

# My Talks with Dean Spanley



By Lord Dunsany:

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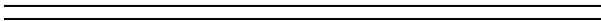
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Preface,  
Chapter: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

MY TALKS  
WITH DEAN SPANLEY  
*ALSO BY LORD DUNSANY*

THE GODS OF PEGANA  
TIME AND THE GODS  
THE SWORD OF WELLERAN  
A DREAMER'S TALES  
THE BOOK OF WONDER  
FIVE PLAYS  
FIFTY-ONE TALES  
TALES OF WONDER  
PLAYS OF GODS AND MEN  
TALES OF WAR  
UNHAPPY FAR-OFF THINGS  
TALES OF THREE HEMISPHERES  
THE CHRONICLES OF RODRIGUEZ  
IF  
PLAYS OF NEAR AND FAR  
THE KING OF ELFLAND'S DAUGHTER  
ALEXANDER AND THREE SMALL PLAYS  
THE CHARWOMAN'S SHADOW  
THE BLESSING OF PAN  
SEVEN MODERN COMEDIES  
FIFTY POEMS  
THE TRAVEL TALES OF MR. JOSEPH JORKENS  
THE CURSE OF THE WISE WOMAN  
MR. JORKENS REMEMBERS AFRICA  
UP IN THE HILLS  
RORY AND BRAN

“When we had hunted the moon enough we came back  
through the wood”

MY TALKS  
WITH DEAN  
SPANLEY

BY  
LORD DUNSANY



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## PREFACE

THAT there are passages in Dean Spanley's conversation that have sometimes jarred on me, the reader will readily credit. But the more that his expressions have been removed from what one might have expected of a man in his position, or indeed any member of my Club, the more they seemed to me to guarantee his sincerity. It would have been easy enough for him to have acted the part that it is his duty to play; but difficult, and I think impossible, to have invented in such meticulous detail the strange story he told me. And for what reason? Upon the authenticity of Dean Spanley's experience I stake my reputation as a scientific writer. If he has deluded me in any particular let scientific bodies reject not only these researches, but any others that I may make hereafter. So sure am I of Dean Spanley's perfect veracity.

Should doubt be expressed of a single page of these talks, and the case against it be made with any plausibility, it is probable that I shall abandon not only this line of research, but that my Investigations into the Origins of the Mentality of Certain Serious Persons, the product of years of observation, may never even be published.

## CHAPTER 1

WERE I to tell how I came to know that Dean Spanley had a secret, I should have to start this tale at a point many weeks earlier. For the knowledge came to me gradually; and it would be of little interest to my readers were I to record the hints and guesses by which it grew to a certainty. Stray conversations gradually revealed it, at first partly overheard from a little group in a corner of a room at the Olympus Club, and later addressed directly to myself. And the odd thing is that almost always it was what Dean Spanley did not say, rather than any word he uttered, a checking of speech that occurred suddenly on the top of speculations of others, that taught me he must be possessed of some such secret as nobody else, at any rate outside Asia, appears to have any inkling of. If anyone in Europe has studied the question so far, I gladly offer him the material I was able to glean from Dean Spanley, to compare and check with his own work. In the East, of course, what I have gathered will not be regarded as having originality.

I will start my story then, on the day on which I became so sure of some astonishing knowledge which Dean Spanley kept to himself, that I decided to act upon my conviction. I had of course cross-examined him before, so far as one can cross-examine an older man in brief conversation in a rather solemn club, but on this occasion I asked him to dine with me. I should perhaps at this point record the three things that I had found out about Dean Spanley: the first two were an interest in transmigration, though only shown as a listener, greater than you might expect in a clergyman; and an interest in dogs. Both these interests were curiously stressed by his

almost emphatic silences, just when it seemed his turn to speak upon either of these subjects. And the third thing I chanced to find was that the Dean, though at the club a meagre drinker of wine, was a connoisseur of old port. And it was this third interest of the Dean's that is really the key to the strange information that I am now able to lay before the public. Well then, after many days, during which my suspicions had at first astonished me, and then excitedly ripened, I said to Dean Spanley in the reading-room of the Club, "Of course the difficulty about transmigration is that nobody ever yet remembered having lived a former life."

"H'm," said the Dean.

And there and then I asked him if he would dine with me, giving as my reason what I knew to be the only one that would have any chance of bringing him, my wish to have his advice upon some vintage port that had been left me by an aunt, and which had been given to her by Count Donetschau a little before 1880. The port was as good as I had been able to buy, but I doubt if he would have drunk it on that account without any name or history, any more than he would have spoken to a man who was dressed well enough, but who had not been introduced to him.

"Count Donetschau?" he said a little vaguely.

"Count Shevenitz-Donetschau," I answered.

And he accepted my invitation.

It was a failure, that dinner. I discovered, what I should have known without any experiment, that one cannot make a rather abstemious dean go past the point at which the wit stands sentry over the tongue's utterance, merely by giving him port that he likes. He liked the port well enough, but nothing that I could say made him take a drop too much of it.

Luckily I had not given myself away, had not said a word to let him see what I was after. And in a month I tried again. I said I found some port of a different vintage, hidden among the rest, and would value his opinion as to which was the better. And he accepted; and this time I had my plan.

Dinner was light, and as good as my cook could make it. Then came the vintage port, three glasses the same as last time and no more, except for half a glass of the old kind for sake of comparison, and after his three and a half glasses came my plan.

“I have a bottle of imperial Tokay in the cellar,” I said.

“Imperial what!” said the Dean.

“Imperial Tokay,” I said.

“*Imperial* Tokay,” he repeated.

“Yes,” I said. For I had been able to get the loan of one from a friend who in some way had become possessed of half a dozen of this rare wine, that until a little while ago was only uncorked by command of Emperors of Austria. When I say the loan of a bottle, I mean that I had told my friend, who was totally unscientific, that there was something I wanted to draw out of this dean, and that I saw no other way of doing it than to offer him a wine, when he had come to his ordinary limit of drinking, so exciting that he would go further from that point, and that anything left in the bottle, “after you have made your dean drunk”, as he put it, would be returned to him. I really think that the only reason he gave me the priceless bottle was for a certain unholy joy that his words implied. I doubt if my researches, which without that imperial Tokay would have been impossible, will be of any interest to him. Well, the imperial Tokay was brought in, and I poured out a glass for Dean Spanley. He drank it off at once.

I don't know if a dean has a different idea of Heaven, some clearer vision of it, than the rest of us. I shall never know. I can only guess from what I saw in the eyes of Dean Spanley as that imperial Tokay went down.

"Will you have another glass?" I asked.

"I never take more than three glasses usually," he replied.

"Oh, port doesn't count," I answered.

He had now had four and a half glasses that evening, and had just come to a point at which such remarks as my last, however silly it may seem here, appear to have wisdom. And, as I spoke, I poured into his glass that curious shining wine, that has somewhat the taste of sherry strangely enchanted. It was now beside him, and we spoke of other things. But when he sipped the Tokay, I said to him rather haltingly, "I want to ask you about a future life."

I said it haltingly, because, when two people are speaking, if one of them lacks confidence the other is more apt to assume it. Certainly Spanley did. He replied, "Heaven. Undoubtedly Heaven."

"Yes, ultimately of course," I said. "But if there were anything in the theories one sometimes hears, transmigration and all that, I was wondering if that might work first."

There was a certain look of caution yet on his face, and so I went rambling on, rather than leave a silence in which he would have to answer, and by the answer commit himself to concealment of all I wanted to know. "I mean," I said, "going to other lives after this one, animals and all that, and working upwards or downwards in each incarnation, according to whether or not; you know what I mean."

And then he drained the glass and I poured out another; and, sipping that almost absently, the look of caution went, and I saw instead so beautiful a contentment reigning there in its place, flickering as it seemed with the passage of old reminiscences, that I felt that my opportunity must be come, and there and then I said to him: “You see I’ve been rather fond of dogs; and, if one chanced to be one of them in another incarnation, I wonder if there are any hints you could give me.”

And I seem to have caught the right memory as it floated by on waves of that wonderful wine, for he answered at once: “Always go out of a room first: get to the door the moment it’s opened. You may not get another chance for a long time.”

Then he seemed rather worried or puzzled by what he had said, and cleared his throat and searched, I think, for another topic; but before he had time to find one I broke in with my thanks, speaking quickly and somewhat loudly, so as to frighten his thoughts away from any new topic, and the thoughts seemed easily guided.

“Thank you very much,” I said, “very much indeed. I will say that over and over again to myself. I will get it into my very; you know, my ego. And so I shall hope to remember it. A hint like that will be invaluable. Is there anything more you could tell me, in case?”

And at the same time, while I spoke to him and held his attention, I refilled his glass with a hand that strayed outside the focus of the immediate view of either of us.

“Well,” he said, “there’s always fleas.”

“Yes that of course would be rather a drawback,” I said.

“I wouldn’t say that,” he answered. “I rather like a few fleas; they indicate just where one’s coat needs licking.”

And a sudden look came over his face again, as though his thoughts would have strayed where I did not want them, back to strict sobriety and the duller problems of this life. To keep him to the subject that so profoundly interested me I hastily asked his advice, an act which in itself helps to hold the attention of any man.

“How can one best ingratiate oneself, and keep in with the Masters?”

“Ah, the Masters,” he muttered, “the Great Ones. What benevolence! What wisdom! What power! And there was one incomparably greater and wiser than all of them. I remember how, if he went away for a day, it used to alter the appearance of the whole world; it affected the sunlight; there was less brightness in it, less warmth. I remember how, when he came back, I used to mix myself a good stiff whiskey and soda and....”

“But dogs,” I said, “dogs don’t drink whiskey.”

I learned afterwards never to interrupt him, but I couldn’t help it now, and I wanted to get the truth, and thought he was talking mere nonsense; and yet it wasn’t quite.

“Er, er, no,” said Dean Spanley, and fumbled awhile with his memories, till I was afraid I had lost touch with the mystery that I had planned so long to explore. I sat saying never a word. And then he went on again.

“I got the effect,” he said, “by racing round and round on the lawn, a most stimulating effect; it seems to send the blood to the head in a very exhilarating manner. What am I saying? Dear me, what *am* I saying?”

And I pretended not to have heard him. But I got no more that night. The curtain that cuts us off from all such knowledge had fallen. Would it ever lift again?

## CHAPTER 2

A FEW nights later I met the Dean at the Club. He was clearly vague about what we had talked of when he had dined with me, but just a little uneasy. I asked him then for his exact opinion about my port, until I had established it in his mind that that was my principal interest in the evening we spent together and he felt that nothing unusual could have occurred. Many people would have practised that much deception merely to conceal from a friend that he had drunk a little more wine than he should have; but at any rate I felt justified in doing it now, when so stupendous a piece of knowledge seemed waiting just within reach. For I had not got it yet. He had said nothing as yet that had about it those unmistakable signs of truth with which words sometimes clothe themselves. I dined at the next table to him. He offered me the wine-list after he had ordered his port, but I waved it away as I thanked him, and somehow succeeded in conveying to him that I never drank ordinary wines like those. Soon after I asked him if he would care to dine again with me; and he accepted, as I felt sure, for the sake of the Tokay. And I had no Tokay. I had returned the bottle to my friend, and I could not ask for any of that wine from him again. Now I chanced to have met a Maharajah at a party; and, fixing an appointment by telephoning to his secretary, I went to see him at his hotel. To put it briefly, I explained to him that the proof of the creed of the Hindus was within my grasp, and that the key to it was imperial Tokay. If he cared to put up the money that would purchase the imperial Tokay, he would receive nothing less than the proof of an important part of his creed. He seemed not so keen as I thought he would be,

though whether because his creed had no need of proof, or whether because he had doubts of it, I never discovered. If it were the latter, he concealed it in the end by agreeing to do what I wished; though, as for the money, he said: "But why not the Tokay?" And it turned out that he had in his cellars a little vault that was full of it. "A dozen bottles shall be here in a fortnight," he said.

A dozen bottles! I felt that with that I could unlock Dean Spanley's heart, and give to the Maharajah a strange secret that perhaps he knew already, and to much of the human race a revelation that they had only guessed.

I had not yet fixed the date of my dinner with Dean Spanley, so I rang him up and fixed it with him a fortnight later and one day to spare.

And sure enough, on the day the Maharajah had promised, there arrived at his hotel a box from India containing a dozen of that wonderful wine. He telephoned to me when it arrived, and I went at once to see him. He received me with the greatest amiability, and yet he strangely depressed me; for, while to me the curtain that was lifting revealed a stupendous discovery, to him, it was only too clear, the thing was almost a commonplace, and beyond it more to learn than I had any chance of discovering. I recovered my spirits somewhat when I got back to my house with that dozen of rare wine that should be sufficient for twenty-four revelations, for unlocking twenty-four times that door that stands between us and the past, and that one had supposed to be locked for ever.

The day came and, at the appointed hour, Dean Spanley arrived at my house. I had champagne for him and no Tokay, and noticed a wistful expression upon his face that increased all through dinner; until by the time that the sweet was

served, and still there was no Tokay, his enquiring dissatisfied glances, though barely perceptible, reminded me, whenever I did perceive them, of those little whines that a dog will sometimes utter when gravely dissatisfied, perhaps because there is another dog in the room, or because for any other reason adequate notice is not being taken of himself. And yet I do not wish to convey that there was ever anything whatever about Dean Spanley that in the least suggested a dog; it was only in my own mind, preoccupied as it was with the tremendous discovery to the verge of which I had strayed, that I made the comparison. I did not offer Dean Spanley any Tokay during dinner, because I knew that it was totally impossible to break down the barrier between him and his strange memories even with Tokay, my own hope being to bring him not so far from that point by ordinary methods, I mean by port and champagne, and then to offer him the Tokay, and I naturally noted the exact amount required with the exactitude of a scientist; my whole investigations depended on that. And then the moment came when I could no longer persuade the Dean to take another drop of wine; of any ordinary wine, I mean; and I put the Tokay before him. A look of surprise came into his face, surprise that a man in possession of Tokay should let so much of the evening waste away before bringing it out. "Really," he said, "I hardly want any more wine, but..."

"It's a better vintage than the other one," I said, making a guess that turned out to be right.

And it certainly was a glorious wine. I took some myself, because with that great bundle of keys to the mysterious past, that the Maharajah's dozen bottles had given me, I felt I could afford this indulgence. A reminiscent look came over

Dean Spanley's face, and deepened, until it seemed to be peering over the boundaries that shut in this life. I waited a while and then I said: "I was wondering about rabbits."

"Among the worst of Man's enemies," said the Dean.

And I knew at once, from his vehemence, that his memory was back again on the other side of that veil that shuts off so much from the rest of us. "They lurk in the woods and plot, and give Man no proper allegiance. They should be hunted whenever met."

He said it with so much intensity that I felt sure the rabbits had often eluded him in that other life; and I saw that to take his side against them as much as possible would be the best way to keep his memory where it was, on the other side of the veil; so I abused rabbits. With evident agreement the Dean listened, until, to round off my attack on them, I added: "And over-rated animals even to eat. There's no taste in them."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," said the Dean. "A good hot rabbit that has been run across a big field has certainly an, an element of..." And he did not complete his sentence; but there was a greedy look in his eyes.

I was very careful about refilling the Dean's glass; I gave him no more for some while. It seemed to me that the spiritual level from which he had this amazing view, back over the ages, was a very narrow one; like a ridge at the top of a steep, which gives barely a resting-place to the mountaineer. Too little Tokay and he would lapse back to orthodoxy; too much, and I feared he would roll just as swiftly down to the present day. It was the ridge from which I feared I had pushed him last time. This time I must watch the mood that Tokay had brought, and neither intensify it nor let

it fade, for as long as I could hold it with exactly the right hospitality. He looked wistfully at the Tokay, but I gave him no more yet.

“Rabbits,” I said to remind him.

“Yes their guts are very good,” he said. “And their fur is good for one. As for their bones, if they cause one any irritation, one can always bring them up. In fact, when in doubt, always bring anything up: it’s easily done. But there is one bit of advice I would give to you. Out-of-doors. It’s always best out-of-doors. There are what it is not for us to call prejudices: let us rather say preferences. But while these preferences exist amongst those who hold them, it is much best out-of-doors. You will remember that?”

“Certainly,” I said. “Certainly.”

And as I spoke I carefully watched his eyes, to see if he was still on that narrow ledge that I spoke of, that spiritual plane from which a man could gaze out on past ages. And he was. A hand strayed tentatively towards the Tokay, but I moved it out of his reach.

“Rats!” I said. And he stirred slightly, but did not seem greatly interested.

And then, without any further suggestion from me, he began to talk of the home-life of a dog, somewhere in England in the days long before motors.

“I used to see off all the carts that drove up to the back-door every day. Whenever I heard them coming I ran round; I was always there in time; and then I used to see them off. I saw them off as far as a tree that there was, a little way down the drive. Always about a hundred barks, and then I used to stop. Some were friends of mine, but I used to see them off the same as the rest. It showed them that the house was well

guarded. People that didn't know me used to hit at me with a whip, until they found out that they were too slow to catch me. If one of them ever had hit me I should have seen him off the whole way down the drive. It was always pleasant to trot back to the house from one of these little trips. I have had criticism for this; angry words, that is to say; but I knew from the tone of the voices that they were proud of me. I think it best to see them off like that, because, because....”

I hastily said: “Because otherwise they might think that the house wasn't properly guarded.”

And the answer satisfied him. But I filled the Dean's glass with Tokay as fast as I could. He drank it, and remained at that strange altitude from which he could see the past.

“Then, sooner or later,” he continued, “the moon comes over the hill. Of course you can take your own line about that. Personally, I never trusted it. It's the look of it I didn't like, and the sly way it moves. If anything comes by at night I like it to come on footsteps, and I like it to have a smell. Then you know where you are.”

“I quite agree,” I said, for the Dean had paused.

“You can hear footsteps,” he went on, “and you can follow a smell, and you can tell the sort of person you have to deal with, by the kind of smell he has. But folk without any smell have no right to be going about among those that have. That's what I didn't like about the moon. And I didn't like the way it stared one in the face. And there was a look in his stare as though everything was odd and the house not properly guarded. The house was perfectly well guarded, and so I said at the time. But he wouldn't stop that queer look. Many's the time I've told him to go away and not to look at me in that odd manner; and he pretended not to hear me. But he knew

all right, he knew he was odd and strange and in league with magic, and he knew what honest folks thought of him: I've told him many a time."

"I should stand no nonsense from him," I said.

"Entirely my view," said the Dean.

There was a silence then such as you sometimes see among well-satisfied diners.

"I expect he was afraid of you," I said; and only just in time, for the Dean came back as it were with a jerk to the subject.

"Ah, the moon," he said. "Yes, he never came any nearer. But there's no saying what he'd have done if I hadn't been there. There was a lot of strangeness about him, and if he'd come any nearer everything might have been strange. They had only me to look after them.

"Only me to look after them," he added reflectively. "You know, I've known them talk to a man that ought at least to be growled at; stand at the front door and talk to him. And for what was strange or magical they never had any sense; no foreboding I mean. Why, there were sounds and smells that would make my hair rise on my shoulders before I had thought of the matter, while they would not even stir. That was why they so much needed guarding. That of course was our *raison d'être*, if I may put it in that way. The French often have a way of turning a phrase, that seems somehow more deft than anything that we islanders do. Not that our literature cannot hold its own."

"Quite so," I said to check this line of thought, for he was wandering far away from where I wanted him. "Our literature is very vivid. You have probably many vivid experiences in your own memory, if you cast your mind back. If you cast

your mind back, you would probably find material worthy of the best of our literature.”

And he did. He cast his mind back as I told him. “My vividest memory,” he said, “is a memory of the most dreadful words that the ears can hear. ‘Dirty dog.’ Those unforgettable words; how clear they ring in my memory. The dreadful anger with which they were always uttered; the emphasis, the miraculous meaning! They are certainly the most, the most prominent words, of all I have ever heard. They stand by themselves. Do you not agree?”

“Undoubtedly,” I said. And I made a very careful mental note that, whenever he wandered away from the subject that so much enthralled me, those might be the very words that would call him back.

“Yes, dirty dog,” he went on. “Those words were never uttered lightly.”

“What used to provoke them?” I asked. For the Dean had paused, and I feared lest at any moment he should find a new subject.

“Nothing,” he said. “They came as though inspired, but from no cause. I remember once coming into the drawing-room on a lovely bright morning, from a very pleasant heap that there was behind the stable yard, where I sometimes used to go to make my toilet; it gave a very nice tang to my skin, that lasted some days; a mere roll was sufficient, if done in the right place; I came in very carefully smoothed and scented and was about to lie down in a lovely patch of sunlight, when these dreadful words broke out. They used to come like lightning, like thunder and lightning together. There was no cause for them; they were just inspired.”

He was silent, reflecting sadly. And before his reflections could change I said, “What did you do?”

“I just slunk out,” he said. “There was nothing else to do. I slunk out and rolled in ordinary grass and humbled myself, and came back later with my fur all rough and untidy and that lovely aroma gone, just a common dog. I came back and knocked at the door and put my head in, when the door was opened at last, and kept it very low, and my tail low too, and I came in very slowly; and they looked at me, holding their anger back by the collar; and I went slower still, and they stood over me and stooped; and then in the end they did not let their anger loose, and I hid in a corner I knew of. Dirty dog. Yes, yes. There are few words more terrible.”

The Dean then fell into a reverie, till presently there came the same look of confusion, and even alarm, on his face, that I had noticed once before, when he had suddenly cried out, “What am I talking about?” And to forestall any such uncomfortable perplexity I began to talk myself. “The lighting, the upkeep and the culinary problems,” I said, “are on the one hand. On the other, the Committee should so manage the Club that its amenities are available to all, or even more so. You, no doubt, agree there.”

“Eh?” he said. “Oh yes, yes.”

I tried no more that night, and the rest of our conversation was of this world, and of this immediate sojourn.

### CHAPTER 3

“I WAS the hell of a dog,” said the Dean, when next I was able to tempt him with the Tokay to that eminence of the mind from which he had this remarkable view down the ages; but it was not easily done, in fact it took me several weeks. “A hell of a dog. I had often to growl so as to warn people. I used to wag my tail at the same time, so as to let them know that I was only meaning to warn them, and they should not think I was angry. Sometimes I used to scratch up the earth, merely to feel my strength and to know that I was stronger than the earth, but I never went on long enough to harm it. Other dogs never dared do more than threaten me; I seldom had to bite them, my growl was enough, and a certain look that I had on my face and teeth, and my magnificent size, which increased when I was angry, so that they could see how large I really was.

“They were lucky to have me to guard them. It was an inestimable privilege to serve them; they had unearthly wisdom; but...”

“But they needed guarding,” I said. For I remembered this mood of his. And my words kept him to it.

“They needed it,” he said. “One night I remember a fox came quite near to the house and barked at them. Came out of the woods and on to our lawn and barked. You can’t have that sort of thing. There’s no greater enemy of Man than the fox. They didn’t know that. They hunted him now and then for sport; but they never knew what an enemy he was. I knew. They never knew that he has no reverence for Man, and no respect for his chickens. I knew. They never knew of his plots. And here he was on the lawn barking at men. I was

unfortunately in the drawing-room, and the doors were shut, or my vengeance would have been frightful. I should have gone out and leapt on him, probably in one single bound from the hall door, and I should have torn him up into four or five pieces and eaten every one of them. And that is just what I told him, holding back nothing. And then I told him all over again. Somebody had to tell him.

“Then one of the Wise Ones came and told me not to make so much noise; and out of respect to him I stopped. But when he went away the fox was still within hearing, so I told him about it again. It was better to tell him again, so as to make quite sure. And so I guarded the house against all manner of dangers and insults, of which their miraculous wisdom had never taken account.”

“What other dangers?” I asked. For the Dean was looking rather observantly at objects on the table, peering at them from under his thick eyebrows, so that in a few moments his consciousness would have been definitely in the world of the outer eye, and far away from the age that has gone from us.

“Dangers?” he said.

“Yes,” I replied.

“The dark of the woods,” he answered, “and the mystery of night. There lurked things there of which Man himself knew nothing, and even I could only guess.”

“How did you guess?” I asked him.

“By smells and little sounds,” said the Dean.

It was this remark about the woods and the night, and the eager way in which he spoke of the smells and the sounds, that first made me sure that the Dean was speaking from knowledge, and that he really had known another life in a

strangely different body. Why these words made me sure I cannot say; I can only say that it is oddly often the case that some quite trivial remark in a man's conversation will suddenly make you sure that he knows what he is talking about. A man will be talking perhaps about pictures, and all at once he will make you feel that Raphael, for instance, is real to him, and that he is not merely making conversation. In the same way I felt, I can hardly say why, that the woods were real to the Dean, and the work of a dog no less to him than an avocation. I do not think I have explained how I came to be sure of this, but from that moment any scientific interest in what my Tokay was revealing was surpassed by a private anxiety to gather what hints I could for my own ends. I did not like to be adrift as I was in a world in which transmigration must be recognized as a fact, without the faintest idea of the kind of problems with which one would have to deal, if one should suddenly find oneself a dog, in what was very likely an English rectory. That possibility came on me with more suddenness than it probably does to my reader, to whom I am breaking it perhaps more gently. From now on I was no longer probing a man's eccentric experience, so much as looking to him for advice. Whether it is possible to carry any such advice forward to the time one might need it is doubtful, but I mean to try my best by committing it carefully to memory, and all that I gleaned from the Dean is of course at my reader's disposal. I asked him first about the simple things; food, water and sleep. I remember particularly his advice about sleep, probably because it confused me and so made me think; but, whatever the cause, it is particularly clear in my memory. "You should always pull up your blanket over your lips," he said. "It ensures warm air when you sleep, and is very important."

It was some time since he had had a glass of Tokay, and to have questioned him as to his meaning would at once have induced in him a logical, or reasonable, frame of mind. We boast so much of our reason, but what can it see compared to that view down the ages that was now being laid before me? It is blind, compared to the Dean.

Luckily I did not have to question him, for by a little flash of memory I recalled a dog sleeping, a certain spaniel I knew; and I remembered how he always tucked the feathery end of his tail over his nostrils in preparation for going to sleep: he belonged to an ignorant man who had neglected to have his tail cut off as a puppy. It was a tail that the Dean meant, not a blanket.

Clear though the meaning was to me the moment I thought of the spaniel, I saw that the confusion of the Dean's remark could only mean that a mist was beginning to gather over his view of time, and I hastily filled his glass. I watched anxiously till he drank it; it must have been his third or fourth; and soon I saw from the clearness of his phrases, and a greater strength in all his utterances, that he was safely back again looking out over clear years.

“The Wise Ones, the Great Ones,” he went on meditatively, “they give you straw. But they do not, of course, make your bed for you. I trust one can do that. One does it, you know, by walking round several times, the oftener the better. The more you walk round, the better your bed fits you.”

I could see from the way he spoke that the Dean was speaking the truth. After all, I had made no new discovery. *In vino veritas*; that was all. Though the boundaries of this adage had been extended by my talks with Dean Spanley,

beyond, I suppose, any limits previously known to man; at any rate this side of Asia.

“Clean straw is bad,” continued the Dean; “because there is no flavour to it. No.”

He was meditating again, and I let him meditate, leaving him to bring up out of that strange past whatever he would for me.

“If you find anything good, hide it,” he continued. “The world is full of others; and they all seem to get to know, if you have found anything good. It is best therefore to bury it. And to bury it when no-one is looking on. And to smooth everything over it. Anything good always improves with keeping a few days. And you know it’s always there when you want it. I have sometimes smoothed things over it so carefully that I have been unable to find it when requiring it, but the feeling that it’s there always remains. It is a very pleasant feeling, hard to describe. Those burials represent wealth, which of course is a feeling denied to those greedy fellows who eat every bone they find, the moment they find it. I have even buried a bone when I’ve been hungry, for the pleasure of knowing that it was there. What am I saying! Oh Heavens, what am I saying!”

So sudden, so unexpected was this rush back down the ages, and just when I thought that he had had ample Tokay, that I scarcely knew what to do. But, whatever I did, it had to be done instantly; and at all costs I had to preserve from the Dean the secret that through his babblings I was tapping a source of knowledge that was new to this side of the world, for I knew instinctively that he would have put a stop to it. He had uttered once before in my hearing a similar exclamation, but not with anything like the shocked intensity

with which he was now vibrating, and his agitation seemed even about to increase. I had, as I say, to act instantly. What I did made a certain coldness between me and the Dean, that lasted unfortunately for several weeks, but at least I preserved the secret. I fell forward over the table and lay unconscious, as though overcome by Tokay.

## CHAPTER 4

THERE was one advantage in the awkwardness that I felt when I next saw the Dean at the Club, and that was that my obvious embarrassment attracted his attention away from the direction in which a single wandering thought might have ruined everything. It was of vital importance to my researches that any question about over-indulgence in a rare wine should be directed solely at me. My embarrassment was not feigned, but there was no need to conceal it. I passed him by one day rather sheepishly, as I crossed the main hall of the Club and saw him standing there looking rather large. I knew he would not give me away to the other members, nor quite condone my lapse. And then one day I very humbly apologized to him in the reading-room.

“That Tokay,” I said. “I am afraid it may have been a little bit stronger than I thought.”

“Not at all,” said the Dean.

And I think we both felt better after that; I for having made my apology, he for the generosity with which his few kind words had bestowed forgiveness. But it was some while before I felt that I could quite ask him to dine with me. Much roundabout talk about the different dates and vintages of imperial Tokay took place before I could bring myself to do that; but in the end I did, and so Dean Spanley and I sat down to dinner again.

Now I don't want to take credit for things that I have not done, and I will not claim that I manœuvred my guest to take up a certain attitude; I think it was merely due to a mood of the Dean. But certainly what happened was that the Dean took up a broad and tolerant line and drank his Tokay like a

man, with the implication made clear, in spite of his silence, that there was no harm in Tokay, but only in not knowing where to stop. The result was that the Dean arrived without any difficulty, and far more quickly than I had hoped, at that point at which the truth that there is in wine unlocked his tongue to speak of the clear vision that the Tokay gave him once more. No chemist conducting experiments in his laboratory is likely to have mixed his ingredients with more care than I poured out the Tokay from now on. I mean, of course, for the Dean. I knew now how very narrow was the ridge on which his intellect perched to peer into the past; and I tended his glass with Tokay with the utmost care.

“We were talking, last time, about bones,” I said.

And if it had turned out to be the wrong thing to say I should have turned the discussion aside on to grilled bones. But no, there was nothing wrong with it. I had got him back to just the very point at which we left off last time.

“Ah, bones,” said the Dean. “One should always bury them. Then they are there when you want them. It is something to know that, behind all the noise and panting that you may make, there is a good solid store of bones, perhaps with a bit of meat on them, put away where others can’t find it. That is always a satisfaction. And then, however hungry one may feel, one knows that the meat is improving all the time. Meat has no taste until it has been hidden awhile. It is always best to bury it. Very often, when I had nothing special to do, I would tear up a hole in the ground. I will tell you why I did that: it attracted attention. Then, if eavesdropping suspicious busybodies wanted to get your bone, they probably looked in the wrong place. It is all part of the scheme of a well-planned life: those that do not take these

little precautions seldom get bones. Perhaps they may pick up a dry one now and again, but that is about all. Yes, always bury your bone.”

I noticed the dawn of what seemed a faint surprise in his face, as though something in his own words had struck him as strange, and I hastily filled his glass and placed it near his hand, which throughout the talks that I had with him had a certain wandering tendency, reminiscent to me of a butterfly in a garden; it hovered now over that golden wine, then lifted the glass, and at once he was back where his own words seemed perfectly natural to him; as indeed they did to me, for I knew that he drew them straight from the well of Truth, that well whose buckets are so often delicate glasses, such as I had on my table, and which were bringing up to me now these astonishing secrets. So often I find myself referring to this Tokay, that, borrowed though it was, it may be thought I am over-proud of my cellar; but I cannot sufficiently emphasise that the whole scientific basis of my researches was the one maxim, ‘*in vino veritas*’; without that the Dean might have exaggerated or misinterpreted, or even have invented the whole of his story. What the law of gravity is to astronomical study, so is this latin maxim to those investigations that I offer now to the public.

“Yes, bury your bone,” said the Dean. “The earth is often flavourless; yet, if you choose with discrimination, in farms, beside roads, or in gardens, you hit on a delightful variety of flavours, that greatly add to your bone. I remember a favourite place of mine, just at the edge of a pig-sty, which well bore out my contention that, by a careful choice of earth, there is hardly any limit to the flavouring that may improve a buried bone or a bit of meat. For pigs themselves I have

nothing at all but contempt. Their claim to be one of us is grossly exaggerated. Always chase them. Chase cows too; not that I have anything particular against them: my only reason for giving you this advice is that by this means you have their horns pointing the right way. Horns are dangerous things and, unless you chase them, they are always pointing the wrong way; which, as I need hardly say, is towards you. There is very likely some scientific reason for it, but whenever you see cows they are always coming towards you; that is to say, until you chase them. Whatever the reason is, I do not think I have ever known an exception to this natural law. Horses one should chase too: I do not exactly know why, but that is the way I feel about it. I leave them alone on a road, but if I find them in a field or on paths I always chase them. It always makes a bit of a stir when horses come by; and, if you don't chase them, the idea gets about that it is they that are making the stir, and not you. That leads to conceit among horses, and all kinds of undesirable things. That's the way I feel about it. There's just one thing to remember, and that is that, unlike cows, their dangerous end is towards you when you chase them; but no-one that has ever heard the jolly sound of their hooves while being really well chased will ever think twice about that. While standing still they can kick with considerable precision, but one is not there on those occasions. While galloping their kicking is often merely silly; and, besides that, one is moving so fast oneself that one can dodge them with the utmost facility. Nothing is more exhilarating than chasing a horse. Chasing anything is good as a general rule; it keeps them moving, and you don't want things hanging around, if you will excuse the modern expression."

The phrase made me a little uneasy, but I needn't have been, for he went straight on. "And that brings us," said the Dean, "to the subject of cats. They are sometimes amusing to chase, but on the whole they are so unreliable that chasing cats can hardly be called a sport, and must be regarded merely as a duty. Their habit of going up trees is entirely contemptible. I never object to a bird going into a tree, if I happen to have chased it off the lawn, so as to keep the lawn tidy. A tree is the natural refuge of a bird. And, besides, one can always get it out of the tree by barking. But to see a four-footed animal in a tree is a sight so revolting and disgusting that I have no words in which to describe it. Many a time I have said what I thought about that, clearly and unmistakably, and yet I have never felt that I have finally dealt with the subject. One of these days perhaps my words will be attended to, and cats may leave trees for good. Till then, till then..."

And I took the opportunity of his hesitation to attempt to turn the talk in a direction that might be more useful to me, if ever the time should come when this that I call I, should be what Dean Spanley had evidently been once.

## CHAPTER 5

THERE was a matter that seemed to me of vital importance, if one could only get it fixed so firm in the core of one's memory that it would have a chance of survival, of surviving in fact the memory itself. This was the matter of wholesome food and water. How could one be sure of obtaining it? Sitting over a tidy table, with a clean tablecloth on it, and clean knives and forks, one may have exaggerated the importance of cleanliness; though I still feel that in the case of water such exaggeration is hardly possible. And then again I exaggerated the probability of finding oneself one day in the position I contemplated. But the vividness and sheer assurance of the Dean's memories were most conducive to this. Add to that vividness and assurance a glass or two of Tokay, and I hardly know who would have held out against the belief that such a change was quite likely. And so I said to him, "I should object, as much as anything, to drinking bad water."

And the Dean said: "There is no such thing as bad water. There is water with different flavours, and giving off different smells. There is interesting water and uninteresting water. But you cannot say there is bad water."

"But if there are really great impurities in it," I said.

"It makes it all the more interesting," said the Dean. "If the impurities are so thick that it is solid, then it ceases to be water. But while it is water it is always good."

I may have looked a trifle sick; for the Dean looked up and said to me reassuringly, "No, no, never trouble yourself about that."

I said no more for a while: it seemed hardly worth the trouble to drive and drive into one's memory, till they became almost part of one's character, little pieces of information that might perhaps survive the great change, if the information was no better than this. Of food I had heard his views already; the whole thing seemed disgusting; but I decided that in the interests of science it was my duty to get all the facts I could from the Dean. So I threw in a word to keep him to the subject, and sat back and listened.

"It is the same with meat," he went on. "When meat can no longer be eaten, it is no longer there. It disappears. Bones remain always, but meat disappears. It has a lovely smell before it goes; and then fades away like a dream."

"I am not hungry," I said.

And indeed truer word was never spoken, for my appetite was entirely lost. "Shall we talk of something else for a bit? If you don't mind. What about sport? Rats for instance?"

"Our wainscot was not well stocked with game," said the Dean; "either rats or mice. I have hunted rats, but not often. There is only one thing to remember at this sport: shake the rat. To shake the rat is essential. I need hardly tell you how to do that, because I think everybody is born to it. It is not merely a method of killing the rat, but it prevents him from biting you. He must be shaken until he is dead. Mice of course are small game."

"What is the largest game you have ever hunted?" I asked. For he had stopped talking, and it was essential to the interests of these researches that he should be kept to the same mood.

"A traction-engine," replied the Dean.

That dated him within fifty years or so; and I decided that that incarnation of his was probably some time during the reign of Queen Victoria.

“The thing came snorting along our road, and I saw at once that it had to be chased. I couldn’t allow a thing of that sort on our flower-beds, and very likely coming into the house. A thing like that might have done anything, if not properly chased at once. So I ran round and chased it. It shouted and threw black stones at me. But I chased it until it was well past our gate. It was very hard to the teeth, very big, very noisy and slow. They can’t turn round on you like rats. They are made for defence rather than for attack. Much smaller game is often more dangerous than traction-engines.”

So clearly did I picture the traction-engine on that Victorian road, with a dog yapping at the back wheels, that I wondered more and more what kind of a dog, in order to complete the mental picture. And that was the question I began to ask the Dean. “What kind of a dog——?” I began. But the question was much harder to ask than it may appear. My guest looked somehow so diaconal, that the words froze on my lips; and, try as I would, I could not frame the sentence: what kind of a dog were you? It seems silly, I know, to say that it was impossible merely to say seven words; and yet I found it so. I cannot explain it. I can only suggest to any that cannot credit this incapacity, that they should address those words themselves to any senior dignitary of the church, and see whether they do not themselves feel any slight hesitancy. I turned my question aside, and only lamely asked, “What kind of a dog used they to keep?”

He asked me who I meant. And I answered: "The people that you were talking about."

Thus sometimes conversations dwindle to trivial ends.

Many minutes passed before I gathered again the lost threads of that conversation. For nearly ten minutes I dared hardly speak, so near he seemed to the light of to-day, so ready to turn away from the shadows he saw so clearly, moving in past years. I poured out for him more Tokay, and he absently drank it, and only gradually returned to that reminiscent mood that had been so gravely disturbed by the clumsiness of my question. Had I asked the Dean straight out, "What kind of a dog were you?" I believe he would have answered satisfactorily. But the very hesitancy of my question had awaked suspicion at once, as though the question had been a guilty thing. I was not sure that he was safely back in the past again until he made a petulant remark about another engine, a remark so obviously untrue that it may not seem worth recording; I only repeat it here as it showed that the Dean had returned to his outlook over the reaches of time, and that he seems to have been contemporary with the threshing machine. "Traction-engines!" he said with evident loathing. "I saw one scratching itself at the back of a haystack. I thoroughly barked at it."

"They should be barked at," I said, as politely as I could.

"Most certainly," said the Dean. "If things like that got to think they could go where they liked without any kind of a protest, we should very soon have them everywhere."

And there was so much truth in that that I was able to agree with the Dean in all sincerity.

"And then where should we all be?" the Dean asked.

And that is a question unfortunately so vital to all of us, that I think it is sufficient to show by itself that the Dean was not merely wandering. It seemed to me that the bright mind of a dog had seen, perhaps in the seventies of the last century, a menace to which the bulk of men must have been blind; or we should never be over-run by machines as we are, in every sense of the word. He was talking sense here. Was it not therefore fair to suppose he was speaking the truth, even where his words were surprising? If I had faintly felt that I was doing something a little undignified in lowering myself to the level of what, for the greater part of these conversations, was practically the mind of a dog, I no longer had that feeling after this observation the Dean had uttered about machinery. Henceforth I felt that he was at least my equal; even when turning, as he soon did, from philosophical speculation, he returned to talk of the chase.

“To chase anything slow,” he said, “is always wearisome. You are continually bumping into what you are chasing. There is nothing so good as a ball. A ball goes so fast that it draws out your utmost speed, in a very exhilarating manner, and it can jump about as far as one can oneself, and before one can begin to be tired it always slows down. And then it takes a long time to eat; so that, one way and another, there is more entertainment in a ball than perhaps anything else one can chase. If one could throw it oneself, like the Masters, I cannot imagine any completer life than throwing a ball and chasing it all day long.”

My aim was purely scientific; I desired to reveal to Europeans a lore taught throughout Asia, but neglected, so far as I knew, by all our investigators; I desired to serve science only. Had it been otherwise, the momentary

temptation that came to me as the Dean spoke now might possibly have prevailed; I might possibly have hurried on some slight excuse from the room and come back with an old tennis-ball, and perhaps have suddenly thrown it, and so have gratified that sense of the ridiculous that is unfortunately in all of us, at the expense of more solid study.

## CHAPTER 6

THE temptation to which I referred in the last chapter was far too trivial a thing to have its place in this record, or indeed in any summary of investigations that may claim to be of value to science. It should certainly have never arisen. And yet, having arisen, it enforces its place amongst my notes; for, my researches being of necessity conversational, whatever turned the current of the conversation between the Dean and myself becomes of scientific importance. And that this unfortunately frivolous fancy, that came so inopportunately, did actually affect the current of our conversation is regrettably only too true. For about five minutes I was unable to shake it off, and during all that time, knowing well how inexcusable such action would be, I dared scarcely move or speak. Dean Spanley therefore continued his reminiscences unguided by me, and sometimes wandered quite away from the subject. I might indeed have lost him altogether; I mean to say, as a scientific collaborator; for during that five minutes I never even filled his glass. Luckily I pulled myself together in time, banished from my mind entirely that foolish and trivial fancy, and resumed the serious thread of my researches by saying to the Dean: "What about ticks?"

"It is not for us to deal with them," said the dean. "The Wise Ones, the Masters, can get them out. Nobody else can. It is of no use therefore to scratch. One's best policy towards a tick is summed up in the words, 'Live and let live.' That is to say, when the tick has once taken up his abode. When the tick is still wild it is a good thing to avoid him, by keeping away from the grasses in which they live, mostly in marshy

places, unless led there by anything exciting, in which case it is of course impossible to think of ticks.”

This fatalistic attitude to a tick, when once it had burrowed in, so strangely different from the view that we take ourselves, did as much as anything else in these strange experiences to decide me that the Dean was actually remembering clearly where the rest of us forget almost totally; standing, as it were, a solitary traveller near one bank of the river of Lethe, and hearing his memories calling shrill through the mist that conceals the opposite shore. From now on I must say that I considered the whole thing proved, and only concerned myself to gather as many facts as possible for the benefit of science, a benefit that I considered it only fair that I should share myself, to the extent of obtaining any useful hints that I could for use in any other sojourn, in the event of my ever meeting with an experience similar to Dean Spanley’s and being able to preserve the memory of what I had learned from him. Now that I considered his former sojourn proved (though of course I do not claim to be the sole judge of that) I questioned Dean Spanley about what seems to many of us one of the most mysterious things in the animal world, the matter of scent. To the Dean there seemed nothing odd in it, and I suppose the mystery lies largely in the comparative weakness of that sense among us.

“How long would you be able to follow a man,” I said, “after he had gone by?”

“That depends on the weather,” said the Dean. “Scent is never the same two days running. One might be able to follow after he had gone half an hour. But there is one thing that one should bear in mind, and that is that, if any of the Masters in their superb generosity should chance to give one

cheese, one cannot, for some while after that, follow with any certainty. The question of scent is of course a very subtle one, and cannot be settled lightly. The view that the Archbishop takes, er, er, is....”

The moment had come for which I had been watching all the evening, the moment when the Dean was waking up from the dream, or falling asleep from the reality, whichever way one should put it, the moment at which any words of his own describing his other sojourn would, upon penetrating those diaconal ears, cause the most painful surprise. Twice before it had happened; and I felt that if it happened again I might no more be able to get the Dean to dine with me. Science might go no further in this direction, in Europe. So I said, “Excuse me a moment. The telephone, I think.” And rushed out of the room.

When I came back our conversation was not, I trust, without interest; but as it was solely concerned with the new lift that it is proposed to instal in the Club to which Dean Spanley and I belong, not many of my readers would easily follow the plans, were I to describe them here, or understand the importance of the new lift.

I pass over the next few weeks. The Dean dined with me once more, but I was not able to persuade him to take sufficient Tokay to enable him to have that wonderful view of his that looked back down the ages, or indeed to see anything of any interest at all. He talked to me, but told me nothing that any reasonably well-educated reader could not find out for himself in almost any library. He was far far short of the point to which I had hoped my Tokay would bring him. I felt a renegade to science. There are those who will understand my difficulties; he was naturally an abstemious man; he was

a dean; and he was by now entirely familiar with the exact strength of Tokay; it was not so easy to persuade him by any means whatever to go so far with that wine as he had gone three times already, three lapses that he must have at least suspected, if he did not even know exactly all about them. There are those who will understand all this. But there are others who in view of what was at stake will be absolutely ruthless; scientists who, in the study of some new or rare disease, would not hesitate to inoculate themselves with it, were it necessary to study it so, men who would never spare themselves while working for Science, and who will not withhold criticism from me. What prevented me, they will ask, from forcing upon Dean Spanley, by any means whatever, sufficient alcohol for these important researches? For such a revelation as was awaiting a few more glasses of wine, any means would have been justified.

It is easy to argue thus. But a broader mind will appreciate that you cannot ask a man to dine with you, let alone a dean, and then by trickery or violence, or whatever it is that some may lightly recommend, reduce him to a state that is far beyond any that he would willingly cultivate. All the permissible arts of a host I had already exercised. Beyond that I would not go. Meanwhile what was I to do? I felt like Keats' watcher of the skies when some new planet swims into his ken, and when almost immediately afterwards some trivial obstacle intervenes; a blind is drawn down, a fog comes up, or perhaps a small cloud; and the wonder one knows to be there is invisible. Much I had learned already, and I trust that what I have written has scientific value, but I wanted the whole story. I was no more content than a man would be who had obtained twenty or thirty pages of an ancient codex, if he knew that there were hundreds of pages

of it. And what I sought seemed so near, and yet out of my grasp, removed from me by perhaps two small glasses. I never lost my temper with the Dean, and when I found that I could no more question him stimulated, I questioned him sober. This was perhaps the most enraging experience of all; for not only was Dean Spanley extremely reticent, but he did not really know anything. An intense understanding of dogs, a sympathy for their more reputable emotions, and a guess that a strange truth may have been revealed to Hindus, was about all he had to tell. I have said already that I knew he had a secret; and this knowledge was what started me on my researches; but this secret of his amounted to no more knowledge, as a scientist uses the word, than a few exotic shells bought in some old shop on a trip to the seaside can supply a knowledge of seafaring. Between the Dean sober at the Olympus Club, and the same Dean after his fourth glass of Tokay, was all the difference between some such tripper as I have indicated, and a wanderer familiar with the surf of the boundaries of the very furthest seas. It was annoying, but it was so. And then it seemed to me that perhaps where I had just failed alone I might be able to succeed with the help of example, if I asked one or two others to meet the Dean. I was thinking in the form of a metaphor particularly unsuited to Tokay, "You may lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink." And from thinking of horses I got the idea of a lead out hunting, and so the idea of a little company at dinner easily came to me, one or two of the right kind who could be trusted to give a lead.

And I found the very man. And the moment I found him I decided that no more were necessary; just he and I and the Dean would make a perfect dinner-party, from which I hoped that so much was to be revealed. I found him sitting next to

me at a public dinner, a man of the most charming address, and with an appreciation of good wine that was evidently the foremost of all his accomplishments. He was so much a contrast to the man on the other side of me, that I turned to Wrather (that was his name) quite early in the dinner and talked to him for the rest of the evening. The man on the other side of me was not only a teetotaller, which anybody may be, but one that wanted to convert his neighbours; and he started on me as soon as the sherry came round, so that it was a pleasure to hear from Wrather what was almost his first remark to me: "Never trust a teetotaller, or a man that wears elastic-sided boots." The idea struck me at once that he might be the man I wanted; and when I saw how well he was guided by the spirit of that saying, both in dress and in habits, I decided that he actually was. Later in that evening he put an arm round my shoulders and said:

"You're younger than me; not with the whole of your life before you, but some of it; and this advice may be useful to you: Never trust a teetotaller, or a man that wears elastic-sided boots."

One doesn't see elastic-sided boots as much now as one used to, and I fancied that he had evolved his saying early in life, or that perhaps it was handed down to him.

We made great friends, and as we went out from the dinner together I tried to help him into his coat. He could not find the arm-hole, and said, "Never mind. I shall never find it. Throw the damned thing over my shoulders."

Which I did. And he added, "But for all that, never trust a teetotaller, or a man that wears elastic-sided boots."

We shared a taxi and, in the darkness of it, he talked as delightfully as he had in the bright hall where we had dined;

until, suddenly seeing a policeman, he stopped the cab and leaned out and shouted, “Bobby! There’s something I want to tell you; and it’s worth all you’ve ever learnt in Scotland Yard.”

The constable came up slowly.

“Look here,” said Wrather. “It’s this. Never trust a teetotaller, or a man that wears elastic-sided boots.”

“We’ve been dining with the Woolgatherers,” I said through a chink beside Wrather.

And the constable nodded his head and walked slowly away.

“Sort of thing that will set him up,” said Wrather; “if only he can remember it.”

## CHAPTER 7

I CALLED on Wrather the very next day and told him about the dinner with the Dean. I did not talk science or philosophy with Wrather, because he was not interested in science, and as far as I could gather from the talk of a single evening the tenets of transmigration did not appeal to him. But I told him that the Dean kept a dog, and knew a great deal about dogs, and that when he had had a few glasses he thought he *was* a dog, and told dog-stories that were amusing and instructive. I told Wrather straight out that the Dean went very slow with wine, and that to get any amusement out of him he must be encouraged to take his whack like a reasonable sportsman. Wrather said very little, but there was a twinkle in his eye, that showed me I could rely on him whenever I should be able to get the Dean. And I think that there may have been also in Wrather's mind, like a dim memory, the idea that I had helped him with a policeman, and he felt grateful. I watched next for the Dean at the Club, and soon found him, and said that I hoped he would dine with me one day again, as I particularly wanted to ask him about the Greek strategy at Troy, a subject that I had found out he was keen on. He may have been a little afraid of that Tokay; on the other hand it attracted him. A man of the Dean's degree of refinement could hardly fail to have been attracted by the Tokay, if he knew anything about wine at all; and Dean Spanley certainly did. He was not displeased to be consulted by me about the Greek strategy; no man is entirely unmoved by being asked for information upon his particular subject; and he was very anxious to tell me about it. The final touch that may have decided him to accept my invitation was that

he had beaten my Tokay last time, and so may well have thought that his fear of it was ungrounded. But an estimate of the Dean's motives in accepting my invitation to dinner may not be without an element of speculation; the bare fact remains that he did accept it. It was to be for the Wednesday of the following week, and I hurried round to Wrather again and got him to promise to come on that day. I told him now still more about the Dean: I said that I was a writer, and wanted to get some of the Dean's stories; but there are many different kinds of writers, and I was far from telling Wrather what kind I was, for I knew that, had I told him I was a scientist, I should merely have bored him; I let him therefore suppose that I wanted the Dean's dog-stories only for what might be humorous in them, and he never at any time had an inkling of the value of what I sought, the Golconda of knowledge that was lying so close to me. I told him that Tokay was the key to what I was after, and that the Dean was rather difficult. "Did I ever tell you," asked Wrather, "a maxim that my old father taught me? Never trust a teetotaller, or a man who wears elastic-sided boots."

"Yes, I think you did," I answered. "But Dean Spanley is not a teetotaller. Only goes a bit slow, you know."

"We'll shove him along," said Wrather.

And I saw from a look in his eye that Wrather would do his best.

And certainly Wrather did do his best when the night came. To begin with he appreciated the Tokay for its own sake. But there was a certain whimsical charm about him that almost compelled you to take a glass with him when he urged you to do so in the way that he had. I know that what I am telling you is very silly. Why should a man take a glass of

wine for himself because another man is taking one for him self? And yet it is one of those ways of the world that I have not been able to check. Some abler man than I may one day alter it. We did not come to the Tokay at once; we began on champagne. And certainly Dean Spanley went very slow with it, as I saw from a certain humorous and mournful look on the face of Wrather, as much as I did by watching the glass of the Dean. And in the end we came to the Tokay; and Wrather goaded the Dean to it.

“I don’t suppose that a dean drinks Tokay,” said Wrather, gazing thoughtfully at his own glass.

“And why not?” asked the Dean.

“They are so sure of Heaven hereafter,” said Wrather, “that they don’t have to grab a little of it wherever they can, like us poor devils.”

“Ahem,” said the Dean, and looked at the glass that I had poured out for him, the merits of which he knew just as well as Wrather.

“And then they’re probably afraid of doing anything that people like me do, thinking we’re all bound for Hell, and that their names might get mixed up by mistake with ours at the Day of Judgment, if they kept company with us too much.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t say that,” said the Dean.

I tried to stop Wrather after a while, thinking he went too far; but he wouldn’t leave Dean Spanley alone: I had set Wrather on to him, and now I found that I could not call him off. At any rate the Dean drank his Tokay. “Well, what more do you want?” Wrather seemed to say to me with a single glance of his expressive eyes, knowing perfectly well that I was trying to stop him. It was then that I asked the Dean about the Greek strategy at Troy. Dean Spanley put down his

third glass of Tokay and began to tell me about it, and a look came over Wrather's face that was altogether pro-Trojan, or at any rate against everything to do with the Greeks. As the Dean talked on I poured out another glass of Tokay for him and watched him, and Wrather watched too. He was getting near to that point at which the curious change took place: I knew that by little signs that I had noted before. Wrather sat now quite silent, seeming to know as much as I did of the effect of the Tokay on the Dean, though he had not ever seen him drink it before. But he was not there yet. I need not say what a thousand writers have said, that alcohol dulls the memory; I need not say what has been said for three thousand years, that wine sharpens the wit; both of these things are true; and both were to be observed in the same Dean. Some minds are more easily affected than others: when forgetfulness came to the Dean it came suddenly and very completely; had it not done so he would never have spoken out as he did. And right on top of the forgetfulness came this other phenomenon, the intense brightening of another part of the mind, a part of the mind that others of us may not possess, but far more likely, I think, a part that in most of us has never happened to be illuminated. It was, as I have said before, on only a narrow ridge that this occurred even with the Dean, only for a short while, only after that precise glass, that exact number of drops of Tokay, that makes the rest of us think, upon careful reflection long after, that we may have perhaps taken a drop more than was strictly advisable. This ridge, this moment, this drop, was now approaching the Dean, and Wrather and I sat watching.

“If we compare the siege of Troy with more modern sieges,” said the Dean, “or the siege of Ilion, as I prefer to

call it, one finds among obvious differences a similarity of general principle.”

Only he did not say the word principle; his tongue bungled it, went back and tried it again, tripped over it and fell downstairs. An effort that he made to retrieve the situation showed me the moment had come.

“Good dog,” I said.

A momentary surprise flickered on Wrather’s face, but with the Dean bright memory shone on the heels of forgetfulness. “Eh?” he said. “Wag was my name. Though not my only one. On rare occasions, very precious to me, I have been called ‘Little Devil’.”

The surprise cleared from Wrather’s face, and a look of mild interest succeeded it, as when a connoisseur notes a new manifestation.

Any difficulty the Dean had had with his tongue had entirely disappeared.

“Ah, those days,” he said. “I used to spend a whole morning at it.”

“At what?” I asked.

“At hunting,” said the Dean, as though that should have been understood. “Ah, I can taste to this day, all the various tastes of digging out a rabbit. How fresh they were.”

“What tastes?” I asked. For however tedious exactitude may be to some, it is bread and jam to a scientist.

“The brown earth,” he said. “And sometimes chalk when one got down deeper, a totally different taste, not so pleasant, not quite so meaty. And then the sharp taste of the juicy roots of trees, that almost always have to be bitten in two while digging out a rabbit. And little unexpected tastes; dead

leaves, and even a slug. They are innumerable, and all delightful. And all the while, you know, there is that full ample scent of the rabbit, growing deeper and deeper as you get further in, till it is almost food to breathe it. The scent grows deeper, the air grows warmer, the home of the rabbit grows darker, and his feet when he moves sound like thunder; and all the while one's own magnificent scratchings sweep towards him. Winds blowing in past one's shoulders with scents from outside are forgotten. And at the end of it all is one's rabbit. That is indeed a moment."

"Some dean," muttered Wrather. An interruption such as no student of science would welcome at such a time. But I forgave him, for he had served science already far better than he could know, and I hushed him with a look, and the Dean went on.

"It may be," said the Dean, "though I cannot analyse it, but it may be that the actual eating of one's rabbit is no more thrilling than that gradual approach as one gnaws one's way through the earth. What would you say?"

"I should say it was equal," I answered.

"And you, Mr. Wrather?" said the Dean.

"Not very good at definitions, you know," said Wrather. "But I will say one thing: one should never trust a teetotaller, or a man that wears elastic-sided boots."

And I could see that he was warming towards the Dean; so that, trivial though such a thought is for a scientist to entertain in the middle of such researches, I saw that my little dinner-party would at any rate go well, as the saying is.

"There is one thing to bear in mind on those occasions," said the Dean, fingering his collar with a touch of uneasiness, "and that is getting back again. When one's dinner is over

one wants to get back. And if the root of a tree, that one has perhaps bitten through, or a thin flint pointing the wrong way, should get under one's collar, it may produce a very difficult situation."

His face reddened a little over his wide white collar even at the thought. And it is not a situation to laugh at.

"Where your head and shoulders have gone they can get back again," the Dean continued; "were it not for the collar. That is the danger. One does not think of that while eating one's rabbit, but it is always a risk, especially where there are roots of trees. There have been cases in which that very thing has happened; caught by the collar. I knew of a case myself. Someone was lost, and men were looking for him in our woods. Of course they could not smell. But I happened to be out for a walk, and I noticed a trail leading straight to a rabbit-hole, a very old trail indeed, but when one put one's nose to the hole the dog was undoubtedly down there, and had been there a long time. He must have been caught. I expect by the collar."

"And what did you do for him?" I couldn't help blurting out.

"He was nobody I knew," said the Dean.

## CHAPTER 8

WRATHER turned his face slowly round and looked at me; and I could see that the feeling of friendship that he had had for the Dean when he found he was not a teetotaller had suddenly all veered away. For myself I cared nothing for the Dean, one way or the other, except as the only link that Europe is known to have between the twentieth century and lives that roamed other ages. As such he was of inestimable value, so that the callousness that was so repulsive to Wrather had no more effect upon me than a distorted bone has on a surgeon; it was just one manifestation of a strange case.

“Are you sure he hasn’t elastic-sided boots?” murmured Wrather to me. An absurd question about any member of the Olympus Club. And I treated it with silence accordingly. And out of that silence arose Dean Spanley’s voice, with a touch of the monotony that is sometimes heard in the voice of a man who is deep in reminiscence, far away from those he addresses.

“It’s a grand life, a dog’s life,” he said.

“If one thinks one’s a dog,” muttered Wrather to me, “one should think one is a decent kind of a dog.”

Dean Spanley never heard him, and rambled on: “It is undoubtedly the most perfect form of enjoyment that can be known. Where else shall we find those hourly opportunities for sport, romance and adventure, combined with a place on the rugs of the wisest and greatest? And then the boundless facilities for an ample social life. One has only to sniff at the wheel of a cart to have news of what is going on, sometimes as much as five miles away. I remember once sniffing at a

wheel myself, and I found that there was a fellow who had been doing the same at a distance of nearly ten miles. And in the end I got to know him. He came one day with the cart, and I recognized him at once. We had a bit of a fight at first; on my part because I had to show him that the house was properly guarded and that it could not allow strangers, and he in order to show that that wheel was his. We fought on a patch of grass that there was near the back door. There was a grip that I used to be fond of; the ear. The throat-grip is of course final, but as nobody ever lets you in at it, or hardly ever, I used to think that it was waste of time to try for it, and I concentrated upon an ear. The ear was my speciality. Well, I got him by one of the ears and he shouted: 'I am a poor dog! I am being most dreadfully maltreated! I am far away from home and I am being killed in a cruel country! I am the favourite dog of very great and magnificent people! They would weep to see me killed like this. They brought me up very nicely! I am a poor dog! Oh! Oh! Oh! All is over with me now! It is the end! I was a poor good dog. But now I am quite dead.' I remember his words to this day. And then a lady came out from the kitchen with a bucket; and she had always a very high opinion of me, a very high opinion indeed, and treated me with the utmost consideration; but to-day she must have had some disappointment, for she acted with the bucket in a way quite unlike herself. Indeed I will not even say what she did with the bucket. It was a hasty act, and quite spoiled the fight. She did it without reflection.

“The other fellow licked the side of his paw and smoothed down his ear with it. ‘Very powerful and angry people you have here,’ he said.

“ ‘Not at all,’ I said. ‘She’s never like that as a rule. She must have had some disappointment.’

“ ‘Never mind,’ he said, ‘it was a good fight, as far as it went.’

“ ‘But I can’t understand her spoiling it,’ I said. ‘I don’t know what disappointed her.’

“ ‘Oh, they’re the same everywhere,’ he said. ‘I have seen people act just as hastily with a broom.’

“We sat and talked like that: how clearly it all comes back to me. And from that we came to talking about sport. And I said that our woods held a lot of very big game. And we arranged a little party of him and me, and set out to hunt the woods there and then. And the very first thing we came to was a great big smell of an enormous animal, and a great enemy of Man, and much too near the house, a fox. And we sat down and said should we hunt him? He was somewhere quite close, the smell was lying on the ground in great heaps and stretched as high up as you could jump. And we sat and thought for a while as to whether we ought to hunt him. And in the end the other fellow decided. I remember his words to this day. ‘Perhaps not,’ he said. So we went on then after rabbits. The woods were on a slope, and near the top there were brambles. I put him into the brambles and ran along the outside a little ahead of him at the edge of the trees. There were rabbits in those brambles that didn’t properly belong to our wood at all: they came in there from the open land, to keep warm. So when my friend put one out, he ran to the open country that he had come from, over the top of the hill; and I gave a shout or two and we both went after him, and it was just the country for a hunt, no bushes or brambles where

the rabbit could play tricks, good short grass very nice for the feet, and fine air for shouting in.

“The rabbit, as you know, has been given a white tail to guide us, so that we did not need to take any trouble to keep him in sight. He went over the top of the hill, smooth grass all the way, with nothing else but a few ant-heaps, and down the side of a valley: his home was a long way off, and it would have been a lovely hunt had he not resorted to trickery. We came to a thick hedge, full of trees, and he went in and hopped about the thorns and round the trunks of the trees in a silly sort of way, and in and out among brambles; in fact the whole thing got so stupid that after a while we decided to have no more to do with the silly thing. I said, ‘Let’s hunt something more sensible.’

“And he said, ‘Let’s.’

“I don’t waste my time on folk that fool about among brambles. Well, we got back to the wood, and we went along taking observations in the air. Winds, you know, blew down paths and between trees, and we noted what was at the other end of the wind. And we hadn’t gone far when there was a very strange scent indeed, quite close, and there was a big hole in the chalk and the scent coming pouring out of it. ‘You have big game in your woods,’ said my friend.

“ ‘Very big game indeed,’ I said.

“And we went up to the hole. There was a badger at home down there, and he seemed to be asleep. So we decided to wake him up. We just put our mouths right into the hole and barked at him. He was a long way down, but he must have heard us. We barked at him for ten minutes. It was the greatest fun. Then we went on through the wood, and presently what should we see but a very showy young rabbit

who was out on a long walk, no doubt for social reasons. So we chased the young fellow all through the wood and back to his own house. It was a very populous neighbourhood, and we didn't stop and dig: too many passages, you know, running in all directions. So I said: 'Let's come and hunt a large bad animal.'

"It was a pig that I meant, but that's how one puts it. You know the sniff beside the other fellow's face, and the beckoning of the head, that means that?"

I merely nodded: I was not going to interrupt the Dean just now with a request for explanations. And I looked at Wrather, in case he was going to do so; but Wrather sat silent and interested.

"He said, 'Let's.' And I said, 'I know where there is one.' And I ran on in front.

"So we came to the pig's house and looked in through his door at him and shouted, 'Pig.' He didn't like that. He looked just like a pig; he was a pig; and he knew it. He came towards his door saying silly surly things in a deep voice. You know the kind of talk. And we just shouted, 'Pig. Pig. Pig.' Both of us, for nearly half an hour. It was perfectly splendid and we enjoyed it immensely."

"What did he say?" asked Wrather.

"What could he say?" said the dean. "He knew he was a pig. But he didn't like being told about it. I've seldom enjoyed myself more. It made up for that fool of a rabbit that was so silly in the hedge on the hill.

"Then we went to the back of the stables and rolled in something nice, till our coats were smooth and we both had a beautiful scent. Then we killed a hen for the fun of it. It was a lovely evening.

“It was getting all dark and late now. In fact, if I stayed any longer, there would be terrible beatings. So I said: ‘What about your cart?’ And he said: ‘It has a long way to go. I can catch that up when I like. We live three overs away.’ ”

“Overs?” I said.

“Dips over the hills,” said the Dean.

And I did not like to question him further, for fear that it would bring him back to our own day. But what I think he meant was a distance of three horizons.

“I said ‘Very well, old fellow, then we’ll have a bit more sport.’

“ ‘What shall it be?’ he said.

“And even as he spoke a thing I had been suspecting happened on top of the hill. There’d been a suspicious light there for some time; not the right kind of light; a touch too much of magic in it to my liking; a thing to be watched. And sure enough the moon rose. It was of course my job to guard the house when the moon came large and sudden over that hill, as I have known it do before, but now that I had my friend with me I said, ‘Shall we hunt it?’ And he said, ‘Oh, let’s.’ And we went up that hill quicker than we went after the rabbit; and when we got to the top we barked at the moon. And lucky for the moon he didn’t stay where he was. And the longer we stayed the stranger the shadows got. Soon it was magic all round us, and more than one dog could bark at. Very magic indeed.

“When we had hunted the moon enough we came back through the wood; and we both of us growled as we came to the trees, so as to warn whatever there was in the darkness, in case it should try to threaten us. There were lots of things in the wood that were hand-in-glove with the moon, queer

things that did not bark or move or smell, and one could not see them, but one knew they were there. We came back down the hill with our mouths wide open, so as to breathe in all the pleasantness of that day: we had hunted a badger, two rabbits, a hen, a pig and the moon, and very nearly a fox; and I had a feeling I have not often had, that it was almost enough. And my friend said, 'I must go after my cart now, or the man will be thinking he's lost.' And I said 'Let me know how you are, next time your cart is coming this way.' And he promised he would. And I promised to let him know how I was, whenever the cart came."

"He thinks he is one, all right," said Wrather to me.

"I beg your pardon?" said the Dean.

"Nothing," said Wrather. "Something we were talking about the other day. I've let the Tokay stop in front of me. I *beg* your pardon." And he passed it on to the Dean. We watched Dean Spanley, thus encouraged, pour out another glass. He drank a little, and Wrather continued, "But you were telling me about a very interesting evening."

"Yes, it was interesting," said the Dean. "I remember coming back to the house, and it was late and the door was unfortunately shut. And I knocked, but nobody came to it. And I had to shout, 'I am out in the cold.' 'I am out in the cold,' I shouted; 'and the moon is after me. It is a terrible terrible night and I shall die in the cold, and my ghost will haunt this house. My ghost will wail in the house when the cold and the moon have killed me. I am a poor dog out in the dark.'

"Those were my very words; it made me very sad to hear myself saying them, and my tail drooped under me and my voice became very mournful. Then they came and opened the

door; the Wise Ones, the Great Ones. And then they beat me with a stick. And of course I said, 'I am only a poor dog; a poor destitute dog overcome with profound shame, who will never sin again.' And, when the beating stopped, everything was very very beautiful.

"I went into the kitchen then and said to them there: 'I have had a splendid beating, and I am not at all the dog that I was before, but am utterly purged of sin, and I am wise now and good and never shall sin again, but I am very hungry.' I am telling you the exact words that I used, because they happen to be very clear in my memory. I don't know if my reminiscences interest you."

"Profoundly," said Wrather. "But I hope you aren't expecting me to drink all the Tokay by myself, and then perhaps going to laugh at me afterwards."

"Not at all," said the Dean.

And he took a little more, though not much, and went on with his reminiscences, while I applauded Wrather as far as one can by a look. "They gave me a very beautiful dinner. They were good women of great wisdom. And when I had finished what they had given me, and I had cleaned the plate as one should, I was fortunate enough to find a good deal of bacon-rind, which was kept in a treasury that I knew of, and which by a great piece of luck was well mixed with some jam and some pieces of cheese, and a good deal of broom-sweepings with several different flavours, and one sausage, which happened to be old enough to give a distinct taste to the whole dish. It was a lovely dinner; and I knew that the moon would not dare to come back again after all I and the other fellow had said to him, so there was really no more to be done when they took me to bed. And I walked round eight

or nine times on the straw, till my bed was just right, and I lay down and the night went away, and all the world was awake again.”

## CHAPTER 9

“WHEN all the world woke up,” the Dean went rambling on, “there were the voices of a great many things that had come too close, impudent folk like birds, that had to be chased. So I shouted, asking to be let out at once. For a long while no-one came, and then I heard a voice saying something about all this noise, which was just what I had been calling his attention to; and he let me out, but I think he had been worried overnight by the moon or one of those prowling things, for he did not look glad. And I ran out and chased everything that needed chasing. And so another day started.”

“You must have been the hell of a dog,” said Wrather suddenly.

That spoiled everything. To begin with, talk of any sort was rather liable to bring him back to the present day; and, besides that, it was not the way to address a dean. That he had once used similar words himself did not excuse Wrather. In any case Dean Spanley, so far as I had observed him, never stayed for very long with his mind’s eye open upon that strange past and shut to this age of ours. He started slightly now, and I indicated the bottle of Tokay, nearly empty, and then glanced towards Wrather, to account for, if not to excuse, the unfortunate words.

“When I was up at Oxford,” said the Dean, “I was certainly a young man of some, shall I say, considerable activity. But a dog in any sense of the word, let alone one qualified by the word you used, would be a much exaggerated way of describing me.”

“Certainly. Quite so,” I said.

And the incident passed off, while we both turned somewhat pitying eyes upon Wrather.

“You know, you’re a bit overcome,” I said to Wrather.

And Wrather understood me.

“I expect that’s it,” he said. And he took the line that I indicated.

It is curious that, of all the amazing things said in that room, the words that made far the most stir were the almost innocent remark of Wrather. And I am sure that Dean Spanley believed that this remark was the strangest that had been made there that evening. This was as it should be; but, while it left the way open for another dinner, it certainly made it difficult to get the Dean to meet Wrather.

Our little dinner-party soon broke up; the Dean was a trifle shocked at Wrather’s lapse with the Tokay; Wrather was a bit ashamed of himself for having spoiled the sport, as he put it afterwards; and I had no longer any scientific interest in the dinner, as I realized that the Dean would not go back through the years any more that night. I merely remained an ordinary host. I do not think it was any hardship on Wrather to have been suspected of drunkenness, for he had brought it all on himself; incidentally he had had an enormous amount of Tokay, but only incidentally, for it had no real effect on Wrather. We all went downstairs, and I called a taxi, into which I put the Dean. Then Wrather came back into the house with me. Going upstairs he apologized for having “undogged the Dean,” and then we came to a room in which I sit and smoke a good deal, and we sat in front of the fire in arm-chairs and talked of Dean Spanley. And Wrather, with the air of a man who has been slightly cheated, said: “Have you noticed that he told us nothing of any love-affair?”

“No,” I said. “He didn’t. I wonder why.”

“Too much dean still left in him,” said Wrather. “You must get him deeper.”

“Deeper?” I said.

“More Tokay,” said Wrather.

It was all very well for Wrather to say that, but it couldn’t be done. Besides which, I was by no means certain how wide that ridge was from which the dean saw the past: at a certain number of glasses he arrived there; might not two extra glasses topple him down beyond it, and, if so, where? Then Wrather, though he had no idea how much was at stake scientifically, was distinctly helpful. “I think he is there all the time; in his dog-kennel, you know,” he said. “Only, in the glare of to-day, he can’t see it. That Tokay of yours is just like pulling down a blind on the glare, and then the old dog can see. Keep him full of it and you should have some sport with him.”

The flippancy of these remarks is obvious. But I give them to my reader for the element of truth that I think they contained, for flashes of truth may often appear to an insight even as unscientific as Wrather’s. Moreover Wrather’s view bore out the idea that I had long ago formed, that Dean Spanley in broad daylight at his club knew something veiled from the rest of us, though too little to be of any real value, until he was entirely removed from unfavourable conditions. And this removal my Tokay seemed to accomplish.

“It’s all very well,” I said rather crossly, “for you to say keep him full of Tokay. But he won’t drink it for me, not to any extent. He would for you somehow; but you’ve spoilt it all by calling him a dog, which is a thing no dean would stand.”

“I’m sorry,” said Wrather. “Let’s think what we can do. You know I’m as keen as you are to hear the old dog talk.”

That this was not the way to speak of Dean Spanley will be clear to my readers, but I said nothing of that then, and, instead of touching on any such delicate matter, we hatched a somewhat childish plot between us.

The plot went like this, and it was mainly Wrather’s idea: the Dean would not want to meet a drunken fellow like Wrather again; no dignitary of the church, no member of an important club, would. But represent Wrather as a man needing guidance, represent him as something much worse than what he had appeared to Dean Spanley, or anything he had ever been, a man about to be wrecked on the rocks of Tokay (if a liquid may be compared to a rock), and Wrather argued and I came to agree, and we hatched the thing out together, the Dean would come to save an almost hopeless case; and, if he got a few glasses of the finest Tokay while he was doing it, who would deserve them more?

“Tell him it’s no case for the pledge,” said Wrather. “Tell him I’m past all that. And there’s a certain amount of truth in that too. Say that I didn’t drink fair. *He* didn’t as a matter of fact: he wouldn’t keep up. But say it was me. And say that I must be watched, and taught to drink at the same pace as other men, reasonable men like the Dean, I mean; or otherwise the black fellow will get me. And I shouldn’t be surprised if he did in any case. But that’s neither here nor there. You get him drinking level with me, and we’ll soon bring out the dog in him, and we’ll have a whale of an evening.”

It wasn’t quite the way to talk; but I agreed. And I would have agreed to odder arrangements than that in the interests

of science.

A few days later I had a talk with the Dean in the Club, on the lines that Wrather and I had arranged.

“I am a good deal worried about that man Wrather,” I said.

“He is a bit crude, somewhat uncouth, somewhat perhaps ...” said Dean Spanley.

And while he pondered some exacter word, I broke in with, “It’s worse than that. The man of course will never be a teetotaller, but he does not notice what other men drink, reasonable men I mean. His only chance would be to learn how much wine can be taken in safety.”

“That’s not always so easy to teach, in a case like that,” said the Dean.

“No,” I said, “and I have come to you for advice about it, for I shouldn’t like to see Wrather, or any man, utterly ruined, as he soon must be if he goes on like that. What I thought was that if he could be guided by some sensible man, he might learn what was good for him and limit himself to that.”

“How do you mean?” said the Dean.

“Well, drinking glass for glass,” I said. “I would see that the wine was passed round continually, and that each man had only his share.”

“H’m,” said the Dean.

“It’s a rare wine, you see, and he’s unfamiliar with it; and he’d learn, that way, how much he could take in safety. It might save him altogether.”

But still the Dean seemed suspicious, or at any rate not quite satisfied.

“I take it you can do that yourself,” he said.

It was then that I played, if I may say so, my master-stroke.

“I’m afraid not,” I said.

“Eh?” said the Dean.

“I am afraid,” I said, “where so much is at stake for Wrather, I could not select myself as the perfect mentor.”

“I see,” said the Dean.

He remembered the occasion when I had given way to Tokay, a surrender by no means enforced on me, but still a surrender.

“Of course if you think he can be checked and brought round, in that way,” said the Dean; “and I dare say it may not be impossible; then of course you should be very careful how it is done.”

“That is why I have come to you,” I said.

“To me, eh?”

“Yes.”

Things hung in the balance then, while the Dean pondered.

“I don’t see how giving him more wine can teach him to take less,” he said; but there was doubt in his voice.

“If one tried to stop a case like that from taking any wine at all, one would lose the last vestige of influence over him, and he would be utterly lost. It’s worth trying.”

“Oh, I suppose so,” said the Dean, and without enthusiasm, for Wrather had been distinctly rude to him.

And then I flashed out on him the ace of trumps. “You suppose so! Can you doubt, Mr. Dean, that any soul is worth saving?”

The ace of trumps at his own game, and it had to take the trick.

“I will certainly be glad to try,” he said.

So I arranged what at one time I had thought to have been impossible, another dinner at my house, at which Dean Spanley was to meet Wrather.

Then I went off to tell Wrather what I had done, and to book him for the date. And at the same time I tried, as tactfully as I could, to check in advance any levity in remarks he might make to the Dean.

“You’ve got to damned well save my soul,” said Wrather. “Never you mind about anything else.”

“You’ll bring him right back with a jerk,” I said, “if you talk like that when he’s there. The split infinitive alone would be almost enough to do it.”

But all Wrather said was: “We’ll have him so far under, that nothing will bring him back.”

It is almost inconceivable to me, looking back on it, that such talk should have been the preliminary of a research of the first importance.

## CHAPTER 10

IT was exactly as Wrath had said, when the dinner came off; he did lead the Dean to the point which we both of us, for very different reasons, desired: and to-day with all its trappings; sights, noises and points of view; fell away from him with the sudden completeness of snow on a southern slope, when the spring sun charms it thence and the sleeping grass is laid bare. At a certain stage of our dinner, and evidently just the right one, I had referred to his reminiscences. And at that moment I had addressed him not as Mr. Dean, but by his earlier name of Wag. Just plain Wag.

“As soon as they brought me round from my own house,” said the Dean, “I used to have breakfast. And after that I used to run round to look for some food, in various places I knew of. There was the pig-sty for one. A very greedy devil, the pig, and a lot of good stuff was brought to him; and, if one knew just where to look, there was always a lot of it to be found that had slopped over into the mud; and even when one found nothing to get one’s teeth into, there was always a very meaty taste in the water of all the puddles round there. And then there was a heap near the stables where a lot of good things were put. Various places, you know. On a lucky day I would sometimes eat till dinner-time; then have dinner, and go out to look for a bit more. That is one way of eating, and a very satisfying way. Another way is to hunt your own game and eat it nice and hot. They say it gives one an appetite; which of course it does; but there is no need for that; one always has an appetite. Still, life would not be complete without hunting. Hunting and dog-fighting should be one’s main pursuits, as guarding is a duty, and eating a pastime.

“I shouldn’t like you to go away with the idea, by the way, that I would eat anything. That was not so. One had a certain position to keep up, and a certain (shall I say?) dignity to preserve; and to preserve it I made a point of never eating bread. There were those that offered it to me, until they got to know me, but I always had to leave it on the carpet. There is no harm in bread, yet it has not only no flavour, but is one of those things that do not develop a flavour even when buried for a long time, so that it can never become interesting. To be a bread-eater is to my mind to be lacking in refinement or self-respect. I do not of course refer to soft toast, on which perhaps a snipe has been lying, all saturated with gravy: such things may be very precious.

“And cake of course is never to be confused with bread; it has a similar taste and the same disabilities, but is a far more important food, so that there can never be any loss of dignity in eating a piece of cake. The Wise Ones eat cake by itself, but to bread they always add something before eating it, which shows the unimportance of bread. And from this I come to table manners. One should catch one’s food as neatly as possible. By fixing one’s eyes on the Wise Ones before they throw, it is almost impossible to miss.”

Wrather moved slowly nearer to me, sideways. I knew what he was going to say.

“Do you think,” he whispered, “that the old dog would catch anything now?”

I could not explain to Wrather at this time what in any case I had led him to believe was not the case, that this was research work on my part, not mere amusement. So all I said to him was, “Don’t whisper;” a rudeness that he forgave me at once with a twinkling eye.

“Eh? What?” said the Dean. “I was saying that one should fix one’s eyes on the Wise Ones. There are those that do not appreciate intense devotion at meal-times. But it is not for us to withhold our devotion on that account. It is born in all of us, and increased by beatings. A few sharp words should not diminish it. And sometimes it brings us abundant bones.”

“I say,” said Wrather, “the old dog wants bucking up a bit.”

“Don’t!” I said in an undertone. “You’ll bring him round.”

“No I shan’t,” said Wrather. And to the Dean he said, “Did you never have any more exciting experiences?”

“Exciting?” replied the Dean. “Life is full of excitement, except while one is sleeping.”

“Anything specially thrilling, I mean,” said Wrather.

I couldn’t stop him. But Dean Spanley, far from being brought back by him to our own time leaned forward and looked at Wrather, and said: “I was out once for a walk by myself, and I saw a nursery-maid and two children and a dog coming my way; and a strange new smell ran past me, and I glanced up and saw the look in the eyes of the dog. And I ran. I started just in time and he never came after me. It was rabies. And the nursery-maid and the children came quietly on, walking as they do on a Sunday.”

“Rabies!” said Wrather, all hushed. “How did you know?”

“How did I know?” said the Dean. “I saw his eyes. And the look was there.”

“And you couldn’t have been mistaken?” I asked.

“It was glaring,” replied the Dean.

And that was one thing I learnt from him.

Wrather drank off a whole glass of Tokay, and said: “Tell us something more cheerful.”

I was afraid every moment that Wrather would bring him back.

“Down,” I said to Wrather, who understood what I meant; and the sharp command helped, I think, to keep the Dean where he was among his old memories. Nevertheless he answered Wrather, and seemed to do what he asked.

“I remember the hounds coming once to our house; professional hunters, you know. I should have liked to have asked them whether they had been permitted to come there by the wise Master, and whether their intentions were entirely correct, and indeed a great many other things; and, if their answers had been satisfactory, I should have liked to have told them all about our woods and all about who lived in them. I could have helped them in hundreds of ways. But unfortunately I was shut up. I shouted a good deal to them from my house; but I should have liked to have gone with them and showed them the way; I should have liked to have gone round and seen that they were all quite well. And I should have liked to have chased the horses, so that they should not think, on account of their size, that they were more important than me. But there it was; I was shut up.

“I had an enormous amount to do when they left. I had to go and find out who they all were, and where they had come from, and if they were all quite well. Every tuft of grass had news of them. There were the scents of the hounds themselves, and scents from the roads they had come by, and tracks and scents of the horses: the field in front of our house was nothing less than a history; and it took me a long time to go through it. I was a bit behindhand owing to having been shut up, but scents that had gone from lawns and paths still

hung in the taller grasses, and I was able to gather all the information that I required.”

“What for?” blurted out Wrather, before I could stop him.

“To guard the house,” said the Dean. “It was my duty to guard it. And I had to know who had come near it, and what their business was. Our house was sacred, and we couldn’t have people coming near it unless we knew what they had come for: there might have been an enemy among them. You will not suggest, I trust, that anybody and everybody should be allowed without enquiry, and without the most careful enquiry, near a sacred house.”

“Not at all,” said Wrather.

And I felt it necessary to add: “Of course not.”

“Ours was a particularly sacred house,” said the Dean, still somewhat nettled. “Even the butcher’s cart had to be barked at, though at many houses such a cart as that would be allowed to drive up without question. I certainly could not have all those people coming without enquiring into their motives, and, as a matter of general interest, their state of health. So I naturally had a very busy morning. They went visiting in our wood while I was still shut up, and I heard them leave the wood hunting. They all shouted out that they were after a fox, and quite right too, but I could not allow them merely on that account to come near a house such as ours without proper investigations.

“And there were two or three light carriages that had come to our stables, and that were fortunately still there when I was let out. So I sniffed at the wheels to get news of what was going on in the world, and I left a message with all of them to say that I was quite well.”

## CHAPTER 11

ONE more story we got from the Dean that night; he had met his friend again, the one that lived three overs away; he had come to the house we had heard of, running behind his cart. The Dean had gone up to him at once, or Wag I should say, no doubt putting his nose right up to the other dog's, and flicking it away and trotting off, and the other dog had followed.

"I invited him to come hunting," said the Dean, "and he said he would like to, and we went off at once."

"What was your friend's name?" put in Wrather.

"Lion-hunter," replied the Dean.

"Did he hunt lions?" asked Wrather.

"No," said the Dean, "but he was always ready to, he was always expecting a lion in his garden, and he thought of himself as Lion-hunter, therefore it was his name."

"Did you think of yourself as Wag?" asked Wrather, not in any way critically, but only, I think, to get the details right.

"No," said the Dean, "I answered to it. I came to them when the Great Ones called that name. I thought of myself as Moon-chaser. I had often hunted the moon."

"I see," said Wrather.

And he had spoken so suavely that he never brought the Dean round, as I feared a jarring note might have done.

"When we came to the wood," continued the Dean, "we examined several rabbit-holes; and when we came to a suitable one, a house with only two doors to it, and the rabbit at home, I set Lion-hunter to dig, and stood myself at the back-door. He did all the barking, while I waited for the

rabbit to come out. Had the rabbit come out I should have leaped on him and torn him to pieces, and eaten up every bit, not allowing Lion-hunter or anyone in the world to have a taste of it. When my blood is up no-one can take anything from me, or even touch it. I should have caught it with one leap, and killed it with one bite, and eaten even the fur. Unfortunately the rabbit lived deeper down than we thought.

“But it was not long before a very strange and beautiful scent blew through the wood, on a wind that happened to come that way from the downs outside. We both lifted our noses, and sure enough it was a hare. We ran out of the wood, and we very soon saw him; he was running over the downs on three legs, in that indolent affected manner that hares have. He stopped and sat up and looked at us, as though he hadn’t expected to meet two great hunters. Then he went on again. We raced to a point ahead of him, so as to meet him when he got there, and we soon made him put down that other hind leg. Unfortunately before he got to the point that we aimed at, he turned. This happened to leave us straight behind him. We shouted out that we were hunting him, and that we were great hunters, Lion-hunter and I, and that nothing ever escaped from us, and that nothing ever would. This so alarmed him that he went faster. When he came to a ridge of the downs he slanted to his left, and we slanted more, so as to cut him off; but when we got over the ridge he had turned again. We shouted to him to stop, as it was useless to try to escape from us; but the tiresome animal was by now some way ahead. He had of course the white tail that is meant to guide us, the same as the rabbit has; and we kept him in sight for a long while. When he was no longer in sight we followed the scent, which Lion-hunter could do very well, though he was not as fast as I; and it led us to places to which

I had never been before, over a great many valleys. We puzzled out the scent and followed on and on, and we did not give up the hunt until all the scent had gone, and nothing remained except the smell of the grass, and the air that blew from the sheep. Night came on rather sooner than usual, and we did not know where we were, so we turned for home.”

“How did you do that,” asked Wrather, “if you did not know where you were?”

“By turning towards it,” replied the Dean. “I turned first, and then Lion-hunter turned the same way.”

“But how did you know which way to turn?” persisted Wrather.

“I turned towards home,” said the Dean.

There was something here that neither Wrather nor I ever quite understood, though we talked it over afterwards, and I was never able to get it from the Dean. My own impression is that there was something concerned which we should not have understood in any case, however it had been explained. My only contribution to any investigation that there may be on these lines is merely that the queer thing is there: what it is I have failed to elucidate.

“We turned towards home,” the Dean went on, “and that led us past a lot of places I never had seen before. We passed a farm where strange people barked at us; and we met a new animal, with a beard and a fine proud smell. The question arose as to whether we should hunt him, but he lowered his horns at us, and jumped round so quickly that the horns were always pointing the wrong way. So we decided we would not hunt him, and told him we would come and hunt him some other day, when it was not so late and we had more time; and we went on towards home. Presently we saw a window

shining at us, and it did not look right. It was a small house and all shut up, and it looked as though bad people might be hiding in it. I asked Lion-hunter if we should go up to the house and bark at them; but he thought that they might be asleep, and that it was better to let bad people go on sleeping. So we went by the lighted window, but it looked very bad in the night. Then the moon came over a ridge of the downs, but not large enough to be barked at. And then we came to a wood, and it turned out to be our own wood. And we ran down the hill and came to my house and barked under the window. And Lion-hunter said that he thought he would go back to his own house now, in case our door should open and anyone come out of it angry. And I said that that might be best. And the door opened, and a Great One appeared. And I said that I had been hunting and that I never would hunt again, and that I had stayed out much much too late, and that the shame of my sin was so great that I could not enter the house, and would only just crawl into it. So I crawled in and had a beating, and shook myself, and it was a splendid evening. I laid down in front of the fire and enjoyed the warmth of it, and turned over the memory of our hunt slowly in my mind; and the fire and my memories and the whole of the night seemed brightened by my beating. How beautiful the fire was! Warmer than the sun, warmer than eating can make you, or running or good straw, or even beatings, it is the most mysterious and splendid of all the powers of Man. For Man makes fire with his own hand. There is no completer life than lying and watching the fire. Other occupations may be as complete, but with none of them do the glow, the warmth and the satisfaction that there are in a fire come to one without any effort of one's own. Before a fire these things come merely by gazing. They are placed in the fire by

Man, in order to warm dogs, and to replenish his own magical powers. Wherever there is a fire there is Man, even out of doors. It is his greatest wonder. On the day that he gives to dogs that secret, as he one day will, dogs and men shall be equal. But that day is not yet. I stray a little, perhaps, from my reminiscences. These things are taught, and are known to be true, but they are not of course any part of my personal observations.”

“Who discovered that?” said Wrather before I could stop him.

“We do not know,” said the Dean.

“Then how do you know it’s true?” asked Wrather.

“They shall be equal one day, and on that day,” said the Dean.

“What day?” asked Wrather.

“Why, the day on which Man tells dogs the secret of fire,” I said to end the discussion.

“Exactly,” said the Dean.

I frowned at Wrather, for we were getting near something very strange; and though Wrather’s interruption did not bring the Dean back, as I feared every moment it might, we heard no more of that strange belief from him. He talked of common things, the ordinary experiences of a dog on a rug at the fireside; things that one might have guessed; nothing that it needed a spiritual traveller to come from a past age to tell us.

## CHAPTER 12

**I**PASS over many weeks, weeks that brought no success to my investigations. A feeling that I had sometimes come very near to strange discoveries only increased my disappointment. It seemed to me that a dog had some such knowledge of the whereabouts of his home as the mariner has of the North pole. The mariner knows by his compass: how does the dog know? And then I had gathered from the Dean that a dog can detect rabies in another dog, before any signs of it appear to the eyes of men. How was that done? What a valuable discovery that might be, if only I could follow it up. But I had no more than a hint of it. And then the strange faith of which the Dean had said only one or two sentences. All the rest that I had got was no more than what an observant man taking notes might have found out or guessed about dogs; but these three things beckoned to me, promising something far more, like three patches of gold on far peaks in some El Dorado of knowledge. The lure of them never left me. I had long talks with Wrather. I let him see that it was more to me than a mere matter of amusement; and he stuck to me and promised to do what he could. He and the Dean and I dined together again, and Wrather and I did our utmost; but I began to see that, in spite of those lapses, induced partly by the rarity of the wine and mainly by the perseverance of deliberate efforts to lure him away from sobriety, the Dean was an abstemious man. Only at the end of our dinner for three or four minutes he stepped back into that mid-Victorian age, that he seemed able to enter in memory when the glare of to-day was dimmed for him; and the things that he said were trivial, and far from the secrets I sought. Nor were they

the sort of things that one much cared to hear: there are many habits and tricks we forgive to dogs on account of their boundless affection, which somehow jar when heard from the lips of a dean. Once more we dined together, and at that dinner the Dean said nothing that would have surprised the timidest of any flock that he had ever tended. And the next day Wrather told me definitely that he could do no more with the Dean.

“I won’t say he’s a teetotaller,” said Wrather, “because I wouldn’t say that lightly of any man, and I know he is not; but he has a damned strong tendency that way. We have got him over it once or twice, but he’ll develop it yet. I can do no more with him.”

Not the way to talk; but never mind that: so much was at stake.

“What’s to be done?” I said desperately.

“I’ll help you all I can,” said Wrather, “but it’s only fair to tell you when I can do no more. He’s not the right sort of fellow. He may have taken his whack once or twice like a sportsman, but it wasn’t because he wanted to. It was just by accident, because he didn’t know the strength of the booze. There are not many people that do. You want to be an emperor of Austria to gauge the strength of Tokay to a nicety.”

“Then I shall never find out what I’m after,” I said in despair.

“I wouldn’t say that,” said Wrather. “I’m not the only sportsman in the world. You want to find someone who takes a stiffer whack than I do, and takes it in a brighter way. There are men you can’t help taking a glass with.”

For a moment I feared that such a quest was hopeless, till I suddenly thought of the Maharajah. It was said of him that champagne was to him what Vichy water is to some people; and, if a sportsman were needed, it was said too that even India had scarcely a score who might claim to be greater sportsmen. Moreover he knew so much of the situation already, that nothing would have to be explained to him. He was the very man.

“What about the Maharajah of Haikwar?” I said.

“He’s a good sportsman,” said Wrather.

“You know him?” I asked.

“No,” said Wrather, “but of course I’ve heard of him. And he might do.”

“I don’t want stuff about lying in front of the fire,” I said. “I want to find out how dogs can find their way home, by a new route and from a strange country. And I want to know how they can detect rabies long before we can; and one or two other things.”

“You’ll have to get him deeper, for all that,” said Wrather; “deeper than I’ve been able to get him. It’s all very well for a dull old dog like the Dean to lay down the exact number of glasses at which one ought to stop; and he’s been doing a good deal of stopping just lately; but the fact remains that when you have a real bright sportsman like the Maharajah of Haikwar taking a glass or two of wine with a man, he does follow along a bit. He’ll get him further than I ever got him.”

“Do you think so?” I said.

“I’m sure of it,” said Wrather. “It’s like horses out hunting. There’s no horse living that would stand perfectly still and watch the field galloping away from him, however dull and

slow he was. You'll see when the Maharajah comes. Ask me too and I'll do my bit, and we'll drag the Dean along yet."

"Further than he's been hitherto?" I asked.

"The man's human after all," said Wrather.

And somehow, from the way he spoke, I hoped again.

The next thing was to get the Maharajah. I called on his secretary, Captain Haram Bhaj, to ask if he and the Maharajah would come and dine with me. "The fact is," I said, "that the proof of one of the principal tenets of his religion, and yours, is at stake. A friend of mine has a memory of a former incarnation. I will get him to come to the dinner. And if we can get him to speak, we may have inestimable revelations that may be of the utmost value to all of your faith."

"Of course what His Highness is really interested in," said Captain Haram Bhaj, "is his handicap."

"His handicap," I lamely repeated.

"At polo," said Haram Bhaj.

"But surely," I said, "his religion must mean something to him."

"Oh yes," said Haram Bhaj. "Only, polo is His Highness's first interest."

And then I thought of Wrather.

"I have a friend," I said, "who used to play a good deal of polo once. It would be a great pleasure to him to meet the Maharajah sahib, if His Highness will come and dine with me."

Wrather had not actually spoken to me of polo, but I had a kind of feeling about him, which turned out to be right, that he had been a polo-player. When Captain Haram Bhaj saw

that polo was likely to be the topic at dinner he said that he thought the Maharajah would come. And as it turned out, he did. I warned Wrather about the polo, and a few nights later we were all gathered at my table, the Maharajah of Haikwar, Captain Haram Bhaj, Wrather and I and the Dean; the first four of these resolved to rob the fifth of a secret that might justify the hope of the East and astound Europe.

## CHAPTER 13

DEAN SPANLEY was asking the Maharajah of Haikwar about ancient customs in India; about Indian music, Indian dress and the tribes that live in the jungle.

Wrather was talking to the Maharajah upon his other side, whenever he got an opportunity, about polo. And Haram Bhaj was watching.

Wrather had contributed to our efforts with one splendid remark, that he had made to the Dean before the Indians arrived. "In the East they think it a discourtesy if all the guests at a party do not drink glass for glass."

The remark created the perfect atmosphere in which the Maharajah's efforts and mine would have the best chance of thriving. The Dean had drawn me aside and said: "Is this good for Mr. Wrather?" And I had said: "Yes, it is ideal for him. The Maharajah never goes one drop beyond what a man should."

So now the plot was in progress with every chance of success. A base plot, some may say. Perhaps all plots are base. But look what there was at stake: a secret to which champagne and Tokay were the only keys. And what a secret! I felt that the world was waiting expectant outside the door.

We were all drinking champagne. Tokay was to come at the end as a *coup de grace*. I flatter myself that the champagne was of a good vintage; and the evening progressed to a point at which the Maharajah laid bare his heart and told Wrather the ambition of his life. I do not think that with an oriental you always get a clear sight of his innermost feelings, but I think that it was so with the Maharajah of Haikwar. His ambition was to have a handicap

of nine at polo. At present he was only eight. And as yet the Dean had not spoken at all of anything nearer himself than the customs of Indian villages.

There was no servant in the room; my butler had gone to bed; and we passed round the champagne among ourselves. Haram Bhaj was particularly helpful. And the Dean was holding back all the time. Yet that force was present that is sometimes found at the pastime of table turning, when everybody combines to pull the same way; and though Dean Spanley set himself against this force, he gradually went with it. More and more I felt that the world was hushed and waiting. And then with the first glass of the Tokay he spoke, spoke from that other century and sojourn. The Maharajah looked interested. But as yet nothing came that was stranger than what we had already heard, nothing that is not known or could not be guessed among those that have carefully studied the ways of dogs. I passed round more Tokay, and the Maharajah and Haram Bhaj and Wrathier helped me. The Dean was telling a story about a dog-fight, not greatly different from the one that I have already given my reader. As in the former one he had gone for the ear, and had succeeded in getting the grip, and brought that tale to a close with a good deal of boasting. It was without doubt a dog that was speaking to us, but a dog with nothing to tell us we did not know. I tried yet more Tokay, and everyone helped me. We got a little idyll then of a spring morning some decades back into the century that is gone; not very interesting, except for the shining eyes of the Dean as he told it, and not very seemly. The stock of Tokay was running low, but was equal to one grand effort: we were all drinking it now in claret glasses. And suddenly I felt that the moment was hovering when what I waited for would be revealed, something that

Man could not know unless told like this; and I knew that Dean Spanley's secrets were about to be laid bare.

I knew that the Maharajah cared more for his handicap than for those religious tenets that he mainly left to the Brahmins, and that the interest he had shown already was little more than the interest that he took as a sportsman in dog-fights; but now that the moment was coming for which I had waited so long I held up my hand to hush them, and as a sign that the mystery of which I had spoken was going to be shown to us now. And so it was. And so it was.

Everything I had sought was laid bare with open hands. I learned the faith of the dog; I knew how they see rabies in the eyes of another long before men guess it; I knew how dogs go home. I knew more about scent than all the Masters of Hounds in England have ever guessed, with all their speculations added together. I knew the wonderful secrets of transmigration. For half an hour that evening I might have spoken with Brahmins, and they would at least have listened to what I had to say, without that quiet scorn lying under a faint smile, with which they listen to all else that we may say to them. For half an hour I knew things that they know. Of this I am sure.

And now my readers will wish to hear them too. Be not too hard on me, reader. It is no easy thing to make a dean drunk. For a cause less stupendous I should not have attempted it. I attempted it for a secret unknown to Europe; and with the help of the Maharajah and the two others, drinking glass for glass, I accomplished it. All that I remember. What Dean Spanley said after his tale of the dog-fight and his little love-affair, I do not remember. I know that he held the key to some strange mysteries, and that he told us all. I remember the

warm room and the lighted candles, and light shining in the champagne and in the Tokay, and people talking, and the words “Never trust a teetotaller or a man who wears elastic-sided boots.” Then I noticed that a window was open, and some of the candles were out and all the rest were low, and everybody seemed to have gone. I went to the window then and leaned out to refresh myself, and when I came back to my chair, I kicked against a body on the floor and found that Wrather was still there, partly under the table. The Maharajah and Haram Bhaj and the Dean were gone. And I propped up Wrather against the legs of a chair, and after a while he spoke. And he said: “For God’s sake give me a whiskey and soda. No more Tokay. For God’s sake a whiskey and soda.”

And I gave him a whiskey and soda, and that brought him round, and I took a little myself. And his first words after that were: “Well, we got the old dog to talk.”

“Yes,” I said. “What did he say?”

“That’s what I can’t remember,” he said.

And that was my trouble too.

I gave Wrather a bed, and I went to bed myself, and in the morning our memories were no clearer.

Knowing the enormous importance of what was said, I went round after a light breakfast to see Haram Bhaj. He had been to Vine Street and stayed the night there, and they had let him go in the morning; and the only clue he had to what he had heard overnight was that he had told the inspector at Vine Street that he, Haram Bhaj, was a black-and-grey spaniel and could get home by himself.

“Now why did I say that?” he said.

But there was not enough in that to be of any use whatever; and later in the day I called on the Maharajah.

“It was a very jolly evening,” he said; and he was evidently grateful to me. But after a while I saw that I should lose his attention unless I talked of polo. Either he remembered nothing, or the secrets of transmigration, if they were secrets from him, scarcely attracted his interest, and he left all such things to the Brahmins.

It only remained to try Dean Spanley again, and this I shall never do now. For very soon after that dinner the Dean was promoted to bishop. He still knows me, still greets me, whenever we meet at the Club. But I shall never get his secret. One of the shrewdest observers of the last century, the lady after whom the greater part of that hundred years was named, stated in one of her letters that she had never known a man who became a bishop to be quite the same as he was before. It was so with Dean Spanley. I can remember no act or word of his that ever showed it, and yet I have sufficiently felt the change never to trouble him with invitations to dine with me any more.

Wrather and I often dined together and, I trust, will often again. We feel like travellers who once, for a short while, have seen something very strange; and neither of us can remember what it was.

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[The end of *My Talks with Dean Spanley* by Lord Dunsany]