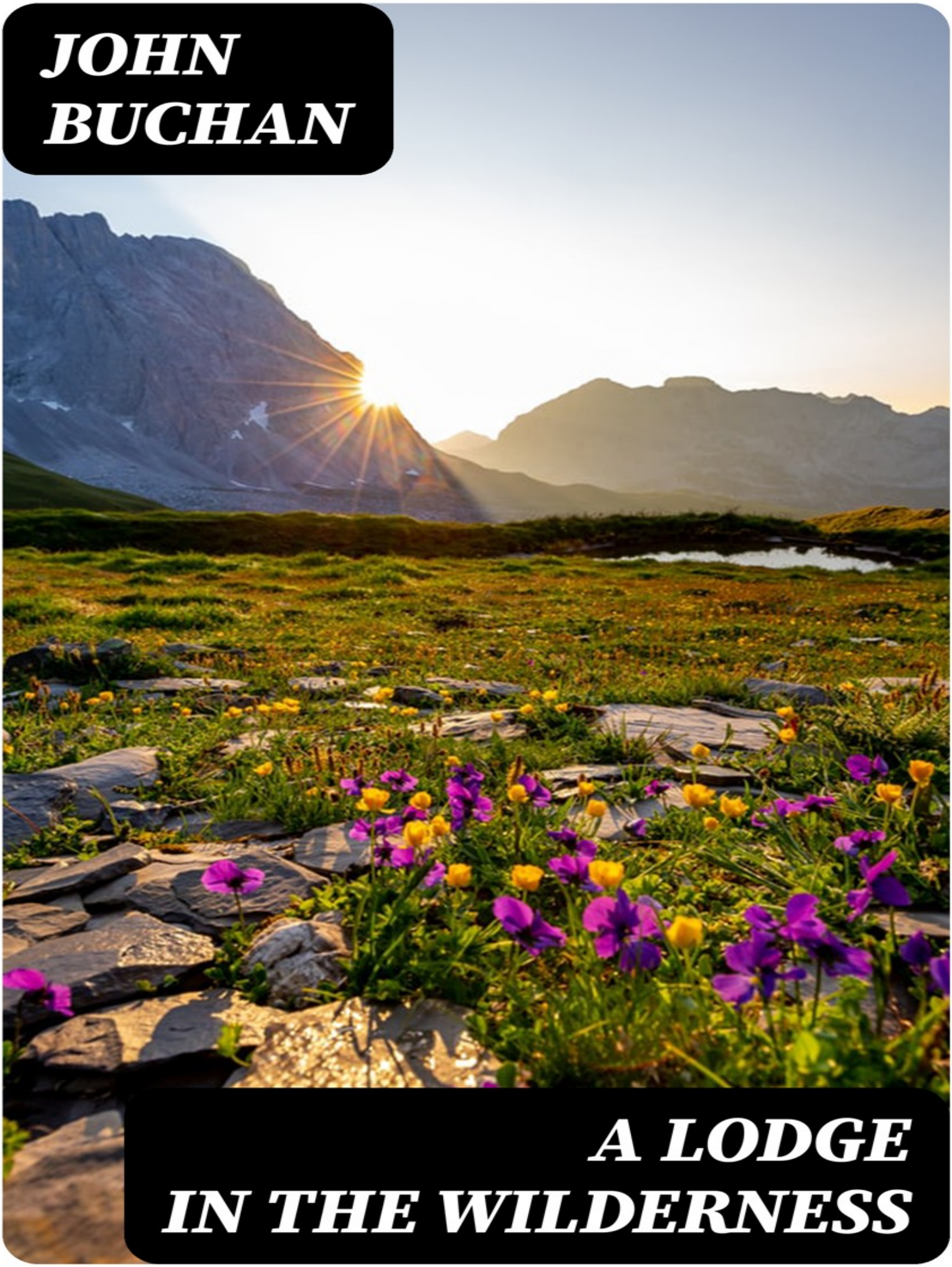
JOHN BUCHAN



A LODGE IN THE WILDERNESS

John Buchan

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THE CHARACTERS

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Mr. Francis Carey
: An intelligent millionaire

Lord Appin
: A Conservative; sometime Prime Minister of England

Lord Launceston
: An Ex-Viceroy; attached to no political party

Mr. Ebenezer Wakefield
: A Canadian Statesman

Mr. Eric Lowentstein
: A Jewish financier

Sir Edward Considine
: An Explorer and famous Big-game Hunter

Colonel Alistair Graham
: A Soldier and Traveler; now of the Intelligence Department

Mr. Lewis Astbury
: A Journalist

Sir Hugh Somerville

The Duchess of Maxton
: Wife of George, 14th Duke of Maxton and Champfleury, at one time a Liberal Secretary of State; Sister of Lord Appin

Lady Amysfort
: A Tory; Wife of a well-known member of the Jockey Club

Mrs. Wilbraham
: Wife qf Colonel Wilbraham, C.B., on service in South Africa

Lady Warcliff
: Wife of Sir Arthur Warcliff, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., a General Officer commanding in India

Lady Lucy Gardner

Wife of Sir Hamilton Gardner, G.C.M.G., High Commissioner of East Africa

Mrs. Yorke

An American; Wife of the Rt. Hon. Henry Yorke, a Liberal Secretary of State

Mrs. Deloraine

Of Deloraine Manor, Shropshire

Lady Flora Brune

Niece of the Duchess of Maxton

Miss Marjory Haystoun

PROLOGUE

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MR FRANCIS CAREY has been long a familiar name to the world—to some people as the most patriotic of millionaires, to others as the richest of patriots. Exiled in early youth to the Colonies for his health's sake, he made a profession of a necessity, and secured in a short space of time bodily well-being and an immense fortune. Few could trace in the square muscular figure of forty-five the pallid and consumptive boy of twenty. By a singular turn of fate he had stood by the cradle of great industries. He was the pioneer of the richest gold-mining area in the world, and scarcely less famous were his shipping lines, his railways, his newspapers, his teak-forests, and his vast tobacco-farms. Money made by enterprise was invested with wisdom, and his fortune was already almost out of bounds when it was doubled by the success of a copper venture which bade fair to rival Montana. And yet in the prime of life, in spite of the wiles of many women, he remained a bachelor. Some attributed the fact to an early and melancholy love affair; others, with better judgment, ascribed it to his preoccupation with the fortunes of his country. In Bacon's phrase he had "espoused the State," and found in her a mistress fairer and more exacting than any mortal Amaryllis.

In London he had modest chambers on a second floor in Half-Moon Street, but no man owned more lordly country-houses. The feudal manors of impoverished English squires, the castles of impecunious Highland chiefs held for him no charms. It was his business, he said, to show the world a

more excellent way. At the head of a long glen in the Selkirks, where snow-peaks rose out of pine-forests, he built himself a hunting-box. In a scented Kashmir valley, among thickets of rhododendron, he had another, where lamas and Turcoman merchants, passing on their way from Leh to Srinagur, brought all the news of Central Asia. A bungalow in a Pacific isle, a fishing-lodge in New Zealand, and a superb farm of the old Dutch style in the Blaauwberg, were other of his dwellings. But his true home, if a nomad can be said to have one, was his house of Musuru, on the scarp of the Mau plateau, looking over the great trough of Equatoria. Here, in the midst of a park of many thousand acres, he lived as Prester John may have lived in his Abyssinian palace. He might lounge through the world of fashion in an old tweed coat, but his heart was on the side of magnificence. He sought for romance in life, and found it by the device of importing the fine flower of civilisation into the stronghold of savagery. It pleased him to shuffle unregarded in a London crowd, knowing that over seas half a continent waited upon his will. His amazing energy annihilated space, and he found time in a crowded life to live in his many houses more regularly than the modest citizen who owns a mansion in Bayswater and a villa at Cannes.

To the world Carey remained a mystery. Every halfpenny paper placarded his achievements, his arrivals and departures were chronicled like those of Royalty, his speeches in the City and his rare appearances on public platforms drew crowds which were denied to eminent statesmen. But the man himself was obscure. He was rarely seen in society, and country-houses knew him not.

Nevertheless he contrived in some way to obtain the friendship of most men and women who were worth knowing. His influence was so well recognised, and yet so inexplicable, that many good people were heard to call it sinister. And yet few had any complaint to make of his doings. He spent his great income generously and prudently on public needs. A vast scheme of education, inaugurated by him, tied the schools of the Colonies to the older institutions of England. One ancient university owed the renewal of her fortunes to his gifts. In the slums his dwellings for workmen had made his name a household word, and at his own cost he yearly relieved the congestion of great cities by planting settlements in new lands. His activity, indeed, was so boundless that, had he figured more in the public eye, enemies would have sprung up out of sheer dullness of understanding. Knowing this, he kept wisely to his humble retirement, that his usefulness might be marred by no private grudges. He was accepted as a kind of national providence, scarcely more to be criticised than the Monarchy. If some called his faith Imperialism, others pointed out how little resemblance it bore to the article cried in the market-place. It was a creed beyond parties, a consuming and passionate interest in the destiny of his people.

On one point alone he found critics. It was his habit to take every year a party of his friends to some one or other of his remote homes. Now it would be a band of sportsmen whom he would carry off to the Selkirks or Kashmir for some weeks of unforgettable hunting. Now he would take a group of his less active acquaintances to his house at the Cape,

where in the midst of vineyards and heathy mountains they could find good talk and a complete seclusion from the world. Once in a while he would have a gathering at his East African dwelling, and these were the choicest of his entertainments. The guests who were fortunate enough to share his hospitality came to form a set by themselves, bound together by the tie of delectable memories. Their enemies christened them "Careyites," and said hard things about the power of the purse; but the coterie was too large, too distinguished, and too representative to be sneered at with impunity. The Radical journalist found nothing to cavil at in the man who, so far as he saw, lived simply and wrought effectively for the poor. The Tory member could not speak ill of one who was so noted a sportsman and so generous a host. The plain man could only admire a figure of such vitality, who was original even in his pleasures.

It will be remembered that some little while ago the creed which is commonly called Imperialism was tossed down into the arena of politics to be wrangled over by parties and grossly mauled in the quarrel. With the fall of the Government which had sanctioned such tactics there came one of those waves of reaction which now and then break in upon our national steadfastness. The name of "Empire" stank in the nostrils of the electorate. Those who used it fell like ninepins; in the huge majority which the new Ministry acquired there were many who openly blasphemed it; and the few who still cherished the faith thought it wise to don temporarily the garb of indifference. Carey viewed the change with philosophic calm. He trusted the instincts of his race, and was not sorry that the dross should be purged

and the spirit purified by misfortune. It occurred to him, however, that a little quiet conversation among some friends of his own way of thinking might be useful by way of clarifying their minds. It is well after defeat to make a short sojourn in the wilderness. That year, accordingly, he selected his party with especial care, and fixed Musuru as the place of entertainment. The months of August, September, and October were chosen as the best time, partly because it was the cool season in East Africa, partly because it was the Bar and Parliamentary vacation—though, indeed, as he reflected, none of his guests had for the present much to do with Parliament. His old friend the Duchess of Maxton, and Mr Hugh Somerville, a young man of thirty, who, after some years of foreign travel, was now endeavouring to make a fortune, were called in to assist in his selection. One rule only he laid down as inviolable—"I will have no husbands and wives, remember, Susan. If a man is married he must come without his wife, and the same for the women. We must all be unattached, for domesticity, as I have often told you, is the foe of friendship."

With this guidance, and after long consideration, a list was prepared. Lord Appin, the Duchess's brother, was the first to be selected. Once the leader of the Conservatives, he had found the trammels of politics too hard to be borne, and had given up to mankind what the virtuous declared was due to his party. In German metaphysics, French furniture, and the Turf he found his nominal interests; but his friends, of whom Carey was the most intimate, were well aware that beneath his insouciance he cherished political

dreams which, though unacceptable to the hustings, were none the less broad-based on prescience and understanding. Lord Launceston, Hugh's former chief, came next; and Mr Eric Lowenstein, a Jewish financier, who had been Carey's partner in many schemes. Mr Ebenezer Wakefield, that eminent Colonial publicist, was added by Carey; and Hugh stipulated for Lewis Astbury, a young journalist who had won fame first as a war correspondent and then as a military critic. With Sir Edward Considine, the traveller, and Colonel Alastair Graham, of the Intelligence Department, the masculine side of the party was complete. The women were more difficult, and the Duchess spent many anxious hours. It was easy enough, she said, to get men without their wives, but it looked so odd for women to go travelling without their husbands; and Hugh's suggestion of a party of girls was refused on the ground of the appalling duties of chaperonage. In the end Lady Lucy Gardner, the wife of a Colonial governor, and Mrs Wilbraham and Lady Warcliff, whose respective husbands were on duty in Africa and India, were selected as the nucleus. Hugh begged for Mrs Yorke, the American wife of an English statesman, the Duchess insisted on Mrs Deloraine, and Carey added Lady Amysfort, the Egeria of her party, who, like her votaries, was out of power since the elections. "I will bring two charming girls," the Duchess said, "Marjory Haystoun and my niece Flora—it will do them all the good in the world. And Marjory is as serious as you, Francis, and nearly as clever. There! I think our list is complete. We have the sexes in equal numbers, which is more than you will find in any English country-house."

These details being settled, it only remained to arrange for the voyage. Following a rule of his own invention, Carey always decreed that his guests should come within the pale of his hospitality at Southampton or Marseilles, or wherever the real journey could be said to begin. Their route was as rigidly mapped out as a Cook's Tour, for he felt that it was desirable to avoid that premature boredom which may fall on ill-assorted fellow-travellers. It was arranged that the Duchess should travel with one of the girls and Lord Launceston. The other girl should go with Lord Appin, Lady Lucy, and Mr Astbury. Lady Amysfort and Mrs Wilbraham should accompany Mr Lowenstein, while Hugh was given the escort of Mrs Yorke and Lady Warcliff. Considine and Graham, it appeared, were at that moment hunting near Lake Rudolf, and would be summoned by messenger so as to arrive with the rest of the party. The various detachments should start at different times, one lingering for a few days at Cairo, another at Mombasa, but all should meet at Musuru in time for dinner on the Twelfth of August.

"Last Twelfth," said the Duchess meditatively, "I was entertaining for Bob at Glenumquhill. Fourteen men and not a woman besides myself. And this year I am to try to keep the peace among seventeen maniacs, eight of them female, on a mountain in the Tropics. After this who shall say that I have not the courage to make any sacrifice for the cause!"

CHAPTER I

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THE present writer is ill-equipped for the task of describing great houses, but Musuru demands that he should dedicate his slender talents to the attempt. From a wayside station on the railway between Mombasa and Port Florence a well-made highway runs north along the edge of the plateau through forests of giant cypress and juniper. To the east lies the great Rift valley, with the silver of its lakes gleaming eerily through the mountain haze. After a dozen miles the woodland ceases and the road emerges on a land of far-stretching downs, broken up into shallow glens where streams of clear water ripple through coverts of bracken and lilies. Native villages with bee-hive huts appear, and the smoke from their wood fires scents the thin upland air. Now the road turns west, and the indefinable something creeps into the atmosphere which tells the traveller that he is approaching the rim of the world. Suddenly he comes upon a gate, with a thatched lodge, which might be in Scotland. Entering, he finds himself in a park dotted with shapely copses and full of the same endless singing streams. Orchards, vineyards, olive-groves, and tobacco-fields appear, and then the drive sweeps into a garden, with a lake in the centre and a blaze of flower-beds. The air blows free to westward, and he knows that he is almost on the edge, when another turn reveals the house against the sky-line. It is long and low, something in the Cape Dutch style, with wide verandahs and cool stone pillars. The sun-shutters and the beams are of cedar, the roof is of warm red tiles,

and the walls are washed with a delicate pure white. Standing, as I have seen it, against a flaming sunset, with the glow of lamplight from the windows, it is as true a fairy palace as ever haunted a poet's dream. Beyond it the hill falls steeply to the Tropics, and the gardens run down into the rich glens. Its height is some nine thousand feet above the sea, and its climate is always temperate; but three thousand feet beneath it is Equatoria, and on clear days a gleam can be caught of the great lakes. So the gardens, which begin with English flowers, fall in tiers through a dozen climates, till azalea gives place to hibiscus, and hibiscus to poinsettia, and below in the moist valley you end with orchids and palms.

Entering the house through the heavy brass-studded doors, you come first into a great panelled hall, floored with a mosaic of marble on which lie many skins and karosses, and lit by a huge silver chandelier. In a corner is a stone fireplace like a cavern, where day and night in winter burns a great fire of logs. Round it are a number of low chairs and little tables, but otherwise the place is empty of furniture, save for the forest of horns and the grinning heads of lion and leopard on the walls. The second hall is more of a summer chamber, for it is panelled in lighter wood and hung with many old prints and pictures concerned with the great age of African adventure. There you will find quaint Dutch and Portuguese charts, and altar-pieces gifted by a de Silveira or a de Barros to some Mozambique church long since in ruins. Brass-bound sea-chests, tall copper vases of Arab workmanship, rare porcelain of the Indies, and rich lacquer cabinets line the walls, and the carpet is an

exquisite old Persian fabric. Beyond, through the folding windows, lie the verandahs, whence one looks over a sea of mist to the trough of the lakes. To the right stretch more panelled chambers—dining-room, smoking-rooms, a library of many thousand volumes, and as fine a private museum as you will find in the world. To the left are the drawing-rooms, hung with flowered silks and curious Eastern brocades, opening on a cool verandah, and lit in the evening by the same wild fires of sunset. Upstairs the bedrooms are masterpieces of arrangement, all fresh and spacious, and yet all unmistakably of Africa and the Tropics. From any window there is a vision of a landscape which has the strange glamour of a dream. The place is embosomed in flowers, whether growing in brass-hooped mahogany tubs or cut and placed daily in the many silver bowls; but no heavy odours ever impair the virginal freshness of the house. Luxury has been carried to that extreme of art where it becomes a delicate simplicity. It is a place to work, to talk, to think, but not to idle in—a strenuous and stimulating habitation. For on every side seems to stretch an unknown world, calling upon the adventurous mind to take possession.

Hugh dressed early, and, finding the hall empty, penetrated into the Green drawing-room, where he came upon Lady Flora Brune examining critically some Zanzibari ivories. They had met many times in London, and were on a footing of easy friendship.

"Well, Mr Somerville, I must ask the usual question. Had you a pleasant journey?"

"Fair," said Hugh, warming his hands at the fire. "We found Cairo a little too hot—at least Mrs Yorke and Lady Warcliff did, for I am a salamander. You were luckier, and stopped at Marseilles."

"Yes, and Aunt Susan behaved so badly. Poor Lord Launceston wanted to stay at home and write, and she dragged him about the whole Riviera, trying to find a house for next winter. He took it like an angel, but I am sure he thought a good deal. He provided me with a lot of books to read on the voyage, and I have muddled my brains so terribly that I haven't a clear idea left. I shall disgrace myself in this party, for it is to be very serious, isn't it?"

"Very serious, Lady Flora. But you and I are young, and the loss of our contributions won't matter. I am very stupid, too, since the elections—"

"You were beaten, weren't you?" said the girl, with wide sympathetic eyes.

"Handsomely. Four thousand of a minority instead of Seymour's majority of fifteen hundred. I hadn't a chance from the start. My work with Launceston was flung in my face, they shouted 'Indian labour' when I tried to speak about anything, and Nonconformist ministers went about the place in motor-cars telling the people that every vote given to me was a vote given against the Lord. They even accused me of being a Jew," said Hugh, stroking a very un-Jewish nose. "Besides, I was that strange wildfowl, a Tory free-trader, and another Unionist was run against me, who claimed the credit of such little Imperialism as was going. But on the whole I enjoyed the sport. I never once lost my temper, and I got a tremendous ovation after the poll. The

men who had voted against me carried me shoulder-high to my hotel, and they all but killed the successful candidate. Englishmen at heart love a failure!"

"Are there any other victims here?" Lady Flora asked.

"Astbury lost by ten in a place which was considered hopeless, so he did well. Also Considine was turned out, but as he never went near the place, and left his wife to do his electioneering, perhaps we need not wonder. But all that is dead and buried. I hear people talking. Let's go and find the others."

The rest of the party had gathered in the inner hall. The young men—Hugh, Astbury, Considine, and Graham—wore ordinary smart London clothes. Carey, as was his custom, had a soft silk shirt and a low collar, above which his magnificent throat and head rose like a bust of some Roman emperor. Mr Wakefield had arrayed himself in that garb which seems inseparable from Colonial statesmen—a short dinner-jacket and a black tie. The tall figure of Lord Launceston stood by the fire, deep in conversation with Lord Appin, whose robust form and silver head contrasted strangely with the bent figure and worn, old-young face of his companion. Mr Lowenstein, a very small man, with untidy hair and bright eager eyes, wandered restlessly between Mrs Wilbraham, who was absorbed in the contemplation of Lord Launceston, and the Duchess, who was considering a plan of the dinner-table.

It was the rule at Musuru to disregard the claims of precedence. Hugh was sent in with Mrs Yorke, and found on his other side Lady Lucy. An English butler was the one concession to the familiar, for the meal was served by Masai

boys, far defter and more noiseless than any footman, dressed in tunics of white linen with a thin border of blue. Hugh had scarcely time to look round the great half-lit room and admire the exquisite harmony of silver lamps and crimson roses, when he found his attention claimed by his right-hand neighbour.

"Please tell me who the people are and all about them," she begged in her pretty exotic voice. "I know you and Margaret Warcliff and the Duchess and Lord Appin and Mr Carey. That is Lord Launceston, isn't it, over there? I do think his deep eyes and haggard face just the most wonderful thing in life. How happy Charlotte Wilbraham looks talking to him! I know they are devoted friends. Who is sitting by his other side?"

"Mrs Deloraine. Don't you know her? She has many claims to be considered the most beautiful woman in England, but she is rarely seen in London. She lives in a wonderful old house in Shropshire, and writes what many people think the only good religious poetry of our day. What a contrast her Madonna face is to Lady Amysfort's!" Hugh looked across the table to where that great lady, with her small head and bright eyes, like some handsome bird of prey, was entertaining Lord Appin.

"Of course that is Lady Amysfort. I have seen her often, but you know one never can recall her face—only a vague impression of something delightful. I suppose that is the secret of her power, for no woman remembers to be jealous of her. Now tell me the others. Who is the pretty fair-haired girl sitting next Lord Appin?"

"Lady Flora Brune, the Duchess's niece. And then comes Sir Edward Considine, the man who has gone from the Cape to Cairo, and from Senegal to Somaliland, and has killed more lions than I have partridges. He and Graham have just come off a hunting-trip, and that explains why they are so gorgeously browned. That is Graham on your right, sitting next Lady Warcliff—the little man with blue eyes and a fair moustache. He went to Klondyke before it was fashionable, and has been in half-a-dozen wars, and is a Lieutenant-Colonel, though he is only thirty-five. He is the mainstay of that precarious institution, our Intelligence Department."

"Speak low," said Mrs Yorke, "and tell me who the people are on our side. Who is the big man next me? He looks like a lawyer."

"I expect you have heard his name in the States. He is Wakefield, the man who was Premier of Canada, and now devotes his life to preaching imperial unity. He is a scholar as well as a publicist, which is rare enough in these days. Do you know his neighbour?"

"The pretty dark child with the earnest eyes? No. Yes,—isn't she Laura Haystoun's girl?"

"Quite right. And now," said Hugh in a whisper, "you know everybody, except the people on my left. The first is Lady Lucy Gardner. Extraordinarily handsome, I think, though she is no longer young, and has been through all the worst climates in the world. Her husband is the Governor of East Africa, and is now taking his leave salmon-fishing in Norway, while his wife lends official countenance to this gathering. On the whole she is the bravest woman I know, and one of the cleverest. The man between her and the

Duchess is Mr Lowenstein, whose name you must have seen in the papers. He is the whipping-boy of our opponents—why, I cannot guess, for a more modest, gentle soul I never met. You may have heard his story. He made a great fortune when quite young, and married a very beautiful girl, the daughter of a Scotch peer. People said she sold herself for his wealth, for he is, as you may observe, a Jew, and not very good to look upon. I believe, however, that it was a real love match, and certainly they made a devoted couple. Then she died suddenly, two years ago, and he got rid of all his houses and pictures, and tried to bury himself abroad. Carey saw his chance, hunted him out, and managed to put a new interest in life into him. Now, as you know, he is hand and glove with him in all his schemes. He is said to be one of the first financial geniuses alive, but he has no courage or nerve, and these Carey supplies in the partnership."

"I like his face," said Mrs Yorke thoughtfully; "there is a fire somewhere behind his eyes. But then I differ from most of my countrymen in liking Jews. You can do something with them—stir them up to follow some mad ideal, and they are never vulgar at heart. If we must have magnates, I would rather Jews had the money. It doesn't degrade them, and they have the infallible good taste of the East at the back of their heads. No Northerner should be rich, unless he happens to be also a genius."

"Genius, I suppose, means some consuming passion which burns up the vulgarity. We are talking about wealth, Lady Lucy," Hugh said, turning to his other neighbour. "Mrs Yorke will only permit it in the case of the elect. Otherwise it offends her sense of fitness."

The lady cast a glance over the room. "This house, for instance. It is so flawless and therefore so refreshing. And yet, when I think how much it must cost to have such a palace in the wilderness, I grow giddy. I am not sure if we have any right to be so comfortable."

Lord Appin caught the last words, and leaned over the table. "Surely that is an exploded heresy," he said, in the rich and exquisite voice which had made him *par excellence* the Public Orator of England. "I thought we had long ago given up the idea that austerity of mind depended upon discomfort of body. The Simple Life is the last refuge of complicated and restless souls. For myself I know no such stimulus to action as a good dinner, and to thought as a beautiful room."

"I am not certain," said Hugh. "It may be some tincture of Calvinism in my blood, but I confess I never feel quite happy unless I am a little miserable. When I am doing work I detest there is a glow of satisfaction about me which I miss when I am swimming along in something which is quite congenial. You remember Bagehot's account of Lord Althorp, who gave up hunting after his wife's death, not because he thought it wrong, but because he felt he had no business to be so happy as hunting made him. I am sure that we are happiest when doing something difficult and unpleasant. The cup wants a dash of bitters to make it palatable, for if taken neat it is sickly."

"How true that is," sighed Mrs Yorke. "Happiness lies only in a divine unrest; and if you are lapped in comfort you stagnate and miss it."

"That is the worst piece of fallacious Stoicism I have ever heard," Lord Appin said firmly. "It means nothing but a low vitality. If you are so morbid as to be dominated by your surroundings, then what you say is true enough. But to the philosophic soul environment matters nothing. He is happy alike in camp, court, and cottage. He will even preserve a modest gaiety in the House of Lords."

"That is not my nature," said Lady Amysfort with conviction. "You may be right—as a counsel of perfection. But which of us attains to that austere height?"

"I frankly confess I don't," Lord Appin replied. "I have just been saying how much I owe to a good dinner and a pretty room. But some of us do. Carey does, I think—and of Launceston I am certain. What is your view, Teddy?"

Sir Edward Considine had been explaining to the appreciative Lady Flora the plan of his recent shooting-trip; but both had been drawn by Lord Appin's proximity to listen to him. His soft voice when he spoke was a strange contrast to his hard, weather-worn face.

"It is all a question of that romance which most of us spend our lives looking for. Luxury is nothing in itself, but in its proper setting it can be an inspiration. A week ago I was perfectly happy. Graham and I were living in the most beastly discomfort, but then we were on the move and we had the excitement of sport, and we never thought about it. To-night, also, I am perfectly happy; but if all this had been in London, and I had been having months of it, I should probably have been miserable. You may imagine what it is to jog on all day through the hot bush with the dust of weeks on you, and your clothes in rags, and no food but

tinned stuff. And then suddenly this afternoon we came to the gates of this place, and paid off our caravan-boys, from a hundred miles north—and in five minutes exchanged barbarism for civilisation. I wallowed in a bath, and my man was waiting with clean English things, and here I am, like the prodigal son after the husks, clothed and in my right mind. I call that romance, and there is no keener pleasure. But you must have the contrast."

Lady Flora nodded approval, recalling apparently kindred experiences in her short life. But the discussion was put an end to by Carey's voice from the head of the table. He began a little nervously, as if he were proposing a toast and had doubts how it would be honoured. For so massive a figure his voice was singularly high-pitched and small, so that he was the predestined victim of mimics. But there was a force behind it which arrested the ear.

"I think," he began, "that this is the time when I ought to say something about why we are all here. You don't need to be told that your company is in itself a sufficient delight to me. But this is not meant to be an ordinary party. Things have moved very fast lately in politics, and most of us have got our eyes a little dazzled. We want time to collect our wits, and think things out,—not only politics, but our whole scheme of life, our ambitions, the things which at the bottom of our hearts we care most for. We are all agreed, more or less, and we represent different sides of experience, so that we can supplement one another's deficiencies. For the moment the fates are against us, and I thought that, like the Apostle Paul, we should come out into the wilderness and reflect a little. We are only spectators at present, and it

is an excellent chance to get our minds clear about what we want while we are looking on at the comedy which others are going to play for us."

Carey paused to sip his wine, and Mr Wakefield, who had a talent for trite quotation, declaimed with gusto the well-known lines of Lucretius:—

"Suave, mari magno turbantibus aequora ventis,
E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem;
Non quia vexari quemquamst jucunda voluptas,
Sed quibus ipse malis careas quia cernere suave est.
Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri
Per campos instructa tua sine parte pericli."*

* *De Rerum Natura*, ii. 1-6. "Pleasant it is, when the winds are tossing the waters of the mighty sea, to behold from the land another's mighty toil—not that there is sweet delight in another's affliction, but that it is pleasant to see griefs from which thou thyself art free. Pleasant also is it to witness the great conflicts of war joined through the plains, thyself with no share in the peril."

"Translate, please," Mrs Yorke whispered to Hugh.

"It means that it is great fun to have a good seat in the stalls and watch other people making idiots of themselves on the stage."

"We have seen many strange things in the last months," Carey went on. "Our creed has been dragged in the mire, and by those who professed to reverence it. Every decaying interest which wanted help has been told that in it could be found its peculiar salvation. Every vulgar feeling in the whole treasury of our national vulgarity has been enlisted in its support. Small wonder that England is a little sick of the very name of Empire. The result, of course, is a return to tradition. The lack-lustre creeds of fifty years ago have acquired a kind of splendour in contrast with the dullness of

our faith. The old armoury has been ransacked, and the rusty flintlocks have all been burnished up. They make an imposing show on parade, and people have not yet begun to think what will happen in the day of battle. For the moment England is insular again, and the past three centuries have been forgotten."

Lord Appin was in the throes of a quotation. "'Little England, which was our reproach, has become our glory,'" he interrupted,—"'the little England of Shakespeare and Milton and Cromwell has conquered the Greater Britain of Baron Steinberg and Mr Bernstein.' The words, I need scarcely say, are not my own, but those of a bright young Liberal journalist, whose contributions to the daily press afford me much innocent pleasure."

"So be it," said Carey cheerfully. "The phase will pass, that we well know. As a philosopher you realise that, to use your barbarous jargon, Being can only develop through non-Being and the Infinite through the negations of the Finite. We have a living creative faith, and we are not disheartened because the people for the moment blaspheme their deities. But, as I have said, it is the occasion to examine ourselves and find the reason of that faith which is in us."

"We need a definition," said Hugh, who had been studying attentively the sphinx-like face of his host. "I call myself an Imperialist, and so does the noisy fellow at the street corner; but if I am pressed to explain I can give no summary statement of my creed."

"Is not the reason because it is not a creed but a faith?" Lady Lucy's clear voice had a peculiar power of compelling attention. "You cannot carve an epic on a nutshell or

expound Christianity in an aphorism. If I could define Imperialism satisfactorily in a sentence I should be very suspicious of its truth."

"No," said Carey, "we don't want a definition. By its fruits ye shall know it. It is a spirit, an attitude of mind, an unconquerable hope. You can phrase it in a thousand ways without exhausting its content. It is a sense of the destiny of England. It is the wider patriotism which conceives our people as a race and not as a chance community. But we might take opinions. Let us each give his or her own description, beginning with Mrs Deloraine."

The lady looked a little confused. "I call it an enlarged sense of the beauty and mystery of the world."

"How true!" said Mrs Yorke. "May I have that for my definition too, Mr Carey?" There seemed a general agreement on this among the women.

Lord Launceston smiled a little sadly. "I don't yet see my way to any summary. It is a spirit moving upon the waters, a dumb faith in the hearts of many simple men up and down the world, who are building better than they know—

'Not till the hours of light return,
All we have built do we discern.'"

Lord Appin, who was eating grapefruit, looked up quizzically. "I call it, in the language of my hobby, the realisation of the need of a quantitative basis for all qualitative development. It is a hard saying, which I shall expound later."

"For Heaven's sake let us keep out of mysticism," broke in Mr Wakefield, who detested Lord Appin's metaphysics. "I

define Imperialism as the closer organic connection under one Crown of a number of autonomous nations of the same blood, who can spare something of their vitality for the administration of vast tracts inhabited by lower races,—a racial aristocracy considered in their relation to the subject peoples, a democracy in their relation to each other."

Mr Astbury nodded. "I take Mr Wakefield's definition for mine."

"And I," said Considine, "call it romance. I have no head for political theories, but I have an eye for a fact. It is the impulse to deeds rather than talk, the ardour of a race which is renewing its youth. It is what made the Elizabethans, and all ages of adventure."

"For my part," said Lady Amysfort, "I think it simply Toryism under a new name—the Toryism of our great men, Bolingbroke, Pitt, Canning, Disraeli. Toryism was never Conservatism, remember. It was a positive creed, both destructive and constructive. Liberalism is a doctrine of abstractions, right or wrong, which bear no true relation to national life. Toryism has always held by the instincts and traditions of the people, and when our island became an empire it became naturally Imperialism."

"As a Liberal Imperialist, Caroline," said the Duchess with some asperity, "I profoundly disagree. I wish George were here to say what I think of your history."

Mr Lowenstein's restless eyes had been wandering from one speaker to the other, and he had several times opened his mouth as if to say something. Now he was about to begin when Miss Haystoun forestalled him.

"I should like to define it in very old words," she said shyly, in her low intense voice. "It is the spirit which giveth life as against the letter which killeth. It means a renunciation of old forms and conventions, and the clear-eyed facing of a new world in the knowledge that when the half-gods go the true gods must come."

"That is beautifully said," murmured Mr Lowenstein.

"Indeed, Marjory, I think it is almost blasphemous." The Duchess, who had been fretting for some time under the turn the conversation had taken, had at last succeeded in catching Lady Amysfort's eye, and the ladies rose to leave. Immediately the men reassorted themselves according to their preference. Astbury took his port round to the vacant chair next Mr Wakefield; Carey, Lord Appin, and Lord Launceston formed a coterie by themselves; Graham and Considine revelled silently in the novel luxury of good cigars, and Hugh joined Lowenstein, by whom he was cross-examined concerning the names of his fellow-guests.

It was not Carey's habit to linger at table, and the sound of a beautiful voice singing a song of Schubert drew the men soon to the inner hall, where Mrs Deloraine sat at the piano. At each end of the apartment log-fires burned brightly; outside the white verandah gleamed chill in the frosty moonlight; and the place was lit only by the hearths and two tall silver lamps beside the piano. A soft aromatic scent—the mingling of flowers and wood-smoke—filled the air.

Lord Appin took his place beside Mrs Deloraine. Carey stood in the centre of a great fireplace, and the others

resorted to chairs and couches. Hugh, finding a very soft rug, settled himself at Lady Flora's feet.

The lady at the piano finished "Der Wanderer" and began the song from *La Princesse Lointaine*. It was a melody of her own making, very wild and tender, and in the dim light her wonderful voice held the listeners like a spell.

"Car c'est chose suprême
D'aimer sans qu'on vous aime,
D'aimer toujours, quand même,
Sans cesse,
D'une amour incertaine,
Plus noble d'être vaine,
Et j'aime la lointaine
Princesse!"

When she ceased there was silence for a little. The place and time were so strange—there among delicate furniture and all the trappings of a high civilisation, looking out over the primeval wilds. Savage beasts roamed a mile off in that untamed heart of the continent. The most sophisticated members of the company felt the glamour of the unknown around them. Lord Launceston rose quietly and walked to the window, where he gazed abstractedly at the starry sky; Lady Lucy was looking into the red glow of the fire; Marjory Haystoun and Lady Flora sat, chin on hand, in a kind of dream. Only Graham and Considine were unconscious of the spell. Months of hunting and going to bed at sundown had spoiled them for civilised hours, and they had dropped off peacefully to sleep in their chairs.