

And once, listening, I heard the Master-Word beating strangely low, and I knew the aether to thrill about me, and a faint stirring was there in my soul, as of a faint voice, speaking; and I knew that Naani called to me some message across the night of the world; yet weak and coming without clear meaning; so that I was tormented and could but send comfort to her, with my brain-elements. And presently I knew that she ceased to speak.

And, later, I heard that there was a new matter forward in the Redoubt; for ten thousand men had assembled to attend the Room of Preparation for the Short Preparation; and by this we knew that those poor Youths who stumbled towards us through the dark, were presently to have help.

And through all that Sleep-Time, there went forward the Spiritual and the Physical Preparation of the ten thousand; and upon the morrow they slept, whilst an hundred thousand made ready their arms.

And in this space of time the two hundred and fifty Youths that went towards the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, had come very nigh thereto; having gone very warily and with some slowness, because, as may be, of the lesson of the Giants.

And to us in the Pyramid, the instruments made known constantly that Influence which was abroad, and which all those of the Tower of Observation thought to proceed from the House of Silence. Yet, nothing could we see with the Great Spy-Glass, and so could come to no sure knowing; but only to fear and wonder.

And, presently, the Youths were upon the Great Road, and turned to the Northward. And beyond them, a great way, stood the House of Silence, upon a low hill at a certain distance to the right of the Road.

By now, they that were wounded had come to within, maybe, fifteen miles of the Great Redoubt; and the news went through all the Cities, that the ten thousand men that were Prepared, made to arm themselves. And I went down by the Tower Lift, and saw them come down by thousands from the Room of Preparation; and none might go nigh to them, or cause them to speak; for they were made Ready, and were, as it might be, holy.

And all the millions of the Mighty Pyramid stood in their cities about certain of the Main Lifts, and watched those thousands go downwards, all in their armour of grey metal, and each one armed with the Diskos, which was that same very terrible weapon, which all had training to.

And I doubt not but that the Young Men of the Pyramid looked, with longing in their hearts, that they might have been among those that went forth to succour. Yet, the older men had graver thoughts in their hearts; for the blood ran more soberly in them, and they had knowledge and memory of the Peril. And by this, I would make clear that I speak less of the peril of the body, which is common to every state of life; but of the peril of the spirit.

And it may be thought by those of this age, that it was most strange that they of that, having all the knowledge of eternity to aid them, had no weapon by which to shoot, and kill at a distance.

But, indeed, this had not been so in the past; as our Histories did show; for some wondrous weapons there had been, that might slay without sound or flash at a full score miles and more; and some we had whole within the Great Museum; and of others but the parts in decay; for they had been foolish things, and reckless to use; for we of that Great Pyramid, wanted not to kill a few of the Monsters that lay at a great distance; but only those which came nigh, to harm us.

And concerning those same weapons that killed silently at a great distance, we had now little knowledge, save that they did waste the Earth-Current; and no practice had we concerning their workings; for it was, maybe, an hundred thousand years gone that they had been used, and found to be of no great worth in a close attack, and harmful otherwise to the peace, in that they angered, unneedful, the Forces of that land, slaying wantonly those monsters which did no more than beset the Mighty Redoubt at a great distance. For, as may be seen by a little thought, we did very gladly keep a reasonable quietness, and refrained from aught that should wake that Land; for we were born to the custom of that strange life, and lived and died in peace, for the most part; and were very content to have security, and to be neutral in all things that did not overbear us; but, as it were, always armed, and ready.

But concerning the great and Evil Forces that were abroad in the Night Land, these we had no power to harm; nor could we hope for more than that we had security from them, which indeed we had; but the hugeness of their power was about us, and we dared not to wake it; save through such extremity as had come to pass by this folly of the Youths; though, even now, we had no thought to attack aught; but only to succour those wounded ones.

And concerning this simplicity of weapons, which excites somewhat even my wonder in this our present age, it may be that the powers of chemistry were someways quaintly limited by conditions in that age; and there to be always a need to spare the Earth-Current; and hence, by this cause and by that, we were brought, by the extreme, nigh to the simplicity of the early world; yet with a strange and mighty difference, as all may know who have read.

Now, presently, the Word was sent to every City throughout the Great Redoubt—as was the Law—that the Great Gate should be opened; and each city sent its Master, to form the Full Watch, as was the Law. And each went clad in grey armour, and carrying the Diskos. And the Full Watch numbered, two thousand; for there were also the Watchmen.

Then the lights in the Great Causeway were made dim; so that the opening of the Gate should cast no great glare from within into the Night Land, to tell the Watcher of the North-West, and all the Monsters, that certain humans went out from the Mighty Pyramid. But whether the vast and hidden Forces of Evil had knowledge, we knew not; and they who went must but chance it, remembering that they were Prepared, and had the Capsule.

And the ten thousand that were Prepared, went out through the Great Gateway, into the night; and the Full Watch stood back from them, and spoke no word, but saluted silently with the Diskos; and they that went, raised each the Diskos a little, and passed out into the dark.

Then the Great Gate was shut; and we made to wait and to watch, with trouble and expectation within our hearts. And at the embrasures many did comfort the women of those men.

And I went back, upwards by miles, until I came to the Tower of Observation; and I looked out from there into the Night Land, and saw that the ten thousand halted at the Circle, and made

arrangement of themselves, and sent some before and upon either hand, and so went forward into the Night Land.

And after that, I went to the Great Spy-Glass, and turned it towards the two hundred and fifty Youths that were far off, upon the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk; yet for awhile I could not perceive them, for all the Road seemed empty. But afterward I saw them, and they were clambering back into the Road, having gone aside, as I thought, because of the passing of one of those Silent Ones, that I saw now at a distance to the Southward of them.

There passed then, some three hours; and in that time I varied my watching between those far-off Youths, and the Ten-thousand that went forward to succour the wounded, that were now, maybe, scarce nine miles distant from the Mighty Pyramid, and the Ten-thousand came very close to them. And, in truth, in a little while, they spied one the other, and I gathered, in spirit, something of the rejoicing of those youths; yet weak and troubled were they, because of their wounds, and their knowledge of failure, and their disobedience of the Law.

And, presently, they were surrounded by the Ten-thousand, and carried upon slings; and all that body swung round towards the Pyramid, and came back at a great pace.

And, in the same time, I heard the sound that made them so swift to hasten; for there smote up through the night the Baying of the Hounds; and we knew that they were discovered. And I swept the Great Spy-Glass over the Land, towards the Valley Of The Hounds, that I might discover them quickly; and I saw them come lumbering, at a strange gallop, and great as horses, and it might be only ten miles to the East.

And I looked once upon the Watcher of the North-East, and I saw and marvelled that the great bell-ear quivered constantly; and I knew that it had knowledge, and gave signal to all the Land. Then did one of the Monstruwacans report that a new and terrible Influence was abroad in the Land; and by the instrument, we had knowledge that it approached; and some of the Monstruwacans called foolishly with weak voices to the Ten-thousand to haste; forgetting, and desiring only their safety from that which came near.

Then, looking with the Great Spy-Glass, I saw that there moved across the Land, from the direction of the Plain of Blue Fire, a mighty Hump, seeming of Black Mist, and came with prodigious swiftness. And I called to the Master Monstruwacan, that he come and look through one of the eye-pieces that were about the Great Spy-Glass; and he came quickly, and when he had looked a while, he called to the Monstruwacan that had made report. And the Monstruwacan answered, and replied that the Influence drew nearer, by the reading of the instrument; yet of the thing itself the man had no sight.

And I ceased not to look, and in a little while, the Humped thing passed downwards into the Vale of Red Fire, which lay across the Land that way. But I watched steadfastly, and presently I saw the black Hump climb up from the Vale of Red Fire upon this side, and come through the night, so that in scarce a minute it had come halfway across that part of the Night Land.

And my heart stood quiet with fear, and the utter terror of this Monster, which I knew to be surely one of the Great Forces of Evil of that Land, and had power, without doubt, to destroy the spirit. And the Master Monstruwacan leapt towards the Home-Call, and sent the great Sound down to the Ten-thousand, that they might attend, and immediately, he signalled to them to Beware. Yet, already I perceived that they knew of this Utter Danger that was upon them; for I saw them slay the Youths quickly, that their spirits might not be lost; for they were Unprepared. But the men, being Prepared, had the Capsule, and would die swiftly in the last moment.

I looked again towards the Hump, and saw that it came like a Hill of Blackness in the Land, and was almost anigh. Then there happened a wonder; for in that moment when all had else gone quickly, that they might save their souls, out of the earth there rose a little Light, like to the crescent of the young moon of this early day. And the crescent rose up into an arch of bright and cold fire,

glowing but little; and it spanned above the Ten-thousand and the dead; and the Hump stood still, and went backwards and was presently lost.

And the men came swiftly towards the Mighty Pyramid. Yet, ere they were come to safety, the Baying of the Hounds sounded close upon them, and they faced to the danger; yet, as I could know, without despair, because that they yet lived after so enormous a peril.

And the Hounds were very nigh, as now I beheld with the Great Spy-Glass; and I counted five score, running with mighty heads low, and in a pack. And lo! as the Hounds came at them, the Ten-thousand drew apart, and had a space between the men, that they might have full use of that terrible Diskos; and they fought with the handles at length, and I saw the disks spin and glisten and send out fire.

Then was there a very great battle; for the Light that arched above them, and held away The Power from their souls, made not to protect them from this danger of the lesser monsters. And at an hundred thousand embrasures within the Mighty Pyramid, the women cried and sobbed, and looked again. And in the lower cities it was told, after, that the Peoples could hear the crash and splinter of the armour, as the Hounds ran to and fro, slaying; aye, even the sound of the armour between their teeth.

Yet, the Ten-thousand ceased not to smite with the Diskos; and they hewed the Hounds in pieces; but of the men that went forth, there were a thousand and seven hundred slain by the Hounds, ere the men won to victory.

Then came that wearied band of heroes back to the home shelter of the Vast Redoubt; and they bore their dead with them, and the Youths that they slew. And they were received with great honour, and with exceeding grief, and in a great silence; for the thing admitted not of words, until a time had passed. And in the cities of the Pyramid there was mourning; for there had been no sorrow like unto this through, mayhap, an hundred thousand years.

And they bore the Youths to their Mothers and to their Fathers; and the Father of each made thanks to the men that they had saved the soul of his son; but the women were silent. Yet, neither to the Father nor to the Mother, was ever made known the name of the slayers; for this might not be; as all shall see with a little thought.

And some did remember that, in verity, all was due to the unwisdom of those Youths, who had heeded not the Law and their life-teachings. Yet had they paid to the uttermost, and passed outwards; and the account of their Deeds was closed.

And all this while did great numbers spy toward the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, that they might watch that band of Youths afar in the Night Land, who went forward amid those horrid dangers. Yet, when the dead Youths had been brought in, many had ceased to look out for a time and had turned to questioning, and some had made inspection that they might know which had come back, and which lay out there where the Giants had slain them, or went forward to more dreadful matters.

But who of those that were abroad, were slain, or still went onward, we had but indifferent knowledge; though the men of the Ten-thousand knew somewhat, having had speech with the wounded Youths, ere they slew them. And, as may be thought, these men were sorely questioned by the Mothers and the Fathers of those Youths that were not accounted of; yet I doubt that few had much knowledge wherewith to console them.

Now there was presently, in the Garden of Silence, which was the lowermost of all the Underground Fields, the Ending of those seventeen hundred heroes, and of the Youths that they saved and slew. And the Garden was a great country, and an hundred miles every way, and the roof thereof was three great miles above, and shaped to a mighty dome; as it had been that the Builders and Makers thereof did remember in their spirits the visible sky of this our present age.

And the making of that Country was all set out in a single History of seven thousand and seventy Volumes. And there were likewise seven thousand and seventy years spent to the making of that Country; so that there had unremembered generations lived and laboured and died, and seen not the end of their labour. And Love had shaped it and hallowed it; so that of all the wonders of the

world, there has been none that shall ever come anigh to that Country of Silence—an hundred miles every way of Silence to the Dead.

And there were in that roof seven moons set in a mighty circle, and lit by the Earth-Current; and the circle was sixty miles across, so that all that Country of Quiet was visible; yet to no great glare, but a sweet and holy light; so that I did always feel in my heart that a man might weep there, and be unashamed.

And in the midst of that silent Country, there was a great hill, and upon the hill a vast Dome. And the Dome was full of a Light that might be seen in all that Country, which was the Garden of Silence. And beneath the Dome was the "Crack," and within it the glory of the Earth-Current, from which all had life and light and safety. And in the Dome, at the North, there was a gateway; and a narrow road went upward to the gateway; and the Road was named The Last Road; and the Gateway was named by no name, but known to all as The Gateway.

And there were in that mighty Country, long roadways, and hidden methods to help travel; and constant temples of rest along the miles; and groves; and the charm of water, falling. And everywhere the Statues of Memory, and the Tablets of Memory; and the whole of that Great Underground Country full of an echo of Eternity and of Memory and Love and Greatness; so that to walk alone in that Land was to grow back to the wonder and mystery of Childhood; and presently to go upwards again to the Cities of the Mighty Pyramid, purified and sweetened of soul and mind.

And in my boyhood, I have wandered oft a week of days in that Country of Silence, and had my food with me, and slept quietly amid the memories; and gone on again, wrapped about with the quiet of the Everlasting. And the man-soul within would be drawn mightily to those places where the Great Ones of the past Eternity of the World had their Memory named; but there was that within me which ever drew me, in the ending, to the Hills of the Babes; those little hills where might be heard amid the lonesomeness of an utter quiet, a strange and wondrous echo, as of a little child calling over the hills. But how this was I know not, save by the sweet cunning of some dead Maker in the forgotten years.

And here, mayhaps by reason of this Voice of Pathos, were to be found the countless Tokens of Memory to all the babes of the Mighty Pyramid, through a thousand ages. And, odd whiles, would I come upon some Mother, sitting there lonely, or mayhaps companied by others. And by this little telling shall you know somewhat of the quietness and the wonder and the holiness of that great Country hallowed to all Memory and to Eternity and to our Dead.

And it was here, into the Country of Silence, that they brought down the Dead to their Burial. And there came down into the Country of Silence, maybe an Hundred Million, out of the Cities of the Pyramid, to be present, and to do Honour.

Now they that had charge of the Dead, did lay them upon the road which ran up unto The Gateway, even that same road which was named The Last Road. And the Road moved upwards slowly with the Dead; and the Dead went inward through The Gateway; first the poor Youths, and afterward they that had given up life that they might save them.

And as the Dead went upwards, there was a very great Silence over all the miles of the Country of Silence. But in a little while there came from afar off, a sound as of a wind wailing; and it came onwards out of the distance, and passed over the Hills of the Babes, which were a great way off. And so came anigh to the place where I stood. Even as the blowing of a sorrowful wind did it come; and I knew that all the great multitudes did sing quietly; and the singing passed onwards, and left behind it an utter silence; even as the wind doth rustle the corn, and pass onwards, and all fall to a greater seeming quietness than before. And the Dead passed inward through The Gateway, into the great light and silence of the Dome; and came out no more.

And again from beyond the far Hills of the Babes there was that sound of the millions singing; and there rose up out of the earth beneath, the voices of the underground organs; and the noise of the sorrow passed over me, and went again into the distance, and left all hushed.

And lo! as there passed inward to the silence of the Dome the last of those dead Heroes, there came again the sound from beyond the Hills of the Babes; and as it came more nigh, I knew that it was the Song of Honour, loud and triumphant, and sung by countless multitudes. And the Voices of the Organs rose up into thunder from the deep earth. And there was a great Honour done to the glory of the Dead. And afterwards, once more a silence.

Then did the Peoples of the Cities arrange themselves so that from every city whence had come a Hero, were the People of that City gathered together. And when they were so gathered, they set up Tokens of Memory to the Dead of their City. But afterwards did charge Artists to the making of sculpture great and beautiful to that same end; and now did but place Tablets against that time.

And afterwards the People did wander over that Country of Silence, and made visit and honour to their Ancestors, if such were deserving.

And presently, the mighty lifts did raise them all to the Cities of the Pyramid; and thereafter there was something more of usualness; save that ever the embrasures were full of those that watched the Youths afar upon the Great Road. And in this place I to remember how that our spy-glasses had surely some power of the Earth-Current to make greater the impulse of the light upon the eye. And they were like no spy-glass that ever you did see; but oddly shaped and to touch both the forehead and the eyes; and gave wonderful sight of the Land. But the Great Spy-Glass to be beyond all this; for it had the Eyes of it upon every side of The Mighty Pyramid, and did be truly an Huge Machine.

And to me, as I went about my duties, or peered forth through the Great Spy-Glass at the Youths upon the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, there came at times a far faint thrilling of the aether; so that sometimes I was aware that there was the beating of the Master-Word in the night; but so strange and weak, that the Instruments had no wotting of it. And when this came, then would I call back through all the everlasting night to Naani, who was indeed Mirdath; and I would send the Master-Word with my brain-elements; and afterwards such comfort as I might.

Yet hard and bitter was the truth of my helplessness and weakness, and the utter terror and might of the Evil Forces and Monsters of the Night Land. So that I was like to have brake my heart with pondering.

And the silence would come again; and anon the weak thrilling of the Aether; but no more the far voice speaking in my soul.

V INTO THE NIGHT LAND

Now, after that destruction which had come upon the Ten-thousand, and the fresh assurance that was upon us of the terror of the Night Land, it may be known that there could be no more thought to succour. Though, in truth, those Youths that went now upon the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk were far beyond our aid.

Yet might it be thought that we should have signalled to them, calling by the Home-Call, which was that great Voice which went forth from the Machine above the sealed base of the Mighty Pyramid. But this we might not do; for then we gave signal to the Monsters of that Land, that some were even now abroad from the Pyramid; yet we could no more than hope that the Evil Forces had no wotting of them; for, in verity, none might ever know the knowledge or the Ignorance which those Powers did possess.

Yet, it must be kept to the mind that we knew even then there was an Influence abroad in the Land, strange and quiet; so that the Instruments did not more than make record of it. And as I have surely set down ere now, we had belief that it did come from that House of Silence, afar in the Night Land, upon that low hill to the North of the Great Road. And many among the Monstruwacans feared that it was directed upon the Youths; but of this there could be no surety; and we could but wait and watch.

Now, about this time those poor Youths did draw nigh to that part of the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, where it turned more swiftly to the North; and they to be now at no mighty distance from that grim and horrid House.

And presently we knew that the Influence had a greater Power in the Land; and I had an assuredness that it came from the House; yet no certain proof was this. But I set out my feelings to the Master Monstruwacan; and he had trust in them and in my power; moreover, he also had belief within himself that some secret Power came out from the House of Silence.

And some talk there was at times that we send the Home-Call into the night, to give warning to the Youths of our knowledge and our fear; and to entreat them to make a safe endeavour to return swiftly. Yet was this an error; and refused by the Master Monstruwacan; for it was not meet that we put the souls of those Youths in peril, until such time as we had certainty that they should be lost if we did not bestir ourselves. For, indeed, this Home-Call was as a mighty Voice, calling over the world, and did have so exceeding a noise, that it had immediately told all that Land how that some were yet abroad from the Great Redoubt. And here will I set down how that the Home-Call had no use in those ages; but had been a Call in the olden time when yet the great flying-ships went abroad over the world.

And there passed now a day and a night; and in all that time there ceased not great multitudes to peer forth into the Night Land at the Youths. For it was known concerning the Influence, and all felt that the Youths did draw nigh very speedy to their fate; and much talk there was; and many things said, and much foolish speech, and kind intent; but no courage to go forth to make further attempt to rescue; which, in truth, calls not for great astonishment, as I have surely writ or oft thought.

And in this place let me set down that the Land was, as it might be said, waked, and unquiet, and a sense of things passing in the night, and of horrid watchfulness; and there were, at this time and at that, low roars that went across the Land. And if I have not told the same before this time, it must be set to count against me and my telling; for, indeed, I should have writ it down before this place. Yet is the difficulty of my task great; and all must bear with me, and entreat for me that I have courage, so that I may come at last to strength and wisdom to tell all that I did see.

Now, in the space of this day and night, it was known that the Youths had not slept, neither had they eaten, save once, as they who had the watch through the Great Spy-Glass did affirm. But they

to hasten away at a woeful speed towards the North, along that Great Dismal Road, so that presently they must cease, or slay themselves with their endeavour.

And all this did give surety to our fears that they were under a spell from that horrid House afar in the Land; and we had an assurance that this thing was. For, presently, there came a Monstruwacan to the Master Monstruwacan to report that there had come sudden a mighty Influence into the Land; and in the same moment, as it might be, I spied through the Great Spy-Glass, and did see those Youths break swiftly from the Road Where The Silent Ones Walk, and begin to run very swift that they might come quickly to the House of Silence.

Then did the Master Monstruwacan hesitate not; but did send the Home-Call across the world, aye, even to those poor doomed ones that hastened, unknowing, to the terror which did compel them. And immediately upon the sound, the Master did send a message to the natural eye, in set language, and made warning that they suffered themselves to be drawn to their destruction by a Force that came from within the House of Silence.

And he besought them to put forth the strength of their spirits, and do battle for their souls; and if they could in no wise compass a victory over *that which drew them onwards*, to slay themselves quickly, ere they went into that House to the horror of utter destruction.

And in all the Pyramid was there a great silence; for the bellowing of the Home-Call bred a quietness, because of that which it did portend; and it was swiftly known by the millions that the Master Monstruwacan did plead for the souls of the Youths; and there went forth, unknowingly, a counter-force from the Mighty Pyramid, by reason of the prayers and soul-wishings of the countless millions.

And the counter-force was plain to my inward hearing, and beat all the aether of the world into a surge of supplication; so that it stunned my spirit with the great power of it. And it seemed to me, as it were, that there was a vast spiritual-noise in all the night; and I spied tremblingly through the Great Spy-Glass, and lo! the Youths did cease from their swift running, and were come together in a crowd, and had a seeming to be confused; as might some who have waked suddenly from sleep, to find that they walked in their sleep, and had come to a strange place.

Then came there a great roar from all the millions that spied from the embrasures—from nigh five hundred thousand embrasures they did look, and I count not the great View-Tables. And the shouting rose up like to the roaring of a mighty wind of triumph, yet was it over-early to sound for victory. For the counter-force which came from the intensity of so many wills blent to one intent, was brake, and the Evil Force which came forth out of the House did draw the Youths again; so that they heeded not their salvation; but turned once again to their running.

And the Mighty Pyramid was full of a shaken silence, and immediately of lamentation and sorrow and horror at this thing. But in that moment there did happen a fresh wonder; for there grew suddenly before those poor Youths, billows of mist—as it had been of pure white fire, shining very chill; yet giving no light upon them.

And the mist of cold fire stayed their way, so that we had knowledge that there fought for the souls of them, one of those sweet Powers of Goodness, which we had belief did strive to ward our spirits at all times from those Forces of Evil and Destruction. And all the millions saw the thing; but some with a great clearness, and many doubtful; yet were all advanced more in spiritual sight and hearing than the normal Peoples of this Age.

But of them all, none had the Night-Hearing, to know a soul having speech in the aether half across the world. Yet, as I have said, some there had been aforetime who were thus given the Hearing, even as was I.

And there came a Monstruwacan to the Master Monstruwacan to make report that the Influence had ceased to work upon the Instruments; and by this thing we knew that in verity the Force which proceeded out from the House of Silence was cut off from us, and from those Youths; and we had assurance that there fought a very mighty Power for the salvation of the souls of the Youths.

And all the Peoples were silent, save for an underbreath of wonder and talk; for all were utter stirred with hope and fear, perceiving that the Youths had some chance given unto them to return.

And whilst the Youths yet wavered in their minds, as I perceived with the Great Spy-Glass, and the knowledge of my soul, and of my natural wit, lo! the Master Monstruwacan sent once more the great Voice of the Home-Call abroad into the Land; and immediately besought those Youths for the sake of their souls and the love which their Mothers had for them, to come swiftly Homewards, whilst they had yet this great Power to shield them, and allow them sweet sanity.

And I thought that some did look towards the Pyramid, as that they answered to the mighty Voice of the Home-Call, and did read the message which the Master Monstruwacan made to them. But in a moment they faced about, seeming to have a good obedience to one who did always lead; and of whom I had inquired, and found to be one named Aschoff, who was a great athlete of the Nine-Hundredth-City. And this same Aschoff, out of the boldness and bravery of his heart, did make, unwitting, to destroy the souls of them all; for he went forward and leapt into the billows of the bright shining fire that made a Barrier in the way of their Destruction.

And immediately the fire ceased from its shining, and gave way and sank and grew to a nothingness; and Aschoff of the Nine-Hundredth-City began again to run towards the House of Silence; and all they that were with him, did follow faithfully, and ceased not to run.

And they came presently to the low Hill whereon was that horrid House; and they went up swiftly—and they were two hundred and fifty, and wholesome of heart, and innocent; save for a natural waywardness of spirit.

And they came to the great open doorway that "hath been open since the Beginning," and through which the cold steadfast light and the inscrutable silence of Evil "hath made for ever a silence that may be felt in all the Land." And the great, uncased windows gave out the silence and the light—aye, the utter silence of an unholy desolation.

And Aschoff ran in through the great doorway of silence, and they that followed. And they nevermore came out or were seen by any human.

And it must be known that the Mothers and the Fathers of those Youths looked out into the Night Land, and saw that thing which came to pass.

And all the people were silent; but some said presently that the Youths would come forth again; yet the people knew in their hearts that the young men had gone in to Destruction; for, in truth, there was that in the night which spoke horror to the souls of all, and a sudden utter quiet in all the Land.

But unto me (that had the Night-Hearing) there came a great Fear of that which might be whispered into my spirit, out of the Quietness of the night—of the agony of those young men. Yet there came no sound, to the hearing of the soul; neither then nor in all the years that were to come; for, in verity, had those Youths passed into a Silence of which the heart cannot think.

And here will I tell how that the strange Quiet which did fill all the Land, seeming to brood within the night, was horrid beyond all the roarings which had passed over the darkness in the time that went before; so that it had given my spirit some rest and assurance to hear but the far-echoing, low thunder of the Great Laughter, or the whining which was used at times to sound in the night from the South-East, where were the Silver-fire Holes that opened before the Thing that Nods. Or the Baying of the Hounds, or the Roaring of the Giants, or any of those dreadful sounds that did often pass through the night. For they could not have offended me as did that time of silence; and so shall you judge how dreadful was that quiet, which did hold so much of horror.

And surely it will be known that none had thinkings now, even in idle speech, that any should have power to succour the Peoples of the Lesser Redoubt. Neither, as I have said, had any the knowledge of the place where it did stand.

And so was it made plain that those Peoples must suffer and come unhelped and alone to their end; which was a sad and dreadful thought to any. Yet had those within the Great Pyramid come already to much sorrow and calamity because that some had made attempt in this matter. And there

had been for gain, only failure, and the sorrow of Mothers, and the loneliness of Wives, and of kin. And now this dread horror upon us, which concerned those lost Youths.

Now, as may be conceived, this *sure knowledge* that we might give no succour to the People of the Lesser Redoubt, weighed heavy upon my heart; for I had, maybe with foolishness, held vague hopes and wonders concerning our power to make expedition secretly into the Night, to discover that Lesser Pyramid, and rescue those poor thousands; and above all, as may be thought, had I the thought of that sweet moment in which I should step forward out of the night and all mystery and terror, and put forth mine arms to Naani, saying: "I am That One." And knowing, in my soul, that she that had been mine in that bygone Eternity, should surely know me upon the instant; and call out swiftly, and come swiftly, and be again unto me in that age, even as she had been in this.

And to think upon it, and to know that this thing should never be; but that, even in that moment of thought, she that had been mine in these olden days of sweetness, might be even then suffering horror in the Power of some foul Monster, was like a kind of madness; so that nearly I could seize the Diskos, and run forth unprepared into the evil and terror of the Night Land, that I should make one attempt to come to that Place where she abode, or else to cast off my life in the attempt.

And oft did I call to Naani; and always I sent the Master-Word beating through the night, that she might have assurance that it was indeed I that did speak unto her spirit, and no foul thing or Monster, spelling evil and lies unto her.

And oft did I make to instruct her that never should she be tempted forth from the shelter of that Redoubt in which she did live, by any message out of the night; but always to await the Master-Word; and, moreover, to have a sure knowledge that none that was her Friend would ever seek to entice her into the night.

And this way and that way would I speak with Naani, sending my words silently with my brain-elements; yet was it doleful and weariful and dreadful always to have speech into the dark, and never to hear the answering beat of the Master-Word, and the sweet, faint voice whispering within my soul. Yet, once and again, would I have knowledge that the aether did thrill about me, weakly, and to mine inward hearing it would seem that the Master-Word did beat faintly in the night; and thereafter would my heart have a little comfort, in that I had assurance, of a kind, that the love-maid of my memory-dreams did still live.

And constant, I put forth my soul to hark; so that my health failed me, with the effort of my harking; and I would chide my being, that I had not a wiser control; and so make a fight to do sanely.

Yet, day by day, did my heart grow more weary and restless; for, indeed, it did seem that life was but a very little matter, against so great a loss as my heart did feel to suffer.

And oft, at this time and that, did there come a Voice speaking plainly out of the night, and did purport to be the voice of Naani; but ever I did say the Master-Word unto the Voice, and the Voice had no power by which it could make the one answer. Yet I jeered not at the Voice, to show contempt of its failing to bewit me; but let the matter bide; and the Voice would be silent a time; and again would make a calling unto me; but never did I make speech with it (for therein lies the danger to the soul), but always did speak the Master-Word to its silencing; and thereafter would shut the thing from my memory, and think only upon sweet and holy matters, as it might be Truth and Courage, but more often of Naani, which was both sweet and holy to my spirit and heart and being.

And so it was as I have set down, there were Monsters without in the Night that did torment me; having, it may be, intent to lure me unto destruction; or indeed it doth chance that they had no hope but to plague me with malice.

And, as may be thought, all this considering of my trouble, and the giving of my strength unto Naani through the night of the world, that she might have comfort and help, did work upon me; so that I grew thin, plainly to the eye of those that loved me.

And the Master Monstruwacan, he that did love me, as I were his son, chid me gently, and had wise speech with me; so that I but loved him the more, yet without having gain of health; for my heart destroyed me, as it doth if love be held back and made always to weep.

And it may be thought strange that my Mother and my Father did not talk also with me; but I had neither Mother nor Father those many years; and this thing I should have set down early; so that none should waste thought pondering to no end. But the blame is to my telling.

Now, concerning my love-trouble, there did happen a certain thing which gave me to decide; for one night I waked from a sore troubled sleep, and it did seem that Naani did call my name, mine olden love name, and in a voice of utter anguish and with beseeching. And I sat up in the bed, and sent the Master-Word into the Night, with my brain-elements; and presently all about me there was the solemn beat of the Master-Word, answering; but weak, and gone faint, that scarce I might hear it.

And I called again with my brain-elements unto Naani, that was Mirdath; and spoke to give her assurance, and to haste to tell unto me that which was so wrong and pitiful with her. And who shall be amazed that I was shaken with the eagerness of my spirit, in that it was so long since Naani had spoken clear within my soul; and now behold, her voice.

Yet, though I did call many a time unto the everlasting night, there came no more the voice of Naani, speaking strangely within my spirit; but only at times a weak thrilling of the aether about me.

And, at the last I grew maddened with the sorrow of this thing, and the sense and knowledge of harm about the maid; and I stood upright upon my feet, and I raised my hands, and gave word and honour unto Naani through all the blackness of the night, that I would no more abide within the Mighty Pyramid to my safety, whilst she, that had been mine Own through Eternity, came to horror and destruction by the Beasts and Evil Powers of that Dark World. And I gave the word with my brain-elements, and bade her to be of heart; for that until I died I would seek her. But out of the Darkness there came naught but the silence.

Then I clothed me swiftly, and went up quickly to the Tower of Observation, that I might speak instant with the Master Monstruwacan; for my heart burned in me to intention, and to be doing speedily that which I had set upon myself to do.

And I came to the Master Monstruwacan, and told all to him; and how that I did mean no more to suffer in quiet and to no end; but to make adventure into the Night Land, that I find Naani, or perchance find a swift peace from this my long troubling.

Now, when the Master Monstruwacan heard that which I had to say, it sat heavily upon him, and he besought me long and many times that I refrain from this thing; for that none might achieve so great a task; but that I should be lost in my Youth before many days were gone by. Yet to all his speech I said naught, save that this thing was laid upon me, and even as I had promised, so should I make to act.

And in the ending, the Master Monstruwacan perceived that I was set to this thing, and not to be moved; and he did put it to me how that I had grown to leanness, with so much troubling, and that I should have wisdom to wait awhile, that I put on my full strength.

But even as I was, so would I go; and this I told to him, gently; and showed how that the thing was meet and helpful to the safety of my soul; for that my strength was still in me; yet was I sweeter in spirit because that I stood lean and pure, and much poor dross and littleness had been burned from me; so that fear was not in me. And all do I lay to the count of my love, which doth purify and make sweet and fearless the human heart.

And because I was even as I have said, so was I the less in trouble of the Forces of Evil; for long and sore had been my Preparation of Spirit; and I wot that none had ever gone forth into the Darkness, so long withholden from that which doth weaken and taint the spirit.

And here let me set down how that the Three Days of Preparation, which were Proper to those that willed to go forth into the Night Land, had for their chief aim the cleansing of the spirit; so that the Powers of Evil did have a less ableness to harm.

But also it was, as I have said, that none should go forth in ignorance of the full dreadfulness of all that held the Night; for it was at the Preparation that there was made known certain horrors that were not told unto the young; and of horrid mutilations, and of abasements of the soul, that did shake the heart with fear, if but they were whispered into the hearing. And these things were not set down in any book that might be lightly come by; but were warded and safe locked by the Master of The Preparation, in the Room of Preparation.

And, indeed, when I did hear that which presently I was to hear, I had wonder in my heart that ever any went out into the Night Land; or that ever the Room of Preparation should have other than Students that meant not to go forth, but only to achieve some knowledge of that which hath been done, and mayhaps shall be once again.

Yet, in verity, is this but the way of the human heart; and hath always been, and will be so in all the years, for ever. For to adventure is the lust of Youth; and to leave Safety is the natural waywardness of the spirit; and who shall reprove or regret; for it were sorrowful that this Spirit of Man should cease. Yet must it not be thought that I do uphold fightings to the death or to mutilation, *between man and man*; but rather do sorrow upon this thought.

Now, when the morrow came, if thus I shall speak of that which was outwardly even as the night, though changing alway within the Mighty Pyramid, I went unto the Room of Preparation; and the Door was closed upon me; and I underwent the Full Preparation; that I might have full power and aid to come to success through all the terror of the Night Land.

And three days and three nights did I abide within the Room of Preparation; and upon the fourth day was mine armour brought unto me; and the Master of the Preparation stood away from me, silent and with sorrow upon his face; but touching me not, neither coming anigh to aid me; nor having any speech with me; for none might crowd upon me, or cause me to answer.

And, presently, was I clad with the grey armour; and below the armour a close-knit suit of special shaping and texture, to have the shape of the armour, and that I might not die by the cold of the Night Land. And I placed upon me a scrip of food and drink, that might keep the life within me for a great time, by reason of its preparation; and this lay ready to me, with the armour, and was stitched about with the Mark of Honour; so that I knew loving women thus to speed me.

And when all was done and made ready, I took up the Diskos, and bowed in silence to the Master of the Preparation; and he went towards the door, and opened it; and signalled that the People stand back; so that I might go forth untouched. And the People stood back; for many had crowded to the door of the Room of Preparation, so that I knew how that my story must be to the heart of all, in all the Cities of the Great Redoubt; for to come unbidden anigh that Door was against the Lesser Law, and that any erred in this matter, betokened much.

And I went out through the Door; and there was a mighty lane of people unto the Great Lift. And about the Great Lift, as I went downwards, did the countless millions stand; and all in a great silence; but having dear sympathy in their souls; yet loyal unto my safety, in that none in all the Mighty Pyramid did make speech unto me, or call out aught. And as I went downward through the miles, lo! all the aether of the world seemed to be surged with the silent prayers and speedings of those quiet multitudes.

And I came at last unto the Great Gate; and behold the dear Master Monstruwacan did stand in full armour, and with the Diskos, to do me honour, with the Full Watch, as I went forth. And I looked at him, quietly, and he looked unto me, and I bent my head to show respect; and he made silent salute with the Diskos; and afterwards I went onwards towards the Great Gateway.

And they made dim the lights in the Great Causeway, that there should no glare go forth into the Land, when the Gate was opened; and behold, they opened not the lesser gate within the greater, for me; but did honour my journey, in that they swung wide the Great Gate itself, through which a monstrous army might pass. And there was an utter silence all about the Gate; and in the hushed light

the two thousand that made the Full Watch, held up each the Diskos, silently, to make salute; and humbly, I held up the Diskos reversed, and went forward into the Dark.

VI THE WAY THAT I DID GO

Now I went forward for a space, and took heed not to look backwards; but to be strong of heart and spirit; for that which did lie before me had need of all my manhood and courage of soul, that I come to the succour of that Maid afar in the darkness of the World, or meet my death proper, as it might need to be.

And thus did I go forward steadfastly, and conscious in all my being of the emotions of that parting from my mighty Home, and of the tenderness and wiseness that did underlie so much curbed rule and guidance.

And my heart was warm towards the Master Monstruwacan for that great honour, that he should come downward in armour to make one with the Full Watch, that he might uphold me to a lofty spirit at the moment of my going.

And all that time as I went forward, was the aether of the night about me, in tumult with the thoughts and blind wishings of the great millions I had but now left to my back.

And, presently, as I steadied somewhat upon my emotions, I was conscious of the exceeding coldness of the night air, and of the different taste of it upon my lungs and in the mouth; and it had, as it were, a wondrous keen sharpening upon my palate, and did fill the lips more in the breathing; so that it may be supposed it had more body within it than that air which did fill the plateau of the Thousandth City where was my home; for the air of every City was of difference, and the greater between one that was afar up and another nigh to the earth, as may be thought; so that many Peoples did migrate unto that level which gave them best healthfulness; but under rule, and with a guidance of quantities. And not all that were lacking of health; for, some are ever contrary.

And here let me set down that, within the deeps of the Fields, there was air utter varied and wonderful, that might charm one here and likewise sorrow another that were happier elsewhere; so that all might have suiting, did they but wander, and have Reason to companion them.

And thus did I go forward, full of new thoughts and olden memories, and fresh-breaking wonders; neither forgetting something of doubts and fears more than a little. And again was it most cunning strange to be out there in the Night Land—though not yet afar—where often had my fancies and imaginings led me; yet until that time never had I touched foot, in all that life, upon the outward earth. And this must be a wondrous quaint seeming thought to those of this present day.

And so came I, at last, nigh to the Circle that did go about the Redoubt; and presently I was come to it; and something astonished was I that it had no great bigness; for I had looked for this by *reasoning*; having always a mind to picture things as they might be truly, and hence coming sometimes to the wonder of a great truth; but odd whiles to errors that others had not made. And now, lo! I did find it but a small, clear tube that had not two inches of thickness; yet sent out a very bright and strong light, so that it seemed greater to the eye, did one but behold from a distance.

And this is but a little thing to set to the telling; yet may it give something of the newness of all; and, moreover, shall you have memory with me in this place, how that oft had I seen Things and Beast-Monsters peer over that same little tube of light, their faces coming forward out of the night.

And this had I seen as child and man; for as children, we did use to keep oft a watch by hours upon an holiday-time, through the great glasses of the embrasures. And we did always hope each to be that one that should first discover a monster looking inwards upon the Mighty Pyramid, across the shining of the Circle. And these to come oft; yet presently to slink away into the night; having, in verity, no liking for that light.

And pride had we taken of ourselves to perceive those monsters which had most of ugliness and horror to commend them; for, thereby did we stand to have won the game of watching, until such

time as a more fearsome Brute be discovered. And so went the play; yet with ever, it doth seem to me now, something of a half-known shudder to the heart, and a child's rejoicing unknowingly in that safety which had power to make light the seeming of such matters.

And this, also, is but a small matter; yet doth it bear upon the inwardness of my feelings; for the memories of all my youth and of the many Beasts that I had seen to peer across the Light, did come upwards in my mind in that moment; so that I did give back a little, unthinking of what I did; but having upon me the sudden imagining of that which might come out of the Dark, beyond.

And I to stand a little moment, and presently had grown free in my heart to have courage of farewell; and so did turn me at last to the viewing of that wondrous Home of the Last Millions of this World. And the sight was an astonishment and an uplifting, that indeed there was so mighty a thing in all the earth.

And well might be that there were Monsters and Forces gathered together about that Hill of Life, out of all the Darkness of the World; for the thing was as a Mighty Mountain that went up measureless into the night; and spread out upon the earth to the right and to the left of me, so that it did seem to hold all the world with its might.

And in the nearer slope were there three hundred thousand great embrasures, as well I did know; there being in all the four sides of the Redoubt, twelve hundred thousand embrasures, as was set out in the books of the schools, and upon the cover of Atlas-books as they still quaintly to be called, and many another place, as might be supposed.

And half a mile upward was the lowest tier of those great window-places, and above that, countless other tiers. And a great light came out from them into the darkness; so that I looked up into the night many miles, and yet did see them in shining rows; and did make separate each embrasure from its fellow for a great way. But there grew yet more, above in the mighty distance, so that they were lost in the upward space of the night, and did seem to me presently but as a constant, glimmering fire, that did shape a shining Peak into the blackness of the heavens, dwindling into the utmost height. And thus was that Everlasting Monument.

Then did it come to me that those little things, which I did see to cluster against the embrasures, were in truth the countless millions of the Mighty Redoubt; and this I could make out with some plainness in those lower embrasures, which were the more near to me than they above; for the Peoples were set against the light within, yet were as small things like unto insects, in that distance, and within so Huge a Bulk.

And I knew that they looked out upon me, and did watch through their spy-glasses. And I sent my gaze upwards again along that great Slope of grey metal, aye! upward again to where it strode glimmering into the Blackness, and so at last to the little star that did crown that Wonder of the World in the eternal night. And, for a little, I did stare towards that far light; for it came from within that Tower of Observation, where so lately I had spend my life; and I had knowledge within my heart that the dear Master Monstruwacan did bend the Great Spy-Glass upon me, through which so oft had I spied. And I raised the Diskos unto him, in salutation and farewell, though I saw him not at all through that vast space.

And my heart was very full; yet my soul but the stronger for it. And then, behold, I was aware of a murmur in the night, coming to me, dim and from afar off; and I saw the little shapes of the Peoples in the lower embrasures, in constant movement; and I knew upon the instant that the Multitudes did take that salute unto themselves, and cried out and waved to me their farewells, or to come back—as may be.

And, indeed, I was but a lonesome person looking up at that great mountain of metal and Life. And I knew that I had danger to realise my plight; and I stayed no more; but did raise the Diskos, reversed, as was but meet from one young man unto all the Millions.

And I looked swiftly upward through those eight great miles of night, unto that Final Light which did shine in the black heavens; so that my friend should know that I thought of him that was

beyond my sight, in that last moment. And it may be that the invisible millions that were far up in the night, in the Upper Cities, did take that also to be a meaning of farewell to themselves; for there came down out of the monstrous height, a far, faint murmur of sound, as of a vague wind up in the night.

Then did I lower the Diskos, and turn me about. And I breasted strangely against the Air Clog, and stept forward across the Circle, into the lonesomeness of the Night Land. And I looked no more behind; for that which was my Home did weaken my heart somewhat, to behold; so that I made determination that I look not again to my back, for a great while.

Yet, about me as I went, there was constant surging in the aether of the world; and it did tell unto me how that those, my people and kin, had continual mind of me, both in prayer and wishings, and in a perpetual watching. And the same gave to me a feeling as of being something companied; yet, in a time, it came to me that this disturbance of the aether should tell to some Evil Force how that I was there abroad in the Land. But how to stop this thing, who should have power? For, of truth, had I been among them to make a full explaining of the danger, they had been yet powerless to cease; for but to have such great multitudes a-think upon one matter, was to set a disturbance about, as should be most clear to all.

Now, at the beginning, I did walk outwards into the Night Land, somewhat blindly, and without sure direction; being intent only to put a good space to my back, that I might cure somewhat the ache which did weaken my heart at the first.

But, in awhile, I ceased somewhat from my overswiftness, and did put thought to my going. And I came quickly to reason that I should try a new way through the Land; for it might be that there was an over-watchfulness in that part which had been trod by the Youths.

And I began therewith to set this thought to the practice; and went not direct towards the North; but to the North and West; and so in the end to mean to circle around to the back of the North-West Watcher, and thence to the North of the Plain Of Blue Fire; and afterwards, as might be, have a true and straightway to the North; and by this planning come a long way clear of that House of Silence, which did put more fear upon me than all else that was horrid in the Land.

Yet, as all will see, this made to me a greater journey; though, in verity, it were better to go slowly and win to success, than to make a greater haste towards Destruction; which was, indeed, surely to be mine end, did I not go warily.

Now it may be thought upon with wonder, that I did go so assuredly to the North; but I went thiswise, part by an inward Knowing, and part come upon by much latter studying, within the Pyramid, of olden books; and by reasoning upon all things that I did observe, that had seemings of verity in them.

And because of this constant searching upon one matter, I had come, but a while back, upon a little book of metal, very strange and ancient, that had lain forgot in a hid place in the Great Library through ten hundred thousand years, maybe, or less or more, for all that I had knowing.

And much that was writ in the book was common knowledge, and set mostly to the count of fairy-tales and suchlike, even as we of this our age take not over-surely any belief in Myths of olden times. Yet had I always much liking for such matters, perceiving behind that outer shell which did win always so much unbelief, the kernel of ancient truths and happenings.

And thus was it, concerning this little book which I had made discovery of; for it told again, that which oft I had heard (even as we in this age, read of the Deluge) how that once, in a time monstrous far back from that, but utter future to this age of ours, the world did brake upwards in a vast earth-quaking, that did rend the world for a thousand miles.

And there came a mighty chasm, so deep that none might see the bottom thereof; and there rushed therein an ocean, and the earth did burst afresh with a sound that did shake all the cities of the world; and a great mist lay upon the earth for many days, and there was a mighty rain.

And, indeed, this was just so set in certain Histories of the Ancient World. Also, there was made reference to it, within some olden Records. Yet nowise to be taken with a serious mind, to the

seeming of the peoples of the Mighty Pyramid; but only as a quaint study for the Students, and to be set out in little tales that did entertain the nurseries; or, as it might be, wise men and the general.

Yet, there was this, about that small and peculiar book, that it did speak of many of these things, as it were that it did quote from the pens of those that did have actual witness; and set all out with a strange gravity, that did cause one to consider it as meant to be indeed the tellings of Truth, and to seem thiswise to have great difference from all that I had read before concerning those matters.

And there was, further, a part in the ending of the book, that did seem to be writ of a time that came afterwards, maybe an hundred thousand, and maybe a million years; but who shall say.

And therein it did tell of an huge and mighty Valley that did come out of the West, towards the South-East, and made turning thence Northwards, and was a thousand miles both ways. And the sides thereof were an hundred miles deep, and the Sun did stand in the Western end, and made a red gloom for a thousand miles. And in the bottom there were great seas; and beasts strange and awesome, and very plentiful.

Now this, as may be seen, was as the talk of Romance; yet did I turn my wits to their natural end, and made thus plain of it. For, in truth, I to have something of belief, and it to seem to me that in a bygone Eternity, when the world was yet light, as in my heart I knew to have been indeed a thing of verity, there was a great and wondrous earthquake.

And the earthquake did burst the world up, along a certain great curve where it had weakness; and there fell into the yawning furnace of the world, one of the great oceans; and immediately made of itself steam, and so brake upwards again, and tore the earth mightily in its swift uprising.

And thereafter there was a mist and confusion and rain upon the world.

And, indeed, all very seemly put; and not to be taken as a light tale.

Then, in that ending of the book, there was one that did write, having lived in a vast later age, when the Sun had come anigh to his dying, and the upward earth was grown quiet and cold and not good to live upon. And in that time the Mighty Chasm had been calmed by the weight of an Eternity, so that it was now a most deep and wondrous Valley, that did hold Seas and great Hills and Mountains; and in it were great forests of kinds, and Lands that were good and healthful; and Places given over to Fire, and to Steamings, and Sulphur Clouds; so that they held Poisons that had ill for Man.

And Great Beasts were there down in that far depth, that none might see ever, save by a strong spy-glass. And such there were in the Early World, and had now been bred in the Ending by those inward forces of Nature which did make the Valley a place of Good Warmth; so that there was, as it were, once more the Primal World born to give new birth unto such olden Monsters, and to others, new and Peculiar to that Age and Circumstance.

And all this, indeed, did the book give also; but constrained and difficult to take clearly to the heart, and not like to the wise plain speech of the early tellings; so that I must even set it out here in mine own speech.

And it did seem to me, by my reading, that Man had come at one time to a great softness of Heart and Spirit through many ages of over-ease. But that the World did come to coldness and unfriendliness, by reason of the Sun's slow ceasing.

And there was presently, in naturalness, a Race upon the earth that were hardy, and made to fight for their lives; and did perceive that the Mighty Valley that cut the World in twain, was a place of Warmth and Life; and so did make to adventure their bodies down that wondrous Height; and were many Ages coming safe to the Bottom; but did find safe places in the downward way where they built them Houses, and made to live, and begot them children; and these grew up to that life of constant and great climbings, and of hard workings upon The Road, which was the One Intent of that People; so that the book did speak of them always as The Road Makers.

And thus did they make downwards through the long years and the ages; and many generations did live and die, and saw not the reaching of the Road down into that Great Vale that lay so monstrous deep in the World.

But in the end they did come there with the Road; and they were very Hardy; and they did fight with the Monsters and slay many; and they built them many Cities, through great years in the Mighty Valley, and did make the Road from City unto City along that Great Valley, even unto the Bight of the Valley. And they found here a constant darkness and Shadow; for that the Sun could not make a shining around that Great Corner. Yet, even here they ceased not to make the Road; but took it around, and a mighty way unto the North; passing it among strange Fires and Pits that burned from out of the earth.

But there was presently, such a power and horror of Monsters and Evil Things in that Valley of Shadow, that the Road Makers were made to go Backwards into the Red Light which did fill the Westward Valley, and came from that low Sun.

And they went back unto their Cities; and lived there mayhaps an hundred thousand years; and grew wise and cunning in all matters; and their Wise People did make dealings and had experiment with those Forces which are Distasteful and Harmful unto Life; but they did this in Ignorance; for all that they had much wisdom; thinking only to Experiment, that they come to greater knowings. But they did open a way for those Forces; and much harm and Pity did come thereby. And then had all People to have Regret; yet too late.

Now, presently, when an hundred thousand years had gone, or it may be a greater space; there came slowly the utter twilight of the world, as the sun to die the more; so that presently it gave but an utter gloomy light. And there grew upon many of the Peoples of the Cities of the Valley, a strangeness and a wildness; so that strange things were done, that had been shameful to all in the Light. And there were wanderings, and consortings with strange outward beings, and presently, many Cities were attacked by monsters that did come from the West; and there was a Pandemonium.

Then was an Age of Sorrows and Fightings, and Hardenings of the Spirit and of the Heart, for all that were of good Fibre; and this did breed a Determined Generation; and there grew up into the World a Leader; and he took all the sound Millions; and did make a mighty Battle upon all Foulness and upon all that did harm and trouble them; and they drove their Enemies down the Valley, and up the Valley, and did utterly scatter and put them to flight.

Then did that Man call all his Peoples together; and did make it plain how that the Darkness grew upon the World, and that the Foul and dreadful Powers abroad, were like to be more Horrid when a greater Gloom came.

And he put to them that they Build a Mighty Refuge; and the Peoples did acclaim; and lo! there was built, presently, a Great House. But the Great House was not Proper; and that Man did take all the Peoples to Wander; and they came to the Bight; and there was built at last that Great and Mighty Pyramid.

Now this is the sense and telling of that book; and but late had I read it; and talked somewhat of it with my dear friend, the Master Monstruwacan; but not overmuch; for I had taken so sudden a mind to GO, that all else had dropped from about me. Yet, to us it did seem clear that there was no life in all the invisible upper world; and that, surely, that Great Road whereon the Silent Ones did walk, must be that same Road which the hardy Peoples of that age did make.

And it did seem wise to the Master Monstruwacan, and unto me, that if any should find the Lesser Redoubt, they must surely do so somewhere within the mighty Valley; but whether The Road that led into the West, where was the Place of the Ab-humans, should bring me to it, I had no knowing; nor whether it might lie on the Northward way. And I, maybe, to wander a thousand miles wrong; if, in truth, I were not into some dreadful trouble before.

And, indeed, no reason of value was there to give me hope that the Lesser Pyramid lay either to the West, or where the Road went North-ward, beyond the House of Silence. Yet I did so feel it to be somewhere to the North, that I had made a determination to search that way for a great distance, the first; and if I could not come upon aught, then I should have sober thought that it did lie Westward. But in the Valley someways, I had feeling of assurance that it must be; for it was plain that the telling

of the book was sound in its bottom sense; as might be seen; for how should any live in the utter bleak and deadly chill of the silent upper world that lay an hundred miles up in the night, hid and lost for ever.

And strange is it to think of those wondrous and mighty cliffs that girt us about, and yet were fast held from us in the dark; so that I had not known of them, save for the telling of that book; though, in truth, it had been always supposed that we lived in a great deep of the world; but, indeed, it was rather held in belief that we abode in the bed of some ancient sea, that did surely slope gradual away from us, and not go up abrupt and savage.

And here let me make so clear as I may that the general peoples had no clear thought upon any such matters; though there was something of it taught in the schools; yet rather this and that, of diverse conclusions, as it might be thinkings of the Teachers, after much study, and some ponderings. For one man, having a lack of imagining, would scoff, and another, maybe, to take it very staidly, but some would build Fancy upon the tellings of the Records, and make foolish and fantastic that which had groundings in Truth; and thus is it ever. But to the most Peoples of the Pyramid, there was no deep conviction nor thought of any great hid World afar in the darkness. For they gave attention and belief only to that which lay to their view; nor could a great lot come to imagine that there had been ever any other Condition.

And to them, it did seem right and meet that there should be strange things, and fires from the earth, and an ever-abiding night, and monsters, and matters hid and tangled much in mystery.

And very content were the most of them; though some had in them the yeast of imaginings, or the pimples of fancy upon them, and to these there seemed many possibilities; though the first to read out to sanity; and the second, to expect and have speech towards much that was foolish or to no purpose.

And of these vague believings of the peoples, have I made hint before, and need not have much trouble to it now. Save that, with the children, as is ever the way, those olden tales had much believing; and the simplicity of the Wise did mate with the beliefs of the Young; and between them did lie the Truth.

And so did I make speed towards the North, having a strong surety in my heart and mind that there were but two ways to my search; for without of the Valley, afar up in the dead lonesomeness of the hidden world, was a cold that was shapen ready to Death, and a lacking, as I must believe, of the sweet, needful air that yet did lie in plenty in that deep place of the earth. So that, surely, the mighty Valley somewheres to hold that other Redoubt.

Yet, as I have said, I went not direct to my journey, but otherwise, for those sound reasons which I did set down a time back.

VII THE NIGHT LAND

Now, as I went towards the North and West, I steered me warily for a great while, that I come safe of that Great Watcher of the North-West. And as I made forward, I put thought to all matters which must concern me; so far as I had imagining to see. And first I did consider the speed that I should keep; and found presently that I did well to be moderate; for that I had before me a great and mighty journey; and indeed, who might speak knowingly of the end thereof?

And another matter, I did arrange; for I would make the times of my goings forward, and the times of mine eatings and sleepings all to a wise and regular fashion; that, thereby, I might go a great way, with the less harm to my body; so that I should be strong when the need did come for my strength. And I made in the end that I should eat and drink, at every sixth hour, and at the eighteenth hour sleep me until the twenty-fourth.

And by this means did I eat thrice in that time, and have six hours of sleep. And this seemed very good to me, and I did strive always to manage thus in all my great journeying in the Night Land. Yet, as may be supposed, there were times oft and many when I must watch without ceasing, and leave my slumber unto the future; for the Land was full of grim and dreadful Perils.

And, as doth be human, I brake my rule straightway in the beginning; for I ceased not to walk for one-and-twenty hours, hiding and creeping, as the need did be in those places that were like to show me unto the Watcher; and when I did think upon food, it did sicken me; so that I would eat by and by, as I made it within my thoughts.

But when one-and-twenty hours had gone, I grew very weary and something faint; and was forced that I look about for some place where I might have rest. And, in a little while, I did see, away off, a small fire-hole, the like of which I had passed odd times even so early. And I made to come nigh to that part; for there would be warmth from the chill of the Night Land, and mayhaps a place dry and convenient to my slumber.

And when I came anigh, I saw that it was a cheerful place, as it might be said, amid so much gloom; for the hole was but a few paces wide, and full of a dull, glowing fire, that did bubble somewhat, and throw off a small sulphur-smoke. And I sat me down, at no great way, and did place the Diskos on the rock to my hand.

And I moved not, awhile; but was aweary, so that I had not the courage to eat, neither to drink; but must turn me and look back to the Mighty Pyramid; and, in truth, though I had come a very good space, yet was I so anigh to it, that I was both cheered and put out of heart; for it did seem close upon me, by reason of its greatness, so that I, who had journeyed a hard and weariful way, was shaken with the greatness of the task that was upon me.

Yet was this but one side of my heart; for it was good to feel the nearness of my Mighty Home; and I knew that there did countless millions make watch upon me, as I sat; yet did I make no sign; for it is not meet to make a constant farewell; but to GO. Yet was it very strange to be thus near, and to show such behaviour as were proper to one afar from all humanity. But so it was that I ordered my ways; for it did seem proper to me; yet was I happy to know that the dear Master Monstruwacan must, time and oft, have spied upon me through the Great Spy-Glass; and mayhaps did watch me in that moment.

And it grew in me that I did act weakly to hold off from mine Vittles, and showed foolishness before my kind friend afar; and I did ope my scrip, and take therefrom three tablets, the which I chewed and did eat; for this was a strong food, treated that it had but small bulk. Yet were they not filling to the belly; and I made that I would drink well, that I might feel that something was therein.

And to this end, I shook from a strong and especial tube, a dust; and I caught the dust within a little cup; and the air did make an action upon that dust, as it were of chemistry; and the dust did boil and make a fizzing in the cup, and rose up and filled it with a liquid that was of simple water; yet very strange to see come that way; but ordinary after a time.

And in this way, as might be seen, had I such food and drink in but a little scrip, that might keep life within me for a great time. Yet was it a way of discomfort, and lacking to the mouth and to the belly; but a sufficient thing unto the need of the body, and good matter for a thankful heart, in that dark and hungry Land.

Now, when I had eaten, I did go over in their order, those things which I did carry; for there was, beside the Diskos and that scrip of food, a pouch that did contain matters various. And these, I did look into; and afterward did take out a small compass that I had been give by the Master Monstruwacan, so that I might find of its workings without the Great Redoubt; and, he had said unto me, that it might be that I should pass far off into the Night Land, and lose the Mighty Pyramid amid so great a Country and so plentiful a Darkness. Then, perchance, if that ancient principle did still lurk within the machine, though turned no more to the North, but unto the Pyramid, then should it guide my feet Homeward out of the Everlasting Night, and thus have once more that ancient use which, as I do know, is common unto this age.

And this was a very cunning thing to have with me, if but it held service to the Earth-Current, and a rare thing, which the Master Monstruwacan did make with his own hands and much skill and pains, from an olden one that had place within the Great Museum, and concerning which I have told somewhat, before this place.

And I set the thing upon the ground; but it had no certain way with it; but did spin and waver constantly, and this I made to consider, and remembered that I was yet above that part where, afar in the earth did spread the greatness of the Underground Fields; and I was, haply, but a little way off from the "Crack"; though a mighty way above.

And it pleased me to wonder whether the dear Master Monstruwacan did behold how that I made test with the compass; for the light was good from the fire-hole; and the Great Spy-Glass had a great strength. Yet, had I no certainty; for, as I did know, from much watchings, there was no surety in the searching of the Land, by the Glass; for there was oft plainness where you did think surely none should see, and anon a dullness where might be thought that the sight went gaily. And this may be plain to all; for the wavering of the lights from the strange fires was not to be accounted to rule; but made a light here, and a darkness there, and then did change about, oddly. Moreover, there were smokes and mists that did come upwards from the earth, in this place and in that; and had somewhiles a greatness; but oft were small, and did lurk low, and had no power but to confuse the sight.

And, presently, I did put by the compass in my pouch, and made to compose myself unto sleep. But here would I now set down how that, in the end, after I had gone many days' journeyings outward from the Mighty Pyramid, I did indeed find it to draw the Northward part of the needle unto it; and this was a comfort and a pleasure to my spirit; moreover, if ever I did get back, as I did think, it would be a matter for great interest unto the Master Monstruwacan; yet, in verity, were there other matters that should hold him more; for he was right human, as all should know.

And, moreover, concerning this same compass, I did find a fresh thing; for, after a yet greater time, as I shall set out in a due place, if I do but remember, which doubt is ever my fear to fret me, I came a mighty way from the Redoubt, and, lo! fearing that I might indeed lose that, My Great Home, in the Darkness of the World, I did pull out that strange wonder of the needle, that I might have comfort by its homeward pointing. And I did discover a new power in the night; for the machine did point no more directwards unto the Great Redoubt; but was a point unto the Westwards; so that I had knowledge that some Great Power afar in the Darkness of the World did sway upon it; and I had a childlike wonder that this might be, in truth, that same Power of the North, of which the books, and my Memory-Dreams did tell. And, indeed, no doubt should there be upon this matter; yet who might

not have doubt in that time, that they should perceive after an eternity, that ancient Northward Force swaying that small servant unto an olden obedience. And it was, as it were, a revealing unto me, how that to know within the brain is one matter; but to have knowledge within the heart is another; for I had always known concerning this Northward Force; but yet had not known with the true meaning of Knowledge.

And yet one other matter there was to cause doubt, at that moment of this new knowing; for it came to me that maybe the power of that Lesser Redoubt did begin to act upon the machine, even as the Earth-Current of the Great Pyramid did hold yet a strong drawing upon the needle; and were this so, then did I not surely begin to stand anigh unto my Journey's end; for that less power of the Lesser Redoubt could have no impudence to pull, save that I had come to a closeness with it.

Yet, in truth, as I do now have knowledge, it was the North that drew; and I do seem to make a great telling about this little matter; but how else shall I show to you mine inward mind, and the lack of knowledge and likewise the peculiar knowings that did go to the making of that time, and the Peoples thereof, which is but to say the same thing twice over.

And now, as I did say, I made to compose myself for sleep; and to this end, I took a cloak-matter which did cross my shoulder and hip, and wrapt it about me, and lay down there in the darkness of the Night, by that strange fire-hole.

And I lay the Diskos beside me, within the cloak; for it was, indeed, my companion and friend in bitter need; so that I had pleasure to feel the strange thing anigh to me. And as I did lie there, in those moments that do drowse the Soul, as it were that they do proceed as breath out of the mouth of Sleep, I had a half-knowing that the aether did surge about me; and I doubt not but that there had watched my every doing, many of the Millions, and had been humanly stirred, at my commending of my spirit unto sleep; and thus did shake the aether of the world about me, with their unity of sympathy.

And, mayhaps, I had some little knowing of this thing, as I did pass, drowsy, into slumber; and it is surely like that I slept the better for it. Moreover, I was wondrous tired and worn, and thus did sleep very strong and heavy; yet I mind me that my last dim thinkings were upon that sweet maid I did go to find. And in slumber did I have speech with her in dreams, and a strange happiness about me, and all seeming to be touched by fairy-light, and freed from the sorrow of life.

And it was from a sweet and lovely sleeping, such as this, that I was waked suddenly by a great and mighty sound; and I came instant to a possessing of my senses; and I knew that the mighty Voice of the Home-Call did go howling across the Night. And, swift and silent, I slid the cloak from about me, and took the haft of that wondrous Diskos into mine hand.

And I did look towards the Pyramid, quickly, for a message; for I had a sure knowledge that there had a great Need arisen, and that some Terror came towards me out of the Dark; else they had never waked all the Night Land to a knowing that an human was abroad out of the Mighty Refuge.

And even as I did peer towards the Great Redoubt, I could not abide to keep my gaze entire that way; but did take a large and fearful look all about me; yet could make to see nothing; and so did stare, eager and anxious, afar into the upper blackness of the Night, where did shine that Final Light of the Tower of Observation; and the same while crouched, and holding the Diskos, and making to glance across my shoulders, and to watch for the message, and all in the same moment.

And then, afar upwards in the prodigious height, I did see the great, and bright and quick darting flashes of a strange green fire, and did know that they spelled to me in the Set-Speech a swift warning that a grey monster, that was a Great Grey Man, had made scent of me in the dark, and was even in that moment of time, crawling towards me through the low moss-bushes that lay off beyond the fire-hole to my back. And the message was sharp; and bade me to leap into the bushes unto my left; and to hide there; so that I might chance to take the thing to an advantage.

And, as may be thought, they had scarce flashed the tale unto me; but I was gone in among the shadows of a clump of the moss-bush that did grow anigh; and I sweat with a strange terror, and a cold and excited shaking of the heart; yet was my spirit set strong to conquer.

And lo! as I did crouch there, hidden, I saw something come very quiet out of the bushes that did grow beyond the fire-hole; and it was great, and crept, and was noways coloured but by greyness in all its parts. And the glare from the fire-hole did seem to trouble it; so that it looked, laying its head to the ground, and spying along the earth, in a strange and Brutish fashion; that it might oversee the glare of the fire-hole. Yet, I doubt that it saw beyond the fire with plainness; for, in a moment, it crept swift in among the bushes again, and came out towards the edge of the fire-hole in another place; and this it did thrice unto my left, and thrice unto my right; and every time did lay its head to the earth, and spy along; and did hunch its shoulders, and thrust forward the jaw horridly and turn the neck, as a very nasty beast might go, wanton.

Now, as you may think, this manner of the Beast-Man did shake my courage mightily; for I did think each time that it did go inward among the moss-bushes, that it had made discovery of me, and would make to take me in the back, from out of the dark of the bushes; and this was an uncomfortable thing to consider, as others might think also, had any been there in the bush with me. And then, in truth, did that same swift sense of mine Hearing, prove helpful to my saving; for, behold, the thing did go back into the moss-bushes, after that last coming out; and did seem to make as it had made a failing to discover me, and had no further intent, save to return unto the Night; and I had this thought truly in mine heart, and for maybe a minute; and then, lo! within my soul a voice did speak plain, and did warn me that the thing did make a great compass among the moss-bushes about the fire-hole, having made discovery of me; and it did go warily to take me in the back, from the other side.

Now, when I heard this voice speak within my spirit, I had knowledge that the dear Master Monstruwacan made watch from the Tower of Observation, and did send the speech with his brain-elements, having in mind that I had the Night-Hearing. And I trusted the speech; for in the same moment of time there did beat all about me in the Night the solemn throb of the Master-Word, as that it had been added with speed, to give instant assurance. And I leapt quick from that clump of the moss-bush, unto another, and crouched, and made a watch all about me; and kept the ears of my spirit open, knowing that the Master Monstruwacan did also watch all, for me.

And, suddenly, I saw a little moving of a bush that grew to the back of those bushes in which I had been hid; and there came out of the bush that moved, a great grey hand, and moved the moss of the clump where I had been, as it were that something peered out of the moving bush. And there followed the great grey head of the Grey Man, and the head went into the clump of the moss-bush where I had been.

And I knew that I must strike now; and I leapt, and smote with the Diskos; and the thing fell upon its side, and the great grey legs came out of the hither bushes, and twitched and drew upwards; but the head remained in the bush where I had been hid. And I stood away from the thing whilst it died; and in mine hand the Diskos did spin and send forth fire; as it were that it did live, and did know that it had slain a great and horrid monster.

And presently the Grey Man was dead; and I went away from those bushes, unto the far side of the fire-hole. And I stood with the Diskos held high and spinning and sending out fire, that they within the Mighty Pyramid might know that I had slain the Beast-Man; for it might be that it lay too much in the shadow for them to look upon.

But the Master Monstruwacan spoke not again to me; for, indeed, it was not meet to do so, except it might save me from a sure danger; for, as you may know from my past tellings, there were Powers of the Night Land that did hearken unto such matters; and it was like enough that there had been overmuch done, even thus, for my further safety. Yet the thing could not be helped.

And now that I was a little calmed, and eased from my fear, I could know that all that the aether of the night was disturbed by the gladness of the millions within the Great Redoubt; so that it was plain how great a multitude had given note unto the fight; and their hearts to beat in sweet sympathy and natural fear; so that I did feel companied and befriended; though, as it may be thought, something shaken yet about the heart.

Now, in a little time, I did gather unto me my wits and had myself to order; and I looked to see how the hours did go, and I found that I had surely slumbered through ten hours. And I reproached myself; for, indeed, I had slept oversound by reason of my having lacked a regular way and time, as I had with a proper wisdom made to be my rule. And I resolved that I would obey the wit of my Reason in all the future time, and make to eat and rest in due season, as you will wot that I did before intend.

Then, with a self-reproachful heart, I went around the small fire-hole, and caught up my cloak and other matters. And I turned me towards the Mighty Pyramid, and did look once upwards along all the great slope, where it did go measureless into the far blackness of the Everlasting Night; and I made no salutation; for I had so resolved, as you will know; moreover, I desired not to call forth any unneedful disturbance of the aether of the world, which indeed must be, did I make to stir the emotions of the Millions.

And I turned me then away, and went off into the night, going swift and cautious, and bearing the Diskos cunningly and almost, as it were, with a love for that strange and wondrous weapon that had so befriended me, and slain the foul Grey Man with one stroke. And I had feeling that it did know me, and had a comradeship for me; and I doubt none will understand this; save, it might be, they of the olden days that did carry one strong sword always. Yet was the Diskos more than the sword; for it did in truth seem to live with the fire and the flame of the Earth-Current that did beat within it.

And it was well acknowledged within the Great Redoubt, that none might touch the Diskos of another; for that the thing went crustily, as it might be said, in the hands of a stranger; and if any made foolishness of this knowledge, and did persist much to such an handling, or making to use, the same would presently act clumsy with the weapon, and come to an hurt; and this was a sure thing, and had been known maybe an hundred thousand years; or perchance a greater time.

And by this it doth seem wise to believe that there did grow always an affinity between the nature of the man—which doth, as ever, include the woman—and the Diskos that he did use in his Practice; and because of this known thing, and that the place would otherwise be lumbered with olden weapons of those that did die, it was a Law and Usage that there was placed with the Dead, the Diskos of the Dead, there upon The Last Road in the Country Of Silence, and was thus made to give back unto the Earth-Current, the power that did lie in it. And this doth seem to a careless thinker, as it were that I told once again those olden customs of the Ancient Folk; but this is otherwise, and had a sound reason to it; yet, if you do so believe, I doubt not but that a right human sentiment was something at the bottom, which is proper; for it is meet that Love should mate with Wisdom to mother Comfort in our sorrows; and it is a warm thing to do aught for our dead; and none may say nay to this.

Now, as I did go onwards into the Night Land, looking ever to this shadow and to that, it may be conceived how my heart would stir with swift fear, at this and that; and that my body would oft quiver to leap aside; and as swift discover that naught assailed.

And so did I go forward, and always with imaginings and wonders concerning what manner of uncouth Being or Brute might come out of the darknesses all about. Yet, in all that time, there was a certain proudness of the heart, that I did come safe out of the power of the Grey Man, and did surely slay him. But, truly, it were well that the praise be considered, and not overmuch given unto me; for I had died as I slept, but that they of the Great Redoubt, had made a watch over me, and waked me unto my saving.

Now, presently, as I walked, I grew something faint, and had knowledge that I did foolishly; for, indeed, I should have eat after my fight; yet may I be forgiven for this forgetting, in that I had been much shaken and put about.

And I sat me down in a little clear place among the bushes, and did eat three of the tablets, and did once more shake forth the dust that did turn in the air to a natural water by a proper and natural chemistry of these matters. And after I had eat, I sat a little while, and did think, and did look upwards at the great slope of the Pyramid in the night; and all the time did I listen with mine

ears and with my spirit; and kept the Diskos across my knees, and looked this way and that, very frequent; but nothing came anigh.

And so I rose presently, and went onwards, and walked for six hours towards the North and the West. And I made much to the West, for a little, that I might come clear of the North-West Watcher. Yet, after a space, I made to do foolishly; for I changed my mind about, and kept something more towards the North, so that I should have a surer sight of that Monster.

And this was, in truth, a rash and naughty thing to consider; for if I were but seen, then should that grim Brute make a signal unto the Evil Powers, and I be met swiftly with destruction. But surely the heart is a strange and wayward thing, and given to quick fears, and immediately unto great and uncountable rashnesses. And so I did go forward unwisely to the Northward of a safe and proper going; and it may be that an influence was upon me, and drew me thatwards; but who shall say.

Now, a great time I walked, and made a halt upon every sixth hour, and did eat and drink, and look a little unto the monstrous towering of the Great Redoubt; and afterwards make strong mine heart, and go forward again. And always I did go warily, and chiefly among the low moss-bush; but sometimes out upon stony ground, and oft across places where sulphur did puff somewhat from the ground in a low smoke, very strong in the nostrils and not liked inwardly.

And as I made onwards, I looked always to my right and to my left, and anon to the rear; yet made a constant observation of the Mighty Watcher, that I did begin to draw nigh unto. And oft did I stoop to crawl, and my hands did bleed somewhat; but after I was troubled so, I put on the great gloves that made complete the grey armour, and so was shod proper to such journeying.

And, presently, when eighteen hours did have passed since that my sudden awakening to the peril of the Grey Man, I did search about for a place to slumber; for I would keep wisely unto my ruling, and go not over long lacking of sleep; and by this planning I should be the less like to sleep oversound, and so should set my spirit to listen whilst I did sleep; and by so much as my spirit should serve me with faith, should I have safety. And this thing is plain, and wants not more to the saying thereof.

And I came presently unto a sudden place where the land did go downwards brokenly, as that it had been burst a great while gone by the inward fires; and I looked downwards over the edge of that place, and went round about it, and did see presently a ledge upon the far side, that was difficult to come upon; yet a place of some little safety to any that might go down to it; for it was awkward to see, and did any monster seek to come at me, I should have chance of warning; and might go downwards a greater way in time to my salvation.

And by this determination, I abode; and came down to that place with labour; but was cheerful of heart that I had found so sure a shelter. And I eat my three tablets, and drank the water that I did get from the powder. And so made to compose my body to sleep. Yet, at this time, a thought did come to me, and I made calculation afresh; and laughed somewhat at that my poor counting; for, indeed, I had thought to eat but thrice in the twenty and four hours; yet by my arranging, I was made, indeed, to eat four times, as you shall see immediately by a little thought. And this thing came more strong upon my spirit than any might think; for I did eat overmuch for the lasting of the food; though, in verity, it was but little to my belly; as you must all think, and have sympathy for my discomfort.

And I considered a little, and had determined that I should afterwards in my journeying, eat but two of the tablets to my meal; and this was a wise thought, and like much wisdom, a discomposing thing. But so it was, and I set it down that you may know the arranging of my ways at that time.

Now, in all this while of meditation, I had been setting my cloak about me, and was fast set to my sleeping; for I had walked a weary way. And I lay me down upon my left side, with my back to the rock, which did overhang me something above; so that I was contented to feel hid from things that might pass by in the Night. And I had the cloak about me, and the Diskos close against my breast, within the cloak, and my head upon my pouch and upon my scrip.

And as I lay thus a moment easeful, I could see that so mighty was the uprising of the Great Pyramid that it was not hid from me even thus, but did stand upward into the night, and did shine, and was plain to be seen above the further edge of that deep place where I did lie.

And I fell upon sleep, looking upward at that Final Light, where, as might be, the Master Monstruwacan did bend the Great Spy-Glass upon my lonesomeness, as I lay there upon the ledge.

And this was a thought of sweet comfort upon which to slumber; the which I did; but my spirit lay wakeful within my breast, and did listen through the night; and harked for all evil matters and things that did make to come anigh. But also my spirit did whisper unto Naani as I went into sleep; and so passed I into dreams.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.