



THE INVISIBLE MAN

by H G Wells

ADAPTED VERSION

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Chapter I

The Strange Man's Arrival

The stranger came early in February one winter's day, through a freezing wind and a heavy snow, the last snowfall of the year, walking, it seemed, from Bramblehurst railway station and carrying a little black bag in his thickly gloved hand. He was wrapped up from head to foot, and the edge of his soft hat hid every inch of his face except the shiny tip of his nose; the snow had piled itself against his shoulders and chest, and added a white peak to the bag he carried. He came exhausted into the Coach and Horses, more dead than alive, and threw his bag down. "A fire," he shouted, "in the name of human charity! A room and a fire!" He shook the snow off himself in the bar, and followed Mrs. Hall into her office. And with that much introduction, that and a complete agreement to terms and a couple of gold coins thrown on the table, he took up his rooms in the inn.

Mrs. Hall lit the fire and left him there while she went to prepare him a meal with her own hands. A guest at Iping in the winter-time was an extraordinary piece of luck, especially a guest who didn't argue over conditions, and she was determined to show herself worthy of her good fortune. As soon as the bacon was frying, and Millie, her helper, had been hurried up a bit by a few cleverly chosen insults, she carried the cloth, plates, and glasses into the room and began to lay them with the greatest care. Although the fire was burning vigorously, she was surprised to see that her visitor was still wearing his hat and coat, standing with his back to her and staring out of the window at the falling snow in the yard. His gloved hands were held behind him, and he seemed to be lost in thought. She noticed that the melted snow that still covered his shoulders was dripping on her carpet. "Can I take your hat and coat, sir," she said, "and give them a good dry in the kitchen?"

"No," he said without turning.

She was not sure she had heard him, and was about to repeat her question.

He turned his head and looked at her over his shoulder. "I prefer to keep them on," he said with emphasis, and she noticed that he wore big blue glasses and had a thick collar that completely hid his face.

"Very well, sir," she said. "As you like. In a bit the room will be warmer."

He made no answer and had turned his face away from her again; and Mrs. Hall, feeling that her attempts at conversation were inopportune, laid the rest of the table things quickly and rushed out of the room. When she returned he was still standing there like a man of stone, his back bent, his collar turned up, his dripping hat turned down, hiding his face and ears completely. She put down the eggs and bacon with considerable emphasis, and called rather than said to him, "Your lunch is served, sir."

"Thank you," he said at the same time, and did not move until she was closing the door. Then he turned round and went to the table.

As she went behind the bar to the kitchen she heard a sound repeated at regular intervals. *Chirk, chirk, chirk*, it went, the sound of a spoon going rapidly round a mixing-bowl. "That girl!" she said. "I completely forgot it. It's her taking so long!" And while she finished mixing the mustard, she reprimanded Millie for her excessive slowness. She had cooked the ham and eggs, laid the table, and done everything, while Millie (help indeed!) had only succeeded in delaying the mustard. And he was a new guest and wanted to stay! Then she filled the mustard pot, and, putting it with a certain grandeur upon a gold and black tray, carried it into the room.

She knocked and entered without delay. As she did so her visitor moved quickly, so that she got only a quick look of a white object disappearing behind the table. It would seem he was picking something up from the floor. She put down the mustard pot on the table, and then she noticed the overcoat and hat had been taken off and put over a chair in front of the fire. A pair of wet boots stood by the fireplace. "I suppose I may have them to dry now," she said in a voice that allowed no disagreement.

"Leave the hat," said her visitor in a barely audible voice, and turning she saw he had raised his head and was sitting looking at her.

For a moment she stood looking at him with her mouth wide open, too surprised to speak.

He held a white cloth - it was a serviette he had brought with him - over the lower part of his face, so that his mouth and jaws were completely hidden, and that was the reason for his barely audible voice. But it was not that which surprised Mrs. Hall. It was the fact that all his forehead above his blue glasses was covered by a white bandage, and that another covered his ears, leaving not a bit of his face exposed except for his pink, pointed nose. It was bright pink, and shiny just as it had been at first. He wore a dark-brown velvet jacket with a high black collar turned up around his neck. The thick black hair, escaping below and between the bandages, came out in curious tails and horns, giving him the strangest appearance imaginable. This bandaged head was so unlike what she had anticipated, that for a moment she was rigid.

He did not remove the serviette, but remained holding it, as she saw now, with a brown gloved hand, and looking at her with his impenetrable blue glasses. "Leave the hat," he said, speaking very clearly through the white cloth.

Her nerves began to recover from the shock they had received. She placed the hat on the chair again by the fire. "I didn't know, sir," she began, "that - " and she stopped embarrassed.

"Thank you," he said dryly, looking from her to the door and then at her again.

"I'll have them nicely dried, sir, at once," she said, and carried his clothes out of the room. She looked quickly at his white-banded head and blue glasses again as she was going out of the door; but his serviette was still in front of his face. She shivered a little as she closed the door behind her, and her face was expressive of her surprise and perplexity. "I never," she whispered. "There!" She went quite softly to the kitchen, and was too preoccupied to ask Millie what she was doing now, when she got there.

The visitor sat and listened to her disappearing foot-steps. He glanced at the window before he removed his serviette and resumed his meal. He took a mouthful, glanced suspiciously at the window, took another mouthful, then got up and, taking the serviette in his hand, walked across the room and pulled the blind down. This left the room in semi-darkness. This done, he returned with a more relaxed air to the table and his meal.

"The poor thing's had an accident or an operation or something," said Mrs. Hall. *"What a shock those bandages did give me!"*

She put on some more coal and hung the traveller's coat up to dry. *"And those glasses! Why, he looked more like a diving helmet than a human man!"* She hung his scarf up. *"And holding that handkerchief over his mouth all the time. Talking through it!...Perhaps his mouth was hurt too - maybe."*

She turned round, suddenly remembering. *"Bless my soul!"* she said, *"haven't you done those potatoes yet, Millie?"*

When Mrs. Hall went to clear away the stranger's lunch, her idea that his mouth must also have been cut or disfigured in the accident she imagined he had suffered, was confirmed. He was smoking a pipe, and all the time that she was in the room he never loosened the silk scarf he had round the lower part of his face to put the pipe to his lips. However it wasn't that he had forgotten, because she saw he glanced at it as it burnt out. He sat in the corner with his back to the window and spoke now, having eaten and drunk and being comfortably warmed through, with less aggressive brevity than before. The reflection of the fire gave a kind of red animation to his big glasses.

"I have some luggage," he said, *"at Bramblehurst station,"* and he asked her how he could have it sent. He bowed his bandaged head quite politely in answer to her explanation. *"Tomorrow!"* he said. *"There is no faster delivery?"* and seemed quite disappointed when she answered *"No."* Was she quite sure? No man with a cart who would go over?

Mrs. Hall answered his questions and developed a conversation. *"It's a steep road, sir,"* she said in answer to the question about a cart; and then, taking advantage of an opening said, *"A carriage turned over there, more than a year ago. A gentleman killed, his coachman too. Accidents, sir, happen in a moment, don't they?"*

But the visitor wasn't going to open up so easily. *"They do,"* he said through his scarf, looking at her quietly through his impenetrable glasses.

"But they take a long time to get well, sir, don't they? ... My sister's son, Tom, cut his arm with a scythe, fell on it in the field, and he spent three months tied up, sir. You wouldn't believe it. It's given me a fear of scythes, sir."

"I can quite understand that," said the visitor.

"He was worried that he'd have to have an operation - he was that bad, sir."

The visitor laughed abruptly, a sharp laugh that he seemed to bite and kill in his mouth. *"Was he?"* he said.

"He was, sir. And it wasn't funny for those who had to look after him, as I had to - my sister has to spend most of her time looking after her little ones. There were bandages to do, sir, and bandages to undo. So that if I may say so, sir - "

"Will you get me some matches?" said the visitor, quite abruptly. *"My pipe is out."*

Mrs. Hall was stopped suddenly. It was certainly rude of him, after telling him all she had done. She stood with her mouth open for a moment, and remembered the two gold coins. She went for the matches.

"Thanks," he said concisely, as she put them down, and turned his shoulder upon her and stared out of the window again. Evidently he was sensitive on the topic of operations and bandages. She did not "say so," however, after all. But the way he had interrupted had irritated her, and Millie had a bad time of it that afternoon.

The visitor remained in the room until four o'clock, without giving the slightest excuse for an intrusion. For the most part he was quite still during that time; it would seem he sat in the growing darkness smoking in the firelight, perhaps sleeping.

Once or twice a curious listener might have heard him at the coals, and for the space of five minutes he was audible walking up and down the the room. He seemed to be talking to himself. Then the armchair creaked as he sat down again.

Chapter 2

Mr. Teddy Henfrey's First Impressions

At four o'clock, when it was quite dark and Mrs. Hall was getting up her courage to go in and ask her visitor if he would like some tea, Teddy Henfrey, the clock-repairer, came into the bar. *"My goodness! Mrs. Hall,"* he said, *"this is terrible weather for thin boots!"* The snow outside was falling faster.

Mrs. Hall agreed with him, and then noticed he had his bag and had a brilliant idea. *"Now you're here, Mr. Teddy,"* she said, *"Could you have a look at the old clock in the lounge? It's going, and it works well; but the hour-hand always points at six."*

And leading the way, she went across to the lounge door and knocked and entered.

Her visitor, she saw as she opened the door, was sitting in the armchair in front of the fire, apparently sleeping, with his bandaged head falling to one side. The only light in the room was the red glow from the fire - which lit his eyes like railway signals, but left his face in darkness - and the remains of the day that came in through the open door. Everything was red, shadowy, and indistinct to her, especially since she had just been lighting the bar lamp, and her eyes were dazzled. But for a second it seemed to her that the man she looked at had an enormous mouth wide open, - a vast and incredible mouth that swallowed the whole of the lower part of his face. It was the sensation of a moment: the white-bandaged head, the monstrous eyes, and this huge yawn below it. Then he moved, sat up in his chair, put up his hand. She opened the door wide, so that the room was lighter, and she saw him more clearly, with the scarf held to his face just as she had seen him hold the serviette before. The shadows, she imagined, had tricked her.

"Would you mind, sir, this man coming to look at the clock, sir?" she said, recovering from her momentary shock.

"Look at the clock?" he said, looking round in a sleepy manner and speaking over his hand, and then waking up more, *"certainly."*

Mrs. Hall went away to get a lamp, and he got up and stretched himself. Then came the light, and Mr. Teddy Henfrey, entering, was confronted by this bandaged person. He was, he says, "taken by surprise."

"Good-afternoon," said the stranger, looking at him, as Mr. Henfrey says with a vivid sense of the dark glasses, "like a lobster."

"I hope," said Mr. Henfrey, *"that it's no intrusion."*

"None whatever," said the stranger. *"Though I understand,"* he said, turning to Mrs. Hall, *"that this room is really to be mine for my own private use."*

"I thought, sir," said Mrs. Hall, *"you'd prefer the clock - "* She was going to say *"mended."*

"Certainly," said the stranger, *"certainly - but, as a rule, I like to be alone and undisturbed."*

"But I'm really glad to have the clock looked at," he said, seeing that Mr. Henfrey's didn't know what to do. *"Very glad."* Mr. Henfrey had intended to apologise and leave, but this reassured him. The stranger stood with his back to the fireplace and put his hands behind his back. *"And,"* he said, *"when the clock-mending is over, I think I would like to have some tea. But not until the clock-mending is over."*

Mrs. Hall was about to leave the room, - she made no attempt at conversation this time, because she did not want to be interrupted in front of Mr. Henfrey, - when her visitor asked her if she had made any arrangements about his boxes at Bramblehurst. She told him she had mentioned the matter to the postman, and that they would be brought over the next day. *"You are certain that is the earliest?"* he said.

She was certain, with a distinct coldness.

"I should explain," he added, *"what I was really too cold and tired to do before, that I am an experimental investigator."*

"Really, sir," said Mrs. Hall, much impressed.

"And my baggage contains apparatus and appliances."

"Very useful things indeed they are, sir," said Mrs. Hall.

"And I'm naturally anxious to get on with my investigation."

"Of course, sir."

"My reason for coming to Iping," he continued, with a certain deliberation of manner, *"was - a desire for solitude. I do not wish to be disturbed in my work. In addition to my work, an accident - "*

"I thought as much," said Mrs. Hall to herself.

" - requires a certain retirement. My eyes - are sometimes so weak and painful that I have to shut myself up in the dark for hours. Lock myself up. Sometimes - now and then. Not at present, certainly. At such times the slightest interruption, the entry of a stranger into the room, is a source of extraordinary annoyance to me - it is good these things are understood."

"Certainly, sir," said Mrs. Hall. *"And if I might ask - "*

"That, I think, is all," said the stranger, with that quietly irresistible air of finality he could assume. Mrs. Hall kept her question and sympathy for a better occasion.

After Mrs. Hall had left the room, he remained standing in front of the fire, watching the clock-mending angrily. Mr. Henfrey not only took the hands off the clock, and the face, but took out the mechanism; and he tried to work in as slow and quiet a manner as possible. He worked with the lamp close to him, and the green lamp-shade threw a brilliant light upon his hands, and upon the frame and wheels, and left the rest of the room shadowy. When he looked up, coloured patches swam in his eyes. Being of a curious nature, he had removed the mechanism - a quite unnecessary procedure - with the idea of postponing his departure and perhaps starting a conversation with the stranger. But the stranger stood there, perfectly silent and still. So still, it got on Henfrey's nerves. He felt alone in the room and looked up, and there, grey and dim, was the bandaged head and huge blue lenses staring fixedly, with a mist of green spots floating in front of them. It was so strange-looking to Henfrey that for a minute they remained staring at one another. Then Henfrey looked down again. Very uncomfortable position! One would like to say something. Should he comment that the weather was very cold for the time of year?

He looked up and started. *"The weather - "* he began.

"Why don't you finish and go?" said the rigid figure, evidently in a state of suppressed fury. *"All you've got to do is to put the hour-hand on its axle. You're simply filling in time - "*

"Certainly, sir - one minute more, sir. I forgot - " And Mr. Henfrey finished and went.

But he went off feeling extremely annoyed. *"Damn it!"* said Mr. Henfrey to himself, walking down the village through the melting snow; *"a man must do a clock at times."*

And again: *"Can't a man look at you? - Ugly!"*

And yet again: *"It seems not. If the police were after you you couldn't be more wrapped and bandaged."*

At Gleeson's corner he saw Hall, who had recently married the stranger's hostess at the Coach and Horses, and who now drove the lping coach to Sidderbridge Junction, coming towards him on his return from that place. Hall had evidently been "stopping a bit" at Sidderbridge, to judge by his driving. *"Good evening, Teddy"* he said, passing.

"You've got a strange one at home!" said Teddy.

Hall very sociably stopped the coach. *"What's that?"* he asked.

"Strange-looking customer stopping at the Coach and Horses," said Teddy.

And he proceeded to give Hall a vivid description of his grotesque guest. *"Looks a bit like a disguise, doesn't it? I'd like to see a man's face if I had him staying in my place,"* said Henfrey. *"But women are so trustful, - where strangers are concerned. He's taken your rooms and he hasn't even given a name, Hall."*

"You don't say so!" said Hall, who was a man of slow apprehension.

"Yes," said Teddy. *"By the week. Whatever he is, you can't get rid of him in less than a week. And he's got a lot of luggage coming tomorrow, so he says. Let's hope it won't be stones in boxes, Hall."*

He told Hall how his aunt at Hastings had been tricked by a stranger with an empty bag. All in all he left Hall vaguely suspicious. *"Get up, old girl,"* said Hall. *"I suppose I must see about this."*

Teddy went on his way feeling considerably relieved.

Instead of "seeing about it," however, Hall on his return was severely told off by his wife on the length of time he had spent in Sidderbridge, and his questions were answered sharply and in an imprecise manner. But the seed of suspicion Teddy had sown germinated in the mind of Mr. Hall. *"You women don't know everything,"* said Mr. Hall, determined to discover more about the personality of his guest at the earliest possible opportunity. And after the stranger had gone to bed, which he did at about half-past nine, Mr. Hall went aggressively into the lounge and looked very hard at his wife's furniture, just to show that the stranger wasn't master there, and examined closely and a little contemptuously a sheet of mathematical calculation the stranger had left. When going to bed he instructed Mrs. Hall to look very closely at the stranger's luggage when it came next day.

"You mind your own business, Hall," said Mrs. Hall, *"and I'll mind mine."*

She was all the more inclined to snap at Hall because the stranger was undoubtedly an unusually strange sort of stranger, and she was by no means sure about him in her own mind. In the middle of the night she woke up dreaming of huge white heads, that came following after her at the end of interminable necks, and with vast black eyes. But being a sensible woman, she subdued her terrors and turned over and went to sleep again.

Chapter 3

The Thousand and One Bottles

So it was that on the ninth day of February this singular person fell out of infinity into Iping Village. Next day his luggage arrived through the melting snow. And very extraordinary luggage it was. There were a couple of large bags, such as a rational man might need, but in addition there were a box of books, - big, fat books, of which some were in an incomprehensible handwriting, - and a dozen or more boxes, and cases, containing objects packed in straw, - glass bottles, it seemed to Hall, pulling with a casual curiosity at the straw. The stranger, covered in hat, coat, gloves, and scarf, came out impatiently to meet Fearenside's cart, while Hall was having a word or two of gossip before helping bring them in. Out he came, not noticing Fearenside's dog, who was sniffing at Hall's legs. *"Come along with those boxes,"* he said. *"I've been waiting long enough."*

And he came down the steps towards the tail of the cart as if to pick up the smaller box.

No sooner had Fearenside's dog caught sight of him, however, than it began to growl savagely, and when he came down the steps it jumped straight at his hand. *"Whup!"* cried Hall, jumping back, for he was no hero with dogs, and Fearenside shouted, *"Lie down!"* and picked up his whip.

They saw the dog's teeth had missed the hand, heard a kick, saw the dog jump to one side and bite the stranger's leg, and heard the sound of his trousers tearing. Then Fearenside's whip reached the dog, and yelping, it ran and hid under the wheels of the waggon. It was all over in a half-minute. No one spoke, everyone shouted. The stranger looked quickly at his torn glove and at his leg, then turned and rushed up the steps into the inn. They heard him run across the passage and up the stairs to his bedroom.

"You brute, you!" said Fearenside, climbing off the waggon with his whip in his hand, while the dog watched him through the wheel. *"Come here!"* said Fearenside - *"You'd better."*

Hall had stood with his mouth open. *"He was bitten,"* said Hall. *"I'd better go and see to him,"* and he went quickly after the stranger. He met Mrs. Hall in the passage. *"Carrier's dog,"* he said, *"bit him."*

He went straight upstairs, and the stranger's door not being closed, he pushed it open and was entering without any ceremony, being of a naturally sympathetic nature.

The blind was down and the room dark. He briefly saw a most strange thing, what seemed a handless arm moving towards him, and a face of three enormous indeterminate spots on white, like the face of a pale flower. Then he was hit violently in the chest, thrown back, and the door slammed shut in his face and locked, all so rapidly that he had no time to observe. A movement of indecipherable shapes, a blow, and a concussion. There he stood in the dark little hall, wondering what he had seen.

After a couple of minutes he rejoined the little group that had formed outside the Coach and Horses. There was Fearenside telling about it all over again for the second time; there was Mrs. Hall saying his dog shouldn't bite her guests; there was Huxter, the shopkeeper from over the road, interrogative; and Sandy Wadgers from the forge, judicial; as well as women and children, - all of them saying things like: *"I wouldn't let it bite me, I know"; "It isn't right to have dogs like that"; "Why did it bite him then?"* and so on.

Mr. Hall, looking at them from the steps and listening, found it incredible that he had seen anything very strange happen upstairs. Any way, his vocabulary was too limited to express his impressions.

"He doesn't want any help, he says," he said in answer to his wife's question. *"We'd better take the luggage in."*

"He ought to have it cauterised immediately," said Mr. Huxter; *"especially if it's at all inflamed."*

"I'd shoot it, that's what I'd do," said a lady in the group.

Suddenly the dog began growling again.

"Come along," shouted an angry voice in the doorway, and there stood the stranger with his collar turned up, and his hat turned down. *"The sooner you get those things in the happier I'll be."* Some people later said that his trousers and gloves had been changed.

"Were you hurt, sir?" said Fearenside. *"I'm really sorry about the dog - "*

"Not a bit," said the stranger. *"Never broke the skin. Hurry up with those things."*

As soon as the first box was carried into the lounge, following his directions, the stranger jumped upon it with extraordinary enthusiasm, and began to unpack it, throwing out the straw without worrying about Mrs. Hall's carpet. And from it he began to produce bottles - little fat bottles containing powders, small and thin bottles containing coloured and white fluids, blue bottles labelled Poison, bottles with round bodies and thin necks, large green-glass bottles, large white-glass bottles, bottles with glass tops and pale labels, bottles with fine corks, bottles with rubber tops, bottles with wooden caps, wine bottles, salad-oil bottles - putting them in rows on the cupboard, over the fire-place, on the table under the window, round the floor, on the book-shelf - everywhere. The chemist's shop in Bramblehurst hadn't half so many. Quite a sight it was. Box after box produced bottles, until all six were empty and the table high with straw; the only things that came out of these boxes apart from the bottles were a number of test-tubes and a carefully packed balance.

And as soon as the boxes were unpacked, the stranger went to the window and started to work, not worrying in the least about the straw all over the floor, the fire which had gone out, the box of books outside, nor for the bags and other luggage that had gone upstairs.

When Mrs. Hall took his dinner in to him, he was already so absorbed in his work, pouring little drops out of the bottles into test-tubes, that he did not hear her until she had cleaned away most of the straw and put the tray on the table, with little emphasis perhaps, considering the state that the floor was in. Then he half turned his head and immediately turned it away again. But she saw he had taken off his glasses; they were beside him on the table, and it seemed to her that his eye sockets were extraordinarily empty. He put on his glasses again, and then turned and faced her. She was about to complain of the straw on the floor when he anticipated her.

"I wish you wouldn't come in without knocking," he said in the tone of abnormal exasperation that seemed so characteristic of him.

"I knocked, but apparently - "

"Perhaps you did. But in my investigations - my really very urgent and necessary investigations - the smallest disturbance, the opening of a door - I must ask you - "

"Certainly, sir. You can turn the lock if you're like that, you know - any time."

"A very good idea," said the stranger.

"This straw, sir, if I might say - "

"Don't. If the straw causes problems put it on the bill." And he spoke indistinctly at her - words suspiciously like curses.

He was so strange, standing there, so aggressive and explosive, bottle in one hand and test-tube in the other, that Mrs. Hall was quite alarmed. But she was a resolute woman. *"In which case, I should like to know, sir, what you consider - "*

"A shilling. Put down a shilling. Surely a shilling's enough?"

"So be it," said Mrs. Hall, picking up the tablecloth and beginning to put it over the table. *"If you're satisfied, of course - "*

He turned and sat down, with his coat-collar towards her.

All the afternoon he worked with the door locked and, as Mrs. Hall testifies, for the most part in silence. But once there was a concussion and a sound of bottles ringing together as if the table had been hit, and the smash of a bottle thrown violently down, and then a rapid pacing around the room. Fearing "something was the matter," she went to the door and listened, not wanting to knock.

"I can't go on," he was shouting. *"I can't go on. Three hundred thousand, four hundred thousand! The huge multitude! Cheated! All my life it may take me! Patience! Patience indeed! Fool and liar!"*

There was a noise of boots on the bricks in the bar, and Mrs. Hall very reluctantly had to leave the rest of his soliloquy. When she returned the room was silent again, except for the creaking of his chair and the occasional sound of a bottle. It was all over. The stranger had resumed work.

When she took in his tea she saw broken glass in the corner of the room under the mirror, and a golden stain that had been carelessly cleaned. She called attention to it.

"Put it on the bill," said her visitor. *"For God's sake don't worry me. If there's damage done, put it down on the bill";* and he went on ticking a list in the exercise book in front of him.

"I'll tell you something," said Fearenside mysteriously. It was late in the afternoon, and they were in the little beer-shop of Iping Hanger.

"Well?" said Teddy Henfrey.

"This man you're speaking of, who my dog bit. Well - he's black. At least, his legs are. I saw through the hole in his glove. You'd have expected to see a sort of pink colour, wouldn't you? Well - there wasn't anything. Just blackness. I tell you, he's as black as my hat."

"My sakes!" said Henfrey. *"It's a strange case altogether. Why, his nose is as pink as paint!"*

"That's true," said Fearenside. *"I know that. And I'll tell you what I'm thinking. That man's a piebald, Teddy. Black here and white there - in patches. And he's ashamed of it. He's a kind of half-breed, and the colour's come out patchy instead of mixing. I've heard of such things before. And it's the common way with horses, as anyone can see."*

Chapter 4

Mr. Cuss Interviews the Stranger

I have described the circumstances of the stranger's arrival in Iping in considerable detail, in order that the curious impression he created may be understood by the reader. But except for two strange incidents, the circumstances of his stay until the extraordinary day of the Club Festival may be passed over very superficially. There were a number of arguments with Mrs. Hall on matters of domestic discipline, but in every case until late in April, when the first signs of penury began, he came out the winner by the easy method of an extra payment. Hall did not like him, and whenever he dared he talked of the advisability of asking him to leave; but he showed his dislike principally by hiding it ostentatiously, and avoiding his visitor as much as possible. *"Wait till the summer,"* said Mrs. Hall, wisely, *"when the artists begin to come. Then we'll see. He may be a bit arrogant, but bills paid punctually are bills paid punctually, whatever you say."*

The stranger did not go to church, and in fact made no difference between Sunday and the irreligious days, even in dress. He worked, as Mrs. Hall thought, very irregularly. Some days he would come down early and be continuously busy. On others he would get up late, walk up and down his room, worrying audibly for hours together, smoke, sleep in the armchair by the fire. Communication with the world beyond the village he had none. His temper continued to be very unpredictable; for the most part his manner was that of a man suffering under almost unbearable provocation, and once or twice things were snapped, torn, crushed, or broken in spasmodic explosions of violence. He seemed under a chronic irritation of the greatest intensity. His habit of talking to himself in a low voice grew steadily, but though Mrs. Hall listened conscientiously she couldn't make head or tail of what she heard.

He rarely went out by daylight, but at nightfall he would go out wrapped up enormously, whether the weather were cold or not, and he chose the loneliest paths and those most overshadowed by trees and banks. His extraordinary glasses and terrible bandaged face under the shadow of his hat, came with a disagreeable unexpectedness out of the darkness upon one or two home-going workers; and Teddy Henfrey, falling out of the Scarlet Coat pub one night at half-past nine, was scared embarrassingly by the stranger's skull-like head (he was walking hat in hand) lit by the sudden light of the opened door. Those children that saw him at nightfall dreamt of monsters, and it seemed doubtful whether he disliked boys more than they disliked him, or the reverse - but there was certainly a vivid enough dislike on either side.

It was inevitable that a person of so remarkable an appearance and behaviour should form a frequent topic in such a village as Iping. Opinion was greatly divided about his occupation. Mrs. Hall was sensitive on the point. When interrogated, she explained very carefully that he was an *"experimental investigator,"* slowly pronouncing the syllables to avoid making a mistake. When asked what an experimental investigator was, she would say with a touch of superiority that most educated people knew that, and would then explain that he *"discovered things."* Her visitor had had an accident, she said, which temporarily discoloured his face and hands; and being of a sensitive nature, he didn't like it being noticed in public.

Out of her hearing there was a general opinion that he was a criminal trying to escape from justice by covering himself up to hide himself completely from the eye of the police. This idea came from the brain of Mr. Teddy Henfrey. No crime of any importance was known to have occurred since the middle or end of February. Elaborated in the imagination of Mr. Gould, the temporary assistant in the National School, this theory took the form that the stranger was an Anarchist in disguise, preparing explosives, and he decided to carry out such detective operations as his time permitted. These consisted mostly in looking very hard at the stranger whenever they met, or in asking people who had never seen the stranger trick questions about him. But he detected nothing.

Another line of opinion followed Mr. Fearenside, and either accepted the piebald view or some modification of it; as, for instance, Silas Durgan, who was heard to say that *"if he wanted to show himself at fairs he'd make his fortune in no time,"* and being a bit of a theologian, compared the stranger to the man with the one talent. Yet another view explained the entire matter by regarding the stranger as a harmless lunatic. That had the advantage of covering everything straight away.

Between these main groups there were the doubters and undecided. Sussex people have few superstitions, and it was only after the events of early April that the thought of the supernatural was first whispered in the village. Even then it was only believed among the women.

But whatever they thought of him, people in Iping on the whole agreed in disliking him. His irritability, though it might have been comprehensible to an urban office-worker, was an amazing thing to these quiet Sussex villagers. The furious gesticulations they saw now and then, the unstoppable pace after nightfall that brought him upon them round quiet corners, the inhuman blocking of all the attempts at conversation, the taste for semi-darkness that meant the closing of doors, the pulling down of blinds, the extinction of candles and lamps - who could agree with such things? They moved to one side as he passed down the village, and when he had gone by, young humorists would put their coat-collars up and pull down their hats, and walk nervously after him in imitation of his behaviour. There was a song popular at that time called the *"Bogey Man"*; Miss Statchell sang it at the schoolroom concert (in aid of the church lamps), and from then on whenever one or two of the villagers were together and the stranger appeared, a line or two of this tune was whistled. Also little children would call *"Bogey Man!"* after him, and run away nervously ecstatic.

Cuss, the doctor, was devoured by curiosity. The bandages excited his professional interest, the report of the thousand and one bottles his jealous respect. All through April and May he wished for an opportunity of talking to the stranger; and at last, he could stand it no longer, and though of the subscription-list for a village nurse as an excuse. He was surprised to find that Mr. Hall did not know his guest's name. *"He gave a name,"* said Mrs. Hall - which was quite untrue - *"but I didn't hear it well."* She thought it seemed so silly not to know the man's name.

Cuss knocked at the lounge door and entered. There was a fairly audible swearing from within. *"Pardon my intrusion,"* said Cuss, and then the door closed and cut Mrs. Hall off from the rest of the conversation.

She could hear the murmur of voices for the next ten minutes, then a shout of surprise, a moving of feet, a chair thrown to one side, a bark of laughter, quick steps to the door, and Cuss appeared, his face white, his eyes staring over his shoulder. He left the door open behind him, and without looking at her walked quickly across the hall and went down the steps, and she heard his feet hurrying along the road. He carried his hat in his hand. She stood behind the door, looking at the open door of the lounge. Then she heard the stranger laughing quietly, and then his footsteps came across the room. She could not see his face where she stood. The lounge door slammed, and the place was silent again.

Cuss went straight up the village to Bunting the vicar. *"Am I mad?"* Cuss began abruptly, as he entered the untidy little study. *"Do I look like an insane person?"*

"What's happened?" said the vicar, putting the paper-weight on the loose sheets of his sermon.

"That man at the inn - "

"Well?"

"Give me something to drink," said Cuss, and he sat down.

When his nerves had been calmed by a glass of cheap sherry - the only drink the good vicar had available - he told him of the interview he had just had. *"I went in,"* he breathed, *"and began to ask for a subscription for that Nurse Fund. He put his hands in his pockets when I came in, and he sat down in his chair. He sniffed. I told him I'd heard he took an interest in scientific things. He said yes. He sniffed again. He kept on sniffing all the time; evidently he recently caught a bad cold. Not surprising, wrapped up like that! I continued explaining the nurse idea, and all the time kept my eyes open. Bottles - chemicals - everywhere. Balance, test-tubes in stands, and a smell of - flowers. Would he subscribe? He said he'd think about it. I asked him, directly, was he researching. He said he was. A long research? He got quite angry. 'A damnable long research,' said he, exploding, so to speak. 'Oh,' said I. And out came the problem. The man was just on the boil, and my question boiled him over. He had been given a prescription, very valuable prescription - what for he wouldn't say. Was it medical? 'Damn you! What are you looking for?' I apologised. Dignified sniff and cough. He started again. He'd read it. Five ingredients. He had put it down; had turned his head. The breeze through the window lifted the paper. Swish, rustle. He was working in a room with an open fireplace, he said. He saw a little flame, and there was the prescription burning and going up the chimney. He had rushed towards it just as it went up chimney. So! Just at that point, to illustrate his story, he took out his arm."*

"Well?"

"No hand - just an empty sleeve. Lord! I thought, that's a deformity! Has a wooden arm, I suppose, and has taken it off. Then, I thought, there's something strange about that. What the devil keeps that sleeve up and open, if there's nothing in it? There was nothing in it, I tell you. Nothing down it, right down to the elbow. I could see right down it to the elbow, and there was a bit of light shining through a hole in the cloth. 'Good God!' I said. Then he stopped. Stared at me with those black glasses of his, and then at his sleeve."

"Well?"

"That's all. He never said a word; just stared angrily, and put his sleeve back in his pocket quickly. 'I was saying,' he said, 'that there was the prescription burning, wasn't I?' Interrogative cough. 'How the devil,' I said, 'can you move an empty sleeve like that?' 'Empty sleeve?' 'Yes,' I said, 'an empty sleeve.'

"It's an empty sleeve, is it? You saw it was an empty sleeve?" He stood up. I stood up too. He came towards me in three very slow steps, and stood quite close. Sniffed venomously. I didn't move, though that bandaged head of his, and those glasses, are enough to make any one nervous, coming quietly up to you.

"You said it was an empty sleeve?" he said. 'Certainly,' I said. Then very quietly he pulled his sleeve out of his pocket again, and raised his arm towards me as though he was going to show it to me again. He did it very, very slowly. I looked at it. It seemed an age. 'Well?' I said, coughing, 'there's nothing in it.' I had to say something. I was beginning to feel frightened. I could see right down it. He extended it straight towards me, slowly, slowly - just like that - until the cuff was six inches from my face. Starng thing to see an empty sleeve come at you like that! And then - "

"Well?"

"Something - exactly like a finger and thumb it felt - pinched my nose."

Bunting began to laugh.

"There wasn't anything there!" said Cuss, his voice going up into a shout at the "there." *"It's all very well for you to laugh, but I tell you I was so surprised, I hit his sleeve hard, and turned round, and ran out of the room - I left him - "*

Cuss stopped. There was no doubting the sincerity of his panic. He turned round in a helpless way and took a second glass of the excellent vicar's very inferior sherry. *"When I hit his sleeve,"* said Cuss, *"I tell you, it felt exactly like hitting an arm. And there wasn't an arm! There wasn't the ghost of an arm!"*

Mr. Bunting thought it over. He looked suspiciously at Cuss. *"It's a most incredible story,"* he said. He looked very wise and serious indeed. *"It's really,"* said Mr. Bunting with judicial emphasis, *"a most incredible story."*

Chapter 5

The Burglary at the Vicarage

The facts of the burglary at the vicarage came to us mainly through the vicar and his wife. It occurred in the early hours of Whit-Monday--the day devoted in Iping to the Club festivities. Mrs. Bunting, it seems, woke up suddenly in the silence that comes before the dawn, with the strong impression that the door of their bedroom had opened and closed. She did not wake her husband at first, but sat up in bed listening. She then distinctly heard the pad, pad, pad of bare feet coming out of the dressing-room next door and walking along the passage towards the staircase. As soon as she felt sure of this, she woke the Rev. Mr. Bunting as quietly as possible. He did not turn on a light, but putting on his glasses, her dressing-gown, and his slippers, he went out into the hall to listen. He heard quite distinctly things being moved at his study desk downstairs, and then a violent sneeze.

At that he returned to his bedroom, armed himself with the most obvious weapon, the poker, and descended the staircase as noiselessly as possible. Mrs. Bunting came out into the hall.

The hour was about four, and the ultimate darkness of the night was past. There was a weak light in the hall, but the open study doorway was impenetrably black. Everything was still except the faint creaking of the stairs under Mr. Bunting's steps, and the slight movements in the study. Then something snapped, the drawer was opened, and there was a rustle of papers. Then came swearing, and a match was lit and the study was flooded with yellow light. Mr. Bunting was now in the hall, and through the crack of the door he could see the desk and the open drawer and a candle burning on the desk. But the robber he could not see. He stood there in the hall undecided what to do, and Mrs. Bunting, her face white and intent, went slowly downstairs after him. One thing kept up Mr. Bunting's courage: the conviction that this burglar was a resident in the village.

They heard the chink of money, and realised that the robber had found the housekeeping reserve of gold--two pounds ten altogether. At that sound Mr. Bunting was moved to abrupt action. Holding the poker firmly, he rushed into the room, closely followed by Mrs. Bunting. "Surrender!" cried Mr. Bunting, fiercely, and then stopped amazed. Apparently the room was completely empty.

Yet they were convinced that they had, that very moment, heard somebody moving in the room. For half a minute, perhaps, they stood with their mouths open, then Mrs. Bunting went across the room and looked behind the screen, while Mr. Bunting looked under the desk. Then Mrs. Bunting pulled back the curtains, and Mr. Bunting looked up the chimney and investigated it with the poker. Then Mrs. Bunting scrutinised the waste-paper basket and Mr. Bunting opened the lid of the coal-scuttle. Then they came to a stop and stood with eyes interrogating each other.

"I could have sworn--" said Mr. Bunting.

"The candle!" said Mr. Bunting. "Who lit the candle?"

"The drawer!" said Mrs. Bunting. "And the money's gone!"

She went quickly to the doorway.

"Of all the extraordinary occurrences--"

There was a violent sneeze in the passage. They rushed out, and as they did so the kitchen door slammed. "Bring the candle," said Mr. Bunting, and led the way. They both heard a sound of locks being rapidly opened.

As he opened the kitchen door he saw that the back door was just opening, and the faint light of early dawn displayed the dark shadows of the garden beyond. He was certain that nothing went out of the door. It opened, stayed open for a moment, and then closed with a slam. As it did so, the candle Mrs. Bunting was carrying from the study flickered. It was a minute or more before they entered the kitchen.

The place was empty. They closed the back door, examined the kitchen thoroughly, and at last went down into the cellar. There was not a soul to be found in the house, search as they would.

Daylight found the vicar and his wife, a curiously-dressed little couple, still wandering about on their own ground floor by the unnecessary light of a candle.

Chapter 6

The Furniture That Went Mad

Now it happened that in the early hours of Whit-Monday, before Millie was woken up, Mr. Hall and Mrs. Hall both got up and went noiselessly down into the cellar. Their business there was of a private nature, and had something to do with the specific gravity of their beer. They had hardly entered the cellar when Mrs. Hall found she had forgotten to bring down a bottle of sarsaparilla from their room. As she was the expert and principal operator in this affair, Hall very properly went upstairs for it.

In the hall he was surprised to see that the stranger's door was open. He went on into his own room and found the bottle as he had been instructed.

But returning with the bottle, he noticed that the locks of the front door had been opened, that the door was not properly closed. And with a flash of inspiration he connected this with the stranger's room upstairs and the suggestions of Mr. Teddy Henfrey. He clearly remembered holding the candle while Mrs. Hall locked the door overnight. At the sight he stopped, then with the bottle still in his hand went upstairs again. He knocked at the stranger's door. There was no answer. He knocked again; then pushed the door open and entered.

It was as he expected. The bed, the room also, was empty. And what was stranger, even to his slow intelligence, on the bedroom chair and along the edge of the bed were the clothes, the only clothes as far as he knew, and the bandages of their guest. His big hat even was hanging over the bed-post.

As Hall stood there he heard his wife's voice coming out of the depth of the cellar, with that rapid telescoping of the syllables and interrogative rising intonation of the final words to a high note, by which the West Sussex villager indicates impatience. *"George! Have you got what I want?"*

At that he turned and hurried down to her. *"Jenny,"* he said, over the cellar steps, *"It's true what Henfrey says. He isn't in his room. And the front door's unlocked."*

At first Mrs. Hall did not understand, and as soon as she did she decided to see the empty room for herself. Hall, still holding the bottle, went first. *"If he isn't there,"* he said, *"his clothes are. And what's he doing without his clothes, then? It's a most curious business."*

As they came up the cellar steps, they both thought they heard the front door open and shut, but seeing it closed and nothing there, neither said a word to the other about it at the time. Mrs. Hall passed her husband in the passage and ran on first upstairs. Some one sneezed on the stairs. Hall, following six steps behind, thought that he heard her sneeze. She, going on first, was under the impression that Hall was sneezing. She threw open the door and stood looking around the room. *"Of all the strange things!"* she said.

She heard a sniff close behind her head as it seemed, and, turning, was surprised to see Hall a dozen feet away on the top-most stair. But in another moment he was next to her. She moved forward and put her hand on the pillow and then under the clothes.

"Cold," she said. *"He's been up for an hour or more."*

As she did so, a most extraordinary thing happened - the bed-clothes picked themselves up, jumped up suddenly into a sort of peak, and then jumped straight over the bottom of the bed. It was exactly as if a hand had held them in the centre and thrown them to one side. Immediately after, the stranger's hat flew off the bed-post, flying in a circle through the air, and then straight at Mrs. Hall's face. Then as quickly came the sponge from the washbasin; and then the chair, throwing the stranger's coat and trousers carelessly to one side, and laughing dryly in a voice very like the stranger's, turned itself up with its four legs at Mrs. Hall, seemed to take aim at her for a moment, and charged at her. She screamed and turned, and then the chair legs came gently but firmly against her back and pushed her and Hall out of the room. The door slammed violently and was locked. The chair and bed seemed to be executing a dance of triumph for a moment, and then abruptly everything was still.

Mrs. Hall almost fainted in Mr. Hall's arms in the hall. It was with the greatest difficulty that Mr. Hall and Millie, who had been woken up by her scream of panic, succeeded in getting her downstairs, and applying the treatment customary in these cases.

"It was spirits," said Mrs. Hall. *"I know it was spirits. I've read in the newspapers about them. Tables and chairs jumping and dancing - !"*

"Take a drop more, Jenny," said Hall. *"It will steady you."*

"Lock him out," said Mrs. Hall. *"Don't let him come in again. I half guessed - I might have known. With those eyes and bandaged head, and never going to church on a Sunday. And all those bottles - more than it's right for any one to have. He's put spirits into the furniture. My good old furniture! It was in that very chair my poor dear mother used to sit when I was a little girl. To think it should rise up against me now!"*

"Just a drop more, Janny," said Hall. *"Your nerves are all upset."*

They sent Millie across the street through the golden five o'clock sunshine to wake up Mr. Sandy Wadgers, the blacksmith. Mr. Hall's compliments and the furniture upstairs was behaving in the most extraordinary manner. Would Mr. Wadgers come round? He was a knowing man, was Mr. Wadgers, and very resourceful. He took quite a serious view of the case. *"I'm damned if that isn't witchcraft,"* was the view of Mr. Sandy Wadgers. *"You want horseshoes for people like that."*

He came round greatly worried. They wanted him to go first upstairs to the room, but he didn't seem to be in any hurry. He preferred to talk in the passage. Huxter's apprentice came out and began taking down the shutters of the shop window. He was called over to join the discussion. Mr. Huxter naturally followed in the course of a few minutes. The Anglo-Saxon genius for

parliamentary government asserted itself; there was a great deal of talk and no decisive action. *"Let's have the facts first,"* insisted Mr. Sandy Wadgers. *"Let's be sure we'd be acting perfectly right in breaking that door open."*

And suddenly and most wonderfully the door of the room upstairs opened by itself, and as they looked up in amazement, they saw descending the stairs the figure of the stranger staring more blackly and blankly than ever with those unreasonably large blue glass eyes of his. He came down rigidly and slowly, staring all the time; he walked across the passage staring, then stopped.

"Look there!" he said, and their eyes followed the direction of his gloved finger and saw a bottle of sarsaparilla next to the cellar door. Then he entered the lounge, and suddenly, quickly, violently slammed the door in their faces.

Not a word was spoken until the last echoes of the slam had disappeared. They stared at one another. *"Well, if that doesn't beat everything!"* said Mr. Wadgers, and left the alternative unsaid.

"I'd go in and ask him about it," said Wadgers, to Mr. Hall. *"I'd demand an explanation."*

It took some time to convince the landlady's husband. At last he knocked, opened the door, and got as far as, *"Excuse me - "*

"Go to the devil!" said the stranger in a tremendous voice, and *"Shut that door after you."* So that brief interview terminated.

Chapter 7

The Unveiling of the Stranger

The stranger went into the little lounge of the Coach and Horses at about half-past five in the morning, and there he stayed until near midday, the blinds down, the door shut, and no-one, after Hall's repulse, venturing near him.

All that time he couldn't have eaten. Three times he rang his bell, the third time furiously and continuously, but no one answered him. *"Him and his 'go to the devil!"* said Mrs. Hall. Soon came an rumour of the burglary at the vicarage, and two and two were put together. Hall, accompanied by Wadgers, went off to find Mr. Shuckleforth, the magistrate, and ask for his advice. No one ventured upstairs. How the stranger occupied himself is unknown. Now and then he would walk violently up and down, and twice came swearing, a tearing of paper, and a violent smashing of bottles.

The little group of scared but curious people increased. Mrs. Huxter came over; some young men wearing their best Sunday clothes, as it was Whit-Monday, joined the group with confused interrogations. Young Archie Harker distinguished himself by going and trying to look under the window-blinds. He could see nothing, but let people believe he had, and other young lping people soon joined him.

It was the finest of all possible Whit-Monday fairs, and down the village street was a row of nearly a dozen stands and a shooting gallery, and on the grass by the forge were three yellow and chocolate waggons and some picturesque strangers of both sexes putting up a coconut shy. The gentlemen wore blue jerseys, the ladies white aprons and quite fashionable hats with heavy feathers. Wodger of the Purple Fawn pub and Mr. Jagers the shoe-maker, who also sold second-hand bicycles, were hanging a string of union-jack flags and royal ensigns (which had originally celebrated the Jubilee) across the road...

And inside, in the artificial darkness of the lounge, into which only one thin line of sunlight penetrated, the stranger, hungry we must suppose, and fearful, hidden in his uncomfortable hot wrappings, read his papers through his dark glasses or chinked his dirty little bottles, and occasionally swore savagely at the boys, audible but invisible, outside the windows. In the corner by the fireplace lay the fragments of half a dozen smashed bottles, and a strong smell of chlorine filled the air. This much we know from what was heard at the time and from what was subsequently seen in the room.

At about midday he suddenly opened his lounge door and stood angrily staring at the three or four people in the bar. *"Mrs. Hall,"* he said. Somebody went timidly and called for Mrs. Hall.

Mrs. Hall appeared after an interval, a little short of breath, but all the fiercer for that. Hall was still out. She had deliberated over the scene, and she came holding a little tray with an unpaid bill upon it. *"Is it your bill you wanted, sir?"* she said.

"Why wasn't my breakfast brought? Why haven't you prepared my meals and answered my bell? Do you think I live without eating?"

"Why isn't my bill paid?" said Mrs. Hall. *"That's what I want to know."*

"I told you three days ago I was waiting for a bank giro - "

"I told you two days ago I wasn't going to await for a bank giro. You can't complain if your breakfast waits a bit, if my bill's been waiting these five days, can you?"

The stranger swore briefly but vividly.

"Now, now!" from the bar.

"And I'd thank you, sir, if you'd keep your swearing to yourself, sir," said Mrs. Hall.

The stranger stood looking more like an angry diving-helmet than ever. It was generally felt in the bar that Mrs. Hall was winning. His next words showed as much.

"Look here, my good woman - " he began.

"Don't good woman me," said Mrs. Hall.

"I've told you my giro hasn't come - "

"Giro indeed!" said Mrs. Hall.

"Still, maybe in my pocket - "

"You told me two days ago that you hadn't anything but a sovereign's worth of silver upon you - "

"Well, I've found some more - "

"Ul-lo!" from the bar.

"I wonder where you found it!" said Mrs. Hall.

That seemed to annoy the stranger very much. He stamped his foot. *"What do you mean?"* he said.

"That I wonder where you found it," said Mrs. Hall. *"And before I take any bills or get any breakfasts, or do any such things at all, you've got to tell me one or two things I don't understand, and that nobody understands, and what everybody is very anxious to understand. I want to know what you've been doing to my chair upstairs, and I want know how it is your room was empty, and how you got in again. People who stay in this house come in by the doors - that's the rule of the house, and that you didn't do, and what I want know is how you did come in. And I want know - "*

Suddenly the stranger raised his gloved hands, stamped his foot, and said, *"Stop!"* with such extraordinary violence that he silenced her instantly.

"You don't understand," he said, *"who I am or what I am. I'll show you. By Heaven! I'll show you."* Then he put his open hand over his face and took it away it. The centre of his face became a black hole. *"Here,"* he said. He stepped forward and gave Mrs. Hall something which she, staring at his metamorphosed face, accepted automatically. Then, when she saw what it was, she screamed loudly, dropped it, and stepped back. The nose - it was the stranger's nose! pink and shining - rolled on the floor.

Then he took off his glasses, and every one in the bar gasped. He took off his hat, and with a violent gesture pulled at his hair and bandages. For a moment they resisted him. A flash of horrible anticipation passed through the bar. *"Oh, my God!"* said some one. Then off they came.

It was worse than anything. Mrs. Hall, standing open-mouthed and horror-struck, screamed at what she saw, and ran for the door of the house. Every one began to move. They were prepared for scars, disfigurements, tangible horrors, but nothing! The bandages and false hair flew across the passage into the bar, making a jump to avoid them. Every one fell on every one else down the steps. For the man who stood there shouting some incoherent explanation, was a solid gesticulating figure up to the coat-collar, and then - nothingness, no visible thing at all!

People down the village heard shouts and screams, and looking up the street saw the Coach and Horses violently throwing out its humanity. They saw Mrs. Hall fall down and Mr. Teddy Henfrey jump to avoid falling over her, and then they heard the terrible screams of Millie, who, appearing suddenly from the kitchen at the noise of the tumult, had come upon the headless stranger from behind.

Immediately every one all down the street, the sweet seller, coconut stand proprietor and his assistant, the swing man, little boys and girls, rustic dandies, smart wenches, smocked elders and aproned gipsies, began running towards the inn; and in a miraculously short space of time a crowd of perhaps forty people, and rapidly increasing, moved and shouted and asked and exclaimed and suggested, in front of Mrs. Hall's inn. Every one seemed to want to talk at once, and the result was babel. A small group supported Mrs. Hall, who was picked up in a state of collapse. There was a conference, and the incredible evidence of a vociferous eyewitness. *"What's he been doing, then?" "Hasn't hurt the girl, has he?" "Run at them with a knife, I believe." "No head, I tell you. It's not a manner speaking, I mean a man without a head!" "Nonsense! it was some magic trick." "Took off his wrappings, he did - "*

In its struggles to see in through the open door, the crowd formed itself into a disordered triangle, with the more adventurous apex nearest the inn. *"He stood for a moment, I heard the girl scream, and he turned. I saw her skirts fly, and he went after her. Didn't take ten seconds. Back he came with a knife in his hand and a loaf of bread; stood just as if he was staring. Not a moment ago. Went in that door there. I tell you, he hasn't got a head at all. You just missed him - "*

There was a disturbance behind, and the speaker stopped to step to one side for a little procession that was marching very resolutely towards the house - first Mr. Hall, very red and determined, then Mr. Bobby Jaffers, the village police constable, and then the cautious Mr. Wadgers. They had come now armed with a warrant.

People shouted conflicting information of the recent circumstances. *"Head or no head,"* said Jaffers, *"I've got to arrest him, and arrest him I will."*

Mr. Hall marched up the steps, marched straight to the door of the lounge and threw it open. *"Constable,"* he said, *"do your duty."*

Jaffers marched in, Hall next, Wadgers last. They saw in the dim light the headless figure facing them, with a half-eaten piece of bread in one gloved hand and a piece of cheese in the other.

"That's him!" said Hall.

"What the devil's this?" came in an angry tone from above the collar of the figure.

"You're a damned strange customer, mister," said Mr. Jaffers. *"But head or no head, the warrant says 'body,' and duty's duty - "*

"Keep away!" said the figure, stepping back.

Abruptly he put down the bread and cheese, and Mr. Hall just picked up the knife on the table in time to save it. Off came the stranger's left glove and was thrown in Jaffers' face. In another moment Jaffers had taken him by the handless wrist and put his arm round his invisible throat. He got a kick on the leg that made him shout, but he kept his hold. Hall pushed the knife along the table to Wadgers and then stepped forward as Jaffers and the stranger staggered towards him. A chair was in the way, and fell over with a crash as they came down together.

"Get the feet," said Jaffers between his teeth.

Mr. Hall, trying to follow instructions, receiving a hard kick in the chest that put him out of action for a moment, and Mr. Wadgers, seeing the decapitated stranger had rolled over and got on top of Jaffers, retreated towards the door, knife in hand, and so collided with Mr. Huxter and the Siddermorton carter coming to the rescue of law and order. At the same moment down came three or four bottles from the cupboard and acrid smell filled the air of the room.

"I'll surrender," cried the stranger, though he had Jaffers down, and in another moment he stood up breathing heavily, a strange figure, headless and handless - for he had pulled off his right glove now as well as his left. *"It's no good,"* he said, trying to catch his breath.

It was the strangest thing in the world to hear that voice coming out of empty space, but the Sussex peasants are perhaps the most matter-of-fact people under the sun. Jaffers got up also and produced a pair of handcuffs.

"I say!" said Jaffers, suddenly stopped by a vague realisation of the incongruity of the whole thing. *"Damn it! Can't use them as I can see."*

The stranger moved his arm down his jacket, and as if by a miracle the buttons to which his empty sleeve pointed became undone. Then he said something about his leg, and bent down. He seemed to be doing something with his shoes and socks.

"Why!" said Huxter, suddenly, *"that's not a man at all. It's just empty clothes. Look! You can see down his collar and the inside of his clothes. I could put my arm -"*

He extended his hand; it seemed to meet something in mid-air, and he drew it back with a sharp exclamation. *"I wish you'd keep your fingers out of my eye,"* said the aerial voice, in a furious tone. *"The fact is, I'm all here: head, hands, legs, and all the rest of it, but it happens I'm invisible. It's a real nuisance, but I am. That's no reason why I should be poked by every stupid peasant in Iping, is it?"*

The suit of clothes, now all unbuttoned and hanging loosely upon its unseen supports, stood up.

Several other of the men had now entered the room, so that it was quite crowded. *"Invisible, eh?"* said Huxter, ignoring the stranger's abuse. *"Who ever heard the likes of that?"*

"It's strange, perhaps, but it's not a crime. Why am I assaulted by a policeman in this way?"

"Ah! that's a different matter," said Jaffers. *"No doubt you are a bit difficult to see in this light, but I've got a warrant, and it's all correct. What I'm after isn't invisibility - it's burglary. A house has been broken into and money taken."*

"Well?"

"And circumstances certainly point -"

"Nonsense!" said the Invisible Man.

"I hope so, sir; but I've got my instructions."

"Well," said the stranger, *"I'll come. I'll come. But no handcuffs."*

"It's the normal thing," said Jaffers.

"No handcuffs," insisted the stranger.

"Pardon me," said Jaffers.

Abruptly the figure sat down, and before any one realised what was being done, the slippers, socks, and trousers had been thrown off under the table. Then he jumped up again and threw off his coat.

"Here, stop that," said Jaffers, suddenly realising what was happening. He held the waist-coat; it struggled, and the shirt slipped out of it and left it empty in his hand. *"Hold him!"* said Jaffers loudly. *"Once he gets his things off -!"*

"Hold him!" shouted every one, and there was a rush at the white shirt which was now all that was visible of the stranger.

The shirt-sleeve hit Hall's face and sent him backward into old Toothsome the sexton, and in another moment it was lifted up about the arms, like a shirt that is being pulled over a man's head. Jaffers tried to hold it, and only helped to pull it off; he was hit in the mouth out of the air, and pulled out his truncheon and hit Teddy Henfrey savagely upon the top of his head.

"Look out!" said everybody, fighting at random and hitting at nothing. *"Hold him! Shut the door! Don't let him get away! I've got something! Here he is!"* A perfect babel of noises they made. Everybody, it seemed, was being hit at once, and Sandy Wadgers, as intelligent as ever and his wits sharpened by a terrible blow in the nose, reopened the door and led the retreat. The others, following, were stuck for a moment in the corner by the doorway. The hitting continued. Phipps, the Unitarian, had a front tooth broken, and Henfrey was injured in the cartilage of his ear. Jaffers was struck under the jaw, and, turning, caught at something that intervened between him and Huxter, and prevented their coming together. He felt a muscular chest, and in another moment the whole mass of struggling, excited men shot out into the crowded hall.

"I've got him!" shouted Jaffers, moving through them all, and wrestling with purple face and swelling veins against his unseen enemy.

Men fell right and left as the extraordinary conflict moved quickly towards the house door, and went down the half-dozen steps of the inn. Jaffers shouted in a strangled voice - holding tight, nevertheless - turned round, and fell heavily with his head on the ground. Only then did his fingers relax.

There were excited cries of *"Hold him!" "Invisible!"* and so on, and a young man rushed in at once, caught something, missed his hold, and fell over the constable's prostrate body. Halfway across the road, a woman screamed as something pushed by her; a dog, kicked apparently, yelped and ran howling into Huxter's yard, and with that the transit of the Invisible Man was accomplished. For a while people stood amazed and gesticulating, and then came Panic, and scattered them through the village as the wind scatters dead leaves.

But Jaffers lay quite still, face upward and knees bent.

Chapter 8

In Transit

The eighth chapter is exceedingly brief, and relates that Gibbins, the amateur naturalist of the district, while lying out on the spacious open countryside without a soul within a couple of miles of him, as he thought, and almost sleeping, heard close to him the sound as of a man coughing, sneezing, and then swearing savagely to himself; and looking, saw nothing. Yet the voice was indisputable. It continued to swear with that variety of vocabulary that distinguishes the swearing of a cultivated man. It grew to a climax, diminished again, and disappeared in the distance, going as it seemed to him in the direction of Adderdean. It lifted to a spasmodic sneeze and ended. Gibbins had heard nothing of the morning's occurrences, but the phenomenon was so strange and disturbing that his philosophical tranquillity vanished; he got up quickly, and hurried down the steepness of the hill towards the village, as fast as he could go.

Chapter 9

Mr. Thomas Marvel

You must picture Mr. Thomas Marvel as a person of copious, flexible face, a cylindrical nose, an ample, fluctuating mouth, and a beard of untidy eccentricity. His figure inclined to roundness; his short arms and legs accentuated this inclination. He wore a furry silk hat, and the frequent substitution of string and shoe-laces for buttons, apparent at critical points of his clothes, marked a man essentially bachelor.

Mr. Thomas Marvel was sitting with his feet in a ditch by the roadside toward Adderdean, about a mile and a half out of Iping. His feet, except for socks with irregular patches, were bare, his big toes were broad, and pricked like the ears of a watchful dog. In a leisurely manner - he did everything in a leisurely manner - he was contemplating trying on a pair of boots. They were the best boots he had come across for a long time, but too large for him; whereas the ones he had worn, in dry weather, a very comfortable fit, but too thin-soled for damp. Mr. Thomas Marvel hated roomy boots, but then he hated damp. He had never properly thought out which he hated most, and it was a pleasant day, and there was nothing better to do. So he put the four boots in a graceful group on the ground and looked at them. And seeing them there among the grass, it suddenly occurred to him that both pairs were exceedingly ugly. He was not at all surprised by a voice behind him.

"*They're boots, anyhow,*" said the voice.

"*They are - charity boots,*" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, with his head on one side regarding them distastefully; "*and I've no idea which is the ugliest pair in the whole universe!*"

"*H'm,*" said the voice.

"*I've worn worse - in fact, I've worn none. But none so incredibly ugly. I've been looking for boots - in particular - for days. Because I was sick of them. They're good enough, of course. But a travelling gentleman sees such a lot of his boots. And if you'll believe me, I've found nothing in the whole blessed county, try as I would, but THEM. Look at them! And a good county for boots, too, in a general way. But it's just my luck. I've got my boots in this county for ten years or more. And then they treat you like this.*"

"*It's a beast of a county,*" said the voice. "*And pigs for people.*"

"*Ain't it?*" said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "*Lord! But them boots! It beats it.*"

He turned his head over his shoulder to the right, to look at the boots of his interlocutor with a view to comparisons, and lo! where the boots of his interlocutor should have been were neither legs nor boots. He turned his head over his shoulder to the left, and there also were neither legs nor boots. He was irradiated by the dawn of a great amazement. "*Where are you?*" said Mr. Thomas Marvel over his shoulder and coming round on all fours. He saw a stretch of empty countryside with the wind blowing and remote green-pointed bushes.

"*Am I drunk?*" said Mr. Marvel. "*Have I had visions? Was I talking to myself? What the -*"

"*Don't be alarmed,*" said a voice.

"*None of your ventriloquising me,*" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, rising sharply to his feet. "*Where are you? Alarmed, indeed!*"

"*Don't be alarmed,*" repeated the voice.

"*You'll be alarmed in a minute, you silly fool,*" said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "*Where are you? Let me see you -*"

"*Are you buried?*" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, after an interval.

There was no answer. Mr. Thomas Marvel stood bootless and amazed, his jacket nearly thrown off.

"*Peewit,*" said a bird, very remote.

"*Peewit, indeed!*" said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "*This is no time for foolery.*" The down was desolate, east and west, north and south; the road with its shallow ditches and white bordering posts, ran smooth and empty north and south, and, except for that bird, the blue sky was empty too. "*So help me,*" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, pulling his coat on to his shoulders again. "*It's the drink! I might have known.*"

"*It's not the drink,*" said the voice. "*You keep your nerves steady.*"

"*Ow!*" said Mr. Marvel, and his face grew white. "*It's the drink,*" his lips repeated noiselessly. He remained staring about him, rotating slowly backwards. "*I could have sworn I heard a voice,*" he whispered.

"*Of course you did.*"

"*It's there again,*" said Mr. Marvel, closing his eyes and putting his hand on his forehead with a tragic gesture. He was suddenly taken by the collar and shaken violently and left more dazed than ever. "*Don't be a fool,*" said the voice.

"*I'm - off - my - head,*" said Mr. Marvel. "*It's no good. It's worrying about those blasted boots. I'm off my blessed head. Or it's spirits.*"

"*Neither one thing nor the other,*" said the voice. "*Listen!*"

"*Fool,*" said Mr. Marvel.

"One minute," said the voice penetratingly, - tremulous with self-control.

"Well?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, with a strange feeling of having been poked in the chest by a finger.

"You think I'm just imagination? Just imagination?"

"What else can you be?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Very well," said the voice, in a tone of relief. "Then I'm going to throw stones at you till you think differently."

"But where are you?"

The voice made no answer. Whiz came a stone, apparently out of the air, and missed Mr. Marvel's shoulder by a hair's breadth. Mr. Marvel, turning, saw a stone raise up into the air, trace a complicated path, hang for a moment, and then fly at his feet with almost invisible rapidity. He was too amazed to avoid it. Whiz it came, and ricocheted from a bare toe into the ditch. Mr. Thomas Marvel jumped a foot and howled aloud. Then he started to run, tripped over an unseen obstacle, and came head over heels into a sitting position.

"Now," said the voice, as a third stone curved upward and hung in the air above the tramp. "Am I imagination?"

Mr. Marvel by way of reply struggled to his feet, and was immediately rolled over again. He lay quiet for a moment. "If you struggle any more," said the voice, "I shall throw the stone at your head."

"All right, all right," said Mr. Thomas Marvel, sitting up, taking his wounded toe in hand and fixing his eye on the third missile. "I don't understand it. Stones throwing themselves. Stones talking. Put yourself down. I'm done."

The third stone fell.

"It's very simple," said the voice. "I'm an invisible man."

"Tell me something I don't know," said Mr. Marvel, gasping with pain. "Where are you hidden - how you do it - I don't know, I'm beat."

"That's all," said the voice. "I'm invisible. That's what I want you to understand."

"Any one could see that. There is no need for you to be so damned impatient, mister. Now then. Give me a clue. How are you hidden?"

"I'm invisible. That's the great point. And what I want you to understand is this - "

"But whereabouts?" interrupted Mr. Marvel.

"Here! Six yards in front of you."

"Oh, come on! I'm not blind. You'll be telling me next you're just thin air. I'm not one of your ignorant tramps - "

"Yes, I am - thin air. You're looking through me."

"What! Isn't there any stuff to you? Is it that?"

"I am just a human being - solid, needing food and drink, needing covering too - But I'm invisible. You see? Invisible. Simple idea. Invisible."

"What, real like?"

"Yes, real."

"Let me touch you," said Marvel, "if you are real. It won't be so strange like, then - Lord!" he said, "how you made me jump! - gripping me like that!"

He felt the hand that had closed round his wrist with his fingers, and his touch went cautiously up the arm, patted a muscular chest, and explored a bearded face. Marvel's face was astonishment.

"I'm damned!" he said. "Most remarkable! - And there I can see a rabbit straight through you, half a mile away! Not a bit of you visible - except - "

He scrutinised the apparently empty space keenly. "You haven't been eatin' bread and cheese?" he asked, holding the invisible arm.

"You're quite right, and it's not quite assimilated into the system."

"Ah!" said Mr. Marvel. "Sort of ghostly, though."

"Of course, all this isn't so wonderful as you think."

"It's quite wonderful enough for my modest wants," said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "How do you manage it? How on earth is it done?"

"It's too long a story. And besides - "

"I tell you, the whole business fair beats me," said Mr. Marvel.

"What I want to say at present is this: I need help. I have come to that - I came upon you suddenly. I was wandering, mad with rage, naked, impotent. I could have murdered. And I saw you - "

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel.

"I came up behind you - hesitated - went on - "

Mr. Marvel's expression was eloquent.

" - then stopped. 'Here,' I said, 'is an outcast like myself. This is the man for me.' So I turned back and came to you - you. And - "

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel. "But I'm all confused. May I ask - How is it? And what you may be requiring in the way of help? - Invisible!"

"I want you to help me get clothes - and shelter - and then, with other things. I've left them long enough. If you won't - well! But you will - must."

"Look here," said Mr. Marvel. "I'm too flabbergasted. Don't knock me about any more. And let me go. I must get steady a bit. And you've pretty near broken my toe. It's all so unreasonable. Empty downs, empty sky. Nothing visible for miles except the bosom of Nature. And then comes a voice. A voice out of heaven! And stones! And a fist - Lord!"

"Pull yourself together," said the voice, "for you have to do the job I've chosen for you."

Mr. Marvel blew out his cheeks, and his eyes were round.

"I've chosen you," said the voice. "You are the only man, except some of those fools down there, who knows there is such a thing as an invisible man. You have to be my helper. Help me - and I will do great things for you. An invisible man is a man of power." He stopped for a moment to sneeze violently.

"But if you betray me," he said, "if you fail to do as I direct you - "

He paused and tapped Mr. Marvel's shoulder. Mr. Marvel gave a yelp of terror at the touch. *"I don't want to betray you," said Mr. Marvel, moving away from the direction of the fingers. "Don't you go a-thinking that, whatever you do. All I want to do is to help you - just tell me what I've got to do. (Lord!) Whatever you want done, that I'm most willing to do."*

Chapter 10

Mr. Marvel's Visit to Iping

After the first wave of panic had spent itself Iping became argumentative. Scepticism suddenly raised its head - rather nervous scepticism, but scepticism nevertheless. It is so much easier not to believe in an invisible man; and those who had actually seen him dissolve into air, or felt the strength of his arm, could be counted on the fingers of two hands. And of these witnesses Mr. Wadgers was presently missing, having retired behind the bolts and bars of his own house, and Jaffers was lying stunned in the parlour of the Coach and Horses. Great and strange ideas transcending experience often have less effect upon men and women than smaller, more tangible considerations. Iping was decorated with flags, and everybody was in their best clothes. Whit-Monday had been looked forward to for a month or more. By the afternoon even those who believed in the Unseen were beginning to resume their little amusements in a tentative fashion, on the supposition that he had quite gone away, and with the sceptics he was already a joke. But people, sceptics and believers alike, were remarkably sociable all that day.

In the tent on Haysman's meadow Mrs. Bunting and other ladies were preparing tea, while, outside, the Sunday-school children ran races and played games under the noisy guidance of the curate and the Misses Cuss and Sackbut. No doubt there was a slight uneasiness in the air, but people for the most part had the sense to conceal whatever imaginative worries they experienced. There were swings and cocoanut shies and promenading, and the steam organ attached to the swings filled the air with a pungent flavour of oil and with equally pungent music. Members of the Club, who had attended church in the morning, were splendid in badges of pink and green, and some had also adorned their bowler hats with brilliant-coloured ribbons. Old Fletcher, whose ideas of holiday-making were severe, was visible through the jasmine about his window or through the open door (whichever way you chose to look), balanced delicately on a piece of wood supported on two chairs, and painting the ceiling of his front room.

About four o'clock a stranger entered the village from the direction of the downs. He was a short, stout person in an extraordinarily shabby top hat, and he appeared to be very much out of breath. His face was apprehensive, and he moved with a sort of reluctant speed. He turned the corner by the church, and directed his way to the Coach and Horses. Among others old Fletcher remembers seeing him, and indeed the old gentleman was so struck by his peculiar agitation that he inadvertently allowed a quantity of paint to run down the brush into the sleeve of his coat while watching him.

This stranger, to the perceptions of the proprietor of the cocoanut shy, appeared to be talking to himself, and Mr. Huxter noticed the same thing. He stopped at the foot of the Coach and Horses steps, and, according to Mr. Huxter, appeared to go through a severe internal struggle before he could induce himself to enter the house. Finally he marched up the steps, and was seen by Mr. Huxter to turn to the left and open the door of the parlour. Mr. Huxter heard voices from within the room and from the bar advised the man of his error. "*That room's private!*" said Hall, and the stranger shut the door clumsily and went into the bar.

In the course of a few minutes he reappeared, wiping his lips with the back of his hand with an air of quiet satisfaction that somehow gave Mr. Huxter the impression of being assumed. He stood looking about him for some moments, and then Mr. Huxter saw him walk in an strangely furtive manner towards the gates of the yard, upon which the parlour window opened. The stranger, after some hesitation, leant against one of the gate-posts, produced a short clay pipe, and prepared to fill it. His fingers trembled while doing so. He lit it clumsily, and folding his arms began to smoke in a languid attitude, an attitude which his occasional quick glances up the yard altogether contradicted.

All this Mr. Huxter saw through the tobacconist's window, and the strangeness of the man's behaviour made to maintain his observation.

Presently the stranger stood up abruptly and put his pipe in his pocket. Then he vanished into the yard. Mr. Huxter, realising he was witness of some petty crime, leapt round his counter and ran out into the road to intercept the thief. As he did so, Mr. Marvel reappeared, his hat on one side, a big packet in a blue table-cloth in one hand, and three books tied together - as it was discovered afterwards with the Vicar's braces - in the other. When he saw Huxter he gave a sort of gasp, and turning sharply to the left, began to run. "*Stop thief!*" cried Huxter, and set off after him. Mr. Huxter's sensations were vivid but brief. He saw the man just before him and sprinting towards the church corner and the hill road. He saw the village flags and festivities beyond, and a face or so turned towards him. He shouted, "*Stop!*" again. He had hardly gone ten paces before his leg was caught in some mysterious fashion, and he was no longer running, but flying with inconceivable rapidity through the air. He saw the ground suddenly close to his face. The world seemed to splash into a million whirling dots of light, and subsequent events interested him no more.

Chapter 11

In the Coach and Horses

Now in order clearly to understand what had happened in the inn, it is necessary to go back to the moment when Mr. Marvel first came into view of Mr. Huxter's window. At that precise moment Mr. Cuss and Mr. Bunting were in the parlour. They were seriously investigating the strange occurrences of the morning, and were, with Mr. Hall's permission, making a thorough examination of the Invisible Man's belongings. Jaffers had partially recovered from his fall and had gone home in the care of his sympathetic friends. The stranger's scattered clothes had been removed by Mrs. Hall and the room tidied up. And on the table under the window where the stranger had usually worked, Cuss had discovered almost at once three big books in manuscript labelled "Diary."

"*Diary!*" said Cuss, putting the three books on the table. "*Now we shall learn something.*" The Vicar stood with his hands on the table.

"*Diary,*" repeated Cuss, sitting down, putting two volumes to support the third, and opening it. "*H'm - no name on the front page. Bother! - code. And figures.*"

The Vicar came round to look over his shoulder.

Cuss turned the pages over with a face suddenly disappointed. "*I'm - dear me! It's all code, Bunting.*"

"*There are no diagrams?*" asked Mr. Bunting. "*No illustrations throwing light -*"

"*See for yourself,*" said Mr. Cuss. "*Some of it's mathematical and some of it's Russian or some such language (to judge by the letters), and some of it's Greek. Now the Greek I thought you -*"

"*Of course,*" said Mr. Bunting, taking out and wiping his glasses and feeling suddenly very uncomfortable, - for he had no Greek left in his mind worth talking about; "*yes - the Greek, of course, may give a clue.*"

"*I'll find you a place.*"

"*I'd rather glance through the volumes first,*" said Mr. Bunting, still wiping. "*A general impression first, Cuss, and then, you know, we can go looking for clues.*"

He coughed, put on his glasses, arranged them carefully, coughed again, and wished something would happen to avoid the seemingly inevitable exposure. Then he took the volume Cuss handed him in a leisurely manner. And then something did happen.

The door opened suddenly.

Both gentlemen jumped violently, looked around, and were relieved to see a red face beneath a furry silk hat. "*Bar?*" asked the face, and stood staring.

"*No,*" said both gentlemen at once.

"*Over the other side, my man,*" said Mr. Bunting. And "*Please shut that door,*" said Mr. Cuss irritably.

"*All right,*" said the intruder, as it seemed, in a low voice curiously different from the dryness of its first enquiry. "*Right you are,*" said the intruder in the former voice. "*Stand clear!*" and he vanished and closed the door.

"*A sailor, I should imagine,*" said Mr. Bunting. "*Amusing fellows they are. Stand clear! indeed. A nautical term referring to his getting back out of the room, I suppose.*"

"*I guess so,*" said Cuss. "*My nerves are all loose to-day. It quite made me jump - the door opening like that.*"

Mr. Bunting smiled as if he had not jumped. "*And now,*" he said with a sigh, "*these books.*"

"*One minute,*" said Cuss, and went and locked the door. "*Now I think we are safe from interruption.*"

Someone sniffed as he did so.

"*One thing is indisputable,*" said Bunting, drawing up a chair next to that of Cuss. "*There certainly have been very strange things happen in Iping during the last few days - very strange. I cannot of course believe in this absurd invisibility story -*"

"*It's incredible,*" said Cuss, "*- incredible. But the fact remains that I saw - I certainly saw right down his sleeve -*"

"*But did you - are you sure? Suppose a mirror, for instance, - hallucinations are so easily produced. I don't know if you have ever seen a really good magician -*"

"*I won't argue again,*" said Cuss. "*We've discussed that, Bunting. And just now there's these books - Ah! here's some of what I imagine to be Greek! Greek letters certainly.*"

He pointed to the middle of the page. Mr. Bunting blushed slightly and brought his face nearer, apparently finding some difficulty with his glasses. Suddenly he became aware of a strange feeling at the back of his neck. He tried to raise his head, and encountered an immovable resistance. The feeling was a curious pressure, the grip of a heavy, firm hand, and it pushed his chin irresistibly to the table. "*Don't move, little men,*" whispered a voice, "*or I'll hit you both!*" He looked into the face of Cuss, close to his own, and each saw a horrified reflection of his own sickly astonishment.

"*I'm sorry to treat you roughly,*" said the Voice, "*but it's unavoidable.*"

"Since when did you learn to look into an investigator's private memoranda?" said the Voice; and two chairs struck the table simultaneously and two sets of teeth rattled.

"Since when did you learn to invade the private rooms of a man in misfortune?" and the concussion was repeated.

"Where have they put my clothes?"

"Listen," said the Voice. *"The windows are closed and I've taken the key out of the door. I am a fairly strong man, and I have the poker - besides being invisible. There's not the slightest doubt that I could kill you both and get away quite easily if I wanted to - do you understand? Very well. If I let you go will you promise not to try any nonsense and do what I tell you?"*

The Vicar and the Doctor looked at one another, and the Doctor pulled a face. "Yes," said Mr. Bunting, and the Doctor repeated it. Then the pressure on the necks relaxed, and the Doctor and the Vicar sat up, both very red in the face and wriggling their heads.

"Please keep sitting where you are," said the Invisible Man. *"Here's the poker, you see."*

"When I came into this room," continued the Invisible Man, after presenting the poker to the tip of the nose of each of his visitors, *"I did not expect to find it occupied, and I expected to find, in addition to my books of memoranda, a set of clothing. Where is it? No, - don't get up. I can see it's gone. Now, just at present, though the days are quite warm enough for an invisible man to run about naked, the evenings are chilly. I want clothing - and other accommodation; and I must also have those three books."*

Chapter 12

The Invisible Man Loses His Temper

It is unavoidable that at this point the narrative should be interrupted again, for a certain very painful reason that will soon be apparent. While these things were going on in the parlour, and while Mr. Huxter was watching Mr. Marvel smoking his pipe against the gate, not a dozen yards away were Mr. Hall and Teddy Henfrey discussing in a state of cloudy puzzlement the one topic.

Suddenly there came a violent thud against the door of the parlour, a sharp cry, and then - silence.

"*Hul - lo!*" said Teddy Henfrey.

"*Hul - lo!*" from the bar.

Mr. Hall took things in slowly but surely. "*That isn't right,*" he said, and came round from behind the bar towards the parlour door.

He and Teddy approached the door together, with intent faces. Their eyes considered. "*Something's wrong,*" said Hall, and Henfrey nodded agreement. The smell of an unpleasant chemical odour met them, and there was a sound of conversation, very rapid and subdued.

"*Are you all right there?*" asked Hall, knocking.

The muttered conversation stopped abruptly, for a moment silence, then the conversation was resumed in hissing whispers, then a sharp cry of "*No! no, you don't!*" There came a sudden motion and the overturning of a chair, a brief struggle. Silence again.

"*What on earth?*" exclaimed Henfrey to himself.

"*Are you all right there?*" asked Mr. Hall sharply, again.

The Vicar's voice answered with a curious jerking intonation: "*Quite ri - ight. Please don't - interrupt.*"

"*Odd!*" said Mr. Henfrey.

"*Odd!*" said Mr. Hall.

"*Says, 'Don't interrupt,'*" said Henfrey.

"*I heard him,*" said Hall.

"*And a sniff,*" said Henfrey.

They remained listening. The conversation was rapid and subdued. "*I can't,*" said Mr. Bunting, his voice rising; "*I tell you, sir, I will not.*"

"*What was that?*" asked Henfrey.

"*Says he won't,*" said Hall. "*Wasn't speaking to us, was he?*"

"*Disgraceful!*" said Mr. Bunting, within.

"*Disgraceful,*" said Mr. Henfrey. "*I heard it - distinctly.*"

"*Who's that speaking now?*" asked Henfrey.

"*Mr. Cuss, I suppose,*" said Hall. "*Can you hear - anything?*"

Silence. The sounds within indistinct and perplexing.

"*Sounds like throwing the table-cloth about,*" said Hall.

Mrs. Hall appeared behind the bar. Hall made gestures of silence and invitation. This roused Mrs. Hall's wifely opposition. "*What are you listening there for, Hall?*" she asked. "*Haven't you got anything better to do - busy day like this?*"

Hall tried to convey everything by grimaces and mime, but Mrs. Hall was not to be convinced. She raised her voice. So Hall and Henfrey, rather humiliated, tip-toed back to the bar, gesticulating to explain to her.

At first she refused to see anything in what they had heard at all. Then she insisted on Hall keeping silence, while Henfrey told her his story. She was inclined to think the whole business nonsense - perhaps they were just moving the furniture about. "*I heard them say 'disgraceful', I did,*" said Hall.

"*I heard that, Mrs Hall,*" said Henfrey.

"*Probably -*" began Mrs. Hall.

"*Hsh!*" said Mr. Teddy Henfrey. "*Didn't I hear the window?*"

"*What window?*" asked Mrs. Hall.

"*Parlour window,*" said Henfrey.

Every one stood listening intently. Mrs. Hall's eyes, directed straight before her, saw without seeing the brilliant rectangle of the inn door, the road white and vivid, and Huxter's shop-front blistering in the June sun. Abruptly Huxter's door opened and Huxter

appeared, eyes staring with excitement, arms gesticulating. *"Yap!"* cried Huxter. *"Stop thief!"* and he ran obliquely across the rectangle towards the yard gates, and vanished.

Simultaneously came a tumult from the parlour, and a sound of windows being closed.

Hall, Henfrey, and the human contents of the bar rushed out at once into the street. They saw some one rush round the corner towards the down road, and Mr. Huxter executing a complicated jump in the air that ended on his face and shoulder. Down the street people were standing astonished or running towards them.

Mr. Huxter was stunned. Henfrey stopped to discover this, but Hall and the two labourers from the bar rushed at once to the corner, shouting incoherent things, and saw Mr. Marvel vanishing round the corner of the church wall. They appear to have come to the impossible conclusion that this was the Invisible Man suddenly become visible, and set off at once along the lane in pursuit. But Hall had hardly run a dozen yards before he gave a loud shout of astonishment and went flying headlong sideways, clutching one of the labourers and bringing him to the ground. He had been charged just as one charges a man at football. The second labourer came round in a circle, stared, and believing that Hall had fallen over by himself, turned to resume the pursuit, only to be tripped by the ankle just as Huxter had been. Then, as the first labourer struggled to his feet, he was kicked sideways by a blow that might have felled an ox.

As he went down, the rush from the direction of the village green came round the corner. The first to appear was the proprietor of the cocoanut shy, a strong man in a blue jersey. He was astonished to see the lane empty save for three men lying absurdly on the ground. And then something happened to his back foot, and he went headlong and rolled sideways just in time to hit the feet of his brother and partner, following headlong. The two were then kicked, knelt on, fallen over, and cursed by quite a number of over-hasty people.

Now when Hall and Henfrey and the labourers ran out of the house, Mrs. Hall, who had been disciplined by years of experience, remained in the bar next the till. And suddenly the parlour door was opened, and Mr. Cuss appeared, and without glancing at her rushed at once down the steps towards the corner. *"Hold him!"* he cried. *"Don't let him drop that packet! You can see him so long as he holds the packet."* He knew nothing of the existence of Marvel. For the Invisible Man had handed over the books and packet in the yard. The face of Mr. Cuss was angry and resolute, but his clothes were strange, a sort of white skirt that could only have gone unnoticed in Greece. *"Hold him!"* he shouted. *"He's got my trousers! And all of the Vicar's clothes!"*

"Look after him in a minute!" he cried to Henfrey as he passed the prostrate Huxter, and coming round the corner to join the tumult, was promptly knocked off his feet into an indecorous sprawl. Somebody in full flight trod heavily on his finger. He shouted, struggled to regain his feet, was knocked against and thrown on all fours again, and became aware that he was involved not in a capture, but a retreat. Every one was running back to the village. He got up again and was hit severely behind the ear. He staggered and set off back to the Coach and Horses immediately, jumping over the abandoned Huxter, who was now sitting up, on his way.

Behind him as he was halfway up the inn steps he heard a sudden shout of rage, rising sharply out of the confusion of cries, and a sounding smack in some one's face. He recognised the voice as that of the Invisible Man, and the note was that of a man suddenly infuriated by a painful blow.

In another moment Mr. Cuss was back in the parlour. *"He's coming back, Bunting!"* he said, rushing in. *"Save yourself! He's gone mad!"*

Mr. Bunting was standing in the window trying to dress himself in the rug and a West Surrey Gazette. *"Who's coming?"* he said, so surprised that his costume just escaped disintegration.

"Invisible Man," said Cuss, and rushed to the window. *"We'd better get out of here! He's fighting mad! Mad!"*

In another moment he was out in the yard.

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Bunting, hesitating between two horrible alternatives. He heard a frightful struggle in the passage of the inn, and his decision was made. He climbed out of the window, adjusted his costume hastily, and ran away up the village as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

From the moment when the Invisible Man screamed with rage and Mr. Bunting made his memorable flight up the village, it became impossible to give a consecutive account of affairs in Iping. Possibly the Invisible Man's original intention was simply to cover Marvel's retreat with the clothes and books. But his temper, at no time very good, seems to have gone completely out of control, and from then on he set to hitting and overthrowing, for the mere satisfaction of hurting.

You must figure the street full of running figures, of doors slamming and fights for hiding-places. You must picture the tumult suddenly running into the unstable equilibrium of old Fletcher's planks and two chairs, - with cataclysmal results. You must picture an appalled couple caught unhappily in a swing. And then the whole tumultuous rush has passed and the Iping streets with its decorations and flags is deserted except for the still raging Unseen, and littered with cocoanuts, overthrown canvas screens, and the scattered stock of a sweet stall. Everywhere there is a sound of closing shutters and bolts, and the only visible humanity is an occasional eye under a raised eyebrow in the corner of a window.

The Invisible Man amused himself for a little while by breaking all the windows in the Coach and Horses, and then he threw a street lamp through the parlour window of Mrs. Gribble. It must have been he who cut the telegraph wire to Adderdean just beyond Higgins' cottage on the Adderdean road. And after that, as his peculiar qualities allowed, he passed out of human perceptions altogether, and he was neither heard, seen, nor felt in Iping any more. He vanished absolutely.

But it was the best part of two hours before any human being ventured out again into the desolation of Iping Street.

Chapter 13

Mr. Marvel Discusses His Resignation

When night was falling and lping was just beginning to peep timidly out again at the wreckage of its Bank Holiday, a short, thick-set man in a shabby silk hat was marching painfully through the twilight behind the beechwoods on the road to Bramblehurst. He carried three books tied together by some sort of ornamental elastic, and a packet wrapped in a blue tablecloth. His reddish face expressed consternation and fatigue; he appeared to be in a spasmodic sort of hurry. He was accompanied by a Voice other than his own, and from time to time he winced under the touch of unseen hands.

"If you escape again," said the Voice; "if you attempt to escape again - "

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel. *"My shoulder's a mass of bruises as it is."*

" - on my honour," said the Voice, *"I will kill you."*

"I didn't try to escape," said Marvel, in a voice that was not far from tears. *"I swear I didn't. I didn't know the blessed turning, that was all! How the devil was I to know the blessed turning? As it is, I've been knocked about - "*

"You'll get knocked about a great deal more if you're not careful," said the Voice, and Mr. Marvel abruptly became silent. He blew out his cheeks, and his eyes were eloquent of despair.

"It's bad enough to let these peasants explode my little secret, without your running off with my books. It's lucky for some of them they ran away when they did! Here am I - No one knew I was invisible! And now what am I to do?"

"What am I to do?" asked Marvel to himself.

"It will be in the papers! Everybody will be looking for me; everyone on their guard - " The Voice broke off into vivid curses and ceased.

The despair of Mr. Marvel's face deepened, and his pace grew slower.

"Go on!" said the Voice.

Mr. Marvel's face assumed a greyish tint between the redder patches.

"Don't drop those books, stupid," said the Voice, sharply - overtaking him.

"The fact is," said the Voice, *"I shall have to make use of you. You're a poor tool, but I must."*

"I'm a miserable tool," said Marvel.

"You are," said the Voice.

"I'm the worst possible tool you could have," said Marvel.

"I'm not strong," he said after a discouraging silence.

"I'm not over strong," he repeated.

"No?"

"And my heart's weak. That little business - I pulled it through, of course - but bless you! I could have dropped."

"Well?"

"I haven't the nerve and strength for the sort of thing you want."

"I'll stimulate you."

"I wish you wouldn't. I wouldn't like to mess up your plans, you know. But I might, - out of sheer fear and misery."

"You'd better not," said the Voice, with quiet emphasis.

"I wish I was dead," said Marvel.

"It isn't fair," he said; *"you must admit - It seems to me I've a perfect right - "*

"Get on!" said the Voice.

Mr. Marvel quickened his pace, and for a time they went in silence again.

"It's very hard," said Mr. Marvel.

This was quite ineffectual. He tried another line.

"What do I get out of it?" he began again in a tone of unendurable wrong.

"Oh! shut up!" said the Voice, with sudden amazing vigour. *"I'll see to you all right. You do what you're told. You'll do it all right. You're a fool and all that, but you'll do - "*

"I tell you, sir, I'm not the man for it. Respectfully - but it is so - "

"If you don't shut up I shall twist your wrist again," said the Invisible Man. *"I want to think."*

Presently two rectangles of yellow light appeared through the trees, and the square tower of a church appeared in the darkness. *"I shall keep my hand on your shoulder,"* said the Voice, *"all through the village. Go straight through and try no foolery. It will be the worse for you if you do."*

"I know that," sighed Mr. Marvel, *"I know all that."*

The unhappy-looking figure in the obsolete silk hat passed up the street of the little village with his burdens, and vanished into the gathering darkness beyond the lights of the windows.

Chapter 14

At Port Stowe

Ten o'clock the next morning found Mr. Marvel, unshaven, dirty, and travel-stained, sitting with the books beside him and his hands deep in his pockets, looking very weary, nervous, and uncomfortable, and inflating his cheeks at frequent intervals, on the bench outside a little inn on the outskirts of Port Stowe. Beside him were the books, but now they were tied with string. The bundle had been abandoned in the pinewoods beyond Bramblehurst, in accordance with a change in the plans of the Invisible Man. Mr. Marvel sat on the bench, and although no one took the slightest notice of him, his agitation remained at fever heat. His hands would go over and again to his various pockets with a curious nervous fumbling.

When he had been sitting for the best part of an hour, however, an elderly mariner, carrying a newspaper, came out of the inn and sat down beside him. *"Pleasant day,"* said the mariner.

Mr. Marvel glanced about him with something very like terror. *"Very,"* he said.

"Seasonable weather for the time of year," said the mariner, taking no denial.

"Quite," said Mr. Marvel.

The mariner produced a toothpick, and was occupied by this for some minutes. His eyes meanwhile were at liberty to examine Mr. Marvel's dusty figure and the books beside him. As he had approached Mr. Marvel he had heard a sound like the dropping of coins into a pocket. He was struck by the contrast of Mr. Marvel's appearance with this suggestion of opulence. So his mind wandered back again to a topic that had taken a curiously firm hold of his imagination.

"Books?" he said suddenly, noisily finishing with the toothpick.

Mr. Marvel jumped and looked at them. *"Oh, yes,"* he said. *"Yes, they're books."*

"There's some extra-ordinary things in books," said the mariner.

"I believe you," said Mr. Marvel.

"And some extra-ordinary things out of them," said the mariner.

"Also true," said Mr. Marvel. He looked at his interlocutor, and then glanced about him.

"There's some extra-ordinary things in newspapers, for example," said the mariner.

"There are."

"In this newspaper," said the mariner.

"Ah!" said Mr. Marvel.

"There's a story," said the mariner, fixing Mr. Marvel with an eye that was firm and deliberate; *"there's a story about an Invisible Man, for instance."*

Mr. Marvel pulled his mouth to one side and scratched his cheek and felt his ears glowing. *"What will they be writing next?"* he asked faintly. *"Austria, or America?"*

"Neither," said the mariner. *"Here!"*

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel, starting.

"When I say here," said the mariner, to Mr. Marvel's intense relief, *"I don't of course mean here in this place, I mean hereabouts."*

"An Invisible Man!" said Mr. Marvel. *"And what's he been up to?"*

"Everything," said the mariner, controlling Marvel with his eye, and then amplifying: *"Every Blessed Thing."*

"I haven't seen a paper for four days," said Marvel.

"Iping's the place he started at," said the mariner.

"In-deed!" said Mr. Marvel.

"He started there. And where he came from, nobody seems to know. Here it is: Pe Culiar Story from Iping. And it says in this paper that the evidence is extra-ordinary strong - extra-ordinary."

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel.

"But then, it's a extra-ordinary story. A clergyman and a doctor were witnesses, - saw him all right - or at least, didn't see him. He was staying, it says, at the Coach and Horses, and no one seems to have been aware of his misfortune, it says, aware of his misfortune, until in an Alteration in the inn, it says, his bandages on his head were torn off. It was then observed that his head was invisible. Attempts were At Once made to secure him, but casting off his clothes, it says, he succeeded in escaping, but not until after a desperate struggle, In Which he had inflicted serious injuries, it says, on our worthy and able constable, Mr. J.A. Jaffers. Pretty straight story, eh? Names and everything."

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel, looking nervously about him, trying to count the money in his pockets by his unaided sense of touch, and

full of a strange and novel idea. *"It sounds most astonishing."*

"Doesn't it? Extra-ordinary, I call it. Never heard of Invisible Men before, I haven't, but nowadays one hears such a lot of extra-ordinary things - that - "

"That all he did?" asked Marvel, trying to seem at his ease.

"It's enough, isn't it?" said the mariner.

"Didn't go Back by any chance?" asked Marvel. *"Just escaped and that's all, eh?"*

"All!" said the mariner. *"Why! - isn't it enough?"*

"Quite enough," said Marvel.

"I should think it was enough," said the mariner. *"I should think it was enough."*

"He didn't have any friends - it doesn't say he had any friends, does it?" asked Mr. Marvel, anxious.

"Isn't one of a sort enough for you?" asked the mariner. *"No, thank Heaven, as one might say, he didn't."*

He nodded his head slowly. *"It makes me quite uncomfortable, the thought of that chap running about the country! He is at present At Large, and from certain evidence it is supposed that he has taken - took, I suppose they mean - the road to Port Stowe. You see we're right in it! None of your American wonders, this time. And just think of the things he might do! Where'd you be, if he drank too much, and went for you? Suppose he wants to rob - who can stop him? He can trespass, he can burgle, he could walk through a cordon of policemen as easy as me or you could give the slip to a blind man! Easier! For these here blind chaps hear very well, I'm told. And wherever there was liquor he fancied - "*

"He's got a tremenjous advantage, certainly," said Marvel. *"And - well."*

"You're right," said the mariner. *"He has."*

All this time Mr. Marvel had been glancing about him intently, listening for faint footsteps, trying to detect imperceptible movements. He seemed on the point of some great resolution. He coughed behind his hand.

He looked about him again, listened, bent towards the mariner, and lowered his voice: *"The fact of it is - I happen - to know just a thing or two about this Invisible Man. From private sources."*

"Oh!" said the mariner, interested. *"You?"*

"Yes," said Mr. Marvel. *"Me."*

"Indeed!" said the mariner. *"And may I ask - "*

"You'll be astonished," said Mr. Marvel behind his hand. *"It's tremendous."*

"Indeed!" said the mariner.

"The fact is," began Mr. Marvel eagerly in a confidential undertone. Suddenly his expression changed marvellously. *"Ow!"* he said. He rose rigidly in his seat. His face was eloquent of physical suffering. *"Wow!"* he said.

"What's up?" said the mariner, concerned.

"Toothache," said Mr. Marvel, and put his hand to his ear. He picked up his books. *"I must be getting on, I think,"* he said. He moved in a strange way along the seat away from his interlocutor. *"But you were just going to tell me about this Invisible Man!"* protested the mariner. Mr. Marvel seemed to consult with himself. *"Hoax,"* said a voice. *"It's a hoax,"* said Mr. Marvel.

"But it's in the paper," said the mariner.

"Hoax all the same," said Marvel. *"I know the chap that started the lie. There's no Invisible Man whatsoever - Blimey."*

"But how about this paper? Doyou mean to say - ?"

"Not a word of it," said Marvel, firmly.

The mariner stared, paper in hand. Mr. Marvel jerkily turned round. *"Wait a bit,"* said the mariner, rising and speaking slowly. *"Do you mean to say - ?"*

"I do," said Mr. Marvel.

"Then why did you let me go on and tell you all this blasted stuff, then? What do you mean by letting a man make a fool of himself like that for? Eh?"

Mr. Marvel blew out his cheeks. The mariner was suddenly very red indeed; he clenched his hands. *"I been talking here for ten minutes,"* he said; *"and you, you little pot-bellied, leathery-faced son of an old boot, couldn't have the elementary manners - "*

"Don't you insult me," said Mr. Marvel.

"Insult! I'm a jolly good mind - "

"Come on," said a voice, and Mr. Marvel was suddenly turned about and started marching off in a curious spasmodic manner. *"You'd better move on,"* said the mariner. *"Who's moving on?"* said Mr. Marvel. He was receding obliquely with a curious

hurrying gait, with occasional violent jerks forward. Some way along the road he began a muttered monologue, protests and recriminations.

"Silly devil!" said the mariner, legs wide apart, hands on his hips, watching the receding figure. *"I'll show you, you silly ass, - hoaxing me! It's here - in the paper!"*

Mr. Marvel replied incoherently and, receding, was hidden by a bend in the road, but the mariner still stood magnificent in the middle of the road, until the approach of a butcher's cart made him move. Then he turned himself towards Port Stowe. *"Full of extra-ordinary asses,"* he said softly to himself. *"Just to take me down a bit - that was his silly game - It's in the paper!"*

And there was another extraordinary thing he was soon to hear, that had happened quite close to him. And that was a vision of a "fist full of money" (no less) travelling without visible help, along by the wall at the corner of St. Michael's Lane. A brother mariner had seen this wonderful sight that very morning. He had snatched at the money and had been knocked headlong, and when he had got to his feet the butterfly money had vanished. Our mariner was in the mood to believe anything, he declared, but that was a bit too far. Afterwards, however, he began to think things over.

The story of the flying money was true. And all about that neighbourhood, even from the serious London and Country Banking Company, from the tills of shops and inns - doors standing that sunny weather entirely open - money had been quietly and dexterously making off that day in handfuls and packets, floating quietly along by walls and shady places, dodging quickly from the approaching eyes of men. And it had, though no man had traced it, invariably ended its mysterious flight in the pocket of that agitated gentleman in the obsolete silk hat, sitting outside the little inn on the outskirts of Port Stowe.

Chapter 15

The Man Who Was Running

In the early evening Doctor Kemp was sitting in his study on the hill overlooking Burdock. It was a pleasant little room, with three windows, north, west, and south, and bookshelves crowded with books and scientific publications, and a broad writing-table, and, under the north window, a microscope, glass slips, minute instruments, some cultures, and scattered bottles of reagents. Doctor Kemp's lamp was lit, although the sky was still bright with the sunset light, and his blinds were up because there was no possibility of peering outsiders to require them pulled down. Doctor Kemp was a tall and slender young man, with flaxen hair and a moustache almost white, and the work he was doing would earn him, he hoped, the fellowship of the Royal Society, so highly did he think of it.

And his eye wandering from his work caught the sunset blazing at the back of the hill that is over against his own. For a minute perhaps he sat, pen in mouth, admiring the rich golden colour above the crest, and then his attention was attracted by the little figure of a man, inky black, running over the hill-top towards him. He was a shortish little man, and he wore a high hat, and he was running so fast that his legs seemed to twinkled.

"Another of those fools," said Doctor Kemp. *"Like that ass who ran into me this morning round a corner, with his 'Invisible Man's coming, sir! I can't imagine what possesses people. One might think we were in the thirteenth century."*

He got up, went to the window, and stared at the dusky hillside and the dark little figure tearing down it. *"He seems in an incredible hurry,"* said Doctor Kemp, *"but he doesn't seem to be getting on. If his pockets were full of lead, he couldn't run heavier."*

In another moment the higher of the villas that went up the hill from Burdock had hidden the running figure. He was visible again for a moment, and again, and then again, three times between the three detached houses that came next, and then the terrace hid him.

"Asses!" said Doctor Kemp, swinging round on his heel and walking back to his writing-table.

But those who saw the fugitive nearer, and perceived the abject terror on his perspiring face, being themselves in the open roadway, did not share in the doctor's contempt. By the man ran, and as he ran he chinked like a well-filled purse that is shaken about. He looked neither to the right nor the left, but his dilated eyes stared straight downhill to where the lamps were being lit, and the people were crowded in the street. And his ill-shaped mouth fell open, and a foam lay on his lips, and his breath came hoarse and noisy. Everyone he passed stopped and began staring up the road and down, and interrogating one another with an feeling of discomfort for the reason of his haste.

And then presently, far up the hill, a dog playing in the road yelped and ran under a gate, and as they still wondered, something - a wind - a pad, pad, pad, - a sound like a panting breathing, - rushed by.

People screamed. People jumped off the pavement. It passed in shouts, it passed by instinct down the hill. They were shouting in the street before Marvel was halfway there. They were rushing into houses and slamming the doors behind them, with the news. He heard it and made one last desperate sprint. Fear came striding by, rushed ahead of him, and in a moment had seized the town.

"The Invisible Man is coming! The Invisible Man."

Chapter 16

In the Jolly Cricketers

The Jolly Cricketers is just at the bottom of the hill, where the tram-lines begin. The barman leant his fat red arms on the counter and talked of horses with an anaemic cabman, while a black-bearded man in grey ate biscuit and cheese, drank Burton, and conversed in American with a policeman off duty.

"*What's the shouting about?*" said the anaemic cabman going off at a tangent, trying to see up the hill over the dirty yellow blind in the low window of the inn. Somebody ran by outside. "*Fire, perhaps,*" said the barman.

Footsteps approached, running heavily, the door was pushed open violently, and Marvel, weeping and untidy, his hat gone, the neck of his coat torn open, rushed in, made a convulsive turn, and attempted to shut the door. It was held half open by a strap.

"*Coming!*" he shouted, his voice shrieking with terror. "*He's coming. The Invisible Man! After me! For God's sake! Help! Help! Help!*"

"*Shut the doors,*" said the policeman. "*Who's coming? What's the row?*" He went to the door, released the strap, and it slammed. The American closed the other door.

"*Let me go inside,*" said Marvel, staggering and weeping, but still clutching the books. "*Let me go inside. Lock me in - somewhere. I tell you he's after me. I gave him the slip. He said he'd kill me and he will.*"

"*You're safe,*" said the man with the black beard. "*The door's shut. What's it all about?*"

"*Let me go inside,*" said Marvel, and shrieked aloud as a blow suddenly made the locked door shake and was followed by a hurried knocking and a shouting outside. "*Hullo,*" cried the policeman, "*who's there?*" Mr. Marvel began to make frantic dives at panels that looked like doors. "*He'll kill me - he's got a knife or something. For God's sake!*"

"*Here you are,*" said the barman. "*Come in here.*" And he held up the flap of the bar.

Mr. Marvel rushed behind the bar as the knocking outside was repeated. "*Don't open the door,*" he screamed. "*Please don't open the door. Where shall I hide?*"

"*This, this Invisible Man, then?*" asked the man with the black beard, with one hand behind him. "*I guess it's about time we saw him.*"

The window of the inn was suddenly smashed in, and there was a screaming and running to and fro in the street. The policeman had been standing on the sofa staring out, trying to see who was at the door. He got down with raised eyebrows. "*It's that,*" he said. The barman stood in front of the bar-parlour door which was now locked on Mr. Marvel, stared at the smashed window and came round to the two other men.

Everything was suddenly quiet. "*I wish I had my truncheon,*" said the policeman, going irresolutely to the door. "*Once we open, in he comes. There's no stopping him.*"

"*Don't you be in too much hurry about that door,*" said the anaemic cabman, anxiously.

"*Unlock the door,*" said the man with the black beard, "*and if he comes -*" He showed a revolver in his hand.

"*That won't do,*" said the policeman; "*that's murder.*"

"*I know what country I'm in,*" said the man with the beard. "*I'm going to shoot at his legs. Unlock the door.*"

"*Not with that thing going off behind me,*" said the barman, trying to see over the blind.

"*Very well,*" said the man with the black beard, and stooping down, revolver ready, unlocked it himself. Barman, cabman, and police-man turned round.

"*Come in,*" said the bearded man in an undertone, standing back and facing the unlocked doors with his pistol behind him. No one came in, the door remained closed. Five minutes afterwards when a second cabman pushed his head in cautiously, they were still waiting, and an anxious face peered out of the bar-parlour and begged information. "*Are all the doors of the house shut?*" asked Marvel. "*He's going round - prowling round. He's as clever as the devil.*"

"*Good Lord!*" said the barman. "*There's the back! Just watch those doors! I say! -*" He looked about him helplessly. The bar-parlour door slammed and they heard the key turn. "*There's the yard door and the private door. The yard door -*"

He rushed out of the bar.

In a minute he reappeared with a carving-knife in his hand. "*The yard door was open!*" he said, and his fat bottom lip dropped.

"*He may be in the house now!*" said the first cabman.

"*He's not in the kitchen,*" said the barman. "*There are two women there, and I've stabbed every inch of it with this knife. And they don't think he's come in. They haven't noticed -*"

"*Have you locked it?*" asked the first cabman.

"*Of course.*" said the barman.

The man with the beard replaced his revolver. And even as he did so the flap of the bar was shut down and the bolt clicked, and

then with a tremendous thud the lock of the door snapped and the bar- parlour door burst open. They heard Marvel squeal like a caught pig, and immediately they were climbing over the bar to his rescue. The bearded man's revolver cracked and the mirror at the back of the parlour was starred brightly and came smashing and tinkling down.

As the barman entered the room he saw Marvel, curiously crumpled up and struggling against the door that led to the yard and kitchen. The door flew open while the barman hesitated, and Marvel was dragged into the kitchen. There was a scream and a clatter of pans. Marvel, head down, and pulling back obstinately, was forced to the kitchen door, and the bolts were opened.

Then the policeman, who had been trying to pass the barman, rushed in, followed by one of the cabmen, gripped the wrist of the invisible hand that had Marvel, was hit in the face and went flying back. The door opened, and Marvel made a frantic effort to get behind it. Then the cabman clutched something. *"I've got him,"* said the cabman. The barman's red hands came clawing at the unseen. *"Here he is!"* said the barman.

Mr. Marvel, released, suddenly dropped to the ground and made an attempt to crawl behind the legs of the fighting men. The struggle went round the edge of the door. The voice of the Invisible Man was heard for the first time, yelling out sharply, as the policeman trod on his foot. Then he cried out passionately and his fists flew round like flails. The cabman suddenly shouted and fell to his knees, kicked under the diaphragm. The door into the bar-parlour from the kitchen slammed and covered Mr. Marvel's retreat. The men in the kitchen found themselves clutching at and struggling with empty air.

"Where's he gone?" cried the man with the beard. *"Out?"*

"This way," said the policeman, stepping into the yard and stopping.

A piece of tile whizzed by his head and smashed among the plates on the kitchen table.

"I'll show him," shouted the man with the black beard, and suddenly a steel barrel shone over the policeman's shoulder, and five bullets had followed one another into the twilight where the missile had come from. As he fired, the man with the beard moved his hand in a horizontal curve, so that his shots radiated out into the narrow yard like spokes from a wheel.

A silence followed. *"Five cartridges,"* said the man with the black beard. *"That's the best of all. Four aces and the joker. Get a lantern, some one, and come and feel about for his body."*

Chapter 17

Doctor Kemp's Visitor

Doctor Kemp had continued writing in his study until the shots disturbed him. Crack, crack, crack, they came one after the other.

"Hello!" said Doctor Kemp, putting his pen into his mouth again and listening. *"Who's letting off revolvers in Burdock? What are the asses at now?"*

He went to the south window, threw it open, and leaning out stared down on the network of windows, gas-lamps and shops with black patches of roof and yard that made up the town at night. *"Looks like a crowd down the hill,"* he said, *"by the Cricketers,"* and remained watching. Then his eyes wandered over the town to far away where the ships' lights shone, and the pier glowed, a little illuminated pavilion like a gem of yellow light. The moon in its first quarter hung over the western hill, and the stars were clear and almost tropically bright.

After five minutes, during which his mind had travelled into a remote speculation of social conditions of the future, and lost itself at last over the time dimension, Doctor Kemp roused himself with a sigh, pulled down the window again, and returned to his writing-desk.

It must have been about an hour after this that the front-door bell rang. He had been writing slackly and with intervals of abstraction, since the shots. He sat listening. He heard the servant answer the door, and waited for her feet on the staircase, but she did not come. *"Wonder what that was,"* said Doctor Kemp.

He tried to resume his work, failed, got up, went downstairs from his study to the landing, rang, and called over the balustrade to the housemaid as she appeared in the hall below. *"Was that a letter?"* he asked.

"Only a runaway ring, sir," she answered.

"I'm restless to-night," he said to himself. He went back to his study, and this time attacked his work resolutely. In a little while he was hard at work again, and the only sounds in the room were the ticking of the clock and the subdued sound of his pen, hurrying in the very centre of the circle of light his lamp-shade threw on his table.

It was two o'clock before Doctor Kemp had finished his work for the night. He got up, yawned, and went downstairs to bed. He had already removed his coat and waist-coat, when he noticed that he was thirsty. He took a candle and went down to the dining-room in search of a siphon and whisky.

Doctor Kemp's scientific pursuits had made him a very observant man, and as he recrossed the hall, he noticed a dark spot on the floor near the mat at the foot of the stairs. He went on upstairs, and then it suddenly occurred to him to ask himself what the spot on the floor might be. Apparently some subconscious element was at work. At any rate, he turned, went back to the hall, put down the siphon and whisky, and bending down, touched the spot. Without any great surprise he found it had the stickiness and colour of drying blood.

He picked up his drink again, and returned upstairs, looking about him and trying to explain the blood-spot. On the landing he saw something and stopped astonished. The door-handle of his own room was blood-stained.

He looked at his own hand. It was quite clean, and then he remembered that the door of his room had been open when he came down from his study, and that consequently he had not touched the handle at all. He went straight into his room, his face quite calm - perhaps a little more resolute than usual. His glance, wandering inquisitively, fell on the bed. On the eiderdown was a patch of blood, and the sheet had been torn. He had not noticed this before because he had walked straight to the dressing-table. On the further side the bed-clothes were depressed as if some one had been recently sitting there.

Then he had an odd impression that he had heard a loud voice say, *"Good Heavens! - Kemp!"* But Doctor Kemp was no believer in Voices.

He stood staring at the tumbled sheets. Was that really a voice? He looked about again, but noticed nothing more than the disordered and blood-stained bed. Then he distinctly heard a movement across the room, near the wash-basin. All men, however highly educated, retain some superstitious ideas. The feeling that is called "eerie" came upon him. He closed the door of the room, came forward to the dressing-table, and put down his drink. Suddenly, with a jump, he perceived a blood-stained bandage hanging in mid-air, between him and the wash-basin.

He stared at this in amazement. It was an empty bandage, a bandage properly tied but quite empty. He would have advanced to grasp it, but a touch stopped him, and a voice speaking quite close to him.

"Kemp!" said the Voice.

"Eh?" said Kemp, with his mouth open.

"Keep your nerve," said the Voice. *"I'm an Invisible Man."*

Kemp made no answer for a while, simply stared at the bandage. *"Invisible Man,"* he said.

"I'm an Invisible Man," repeated the Voice.

The story he had been ridiculing only that morning rushed through Kemp's brain. He does not appear to have been either very much frightened or very greatly surprised at the moment. Realisation came later.

"I thought it was all a lie," he said. The thought uppermost in his mind was the reiterated arguments of the morning. *"Have you a bandage on?"* he asked.

"Yes," said the Invisible Man.

"Oh!" said Kemp, and then roused himself. "I say!" he said. "But this is nonsense. It's some trick." He stepped forward suddenly, and his hand, extended towards the bandage, met invisible fingers.

He recoiled at the touch and his colour changed.

"Keep steady, Kemp, for God's sake! I want help badly. Stop!"

The hand gripped his arm. He hit at it.

"Kemp!" cried the Voice. "Kemp! Keep steady!" and the grip tightened.

A frantic desire to free himself took possession of Kemp. The hand of the bandaged arm gripped his shoulder, and he was suddenly tripped and thrown backwards upon the bed. He opened his mouth to shout, and the corner of the sheet was pushed between his teeth. The Invisible Man had him down, but his arms were free and he hit and tried to kick savagely.

"Listen to reason, will you?" said the Invisible Man, sticking to him in spite of a pounding in the ribs. "By Heaven! you'll madden me in a minute!"

"Lie still, you fool!" shouted the Invisible Man in Kemp's ear.

Kemp struggled for another moment and then lay still.

"If you shout I'll smash your face," said the Invisible Man, relieving his mouth.

"I'm an Invisible Man. It's no foolishness, and no magic. I really am an Invisible Man. And I want your help. I don't want to hurt you, but if you behave like a frantic peasant, I must. Don't you remember me, Kemp? - Griffin, of University College?"

"Let me get up," said Kemp. "I'll stay where I am. And let me sit quiet for a minute."

He sat up and felt his neck.

"I am Griffin, of University College, and I have made myself invisible. I am just an ordinary man - a man you have known - made invisible."

"Griffin?" said Kemp.

"Griffin," answered the Voice - "a younger student, almost an albino, six feet high, and broad, with a pink and white face and red eyes - who won the medal for chemistry."

"I am confused," said Kemp. "My brain is rioting. What has this to do with Griffin?"

"I am Griffin."

Kemp thought. "It's horrible," he said. "But what devilry must happen to make a man invisible?"

"It's no devilry. It's a process, logical and intelligible enough - "

"It's horrible!" said Kemp. "How on earth - ?"

"It's horrible enough. But I'm wounded and in pain, and tired - Great God! Kemp, you are a man. Take it steady. Give me some food and drink, and let me sit down here."

Kemp stared at the bandage as it moved across the room, then saw a basket chair pulled across the floor and come to a stop near the bed. It creaked, and the seat was depressed a quarter of an inch or so. He rubbed his eyes and felt his neck again. "This beats ghosts," he said, and laughed stupidly.

"That's better. Thank Heaven, you're getting sensible!"

"Or silly," said Kemp, and rubbed his eyes.

"Give me some whisky. I'm near dead."

"It didn't feel so. Where are you? If I get up shall I run into you? There! all right. Whisky? Here. Where shall I give it you?"

The chair creaked and Kemp felt the glass taken away from him. He let go by an effort; his instinct was all against it. It came to rest poised twenty inches above the front edge of the seat of the chair. He stared at it in infinite perplexity. "This is - this must be - hypnotism. You must have suggested you are invisible."

"Nonsense," said the Voice.

"It's ridiculous."

"Listen to me."

"I demonstrated conclusively this morning," began Kemp, "that invisibility - "

"Never mind what you've demonstrated! - I'm starving," said the Voice, "and the night is - chilly to a man without clothes."

"Food!" said Kemp.

The glass of whisky tilted itself. "Yes," said the Invisible Man, putting it down. "Have you got a dressing gown?"

Kemp made some exclamation in an undertone. He walked to a wardrobe and produced a robe of dark scarlet. *"This do?"* he asked. It was taken from him. It hung limp for a moment in mid-air, fluttered weirdly, stood full and decorous buttoning itself, and sat down in his chair. *"Pants, socks, slippers would be a comfort,"* said the Unseen. *"And food."*

"Anything. But this is the insanest thing I ever was in, in my life!"

He turned out his drawers for the articles, and then went downstairs to the kitchen. He came back with some cold steaks and bread, pulled up a light table, and placed them before his guest. *"Never mind knives,"* said his visitor, and a steak hung in mid-air, with a sound of chewing.

"Invisible!" said Kemp, and sat down on a bedroom chair.

"I always like to put something on before I eat," said the Invisible Man, with a full mouth, eating greedily. *"Strange fancy!"*

"I suppose that wrist is all right," said Kemp.

"Trust me," said the Invisible Man.

"Of all the strange and wonderful - "

"Exactly. But it's odd I should run into your house to get my bandaging. My first stroke of luck. Anyhow I meant to sleep in this house to-night. You must stand that! It's a filthy nuisance, my blood showing, isn't it? Quite a patch over there. Gets visible as it coagulates, I see. I've been in the house three hours."

"But how's it done?" began Kemp, in a tone of exasperation. *"Confound it! The whole business - it's unreasonable from beginning to end."*

"Quite reasonable," said the Invisible Man. *"Perfectly reasonable."*

He reached over and secured the whisky bottle. Kemp stared at the devouring dressing-gown. A ray of candle-light penetrating a torn patch in the right shoulder, made a triangle of light under the left ribs. *"What were the shots?"* he asked. *"How did the shooting begin?"*

"There was a fool of a man - a sort of confederate of mine - curse him! - who tried to steal my money. Has done so."

"Is he invisible too?"

"No."

"Well?"

"Can't I have some more to eat before I tell you all that? I'm hungry - in pain. And you want me to tell stories!"

Kemp got up. *"You didn't do any shooting?"* he asked.

"Not me," said his visitor. *"Some fool I'd never seen fired at random. A lot of them got scared. They all got scared at me. Curse them! - I say - I want more to eat than this, Kemp."*

"I'll see what there is more to eat downstairs," said Kemp. *"Not much, I'm afraid."*

After he had finished eating, and he made a heavy meal, the Invisible Man demanded a cigar. He bit the end savagely before Kemp could find a knife, and cursed when the outer leaf loosened. It was strange to see him smoking; his mouth and throat, pharynx and nostrils, became visible as a sort of whirling smoke cast.

"This blessed gift of smoking!" he said, and puffed vigorously. *"I'm lucky to have come upon you, Kemp. You must help me. Fancy running into you just now! I'm in a devilish mess. I've been mad, I think. The things I have been through! But we will do things yet. Let me tell you - "*

He helped himself to more whisky and soda. Kemp got up, looked about him, and fetched himself a glass from his spare room. *"It's wild - but I suppose I may drink."*

"You haven't changed much, Kemp, these dozen years. You fair men don't. Cool and methodical - after the first collapse. I must tell you. We will work together!"

"But how was it all done?" said Kemp, *"and how did you get like this?"*

"For God's sake, let me smoke in peace for a little while! And then I will begin to tell you."

But the story was not told that night. The Invisible Man's wrist was growing painful, he was feverish, exhausted, and his mind came round to remember his chase down the hill and the struggle about the inn. He spoke in fragments of Marvel, he smoked faster, his voice grew angry. Kemp tried to gather what he could.

"He was afraid of me, I could see he was afraid of me," said the Invisible Man many times over. *"He meant to give me the slip! What a fool I was!"*

"The cur!"

"I should have killed him - "

"Where did you get the money?" asked Kemp, abruptly.

The Invisible Man was silent for a space. *"I can't tell you to-night,"* he said.

He groaned suddenly and leant forward, supporting his invisible head on invisible hands. *"Kemp,"* he said, *"I've had no sleep for nearly three days - except a couple of dozes of an hour or so. I must sleep soon."*

"Well, have my room - have this room."

"But how can I sleep? If I sleep - he will get away. Ugh! What does it matter?"

"What's the shot-wound?" asked Kemp, abruptly.

"Nothing - scratch and blood. Oh, God! How I want sleep!"

"Why not?"

The Invisible Man appeared to be looking at Kemp. *"Because I've a particular objection to being caught by my fellow-men,"* he said slowly.

Kemp jumped.

"Fool that I am!" said the Invisible Man, striking the table smartly. *"I've put the idea into your head."*

Chapter 18

The Invisible Man Sleeps

Exhausted and wounded as the Invisible Man was, he refused to accept Kemp's word that his freedom would be respected. He examined the two windows of the bedroom, drew up the blinds, and opened them to confirm Kemp's statement that a retreat by them would be possible. Outside the night was very quiet and still, and the new moon was setting over the down. Then he examined the keys of the bedroom and the two dressing-room doors, to satisfy himself that these also could be made an assurance of freedom. Finally he expressed himself satisfied. He stood on the hearth-rug and Kemp heard the sound of a yawn.

"I'm sorry," said the Invisible Man, "if I cannot tell you all that I have done to-night. But I am worn out. It's grotesque, no doubt. It's horrible! But believe me, Kemp, it is quite a possible thing. I have made a discovery. I meant to keep it to myself. I can't. I must have a partner. And you - We can do such things - But to-morrow. Now, Kemp, I feel as though I must sleep or perish."

Kemp stood in the middle of the room staring at the headless garment. *"I suppose I must leave you,"* he said. *"It's - incredible. Three things happening like this, overturning all my preconceptions, would make me insane. But it's real! Is there anything more that I can get you?"*

"Only say good-night," said Griffin.

"Good-night," said Kemp, and shook an invisible hand. He walked sideways to the door. Suddenly the dressing-gown walked quickly towards him. *"Understand me!"* said the dressing-gown. *"No attempts to stop me, or capture me! Or -"*

Kemp's face changed a little. *"I thought I gave you my word,"* he said.

Kemp closed the door softly behind him, and the key was turned. Then, as he stood with an expression of passive amazement on his face, the rapid feet came to the door of the dressing-room and that too was locked. Kemp slapped his brow with his hand. *"Am I dreaming? Has the world gone mad - or have I?"*

He laughed, and put his hand to the locked door. *"Locked out of my own bedroom, by a flagrant absurdity!"* he said.

He walked to the top of the staircase, turned, and stared at the locked doors. *"It's fact,"* he said. He put his fingers to his slightly bruised neck. *"Undeniable fact!"*

"But -"

He shook his head hopelessly, turned, and went downstairs.

He lit the dining-room lamp, got out a cigar, and began pacing the room. Now and then he would argue with himself.

"Invisible!" he said.

"Is there such a thing as an invisible animal? In the sea, yes. Thousands! millions! All the larvae, all the little nauplii and tornarias, all the microscopic things, the jelly-fish. In the sea there are more things invisible than visible! I never thought of that before. And in the ponds too! All those little pond-life things - specks of colourless translucent jelly! But in air? No!"

"It can't be."

"But after all - why not?"

"If a man was made of glass he would still be visible."

His meditation became profound. Three cigars had passed into the invisible or diffused as a white ash over the carpet before he spoke again. Then it was merely an exclamation. He turned aside, walked out of the room, and went into his little consulting-room and lit the gas there. It was a little room, because Dr. Kemp did not live by practice, and in it were the day's newspapers. The morning's paper lay carelessly opened and thrown aside. He picked it up, turned it over, and read the account of a "Strange Story from Iping" that the Mariner at Port Stowe had spelt over so painfully to Mr. Marvel. Kemp read it quickly.

"Wrapped up!" said Kemp. *"Disguised! Hiding it! No one seems to have been aware of his misfortune! What the devil is his game?"*

He dropped the paper, and his eye went seeking. *"Ah!"* he said, and picked up the St. James' Gazette, lying folded up as it had arrived. *"Now we shall get at the truth,"* said Dr. Kemp. He opened the paper; a couple of columns confronted him. "An Entire Village in Sussex goes Mad" was the heading.

"Good Heavens!" said Kemp, reading eagerly an incredulous account of the events in Iping the previous afternoon, that have already been described. Over the page the report in the morning paper had been reprinted.

He re-read it. "Ran through the streets striking right and left. Juffers insensible. Mr. Huxter in great pain - still unable to describe what he saw. Painful humiliation - vicar. Women ill with terror! Windows smashed. This extraordinary story probably a fabrication. Too good not to print - cum grano!"

He dropped the paper and stared blankly in front of him. *"Probably a fabrication!"*

He picked up the paper again, and re-read the whole business. *"But where does the Tramp come in? Why on earth was he chasing a Tramp?"*

He sat down abruptly on the surgical couch. *"He's not only invisible,"* he said, *"but he's mad! Homicidal!"*

When dawn came to mingle its pallor with the lamp-light and cigar smoke of the dining-room, Kemp was still pacing up and down, trying to grasp the incredible.

He was altogether too excited to sleep. His servants, descending sleepily, discovered him, and were inclined to think that overstudy had worked this ill on him. He gave them extraordinary but quite explicit instructions to lay breakfast for two in the study - and then to confine themselves to the basement and ground-floor. Then he continued to pace the dining-room until the morning's paper came. That had much to say and little to tell, beyond the confirmation of the evening before and a very badly written account of another remarkable tale from Port Burdock. This gave Kemp the essence of the happenings at the Jolly Cricketers, and the name of Marvel. "He has made me stay with him twenty-four hours," Marvel testified. Certain minor facts were added to the lying story, notably the cutting of the village telegraph-wire. But there was nothing to throw light on the connection between the Invisible Man and the Tramp; for Mr. Marvel had supplied no information about the three books, or the money with which he was lined. The incredulous tone had vanished and a shoal of reporters and inquirers were already at work elaborating the matter.

Kemp read every scrap of the report and sent his housemaid out to get every one of the morning papers she could. These also he devoured.

"He is invisible!" he said. "And it reads like rage growing to mania! The things he may do! The things he may do! And he's upstairs free as the air. What on earth ought I to do?"

"For instance, would it be a breach of faith if - ? No."

He went to a little untidy desk in the corner, and began a note. He tore this up half written, and wrote another. He read it over and considered it. Then he took an envelope and addressed it to "Colonel Adye, Port Burdock."

The Invisible Man woke up even as Kemp was doing this. He awoke in an evil temper, and Kemp, alert for every sound, heard his feet rush suddenly across the bedroom overhead. Then a chair was thrown over and the wash-basin glass smashed. Kemp hurried upstairs and knocked eagerly.

Chapter 19

Certain First Principles

"What's the matter?" asked Kemp, when the Invisible Man let him in.

"Nothing," was the answer.

"But, confound it! The smash?"

"Fit of temper," said the Invisible Man. "Forgot this arm; and it's sore."

"You're rather liable to that sort of thing."

"I am."

Kemp walked across the room and picked up the fragments of broken glass. "All the facts are out about you," said Kemp, standing up with the glass in his hand; "all that happened in Iping, and down the hill. The world has become aware of its invisible citizen. But no one knows you are here."

The Invisible Man swore.

"The secret's out. I gather it was a secret. I don't know what your plans are, but of course I'm anxious to help you."

The Invisible Man sat down on the bed.

"There's breakfast upstairs," said Kemp, speaking as easily as possible, and he was delighted to find his strange guest got up willingly. Kemp led the way up the narrow staircase to the study.

"Before we can do anything else," said Kemp, "I must understand a little more about this invisibility of yours." He had sat down, after one nervous glance out of the window, with the air of a man who has talking to do. His doubts of the sanity of the entire business flashed and vanished again as he looked across to where Griffin sat at the breakfast-table, - a headless, handless dressing-gown, wiping unseen lips on a miraculously held serviette.

"It's simple enough - and credible enough," said Griffin, putting the serviette aside and leaning the invisible head on an invisible hand.

"No doubt, to you, but -" Kemp laughed.

"Well, yes; to me it seemed wonderful at first, no doubt. But now, great God! - But we will do great things yet! I came on the stuff first at Chesilstowe."

"Chesilstowe?"

"I went there after I left London. You know I dropped medicine and took up physics? No? - well, I did. Light - fascinated me."

"Ah!"

"Optical density! The whole subject is a network of riddles - a network with solutions glimmering elusively through. And being only twenty-two and full of enthusiasm, I said, 'I will devote my life to this. This is worth while.' You know what fools we are at twenty-two?"

"Fools then or fools now," said Kemp.

"As though Knowing could be any satisfaction to a man!"

"But I went to work - like a slave. And I had hardly worked and thought about the matter six months before light came through suddenly - blindingly! I found a general principle of pigments and refraction, - a formula, a geometrical expression involving four dimensions. Fools, common men, even common mathematicians, do not know anything of what some general expression may mean to the student of molecular physics. In the books - the books that Tramp has hidden - there are marvels, miracles! But this was not a method, it was an idea that might lead to a method by which it would be possible, without changing any other property of matter, - except, in some instances, colours, - to lower the refractive index of a substance, solid or liquid, to that of air - so far as all practical purposes are concerned."

"Phew!" said Kemp. "That's odd! But still I don't see quite - I can understand that thereby you could spoil a valuable stone, but personal invisibility is another thing."

"Precisely," said Griffin. "But consider: Visibility depends on the action of the visible bodies on light. Either a body absorbs light, or it reflects or refracts it, or does all these things. If it neither reflects nor refracts nor absorbs light, it cannot of itself be visible. You see an opaque red box, for instance, because the colour absorbs some of the light and reflects the rest, all the red part of the light, to you. If it did not absorb any particular part of the light, but reflected it all, then it would be a shining white box. Silver! A diamond box would neither absorb much of the light nor reflect much from the general surface, but just here and there where the surfaces were favourable the light would be reflected and refracted, so that you would get a brilliant appearance of flashing reflections and translucencies, - a sort of skeleton of light. A glass box would not be so brilliant, not so clearly visible, as a diamond box, because there would be less refraction and reflection. See that? From certain points of view you would see quite clearly through it. Some kinds of glass would be more visible than others, a box of flint glass would be brighter than a box of ordinary window glass. A box of very thin common glass would be hard to see in a bad light, because it would absorb hardly any light and refract and reflect very little. And if you put a sheet of common white glass in water, still

more if you put it in some denser liquid than water, it would vanish almost altogether, because light passing from water to glass is only slightly refracted or reflected or indeed affected in any way. It is almost as invisible as a jet of coal gas or hydrogen is in air. And for precisely the same reason!"

"Yes," said Kemp, "that is pretty clear."

"And here is another fact you will know to be true. If a sheet of glass is smashed, Kemp, and crushed into a powder, it becomes much more visible while it is in the air; it becomes at last an opaque white powder. This is because the powdering multiplies the surfaces of the glass at which refraction and reflection occur. In the sheet of glass there are only two surfaces; in the powder the light is reflected or refracted by each grain it passes through, and very little gets right through the powder. But if the white powdered glass is put into water, it immediately vanishes. The powdered glass and water have much the same refractive index; that is, the light undergoes very little refraction or reflection in passing from one to the other."

"You make the glass invisible by putting it into a liquid of nearly the same refractive index; a transparent thing becomes invisible if it is put in any medium of almost the same refractive index. And if you will consider only a second, you will see also that the powder of glass might be made to vanish in air, if its refractive index could be made the same as that of air; for then there would be no refraction or reflection as the light passed from glass to air."

"Yes, yes," said Kemp. "But a man's not powdered glass!"

"No," said Griffin. "He's more transparent!"

"Nonsense!"

"That from a doctor! How one forgets! Have you already forgotten your physics, in ten years? Just think of all the things that are transparent and seem not to be so. Paper, for instance, is made up of transparent fibres, and it is white and opaque only for the same reason that a powder of glass is white and opaque. Oil white paper, fill up the interstices between the particles with oil so that there is no longer refraction or reflection except at the surfaces, and it becomes as transparent as glass. And not only paper, but cotton fibre, linen fibre, wool fibre, woody fibre, and bone, Kemp, flesh, hair, nails and nerves, Kemp, in fact the whole fabric of a man except the red of his blood and the black pigment of hair, are all made up of transparent, colourless tissue. So little suffices to make us visible one to the other. For the most part the fibres of a living creature are no more opaque than water."

"Great Heavens!" cried Kemp. "Of course, of course! I was thinking only last night of the sea larvae and all jelly-fish!"

"Now you understand me! And all that I knew and had in mind a year after I left London - six years ago. But I kept it to myself. I had to do my work under incredible disadvantages. Oliver, my professor, was a scientific bouncer, a journalist by instinct, a thief of ideas, - he was always prying! And you know the knavish system of the scientific world. I simply would not publish, and let him share my credit. I went on working. I got nearer and nearer making my formula into an experiment, a reality. I told no living soul, because I meant to flash my work upon the world with crushing effect, - to become famous at a blow. I took up the question of pigments to fill up certain gaps. And suddenly, not by design but by accident, I made a discovery in physiology."

"Yes?"

"You know the red colouring matter of blood; it can be made white - colourless - and remain with all the functions it has now!"

Kemp gave a cry of incredulous amazement.

The Invisible Man rose and began pacing the little study. *"You may well exclaim. I remember that night. It was late at night, - in the daytime one was bothered with the gaping, silly students, - and I worked then sometimes till dawn. It came suddenly, splendid and complete into my mind. I was alone; the laboratory was quiet, with the tall lights burning brightly and silently. In all my great moments I have been alone. 'One could make an animal - a tissue - transparent! One could make it invisible! All except the pigments. I could be invisible!' I said, suddenly realising what it meant to be an albino with such knowledge. It was overwhelming. I left the filtering I was doing, and went and stared out of the great window at the stars. 'I could be invisible!' I repeated."*

"To do such a thing would be to transcend magic. And I beheld, unclouded by doubt, a magnificent vision of all that invisibility might mean to a man, - the mystery, the power, the freedom. Drawbacks I saw none. You have only to think! And I, a shabby, poverty-struck, hemmed-in demonstrator, teaching fools in a provincial college, might suddenly become - this. I ask you, Kemp, if you - Any one, I tell you, would have flung himself upon that research. And I worked three years, and every mountain of difficulty I toiled over showed another from its summit. The infinite details! And the exasperation, - a professor, a provincial professor, always prying. 'When are you going to publish this work of yours?' was his everlasting question. And the students, the cramped means! Three years I had of it -

"And after three years of secrecy and exasperation, I found that to complete it was impossible, - impossible."

"How?" asked Kemp.

"Money," said the Invisible Man, and went again to stare out of the window.

He turned round abruptly. *"I robbed the old man - robbed my father."*

"The money was not his, and he shot himself."

Chapter 20

At the House in Great Portland Street

For a moment Kemp sat in silence, staring at the back of the headless figure at the window. Then he started, struck by a thought, got up, took the Invisible Man's arm, and turned him away from the window.

"You are tired," he said, "and while I sit, you walk about. Have my chair."

He placed himself between Griffin and the nearest window.

For a while Griffin sat silent, and then he resumed abruptly:

"I had left the Chesilstowe cottage already," he said, "when that happened. It was last December. I had taken a room in London, a large unfurnished room in a big ill-managed lodging-house in a slum near Great Portland Street. The room was soon full of the appliances I had bought with his money; the work was going on steadily, successfully, drawing near an end. I was like a man emerging from a jungle, and suddenly coming on some unmeaning tragedy. I went to bury him. My mind was still on this research, and I did not lift a finger to save his character. I remember the funeral, the cheap hearse, the brief ceremony, the windy frost-bitten hillside, and the old college friend of his who read the service over him, - a shabby, black, bent old man with a snivelling cold.

"I remember walking back to the empty home, through the place that had once been a village and was now patched by the property speculators into the ugly likeness of a town. Every way the roads ran out at last into the desecrated fields and ended in rubble heaps and wet weeds. I remember myself as a gaunt black figure, going along the slippery, shiny pavement, and the strange sense of detachment I felt from the squalid respectability, the sordid commercialism of the place.

"I did not feel a bit sorry for my father. He seemed to me to be the victim of his own foolish sentimentality. The current custom required my attendance at his funeral, but it was really not my affair.

"But going along the High Street, my old life came back to me for a while, for I met the girl I had known ten years since. Our eyes met.

"Something moved me to turn back and talk to her. She was a very ordinary person.

"It was all like a dream, that visit to the old places. I did not feel then that I was lonely, that I had come out from the world into a desolate place. I appreciated my loss of sympathy, but I put it down to the general inanity of things. Re-entering my room seemed like the recovery of reality. There were the things I knew and loved. There stood the apparatus, the experiments arranged and waiting. And now there was scarcely a difficulty left, beyond the planning of details.

"I will tell you, Kemp, sooner or later, all the complicated processes. We need not go into that now. For the most part, saving certain gaps I chose to remember, they are written in cypher in those books that tramp has hidden. We must hunt him down. We must get those books again. But the essential phase was to place the transparent object whose refractive index was to be lowered between two radiating centres of a sort of ethereal vibration, of which I will tell you more fully later. No, not these Röntgen vibrations - I don't know that these others of mine have been described. Yet they are obvious enough. I needed two little dynamos, and these I worked with a cheap gas engine. My first experiment was with a bit of white wool fabric. I was the strangest thing in the world to see it in the flicker of the flashes soft and white, and then to watch it fade like a puff of smoke and vanish.

"I could scarcely believe I had done it. I put my hand into the emptiness, and there was the thing as solid as ever. I felt it awkwardly, and threw it on the floor. I had a little trouble finding it again.

"And then came a curious experience. I heard a miaow behind me, and turning, saw a thin white cat, very dirty, on the cistern cover outside the window. A thought came into my head. 'Everything ready for you,' I said, and went to the window, opened it, and called softly. She came in, purring, - the poor beast was starving, - and I gave her some milk. All my food was in a cupboard in the corner of the room. After that she went smelling round the room, - evidently with the idea of making herself at home. The invisible rag upset her a bit; you should have seen her spit at it! But I made her comfortable on the pillow of my bed. And I gave her butter to get her to wash."

"And you processed her?"

"I processed her. But giving drugs to a cat is no joke, Kemp! And the process failed."

"Failed!"

"In two particulars. These were the claws and the pigment stuff - what is it? - at the back of the eye in a cat. You know?"

"Tapetum."

"Yes, the tapetum. It didn't go. After I'd given the stuff to bleach the blood and done certain other things to her, I gave the beast opium, and put her and the pillow she was sleeping on, on the apparatus. And after all the rest had faded and vanished, there remained two little ghosts of her eyes."

"Odd!"

"I can't explain it. She was bandaged and clamped, of course, - so I had her safe; but she woke while she was still misty, and miaowed dismally, and some one came knocking. It was an old woman from downstairs, who suspected me of vivisection, - a

drunken old creature, with only a white cat to care for in all the world. I took out some chloroform, and applied it, and answered the door. 'Did I hear a cat?' she asked. 'My cat?' 'Not here,' said I, very politely. She was a little doubtful and tried to peer past me into the room; strange enough to her no doubt, - bare walls, uncurtained windows, bed, with the gas engine vibrating, and the seethe of the radiant points, and that faint ghastly stinging of chloroform in the air. She had to be satisfied at last and went away again."

"How long did it take?" asked Kemp.

"Three or four hours - the cat. The bones and sinews and the fat were the last to go, and the tips of the coloured hairs. And, as I say, the back part of the eye, tough iridescent stuff it is, wouldn't go at all."

"It was night outside long before the business was over, and nothing was to be seen but the dim eyes and the claws. I stopped the gas engine, felt for and stroked the beast, which was still insensible, and then, being tired, left it sleeping on the invisible pillow and went to bed. I found it hard to sleep. I lay awake thinking weak aimless stuff, going over the experiment over and over again, or dreaming feverishly of things growing misty and vanishing about me, until everything, the ground I stood on, vanished, and so I came to that sickly falling nightmare one gets. About two, the cat began miaowing about the room. I tried to hush it by talking to it, and then I decided to turn it out. I remember the shock I had when striking a light - there were just the round eyes shining green - and nothing round them. I would have given it milk, but I hadn't any. It wouldn't be quiet, it just sat down and miaowed at the door. I tried to catch it, with an idea of putting it out of the window, but it wouldn't be caught, it vanished. Then it began miaowing in different parts of the room. At last I opened the window and made a noise. I suppose it went out at last. I never saw any more of it."

"Then - Heaven knows why - I started thinking of my father's funeral again, and the dismal windy hillside, until the day had come. I found sleeping was hopeless, and, locking my door after me, wandered out into the morning streets."

"You don't mean to say there's an invisible cat at large!" said Kemp.

"If it hasn't been killed," said the Invisible Man. "Why not?"

"Why not?" said Kemp. "I didn't mean to interrupt."

"It's very probably been killed," said the Invisible Man. "It was alive four days after, I know, and down a grating in Great Titchfield Street; because I saw a crowd round the place, trying to see where the miaowing came from."

He was silent for the best part of a minute. Then he resumed abruptly:

"I remember that morning before the change very vividly. I must have gone up Great Portland Street. I remember the barracks in Albany Street, and the horse soldiers coming out, and at last I found myself sitting in the sunshine and feeling very ill and strange, on the top of Primrose Hill. It was a sunny day in January, - one of those sunny, frosty days that came before the snow this year. My tired brain tried to formulate the position, to plot out a plan of action."

"I was surprised to find, now that my prize was within my grasp, how inconclusive its attainment seemed. As a matter of fact I was exhausted; the intense stress of nearly four years' continuous work left me incapable of any strength of feeling. I was apathetic, and I tried in vain to recover the enthusiasm of my first inquiries, the passion of discovery that had enabled me to compass even the downfall of my father's grey hairs. Nothing seemed to matter. I saw pretty clearly this was a transient mood, due to overwork and want of sleep, and that either by drugs or rest it would be possible to recover my energies."

"All I could think clearly was that the thing had to be carried through; the fixed idea still ruled me. And soon, for the money I had was almost exhausted. I looked about me at the hillside, with children playing and girls watching them, and tried to think of all the fantastic advantages an invisible man would have in the world. After a time I crawled home, took some food and a strong dose of strychnine, and went to sleep in my clothes on my unmade bed. Strychnine is a grand tonic, Kemp, to take the weakness out of a man."

"It's the devil," said Kemp. "It's the palaeolithic in a bottle."

"I awoke vastly invigorated and rather irritable. You know?"

"I know the stuff."

"And there was some one knocking at the door. It was my landlord with threats and inquiries, an old Polish Jew in a long grey coat and greasy slippers. I had been tormenting a cat in the night he was sure, - the old woman's tongue had been busy. He insisted on knowing all about it. The laws of this country against vivisection were very severe, - he might be liable. I denied the cat. Then the vibration of the little gas engine could be felt all over the house, he said. That was true, certainly. He edged round me into the room, peering about over his German-silver spectacles, and a sudden fear came into my mind that he might carry away something of my secret. I tried to keep between him and the concentrating apparatus I had arranged, and that only made him more curious. What was I doing? Why was I always alone and secretive? Was it legal? Was it dangerous? I paid nothing but the usual rent. His had always been a most respectable house - in a disreputable neighbourhood. Suddenly my temper gave way. I told him to get out. He began to protest, to talk of his right of entry. In a moment I had him by the collar; something ripped, and he went spinning out into his own passage. I slammed and locked the door and sat down trembling."

"He made a fuss outside, which I disregarded, and after a time he went away."

"But this brought matters to a crisis. I did not know what he would do, nor even what he had power to do. To move to fresh apartments would have meant delay; altogether I had barely twenty pounds left in the world, - for the most part in the bank, - and I could not afford that. Vanish! It was irresistible. Then there would be an inquiry, the sacking of my room -"

"At the thought of the possibility of my work being exposed or interrupted at its very climax, I became angry and active. I hurried out with my three books of notes, my cheque-book, - the tramp has them now, - and directed them from the nearest Post Office to a house of call for letters and parcels in Great Portland Street. I tried to go out noiselessly. Coming in, I found my landlord going quietly upstairs; he had heard the door close, I suppose. You would have laughed to see him jump aside on the landing as I came rushing after him. He glared at me as I went by him, and I made the house quiver with the slamming of my door. I heard him come shuffling up to my floor, hesitate, and go down. I set to work upon my preparations immediately.

"It was all done that evening and night. While I was still sitting under the sickly, drowsy influence of the drugs that decolourise blood, there came a repeated knocking at the door. It ceased, footsteps went away and returned, and the knocking was resumed. There was an attempt to push something under the door - a blue paper. Then in a fit of irritation I rose and went and threw the door wide open. 'Now then?' said I.

"It was my landlord, with a notice of eviction or something. He held it out to me, saw something odd about my hands, I expect, and lifted his eyes to my face.

"For a moment he gaped. Then he gave a sort of inarticulate cry, dropped candle and the note together, and went rushing down the dark passage to the stairs. I shut the door, locked it, and went to the mirror. Then I understood his terror. My face was white - like white stone.

"But it was all horrible. I had not expected the suffering. A night of racking anguish, sickness and fainting. I set my teeth, though my skin was presently afire; all my body afire; but I lay there like grim death. I understood now how it was the cat had howled until I chloroformed it. Lucky it was I lived alone and untended in my room. There were times when I sobbed and groaned and talked. But I stuck to it. I became insensible and woke languid in the darkness.

"The pain had passed. I thought I was killing myself and I did not care. I shall never forget that dawn, and the strange horror of seeing that my hands had become as clouded glass, and watching them grow clearer and thinner as the day went by, until at last I could see the sickly disorder of my room through them, though I closed my transparent eyelids. My limbs became glassy, the bones and arteries faded, vanished, and the little white nerves went last. I ground my teeth and stayed there to the end. At last only the dead tips of the finger-nails remained, pallid and white, and the brown stain of some acid upon my fingers.

"I struggled up. At first I was as incapable as a newborn baby, - stepping with legs I could not see. I was weak and very hungry. I went and stared at nothing in my mirror, at nothing save where an attenuated pigment still remained behind the retina of my eyes, fainter than mist. I had to hang on to the table and press my forehead to the glass.

"It was only by a frantic effort of will that I dragged myself back to the apparatus and completed the process.

"I slept during the morning, pulling the sheet over my eyes to shut out the light, and about midday I was awakened again by a knocking. My strength had returned. I sat up and listened and heard a whispering. I jumped to my feet and as noiselessly as possible began to detach the connections of my apparatus, and to distribute it about the room, so as to destroy the suggestions of its arrangement. Presently the knocking was renewed and voices called, first my landlord's, and then two others. To gain time I answered them. The invisible rag and pillow came to hand and I opened the window and threw them out on to the cistern cover. As the window opened, a heavy crash came at the door. Some one had charged it with the idea of smashing the lock. But the strong locks I had screwed up some days before stopped him. That surprised me, made me angry. I began to tremble and do things hurriedly.

"I threw together some loose paper, straw, packing paper and so on, in the middle of the room, and turned on the gas. Heavy blows began to rain upon the door. I could not find the matches. I beat my hands on the wall with rage. I turned down the gas again, stepped out of the window on the cistern cover, very softly lowered the window, and sat down, secure and invisible, but quivering with anger, to watch events. They split a panel, I saw, and in another moment they had broken away the staples of the locks and stood in the open doorway. It was the landlord and his two step-sons, strong young men of twenty-three or four. Behind them fluttered the old hag of a woman from downstairs.

"You may imagine their astonishment on finding the room empty. One of the younger men rushed to the window at once, threw it up and stared out. His staring eyes and thick-lipped bearded face came a foot from my face. I was half tempted to hit his silly face, but I stopped my doubled fist. He stared right through me. So did the others as they joined him. The old man went and looked under the bed, and then they all made a rush for the cupboard. They had to argue about it at length in Yiddish and Cockney English. They decided I had not answered them, that their imagination had deceived them. A feeling of extraordinary elation took the place of my anger as I sat outside the window and watched these four people - for the old lady came in, glancing suspiciously about her like a cat, trying to understand the riddle of my behaviour.

"The old man, so far as I could understand, agreed with the old lady that I was a vivisectionist. The sons protested in bad English that I was an electrician, and indicated to the dynamos and radiators. They were all nervous about my arrival, although I found subsequently that they had locked the front door. The old lady looked into the cupboard and under the bed, and one of the young men stared up the chimney. One of my fellow lodgers, a fruit seller who shared the opposite room with a butcher, appeared on the landing, and he was called in and told incoherent things.

"It occurred to me that the radiators, if they fell into the hands of some acute well-educated person, would give me away too much, and watching my opportunity, I came into the room and pushed one of the little dynamos off its fellow on which it was standing, and smashed both apparatus. Then, while they were trying to explain the smash, I escaped out of the room and went softly downstairs.

"I went into one of the sitting-rooms and waited until they came down, still speculating and argumentative, all a little disappointed at finding no 'horrors,' and all a little puzzled how they stood with regard to me. Then I went up again with a box of

matches, set fire to my pile of paper and rubbish, put the chairs and bedding next to it, led the gas to the affair, by means of an rubber tube, and waving goodbye to the room left it for the last time."

"You set fire to the house!" exclaimed Kemp.

"Set fire to the house. It was the only way to cover my trail - and no doubt it was insured. I opened the front door quietly and went out into the street. I was invisible, and I was only just beginning to realise the extraordinary advantage my invisibility gave me. My head was already full of plans of all the wild and wonderful things I had now impunity to do."

Chapter 21

In Oxford Street

"In going downstairs the first time I found an unexpected difficulty because I could not see my feet; indeed I stumbled twice, and there was an unaccustomed clumsiness in holding the lock. By not looking down, however, I managed to walk on the level reasonably well.

"My mood, I say, was one of exaltation. I felt as a seeing man might do, with padded feet and noiseless clothes, in a city of the blind. I experienced a wild impulse to play jokes, to surprise people, to pat men on the back, throw people's hats off, and generally enjoy in my extraordinary advantage.

"But hardly had I come into Great Portland Street, however, when I heard a clashing concussion and was hit violently behind, and turning saw a man carrying a basket of soda-water siphons, and looking in amazement at his load. Although the blow had really hurt me, I found something so irresistible in his astonishment that I laughed aloud. 'The devil's in the basket,' I said, and suddenly took it out of his hand. He let go incontinently, and I swung the whole weight into the air.

"But a fool of a cabman, standing outside a public house, made a sudden rush for this, and his extending fingers took me with excruciating violence under the ear. I let the whole down with a smash on the cabman, and then, with shouts and the clatter of feet about me, people coming out of shops, vehicles pulling up, I realised what I had done for myself, and cursing my stupidity, backed against a shop window and prepared to escape from out of the confusion. In a moment I should be trapped by a crowd and inevitably discovered. I pushed by the butcher boy, who luckily did not turn to see the nothingness that pushed him aside, and dodged behind the cab. I hurried straight across the road, which was happily clear, and hardly paying attention to which way I went, in the fright of detection the incident had given, plunged into the afternoon crowds of Oxford Street.

"I tried to get into the stream of people, but they were too thick for me, and in a moment my heels were being trodden upon. I took to the side of the road, the roughness of which I found painful to my feet, and almost immediately the shaft of a cab hit me under the shoulder, reminding me that I was already bruised severely. I staggered out of the way of the cab, avoided a pram by a convulsive movement, and found myself behind the cab. A happy thought saved me, and as this drove slowly along I followed immediately behind it, trembling and astonished at my adventure. And not only trembling, but shivering. It was a bright day in January and I was stark naked and the thin layer of mud that covered the road was freezing. Foolish as it seems to me now, I had not taken into consideration that, transparent or not, I was still affected by the weather and all its consequences.

"Then suddenly a bright idea came into my head. I ran round and got into the cab. And so, shivering, scared, and sniffing with the beginnings of a cold, and with the bruises of my back growing upon my attention. I drove slowly along Oxford Street and past Tottenham Court Road. My mood was as different from that in which I had felt ten minutes ago as it is possible to imagine. This invisibility indeed! The one thought that possessed me was - how was I to get out of the trouble I was in.

"We went slowly past Mudie's, and there a tall woman with five or six yellow-labelled books hailed my cab, and I jumped out just in time to escape her, narrowly missing a railway van in my escape. I went off up the road to Bloomsbury Square, intending to head north past the Museum and so get into the quiet district. I was not excessively cold, and the strangeness of my situation so unnerved me that I whimpered as I ran. At the northward corner of the Square a little white dog ran out of the Pharmaceutical Society's offices, and ran towards me, nose down.

"I had never realised it before, but the nose is to the mind of a dog what the eye is to the mind of a seeing man. Dogs perceive the scent of a man moving as men perceive his vision. This brute began barking and leaping, showing, as it seemed to me, only too plainly that he was aware of me. I crossed Great Russell Street, glancing over my shoulder as I did so, and went some way along Montague Street before I realised what I was running towards.

"Then I became aware of a sound of music, and looking along the street saw a number of people advancing out of Russell Square, red shirts, and the banner of the Salvation Army in front. Such a crowd, singing in the roadway and filling the pavement, I could not hope to penetrate, and fearing to go back and farther from home again, and deciding on the spur of the moment, I ran up the white steps of a house facing the Museum, and stood there waiting for the crowd to pass. Happily the dog stopped at the noise of the band too, hesitated, and turned tail, running back to Bloomsbury Square again.

"On came the band, playing with unconscious irony some hymn about 'When shall we see his Face?' and it seemed an interminable time to me before the tide of the crowd washed along the pavement by me. Thud, thud, thud, came the drum with a vibrating resonance, and for the moment I did not notice two children stopping at the railings next to me. 'Look at those,' said one. 'Look at what?' said the other. 'Why - those footmarks - bare. Like what you make in mud.'

"I looked down and saw the youngsters had stopped and were gaping at the muddy footmarks I had left behind me up the newly painted steps. The passing people elbowed and pushed them, but their confounded intelligence was caught. 'Thud, thud, thud, When, thud, shall we see, thud, his face, thud, thud.' 'A barefoot man has gone up those steps,' said one. 'And he hasn't come down again. And his foot was bleeding.'

"The thick of the crowd had already passed. 'Looky there, Ted,' said the younger of the detectives, with the sharpness of surprise in his voice, and pointed straight to my feet. I looked down and saw at once the dim suggestion of their outline sketched in splashes of mud. For a moment I was paralysed.

"'Why, that's strange,' said the elder. 'Very strange! It's just like the ghost of a foot, isn't it?' He hesitated and advanced with outstretched hand. A man stopped to see what he was doing, and then a girl. In another moment he would have touched me. Then I saw what to do. I made a step, the boy jumped back with an exclamation, and with a rapid movement I swung myself

over into the doorway of the next house. But the smaller boy was sharp-eyed enough to follow the movement and before I was well down the steps and on the pavement, he had recovered from his momentary astonishment and was shouting out that the feet had gone over the wall.

"They rushed round and saw my new footmarks flash into being on the lower step and upon the pavement. 'What's up?' asked some one. 'Feet! Look! Feet running!' Everybody in the road, except my three pursuers, was following the Salvation Army, and this not only impeded me but them. There was an eddy of surprise and interrogation. At the cost of knocking over one young fellow I got through, and in another moment I was rushing headlong round the circuit of Russell Square, with six or seven astonished people following my footmarks. There was no time for explanation, or else the whole crowd would have been after me.

"Twice I turned corners, thrice I crossed the road and came back on my tracks, and then, as my feet grew hot and dry, the damp impressions began to disappear. At last I had a breathing space and rubbed my feet clean with my hands, and so got away altogether. The last I saw of the chase was a little group of a dozen people perhaps, studying with infinite perplexity a slowly drying footprint that had resulted from a puddle in Travistock Square - a footprint as isolated and incomprehensible to them as Crusoe's solitary discovery.

"This running warmed me to a certain extent, and I went on with a better courage through the maze of less frequented roads. My back had now become very stiff and sore, my throat was painful from the cabman's fingers, and the skin of my neck had been scratched by his nails; my feet hurt exceedingly and I was lame from a little cut on one foot. I saw in time a blind man approaching me, and ran away limping, for I feared his subtle intuitions. Once or twice accidental collisions occurred and I left people amazed, with unaccountable curses ringing in their ears. Then came something silent and quiet against my face, and across the Square fell a thin veil of slowly falling flakes of snow. I had caught a cold, and I could not avoid an occasional sneeze. And every dog that came in sight, with its pointing nose and curious sniffing, was a terror to me.

"Then came men and boys running, first one and then others, and shouting as they ran. It was a fire. They ran in the direction of my lodging, and looking back down a street I saw a mass of black smoke streaming up above the roofs and telephone wires. It was my lodging burning; my clothes, my apparatus, all my resources indeed, except my cheque-book and the three volumes of memoranda that awaited me in Great Portland Street, were there. Burning! I had burnt my boats - if ever a man did! The place was blazing."

The Invisible Man paused and thought. Kemp glanced nervously out of the window. "Yes?" he said. "Go on."

Chapter 22

In the Emporium

"So last January, with the beginning of a snowstorm in the air about me - and if it settled on me it would betray me! - tired, cold, painful, inexpressibly wretched, and still only half convinced of my invisible quality, I began this new life to which I am committed. I had no refuge, no equipment, no human being in the world in whom I could confide. To have told my secret would have given me away - made a mere show and rarity of me. Nevertheless, I was half tempted to go up to some passer-by and throw myself at his mercy. But I knew too clearly the terror and brutal cruelty my advances would evoke. I made no plans in the street. My sole object was to get shelter from the snow, to get myself covered and warm; then I might hope to plan. But even to me, an Invisible Man, the rows of London houses stood locked, barred, and bolted impregnably.

"Only one thing could I see clearly before me, the cold exposure and misery of the snowstorm and the night.

"And then I had a brilliant idea. I turned down one of the roads leading from Gower Street to Tottenham Court Road, and found myself outside Omniums, the big establishment where everything is to be bought - you know the place - meat, grocery, linen, furniture, clothing, oil paintings even - a huge collection of shops rather than a shop. I had thought I would find the doors open, but they were closed, and as I stood in the wide entrance a carriage stopped outside, and a man in uniform - you know the kind of person with 'Omnium' on his cap - threw open the door. I managed to enter, and walking down the shop - it was a department where they were selling ribbons and gloves and stockings and that kind of thing - came to a more spacious region devoted to picnic baskets and wicker furniture.

"I did not feel safe there, however; people were going up and down, and I walked restlessly about until I came upon a huge section in an upper floor containing hundreds and hundreds of beds, and past these I found a resting-place at last among a huge pile of folded mattresses. The place was already lit up and agreeably warm, and I decided to remain where I was, keeping a cautious eye on the two or three sets of shop assistants and customers who were strolling through the place until closing time came. Then I would be able, I thought, to rob the place for food and clothing, and disguised, examine its resources, perhaps sleep on some of the bedding. That seemed an acceptable plan. My idea was to procure clothing to make myself a muffled but acceptable figure, to get money, and then to recover my books and parcels where they awaited me, take a lodging somewhere and elaborate plans for the complete realisation of the advantages my invisibility gave me (as I still imagined) over my fellow-men.

"Closing time arrived quickly enough; it could not have been more than an hour after I took up my position on the mattresses before I noticed the blinds of the windows being drawn, and customers being marched doorward. And then a number of young men began with remarkable speed to tidy up the goods that remained disturbed. I left my hiding place as the crowds diminished, and moved cautiously out into the less desolate parts of the shop. I was really surprised to observe how rapidly the young men and women tidied away the goods displayed for sale during the day. All the boxes of goods, the hanging fabrics, the festoons of lace, the boxes of sweets in the grocery section, the displays of this and that, were being taken down, folded up, put into tidy receptacles, and everything that could not be taken down and put away had sheets thrown over it. Finally all the chairs were turned up on to the counters, leaving the floor clear. As soon as each of these young people had finished, he or she made directly for the door with such an expression of animation as I have rarely observed in a shop assistant before. Then came a lot of youngsters throwing sawdust and carrying buckets and brooms. I had to dodge to get out of the way, and as it was, my ankle got stung with the sawdust. For some time, wandering through the darkened departments, I could hear the brooms at work. And at last a good hour or more after the shop had been closed, came a noise of locking doors. Silence came upon the place, and I found myself wandering through the vast and intricate shops, galleries and showrooms of the place, alone. It was very still; in one place I remember passing near one of the Tottenham Court Road entrances and listening to the tapping of bootheels of the passers-by.

"My first visit was to the place where I had seen stockings and gloves for sale. It was dark, and I had the devil of a hunt after matches, which I found at last in the drawer of the little cash desk. Then I had to get a candle. I had to tear down wrappings and go through a number of boxes and drawers, but at last I managed to find what I was looking for; the box label called them lambswool pants, and lambswool vests. Then socks, a thick scarf, and then I went to the clothing place and got trousers, a jacket, an overcoat and a hat - a clerical sort of hat with the brim turned down. I began to feel a human being again, and my next thought was food.

"Upstairs was a refreshment department, and there I got cold meat. There was coffee still in the urn, and I lit the gas and warmed it up again, and altogether I did not do badly. Afterwards, going through the place in search of blankets - I had to put up at last with a heap of eiderdowns - I came upon a grocery section with a lot of chocolate and candied fruits, more than was good for me indeed - and some white burgundy. And near that was a toy department, and I had a brilliant idea. I found some artificial noses - toy noses, you know, and I thought of dark glasses. But Omniums had no optical department. My nose had been a difficulty indeed - I had thought of paint. But the discovery started me hinking about wigs and masks and the like. Finally I went to sleep on a heap of eiderdowns, very warm and comfortable.

"My last thoughts before sleeping were the most agreeable I had had since the change. I was in a state of physical serenity, and that was reflected in my mind. I thought that I would be able to get out unobserved in the morning with my clothes upon me, covering my face with a white scarf I had taken, buy, with the money I had taken, glasses and so on, and so complete my disguise. I fell into disorderly dreams of all the fantastic things that had happened during the last few days. I saw the ugly little landlord vociferating in his rooms; I saw his two sons marvelling, and the wrinkled old woman's face as she asked for her cat. I experienced again the strange sensation of seeing the cloth disappear, and so I came round to the windy hillside and the sniffing old clergyman mumbling 'Dust to dust, earth to earth,' and my father's open grave.

"You too," said a voice, and suddenly I was being forced towards the grave. I struggled, shouted, appealed to the mourners, but they continued following the service; the old clergyman, too, never stopped droning and sniffing through the ritual. I realised I was invisible and inaudible, that overpowering forces had their grip on me. I struggled in vain, I was forced over the edge, the coffin rang hollow as I fell upon it, and the earth came flying after me in spadefuls. Nobody paid attention to me, nobody was aware of me. I made convulsive struggles and awoke.

"The pale London dawn had come, the place was full of a chilly grey light that filtered round the edges of the window blinds. I sat up, and for a time I could not think where this ample apartment, with its counters, its piles of rolled stuff, its heaps of quilts and cushions, its iron pillars, might be. Then, as recollection came back to me, I heard voices in conversation.

"Then far down the place, in the brighter light of some department which had already raised its blinds, I saw two men approaching. I got quickly to my feet, looking about me for some way of escape, and even as I did so the sound of my movement made them aware of me. I suppose they saw merely a figure moving quietly and quickly away. 'Who's that?' cried one, and 'Stop there,' shouted the other. I rushed round a corner and ran straight into - a faceless figure, mind you! - a lad of fifteen. He shouted and I knocked him over, rushed past him, turned another corner, and by a happy inspiration threw myself on the floor behind a counter. In another moment feet went running past and I heard voices shouting, 'All hands to the doors!' asking what was 'up,' and giving one another advice how to catch me.

"Lying on the ground, I felt scared out of my wits. But - odd as it may seem - it did not occur to me at the moment to take off my clothes as I should have done. I had made up my mind, I suppose, to get away in them, and that ruled me. And then down the vista of the counters came a shout of 'Here he is!'

"I jumped to my feet, took a chair off the counter, and sent it flying at the fool who had shouted, turned, came into another round a corner, sent him spinning, and rushed up the stairs. He kept his footing, and came up the staircase hot after me. Up the staircase were piled a multitude of those bright-coloured pot things - what are they?"

"Art pots," suggested Kemp.

"That's it! Art pots. Well, I turned at the top step and turned round, picked one out of a pile and smashed it on his silly head as he came at me. The whole pile of pots went headlong, and I heard shouting and footsteps running from all parts. I made a mad rush for the refreshment place, and there was a man in white like a cook, who took up the chase. I made one last desperate turn and found myself among lamps and ironmongery. I went behind the counter of this, and waited for my cook, and as he ran in at the head of the chase, I hit him with a lamp. Down he went, and I crouched behind the counter and began taking off my clothes as fast as I could. Coat, jacket, trousers, shoes were all right, but a lambswool vest fits a man like a skin. I heard more men coming, my cook was lying quiet on the other side of the counter, stunned or scared speechless, and I had to make another run for it, like a rabbit hunted out of a wood-pile.

"This way, policeman!" I heard some one shouting. I found myself in my bed store-room again, and at the end a wilderness of wardrobes. I rushed among them, went flat, got rid of my vest after infinite wriggling, and stood a free man again, panting and scared, as the policeman and three of the shopmen came round the corner. They made a rush for the vest and pants, and grabbed the trousers. 'He's dropping his plunder,' said one of the young men. 'He must be somewhere here.'

"But they did not find me all the same.

"I stood watching them hunt for me for a time, and cursing my ill-luck in losing the clothes. Then I went into the refreshment-room, drank a little milk I found there, and sat down by the fire to consider my position.

"In a little while two assistants came and began to talk over the business very excitedly and like the fools they were. I heard a magnified account of my attack, and other speculations as to my whereabouts. Then I started to plan again. The insurmountable difficulty of the place, especially now it was alarmed, was to get any plunder out of it. I went down into the warehouse to see if there was any chance of packing and addressing a parcel, but I could not understand the system of checking. About eleven o'clock, the snow having melted as it fell, and the day being finer and a little warmer than the previous one, I decided that the Emporium was hopeless, and went out again, exasperated at my lack of success, with only the vaguest plans of action in my mind."

Chapter 23

In Drury Lane

"But you begin to realise now," said the Invisible Man, "the full disadvantage of my condition. I had no shelter, no covering. To get clothing was to give up all my advantage, to make myself a strange and terrible thing. I was fasting; for to eat, to fill myself with unassimilated matter, would be to become grotesquely visible again."

"I never thought of that," said Kemp.

"Nor had I. And the snow had warned me of other dangers. I could not go out in snow - it would settle on me and expose me. Rain, too, would make me a watery outline, a glistening surface of a man - a bubble. And fog - I would be like a fainter bubble in a fog, a surface, a greasy glimmer of humanity. Moreover, as I went out - in the London air - I gathered dirt around my ankles, floating dust upon my skin. I did not know how long it would be before I would become visible from that cause also. But I saw clearly it could not be for long.

"Not in London at any rate.

"I went into the slums towards Great Portland Street, and found myself at the end of the street in which I had lodged. I did not go that way, because of the crowd halfway down it opposite the still smoking ruins of the house I had set fire to. My most immediate problem was to get clothes. What to do with my face puzzled me. Then I saw in one of those little miscellaneous shops - news, sweets, toys, stationery, belated Christmas nonsense, and so on - an selection of masks and noses. I realised that problem was solved. In a flash I saw my course. I turned round, no longer aimless, and went - circuitously in order to avoid the busy ways, towards the back streets north of the Strand; for I remembered, though not very distinctly where, that some theatrical costumiers had shops in that district.

"The day was cold, with a sharp wind down the northward running streets. I walked fast to avoid being overtaken. Every crossing was a danger, every passenger a thing to watch alertly. One man as I was about to pass him at the top of Bedford Street, turned upon me abruptly and came into me, sending me into the road and almost under the wheel of a passing cab. The verdict of the cab-rank was that he had had some sort of stroke. I was so unnerved by this encounter that I went into Covent Garden Market and sat down for some time in a quiet corner by a stall of violets, panting and trembling. I found I had caught a new cold, and had to go out after a while in case my sneezes attracted attention.

"At last I reached the object of my quest, a dirty little shop in a side-street near Drury Lane, with a window full of tinsel robes, artificial jewels, wigs, slippers, dominoes and theatrical photographs. The shop was old-fashioned and low and dark, and the house rose above it for four storeys, dark and dismal. I peered through the window and, seeing no one inside, entered. The opening of the door set a clanking bell ringing. I left it open, and walked round an empty costume stand, into a corner behind a long mirror. For a minute or so no one came. Then I heard heavy feet walking across a room, and a man appeared down the shop.

"My plans were now perfectly definite. I proposed to make my way into the house, hide myself upstairs, wait for my opportunity, and when everything was quiet, find a wig, mask, glasses, and costume, and go into the world, perhaps a grotesque but still a credible figure. And incidentally of course I could rob the house of any available money.

"The man who had entered the shop was a short, thin, bent, brown man, with long arms and very short legs. Apparently I had interrupted a meal. He stared about the shop with an expression of expectation. This gave way to surprise, and then anger, as he saw the shop empty. 'Damn the boys!' he said. He went to stare up and down the street. He came in again in a minute, kicked the door closed with his foot angrily, and went muttering back to the house door.

"I came forward to follow him, and at the noise of my movement he stopped. I did so too, surprised by his quickness of ear. He slammed the house door in my face.

"I stood hesitating. Suddenly I heard his quick footsteps returning, and the door reopened. He stood looking about the shop like one who was still not satisfied. Then, murmuring to himself, he examined the back of the counter and peered behind some fixtures. Then he stood doubtful. He had left the house door open and I slipped into the inner room.

"It was a strange little room, poorly furnished and with a number of big masks in the corner. On the table was his breakfast, and it was an exasperating thing for me, Kemp, to have to sniff his coffee and stand watching while he came in and resumed his meal. And his table manners were irritating. Three doors opened into the little room, one going upstairs and one down, but they were all shut. I could not get out of the room while he was there, I could scarcely move because of his alertness, and there was draught down my back. Twice I stopped a sneeze just in time.

"The spectacular quality of my sensations was curious and novel, but for all that I was tired and angry long before he had finished eating. But at last he made an end and putting his crockery on the black tin tray upon which he had had his teapot, and gathering all the crumbs up on the mustard-stained cloth, he took the whole lot of things with him. His burden prevented his shutting the door behind him - as he would have done; I never saw such a man for shutting doors - and I followed him into a very dirty underground kitchen. I had the pleasure of seeing him begin to wash up, and then, finding no good in staying down there, and the brick floor being cold to my feet, I returned upstairs and sat in his chair by the fire. It was burning low, and scarcely thinking, I put on a little coal. The noise of this brought him up at once, and he stood staring. He peered about the room and was within an inch of touching me. Even after that examination, he scarcely seemed satisfied. He stopped in the doorway and took a final inspection before he went down.

"I waited in the little parlour for an age, and at last he came up and opened the upstairs door. I just managed to get past him.

"On the staircase he stopped suddenly, so that I very nearly walked into him. He stood looking back right into my face and listening. 'I could have sworn,' he said. His long hairy hand pulled at his lower lip. His eye went up and down the staircase. Then he grunted and went on up again.

"His hand was on the handle of a door, and then he stopped again with the same puzzled anger on his face. He was becoming aware of the faint sounds of my movements about him. The man must have had diabolically acute hearing. He suddenly flashed into rage. 'If there's any one in this house,' he cried, and left the threat unfinished. He put his hand in his pocket, failed to find what he wanted, and rushing past me went blundering noisily downstairs. But I did not follow him. I sat on the top of the staircase until his return.

"Soon he came up again, still muttering. He opened the door of the room, and before I could enter, slammed it in my face.

"I decided to explore the house, and spent some time in doing so as noiselessly as possible. The house was very old, damp so that the paper in the attics was peeling from the walls, and rat-infested. Some of the door handles were stiff and I was afraid to turn them. Several rooms I did inspect were unfurnished, and others were littered with theatrical lumber, bought second-hand, I judged, from its appearance. In one room next to his I found a lot of old clothes. I began looking through these, and in my eagerness forgot again the evident sharpness of his ears. I heard a stealthy footstep and, looking up just in time, saw him peering in at the tumbled heap and holding an old-fashioned revolver in his hand. I stood perfectly still while he stared about open-mouthed and suspicious. 'It must have been her,' he said slowly. 'Damn her!'

"He shut the door quietly, and immediately I heard the key turn in the lock. Then his footsteps retreated. I realised abruptly that I was locked in. For a minute I did not know what to do. I walked from door to window and back, and stood perplexed. A gust of anger came upon me. But I decided to inspect the clothes before I did anything further, and my first attempt brought down a pile from an upper shelf. This brought him back, more sinister than ever. That time he actually touched me, jumped back with amazement and stood astonished in the middle of the room.

"Presently he calmed a little. 'Rats,' he said in an undertone, fingers on lip. He was evidently a little scared. I moved quietly out of the room, but a plank creaked. Then the infernal little brute started going all over the house, revolver in hand and locking door after door and pocketing the keys. When I realised what he was up to I had a fit of rage - I could hardly control myself sufficiently to watch my opportunity. By this time I knew he was alone in the house, and so I knocked him on the head."

"Knocked him on the head!" exclaimed Kemp.

"Yes - stunned him - as he was going downstairs. Hit him from behind with a stool that stood on the landing. He went downstairs like a bag of old boots."

"But - ! I say! The common conventions of humanity - "

"Are all very well for common people. But the point was, Kemp, that I had to get out of that house in a disguise without his seeing me. I couldn't think of any other way of doing it. And then I gagged him with a Louis Quatorze vest and tied him up in a sheet."

"Tied him up in a sheet!"

"Made a sort of bag of it. It was rather a good idea to keep the idiot scared and quiet, and a devilish hard thing to get out of - head away from the string. My dear Kemp, it's no good your sitting and glaring as though I was a murderer. It had to be done. He had his revolver. If he saw me he would be able to describe me - "

"But still," said Kemp, "in England - to-day. And the man was in his own house, and you were - well, robbing."

"Robbing! Confound it! You'll call me a thief next! Surely, Kemp, you're not fool enough to dance on the old strings. Can't you see my position?"

"And his too," said Kemp.

The Invisible Man stood up sharply. *"What do you mean to say?"*

Kemp's face grew a little hard. He was about to speak and stopped himself. *"I suppose, after all," he said with a sudden change of manner, "the thing had to be done. You were in trouble. But still - "*

"Of course I was in trouble - infernal trouble. And he made me angry too - hunting me about the house, fooling about with his revolver, locking and unlocking doors. He was simply exasperating. You don't blame me, do you? You don't blame me?"

"I never blame any one," said Kemp. "It's quite out of fashion. What did you do next?"

"I was hungry. Downstairs I found a loaf of bread and some old cheese - more than sufficient to satisfy my hunger. I took some brandy and water, and then went up past my impromptu bag - he was lying quite still - to the room containing the old clothes. This looked out upon the street, two lace curtains brown with dirt covering the window. I went and peered out. Outside the day was bright - by contrast with the brown shadows of the dismal house in which I found myself, dazzlingly bright. A brisk traffic was going by, fruit carts, a cab, a four-wheeler with a pile of boxes, a fishmonger's cart. I turned with spots of colour swimming before my eyes to the shadowy fixtures behind me. My excitement was giving place to a clear apprehension of my position again. The room was full of a faint scent of benzoline, used, I suppose, in cleaning the garments.

"I began a systematic search of the place. I would judge the hunchback had been alone in the house for some time. He was a curious person. Everything that could possibly be of service to me I collected in the clothes storeroom, and then I made a deliberate selection. I found a handbag I thought a suitable possession, and some powder, rouge, and sticking-plaster.

"I had thought of painting and powdering my face and all that there was to show of me, in order to render myself visible, but the disadvantage of this lay in the fact that I should require turpentine and other equipment and a considerable amount of time before I could vanish again. Finally I chose a mask of the better type, slightly grotesque but not more so than many human beings, dark glasses, greyish whiskers, and a wig. I could find no underwear, but that I could buy subsequently, and for the time I covered myself in a cloak and some white cashmere scarfs. I could find no socks, but the hunchback's boots were rather a loose fit and sufficed. In a desk in the shop were three sovereigns and about thirty shillings' worth of silver, and in a locked cupboard I broke open in the inner room were eight pounds in gold. I could go forth into the world again, equipped.

"Then came a curious hesitation. Was my appearance really - credible? I tried myself with a little bedroom mirror, inspecting myself from every point of view to discover any forgotten chink, but it all seemed sound. I was grotesque in a theatrical way, but I was certainly not a physical impossibility. Gathering confidence, I took my mirror down into the shop, pulled down the shop blinds, and looked at myself from every point of view with the help of the long mirror in the corner.

"I spent some minutes gathering up my courage and then unlocked the shop door and marched out into the street, leaving the little man to get out of his sheet again when he liked. In five minutes a dozen turnings intervened between me and the costumier's shop. No one appeared to notice me very much. My last difficulty seemed overcome."

He stopped again.

"And you worried no more about the hunchback?" said Kemp.

"No," said the Invisible Man. *"Nor have I heard what became of him. I suppose he untied himself or kicked himself out. The knots were pretty tight."*

He became silent, and went to the window and stared out.

"What happened when you went out into the Strand?"

"Oh! - disillusionment again. I thought my troubles were over. Practically I thought I had impunity to do whatever I chose, everything - except to give away my secret. So I thought. Whatever I did, whatever the consequences might be, was nothing to me. I had merely to throw aside my clothes and vanish. No person could hold me. I could take my money where I found it. I decided to treat myself to a sumptuous feast, and then stay at a good hotel, and accumulate a new set of clothes. I felt amazingly confident - it's not particularly pleasant recalling that I was an idiot. I went into a place and was already ordering a lunch, when it occurred to me that I could not eat unless I exposed my invisible face. I finished ordering the lunch, told the man I would be back in ten minutes, and went out exasperated. I don't know if you have ever been disappointed in your appetite."

"Not quite so badly," said Kemp, *"but I can imagine it."*

"I could have smashed the silly devils. At last, faint with the desire for tasteful food, I went into another place and demanded a private room. 'I am disfigured,' I said. 'Badly.' They looked at me curiously, but of course it was not their affair - and so at last I got my lunch. It was not particularly well served, but it sufficed; and when I had had it, I sat over a cigar, trying to plan my line of action. And outside a snowstorm was beginning.

"The more I thought it over, Kemp, the more I realised what a helpless absurdity an Invisible Man was - in a cold and dirty climate and a crowded civilised city. Before I made this mad experiment I had dreamt of a thousand advantages. That afternoon it seemed all disappointment. I went over the heads of the things a man reckons desirable. No doubt invisibility made it possible to get them, but it made it impossible to enjoy them when they are got. Ambition - what is the good of pride of place when you cannot appear there? What is the good of the love of woman when her name must needs be Delilah? I have no taste for politics, for fame, for philanthropy, for sport. What was I to do? And for this I had become a wrapped-up mystery, a swathed and bandaged caricature of a man!"

He paused, and his attitude suggested a glance at the window.

"But how did you get to Iping?" said Kemp, anxious to keep his guest busy talking.

"I went there to work. I had one hope. It was a half idea! I have it still. It is a full blown idea now. A way of getting back! Of restoring what I have done. When I choose. When I have done everything I mean to do invisibly. And that is what I chiefly want to talk to you about now."

"You went straight to Iping?"

"Yes. I had simply to get my three volumes of memoranda and my cheque-book, my luggage and underwear, order a quantity of chemicals to work out this idea of mine - I will show you the calculations as soon as I get my books - and then I started. Jove! I remember the snowstorm now, and the accursed bother it was to keep the snow from wetting my cardboard nose."

"At the end," said Kemp, *"the day before yesterday, when they found you out, you rather - to judge by the papers - "*

"I did. Rather. Did I kill that fool of a police man?"

"No," said Kemp. *"He's expected to recover."*

"That's his luck, then. I completely lost my temper, the fools! Why couldn't they leave me alone? And that grocer lout?"

"There are no deaths expected," said Kemp.

"I don't know about that tramp of mine," said the Invisible Man, with an unpleasant laugh.

"By Heaven, Kemp, you don't know what rage is! To have worked for years, to have planned and plotted, and then to get some

fumbling idiot messing across your course! Every conceivable sort of silly creature that has ever been created has been sent to cross me.

"If I have much more of it, I shall go wild - I shall start cutting them down.

"As it is, they've made things a thousand times more difficult."

"No doubt it's exasperating," said Kemp, dryly.

Chapter 24

The Plan That Failed

"But now," said Kemp, with a side glance out of the window, "what are we to do?"

He moved nearer his guest as he spoke in such a way as to prevent the possibility of a glimpse of the three men who were coming up the hill road - with an intolerable slowness, as it seemed to Kemp.

"What were you planning to do when you were heading for Port Burdock? Had you any plan?"

"I was going to get out of the country. But I have changed that plan rather since seeing you. I thought it would be wise, now the weather is hot and invisibility possible, to make for the South. Especially as my secret was known, and every one would be on the lookout for a masked and muffled man. You have ships from here to France. My idea was to get aboard one and run the risks of the journey. From there I could go by train into Spain, or else get to Algiers. It would not be difficult. There a man might always be invisible - and yet live. And do things. I was using that tramp as a money box and luggage carrier, until I decided how to get my books and things sent over to meet me."

"That's clear."

"And then the filthy brute tried to rob me! He has hidden my books, Kemp. Hidden my books! If I can lay my hands on him!"

"Best plan to get the books out of him first."

"But where is he? Do you know?"

"He's in the town police station, locked up, by his own request, in the strongest cell in the place."

"Cur!" said the Invisible Man.

"But that interferes with your plans a little."

"We must get those books; those books are vital."

"Certainly," said Kemp, a little nervously, wondering if he heard footsteps outside. "Certainly we must get those books. But that won't be difficult, if he doesn't know they're for you."

"No," said the Invisible Man, and thought.

Kemp tried to think of something to keep the talk going, but the Invisible Man resumed of his own accord.

"Coming into your house, Kemp," he said, "changes all my plans. For you are a man that can understand. In spite of all that has happened, in spite of this publicity, of the loss of my books, of what I have suffered, there still remain great possibilities, huge possibilities -

"You have told no one I am here?" he asked abruptly.

Kemp hesitated. "That was implied," he said.

"No one?" insisted Griffin.

"Not a soul."

"Ah! Now - " The Invisible Man stood up, and putting his hands on his hips began to pace the study.

"I made a mistake, Kemp, a huge mistake, in carrying this thing through alone. I have wasted strength, time, opportunities. Alone - it is wonderful how little a man can do alone! To rob a little, to hurt a little, and that's all.

"What I want, Kemp, is a goal-keeper, a helper, and a hiding-place, an arrangement whereby I can sleep and eat and rest in peace, and unsuspected. I must have a confederate. With a confederate, with food and rest - a thousand things are possible.

"So far I have gone on vague lines. We have to consider all that invisibility means, all that it does not mean. It means little advantage for spying and so on - one makes sounds. It's of little help, a little help perhaps - in housebreaking and so on. Once you've caught me you could easily imprison me. But on the other hand I am hard to catch. This invisibility, in fact, is only good in two cases: It's useful in getting away, it's useful in approaching. It's particularly useful, therefore, in killing. I can walk round a man, whatever weapon he has, choose my point, strike as I like. Dodge as I like. Escape as I like."

Kemp's hand went to his moustache. Was that a movement downstairs?

"And it is killing we must do, Kemp."

"It is killing we must do," repeated Kemp. "I'm listening to your plan, Griffin, but I'm not agreeing. Why killing?"

"Not random killing but a judicious slaying. The point is they know there is an Invisible Man - as well as we know there is an Invisible Man. And that Invisible Man, Kemp, must now establish a Reign of Terror. Yes - no doubt it's surprising. But I mean it. A Reign of Terror. He must take some town like your Burdock and terrify and dominate it. He must issue his orders. He can do that in a thousand ways - pieces of paper pushed under doors would be enough. And all who disobey his orders he must kill, and kill all who would defend the disobedient."

"Humph!" said Kemp, no longer listening to Griffin but to the sound of his front door opening and closing.

"It seems to me, Griffin," he said, to cover his wandering attention, "that your confederate would be in a difficult position."

"No one would know he was a confederate," said the Invisible Man, eagerly. And then suddenly, "Hush! What's that downstairs?"

"Nothing," said Kemp, and suddenly began to speak loud and fast. "I don't agree to this, Griffin," he said. "Understand me, I don't agree to this. Why dream of playing a game against the race? How can you hope to gain happiness? Don't be a lone wolf. Publish your results; take the world - take the nation at least - into your confidence. Think what you might do with a million helpers - "

The Invisible Man interrupted Kemp. *"There are footsteps coming upstairs,"* he said in a low voice.

"Nonsense," said Kemp.

"Let me see," said the Invisible Man, and advanced, arm extended, to the door.

Kemp hesitated for a second and then moved to intercept him. The Invisible Man started and stood still. *"Traitor!"* cried the Voice, and suddenly the dressing-gown opened, and sitting down the Unseen began to get undressed. Kemp made three swift steps to the door, and immediately the Invisible Man - his legs had vanished - jumped to his feet with a shout. Kemp threw the door open.

As it opened, there came a sound of hurrying feet downstairs and voices.

With a quick movement Kemp pushed the Invisible Man back, jumped to one side, and slammed the door. The key was outside and ready. In another moment Griffin would have been alone in the study, a prisoner. Except for one little thing. The key had been put in hastily that morning. As Kemp slammed the door it fell noisily upon the carpet.

Kemp's face became white. He tried to hold the door handle with both hands. For a moment he stood pulling. Then the door opened six inches. But he got it closed again. The second time it was opened a foot wide, and the dressing-gown came pushing itself into the opening. His throat was gripped by invisible fingers, and he let go of the handle to defend himself. He was forced back, tripped and thrown heavily into the corner of the landing. The empty dressing-gown was thrown on the top of him.

Halfway up the staircase was Colonel Adye, the recipient of Kemp's letter, the chief of the Burdock police. He was staring at the sudden appearance of Kemp, followed by the extraordinary sight of clothing thrown in the air. He saw Kemp knocked down, and struggling to his feet. He saw him rush forward, and go down again, felled like an ox.

Then suddenly he was hit violently. By nothing! A vast weight, it seemed, jumped upon him, and he was thrown headlong down the staircase, with a grip at his throat and a knee in his groin. An invisible foot trod on his back, ghostly footsteps passed downstairs, he heard the two police officers in the hall shout and run, and the front door of the house slammed violently.

He rolled over and sat up staring. He saw, staggering down the staircase, Kemp, dusty and dishevelled, one side of his face white from a blow, his lip bleeding, holding a pink dressing-gown and some underwear in his arms.

"My God!" cried Kemp, *"the game's up! He's gone!"*

Chapter 25

The Hunting of the Invisible Man

For a while Kemp was too inarticulate to make Adye understand the things that had just happened. The two men stood on the landing, Kemp speaking quickly, the grotesque costume of Griffin still on his arm. But presently Adye began to understand something of the situation.

"He's mad," said Kemp; "inhuman. He is pure selfishness. He thinks of nothing but his own advantage, his own safety. I have listened to such a story this morning of brutal self-seeking! He has wounded men. He will kill them unless we can prevent him. He will create a panic. Nothing can stop him. He is going out now - furious!"

"He must be caught," said Adye. "That is certain."

"But how?" cried Kemp, and suddenly became full of ideas. "You must begin at once. You must set every available man to work. You must prevent his leaving this district. Once he gets away he may go through the countryside as he likes, killing and maiming. He dreams of a reign of terror! A reign of terror, I tell you. You must set a watch on trains and roads and shipping. The garrison must help. You must telegraph for help. The only thing that may keep him here is the thought of recovering some books of notes he counts of value. I will tell you of that! There is a man in your police station - Marvel."

"I know," said Adye, "I know. Those books - yes."

"And you must prevent him from eating or sleeping; day and night the country must be alert for him. Food must be locked up and secured, all food, so that he will have to break his way to it. The houses everywhere must be locked against him. Heaven send us cold nights and rain! The whole countryside must begin hunting and keep hunting. I tell you, Adye, he is a danger, a disaster; unless he is caught and secured, it is frightful to think of the things that may happen."

"What else can we do?" said Adye. "I must go down at once and begin organising. But why not come? Yes - you come too! Come, and we must hold a sort of council of war, - get Hopps to help - and the railway managers. By jove! it's urgent. Come along - tell me as we go. What else is there we can do? Put that stuff down."

In another moment Adye was leading the way downstairs. They found the front door open and the policemen standing outside staring at empty air. *"He's got away, sir,"* said one.

"We must go to the central station at once," said Adye. *"One of you go on down and get a cab to come up and meet us - quickly. And now, Kemp, what else?"*

"Dogs," said Kemp. *"Get dogs. They don't see him, but they smell him. Get dogs."*

"Good," said Adye. *"It's not generally known, but the prison officials over at Halstead know a man with bloodhounds. Dogs. What else?"*

"Bear in mind," said Kemp, *"his food shows. After eating, his food shows until it is assimilated. So that he has to hide after eating. You must keep on beating - every bush, every quiet corner. And put all weapons, all implements that might be weapons, away. He can't carry such things for long. And what he can pick up and hit men with must be hidden away."*

"Good again," said Adye. *"We shall have him yet!"*

"And on the roads," said Kemp, and hesitated.

"Yes?" said Adye.

"Powdered glass," said Kemp. *"It's cruel, I know. But think of what he may do!"*

Adye drew the air in between his teeth sharply. *"It's unsportsmanlike. I don't know. But I'll have powdered glass got ready. If he goes too far -"*

"The man's become inhuman, I tell you," said Kemp. *"I am as sure he will establish a reign of terror - so soon as he has got over the emotions of this escape - as I am sure I am talking to you. Our only chance is to be ahead. He has cut himself off from his kind. His blood be upon his own head."*

Chapter 26

The Wicksteed Murder

The Invisible Man seems to have rushed out of Kemp's house in a state of blind fury. A little child playing near Kemp's gateway was violently caught up and thrown aside, so that its ankle was broken, and thereafter for some hours the Invisible Man passed out of human perceptions. No one knows where he went nor what he did. But one can imagine him hurrying through the hot June morning, up the hill and on to the open downland behind Port Burdock, raging and despairing at his intolerable fate, and sheltering at last, hot and tired, among the thickets of Hintondean, to piece together again his shattered schemes against his species. That seems the most probable refuge for him, for there it was he re-asserted himself in a grimly tragical manner about two in the afternoon.

One wonders what his state of mind may have been during that time, and what plans he devised. No doubt he was almost ecstatically exasperated by Kemp's treachery, and though we may be able to understand the motives that led to that deceit, we may still imagine and even sympathise a little with the fury the attempted surprise must have occasioned. Perhaps something of the stunned astonishment of his Oxford Street experiences may have returned to him, for evidently he had counted on Kemp's co-operation in his brutal dream of a terrorised world. At any rate he vanished from human knowledge at about midday, and no living witness can tell what he did until about half-past two. It was a fortunate thing, perhaps, for humanity, but for him it was a fatal inaction.

During that time a growing multitude of men scattered over the countryside were busy. In the morning he had still been simply a legend, a terror; in the afternoon, mainly by virtue of Kemp's drily worded proclamation, he was presented as a tangible antagonist, to be wounded, captured, or overcome, and the countryside began organising itself with inconceivable rapidity. By two o'clock even he might still have got out of the district by getting aboard a train, but after two that became impossible. Every passenger train along the lines on a great parallelogram between Southampton, Manchester, Brighton, and Horsham, travelled with locked doors, and the goods traffic was almost entirely suspended. And in a great circle of twenty miles round Port Burdock, men armed with guns and sticks were presently setting out in groups of three and four, with dogs, to beat the roads and fields.

Mounted policemen rode along the country lanes, stopping at every cottage and warning the people to lock up their houses, and keep indoors unless they were armed, and all the elementary schools had closed by three o'clock, and the children, scared and keeping together in groups, were hurrying home. Kemp's proclamation - signed by Adye - was posted over almost the whole district by four or five o'clock in the afternoon. It gave briefly but clearly all the conditions of the struggle, the necessity of keeping the Invisible Man from food and sleep, the necessity for incessant watchfulness and for a prompt attention to any evidence of his movements. And so swift and decided was the action of the authorities, so prompt and universal was the belief in this strange being, that before nightfall an area of several hundred square miles was in a state of siege. And before nightfall, too, a thrill of horror went through the whole watching nervous countryside. Going from whispering mouth to mouth, swift and certain over the length and breadth of the county, passed the story of the murder of Mr. Wicksteed.

If our supposition that the Invisible Man's refuge was the Hintondean thickets, then we must suppose that in the early afternoon he came out again intent upon some project that involved the use of a weapon. We cannot know what the project was, but the evidence that he had the iron rod in hand before he met Wicksteed is to me at least overwhelming.

We can know nothing of the details of the encounter. It occurred on the edge of a gravel pit, not two hundred yards from Lord Burdock's Lodge gate. Everything points to a desperate struggle, - the trampled ground, the numerous wounds Mr. Wicksteed received, his broken walking-stick; but why the attack was made - except in a murderous frenzy - it is impossible to imagine. Indeed the theory of madness is almost unavoidable. Mr. Wicksteed was a man of forty-five or forty-six, steward to Lord Burdock, of inoffensive habits and appearance, the very last person in the world to provoke such a terrible antagonist. Against him it would seem the Invisible Man used an iron bar taken from a broken piece of fence. He stopped this quiet man, going quietly home to his midday meal, attacked him, beat down his weak defences, broke his arm, knocked him down, and smashed his head to a jelly.

He must have taken this bar out of the fencing before he met his victim; he must have been carrying it ready in his hand. Only two details apart what has already been said seem to bear on the matter. One is the circumstance that the gravel pit was not in Mr. Wicksteed's direct path home, but nearly a couple of hundred yards out of his way. The other is the assertion of a little girl to the effect that, going to her afternoon school, she saw the murdered man "trotting" in a peculiar manner across a field towards the gravel pit. Her pantomime of his action suggests a man pursuing something on the ground before him and hitting at it again and again with his walking-stick. She was the last person to see him alive. He passed out of her sight to his death, the struggle being hidden from her only by some beech trees and a slight depression in the ground.

Now this, to the present writer's mind at least, lifts the murder out of the realm of the absolutely random. We may imagine that Griffin had taken the bar as a weapon, but without any deliberate intention of using it in murder. Wicksteed may then have come by and noticed this bar inexplicably moving through the air. Without any thought of the Invisible Man - for Port Burdock is ten miles away - he may have chased it. It is quite conceivable that he may not even have heard of the Invisible Man. One can then imagine the Invisible Man going off - quietly in order to avoid revealing his presence in the neighbourhood, and Wicksteed, excited and curious, pursuing this unaccountably moving object - finally hitting at it.

No doubt the Invisible Man could easily have distanced his middle-aged pursuer under ordinary circumstances, but the position in which Wicksteed's body was found suggests that he had the bad luck to drive his prey into a corner between a bank of stinging nettles and the gravel pit. To those who appreciate the extraordinary irascibility of the Invisible Man, the rest of the encounter will be easy to imagine.

But this is pure hypothesis. The only undeniable facts - for stories of children are often unreliable - are the discovery of Wicksteed's body, beaten to death, and of the blood-stained iron bar thrown among the nettles. The abandonment of the rod by

Griffin, suggests that in the emotional excitement of the affair, the purpose for which he took it - if he had a purpose - was abandoned. He was certainly an intensely egotistical and unfeeling man, but the sight of his victim, his first victim, bloody and pitiful at his feet, may have released some feeling of remorse to flood for a time whatever scheme of action he had thought of.

After the murder of Mr. Wicksteed, he would seem to have headed across the country towards the downland. There is a story of a voice heard about sunset by a couple of men in a field near Fern Bottom. It was wailing and laughing, crying and groaning, and again and again it shouted. It must have been strange hearing. It went up across the middle of a clover field and disappeared away towards the hills.

That afternoon the Invisible Man must have learnt something of the rapid use Kemp had made of his confidences. He must have found houses locked and secured; he may have waited near railway stations and wandered about inns, and no doubt he read the proclamations and realised something of the nature of the campaign against him. And as the evening advanced, the fields became dotted here and there with groups of three or four men, and noisy with the yelping of dogs. These men-hunters had particular instructions as to the way they should help one another in the case of an encounter. He avoided them all. We may understand something of his exasperation, and it could have been none the less because he himself had supplied the information that was being used so remorselessly against him. For that day at least he lost heart; for nearly twenty-four hours, except when he attacked Wicksteed, he was a hunted man. In the night, he must have eaten and slept; for in the morning he was himself again, active, powerful, angry, and malignant, prepared for his last great struggle against the world.

Chapter 27

The Siege of Kemp's House

Kemp read a strange message, written in pencil on a greasy sheet of paper.

"You have been amazingly energetic and clever," this letter said, "though what you expect to gain by it I cannot imagine. You are against me. For a whole day you have chased me; you have tried to rob me of a night's rest. But I have had food in spite of you, I have slept in spite of you, and the game is only beginning. The game is only beginning. There is nothing for it, but to start the Terror. This announces the first day of the Terror. Port Burdock is no longer under the Queen tell your Colonel of Police, and the rest of them; it is under me - the Terror! This is day one of year one of the new epoch - the Epoch of the Invisible Man. I am Invisible Man the First. To begin with the rule will be easy. The first day there will be one execution as an example - a man named Kemp. Death starts for him to-day. He may lock himself away, hide himself away, get guards about him, put on armour if he likes; Death, the unseen Death, is coming. Let him take precautions; it will impress my people. Death starts from the letter-box by midday. The letter will fall in as the postman comes along, then off! The game begins. Death starts. Help him not, my people, lest Death fall upon you also. To-day Kemp is to die."

Kemp read this letter twice. *"It's no joke,"* he said. *"That's his voice! And he means it."*

He turned the folded sheet over and saw on the addressed side of it the postmark Hintondean, and the prosaic detail, "2d. to pay."

He got up, leaving his lunch unfinished - the letter had come by the one o'clock post - and went into his study. He rang for his housekeeper, and told her to go round the house at once, examine all the locks of the windows, and close all the shutters. He closed the shutters of his study himself. From a locked drawer in his bedroom he took a little revolver, examined it carefully, and put it into the pocket of his jacket. He wrote a number of brief notes, one to Colonel Adye, gave them to his servant to take, with explicit instructions as to her way of leaving the house. *"There is no danger,"* he said, and added a mental reservation, *"to you."* He remained meditative for a space after doing this, and then returned to his cooling lunch.

He ate with gaps of thought. Finally he hit the table sharply. *"We will have him!"* he said; *"and I am the bait. He will come too far."*

He went up to the study, carefully shutting every door after him. *"It's a game,"* he said, *"a strange game - but the chances are all for me, Mr. Griffin, in spite of your invisibility. Griffin contra mundum - with a vengeance!"*

He stood at the window staring at the hot hillside. *"He must get food every day - and I don't envy him. Did he really sleep last night? Out in the open somewhere - secure from collisions. I wish we could get some good cold wet weather instead of the heat."*

"He may be watching me now."

He went close to the window. Something knocked sharply against the brickwork over the frame, and made him jump violently.

"I'm getting nervous," said Kemp. But it was five minutes before he went to the window again. *"It must have been a sparrow,"* he said.

Soon he heard the front-door bell ringing, and hurried downstairs. He unbolted and unlocked the door, examined the chain, put it up, and opened cautiously without showing himself. A familiar voice hailed him. It was Adye.

"Your servant's been attacked, Kemp," he said round the door.

"What!" exclaimed Kemp.

"Had that note of yours taken away from her. He's near here. Let me in."

Kemp released the chain, and Adye entered through as narrow an opening as possible. He stood in the hall, looking with infinite relief at Kemp relocking the door. *"Note was snatched out of her hand. Scared her horribly. She's down at the station. Hysterics. He's close here. What was it about?"*

Kemp swore.

"What a fool I was," said Kemp. *"I might have known. It's not an hour's walk from Hintondean. Already!"*

"What's up?" said Adye.

"Look here!" said Kemp, and led the way into his study. He handed Adye the Invisible Man's letter. Adye read it and whistled softly. *"And you - ?"* said Adye.

"Proposed a trap - like a fool," said Kemp, *"and sent my proposal out by a maid servant. To him."*

Adye followed Kemp's profanity.

"He'll clear out," said Adye.

"Not he," said Kemp.

A resounding smash of glass came from upstairs. Adye had a silvery glimpse of a little revolver half out of Kemp's pocket. *"It's a window, upstairs!"* said Kemp, and led the way up. There came a second smash while they were still on the staircase. When they reached the study they found two of the three windows smashed, half the room covered with splintered glass, and one big

stone lying on the writing table. The two men stopped in the doorway, contemplating the wreckage. Kemp swore again, and as he did so the third window went with a snap like a pistol, hung starred for a moment, and collapsed in jagged, shivering triangles into the room.

"What's this for?" said Adye.

"It's a beginning," said Kemp.

"There's no way of climbing up here?"

"Not for a cat," said Kemp.

"No shutters?"

"Not here. All the downstairs rooms - Hullo!"

Smash, and then whack of boards hit hard came from downstairs. "Confound him!" said Kemp. "That must be - yes - it's one of the bedrooms. He's going to do all the house. But he's a fool. The shutters are up, and the glass will fall outside. He'll cut his feet."

Another window proclaimed its destruction. The two men stood on the landing perplexed. "I have it!" said Adye. "Let me have a stick or something, and I'll go down to the station and get the bloodhounds put on. That ought to settle him! They're near by - not ten minutes - "

Another window went the way of its fellows.

"You haven't a revolver?" asked Adye.

Kemp's hand went to his pocket. Then he hesitated. "I haven't one - at least to spare."

"I'll bring it back," said Adye, "you'll be safe here."

Kemp handed him the weapon.

"Now for the door," said Adye.

As they stood hesitating in the hall, they heard one of the first-floor bedroom windows crack and clash. Kemp went to the door and began to open the lock as silently as possible. His face was a little paler than usual. "You must step straight out," said Kemp. In another moment Adye was on the doorstep and the lock was closing again. He hesitated for a moment, feeling more comfortable with his back against the door. Then he marched, upright and square, down the steps. He crossed the lawn and approached the gate. A little breeze seemed to ripple over the grass. Something moved near him. "Stop a bit," said a Voice, and Adye stopped and his hand tightened on the revolver.

"Well?" said Adye, white and grim, and every nerve tense.

"Oblige me by going back to the house," said the Voice, as tense and grim as Adye's.

"Sorry," said Adye a little hoarsely, and moistened his lips with his tongue. The Voice was on his left front, he thought. Suppose he were to take his luck with a shot?

"What are you going for?" said the Voice, and there was a quick movement of the two, and a flash of sunlight from the open lip of Adye's pocket.

Adye desisted and thought. "Where I go," he said slowly, "is my own business." The words were still on his lips, when an arm came round his neck, his back felt a knee, and he was falling backward. He drew clumsily and fired absurdly, and in another moment he was hit in the mouth and the revolver pulled from his grip. He made a vain grab at a slippery leg, tried to get up and fell back. "Damn!" said Adye. The Voice laughed. "I'd kill you now if it wasn't the waste of a bullet," it said. He saw the revolver in mid-air, six feet off, covering him.

"Well?" said Adye, sitting up.

"Get up," said the Voice.

Adye stood up.

"Attention" said the Voice, and then fiercely, "Don't try any games. Remember I can see your face if you can't see mine. You've got to go back to the house."

"He won't let me in," said Adye.

"That's a pity," said the Invisible Man. "I've got no quarrel with you."

Adye moistened his lips again. He glanced away from the barrel of the revolver and saw the sea far off very blue and dark under the midday sun, the smooth green down, the white cliff of the Head, and the multitudinous town, and suddenly he knew that life was very sweet. His eyes came back to this little metal thing hanging between heaven and earth, six yards away. "What am I to do?" he said sullenly.

"What am I to do?" asked the Invisible Man. "You will get help. The only thing is for you to go back."

"I will try. If he lets me in will you promise not to rush the door?"

"I've got no quarrel with you," said the Voice.

Kemp had hurried upstairs after letting Adye out, and now crouching among the broken glass and peering cautiously over the edge of the study window-sill, he saw Adye stand talking with the Unseen. *"Why doesn't he fire?"* whispered Kemp to himself. Then the revolver moved a little and the glint of the sunlight flashed in Kemp's eyes. He shaded his eyes and tried to see the source of the blinding light.

"Surely!" he said. *"Adye has given up the revolver."*

"Promise not to rush the door," Adye was saying. *"Don't push a winning game too far. Give a man a chance."*

"You go back to the house. I tell you flatly I will not promise anything."

Adye's decision seemed suddenly made. He turned towards the house, walking slowly with his hands behind him. Kemp watched him - puzzled. The revolver vanished, flashed again into sight, vanished again, and became evident on a closer scrutiny as a little dark object following Adye. Then things happened very quickly. Adye jumped backwards, turned round, clutched at this little object, missed it, threw up his hands and fell forward on his face, leaving a little puff of blue smoke in the air. Kemp did not hear the sound of the shot. Adye writhed, raised himself on one arm, fell forward, and lay still.

For a while Kemp remained staring at the quiet carelessness of Adye's attitude. The afternoon was very hot and still, nothing seemed moving in all the world except a couple of yellow butterflies chasing each other through the bushes between the house and the road gate. Adye lay on the grass near the gate. The blinds of all the villas down the hill-road were drawn, but in one little green summer-house was a white figure, apparently an old man asleep. Kemp scrutinised the surroundings of the house for a glimpse of the revolver, but it had vanished. His eyes came back to Adye. The game was opening well.

Then came a ringing and knocking at the front door, that grew at last tumultuous, but following Kemp's instructions the servants had locked themselves into their rooms. This was followed by a silence. Kemp sat listening and then began looking cautiously out of the three windows, one after another. He went to the top of the staircase and stood listening uneasily. He armed himself with his bedroom poker, and went to examine the interior locks of the ground-floor windows again. Everything was safe and quiet. He returned to the study. Adye lay motionless over the edge of the gravel just as he had fallen. Coming along the road by the villas were the housemaid and two policemen.

Everything was deadly still. The three people seemed very slow in approaching. He wondered what his antagonist was doing.

He jumped. There was a smash from below. He hesitated and went downstairs again. Suddenly the house resounded with heavy blows and the splintering of wood. He heard a smash and the destructive clang of the iron fastenings of the shutters. He turned the key and opened the kitchen door. As he did so, the shutters, broken and splintering, came flying inward. He stood horrified. The window frame, save for one cross bar, was still intact, but only little teeth of glass remained in the frame. The shutters had been broken in with an axe, and now the axe was descending in sweeping blows upon the window frame and the iron bars defending it. Then suddenly it jumped aside and vanished. He saw the revolver lying on the path outside, and then the little weapon flew into the air. He dodged back. The revolver cracked just too late, and a splinter from the edge of the closing door flashed over his head. He slammed and locked the door, and as he stood outside he heard Griffin shouting and laughing. Then the blows of the axe, with their splitting and smashing accompaniments, were resumed.

Kemp stood in the passage trying to think. In a moment the Invisible Man would be in the kitchen. This door would not keep him a moment, and then -

A ringing came at the front door again. It would be the policemen. He ran into the hall, put up the chain, and drew the bolts. He made the girl speak before he dropped the chain, and the three people blundered into the house in a heap, and Kemp slammed the door again.

"The Invisible Man!" said Kemp. *"He has a revolver, with two shots - left. He's killed Adye. Shot him anyhow. Didn't you see him on the lawn? He's lying there."*

"Who?" said one of the policemen.

"Adye," said Kemp.

"We came round the back way," said the girl.

"What's that smashing?" asked one of the policemen.

"He's in the kitchen - or will be. He has found an axe -"

Suddenly the house was full of the Invisible Man's resounding blows on the kitchen door. The girl stared towards the kitchen, shuddered, and retreated into the dining-room. Kemp tried to explain in broken sentences. They heard the kitchen door give.

"This way," cried Kemp, starting into activity, and pushed the policemen into the dining-room doorway.

"Poker," said Kemp, and rushed to the fireplace. He handed a poker to each policeman. He suddenly threw himself backward.

"Whup!" said one policeman, ducked, and caught the axe on his poker. The pistol snapped its penultimate shot and ripped a valuable Sidney Cooper painting. The second policeman brought his poker down on the little weapon, as one might knock down a fly, and sent it rattling to the floor.

At the first clash the girl screamed, stood screaming for a moment by the fireplace, and then ran to open the shutters - possibly with an idea of escaping by the shattered window.

The axe receded into the passage, and fell to a position about two feet from the ground. They could hear the Invisible Man breathing. *"Stand away, you two,"* he said. *"I want that man Kemp."*

"We want you," said the first policeman, making a quick step forward and waving with his poker at the Voice. The Invisible Man must have moved back. He knocked into the umbrella stand. Then, as the policeman staggered with the swing of the blow he had aimed, the Invisible Man countered with the axe, the helmet crumpled like paper, and the blow sent the man spinning to the floor at the top of the kitchen stairs. But the second policeman, aiming behind the axe with his poker, hit something soft that snapped. There was a sharp exclamation of pain and the axe fell to the ground. The policeman swiped again at emptiness and hit nothing; he put his foot on the axe, and struck again. Then he stood, poker ready, listening intent for the slightest movement.

He heard the dining-room window open, and a quick rush of feet within. His companion rolled over and sat up with the blood running down between his eye and ear. *"Where is he?"* asked the man on the floor.

"Don't know. I've hit him. He's standing somewhere in the hall. Unless he's got past you. Doctor Kemp - sir."

Pause.

"Doctor Kemp," called the policeman again.

The second policeman struggled to his feet. He stood up. Suddenly the faint pad of bare feet on the kitchen stairs could be heard. *"Yap!"* cried the first policeman and incontinently threw his poker. It smashed a little gas tap.

He made as if he would chase the Invisible Man downstairs. Then he thought better of it and stepped into the dining-room.

"Doctor Kemp," he began, and stopped short -

"Doctor Kemp's in here," he said, as his companion looked over his shoulder.

The dining-room window was wide open, and neither housemaid nor Kemp was to be seen.

The second policeman's opinion of Kemp was terse and vivid.

Chapter 28

The Hunter Hunted

Mr. Heelas, Mr. Kemp's nearest neighbour among the villa holders, was asleep in his summer house when the siege of Kemp's house began. Mr. Heelas was one of the sturdy minority who refused to believe "in all this nonsense" about an Invisible Man. His wife, however, as he was to be reminded subsequently, did. He insisted upon walking about his garden just as if nothing was the matter, and he went to sleep in the afternoon in accordance with the custom of years. He slept through the smashing of the windows, and then woke up suddenly with a curious persuasion of something wrong. He looked across at Kemp's house, rubbed his eyes and looked again. Then he put his feet to the ground, and sat listening. He said he was damned, and still the strange thing was visible. The house looked as though it had been deserted for weeks - after a violent riot. Every window was broken, and every window, save those of the study, was blinded by the internal shutters.

"I could have sworn it was all right" - he looked at his watch - "twenty minutes ago."

He became aware of a measured concussion and the clash of glass, far away in the distance. And then, as he sat open-mouthed, came a still more wonderful thing. The shutters of the drawing-room window were flung open violently, and the housemaid in her outdoor hat and clothes, appeared struggling in a frantic manner to throw up the window. Suddenly a man appeared beside her, helping her - Dr. Kemp! In another moment the window was open, and the housemaid was struggling out; she ran forward and vanished among the bushes. Mr. Heelas stood up, exclaiming vaguely and vehemently at all these wonderful things. He saw Kemp stand on the sill, jump from the window, and reappear almost instantaneously running along a path between the bushes and stooping as he ran, like a man who evades observation. He vanished behind a laburnum, and appeared again climbing a fence adjacent to the open down. In a second he had fallen over and was running at a tremendous pace down the slope towards Mr. Heelas.

"Lord!" cried Mr. Heelas, struck with an idea; *"it's that Invisible Man brute! It's right, after all!"*

With Mr. Heelas to think things like that was to act, and his cook watching him from the top window was amazed to see him come running towards the house at a good nine miles an hour. *"Thought he wasn't afraid,"* said the cook. *"Mary, just come here!"* There was a slamming of doors, a ringing of bells, and the voice of Mr. Heelas bellowing like a bull. *"Shut the doors, shut the windows, shut everything! the Invisible Man is coming!"* Instantly the house was full of screams and directions, and scurrying feet. He ran to shut the French windows himself that opened on the veranda; as he did so Kemp's head and shoulders and knee appeared over the edge of the garden fence. In another moment Kemp had ploughed through the asparagus, and was running across the tennis lawn to the house.

"You can't come in," said Mr. Heelas, shutting the bolts. *"I'm very sorry if he's after you, but you can't come in!"*

Kemp appeared with a face of terror close to the glass, rapping and then shaking frantically at the French window. Then, seeing his efforts were useless, he ran along the veranda, jumped over the end, and went to hammer at the side door. Then he ran round by the side gate to the front of the house, and so into the hill-road. And Mr. Heelas staring from his window - a face of horror - had scarcely witnessed Kemp vanish, before the asparagus was being trampled this way and that by feet unseen. At that Mr. Heelas ran precipitately upstairs, and the rest of the chase is beyond his view. But as he passed the staircase window, he heard the side gate slam.

Emerging into the hill-road, Kemp naturally took the downward direction, and so it was he came to run in his own person the very race he had watched with such a critical eye from the study only four days ago. He ran it well for a man out of training; and though his face was white and wet, his wits were cool to the last. He ran with wide strides, and wherever a patch of rough ground intervened, wherever there came a patch of stones, or a bit of broken glass shone dazzling, he crossed it and left the bare invisible feet that followed to take what line they would.

For the first time in his life Kemp discovered that the hill-road was indescribably vast and desolate, and that the beginnings of the town far below at the hill foot were strangely remote. Never had there been a slower or more painful method of progression than running. All the gaunt villas, sleeping in the afternoon sun, looked locked and barred; no doubt they were locked and barred - by his own orders. But at any rate they might have kept a lookout for an eventuality like this! The town was rising up now, the sea had dropped out of sight behind it, and people down below were moving. A tram was just arriving at the hill foot. Beyond that was the police station. Was that footsteps he heard behind him? Sprint.

The people below were staring at him, one or two were running, and his breath was beginning to saw in his throat. The tram was quite near now, and the Jolly Cricketers was noisily locking its doors. Beyond the tram were posts and heaps of gravel - the drainage works. He had a transitory idea of jumping into the tram and slamming the doors, and then he resolved to go to the police station. In another moment he had passed the door of the Jolly Cricketers, and was in the blistering end of the street, with human beings about him. The tram driver and his helper - arrested by the sight of his furious speed - stood staring with the tram horses unhitched. Further on the astonished features of road workers appeared above the mounds of gravel.

His pace slowed a little, and then he heard the swift pad of his pursuer, and leapt forward again. *"The Invisible Man!"* he cried to the road workers, with a vague indicative gesture, and by an inspiration jumped the excavation and placed a burly group between him and the chase. Then abandoning the idea of the police station he turned into a little side street, rushed by a greengrocer's cart, hesitated for the tenth of a second at the door of a sweet shop, and then made for the mouth of an alley that ran back into the main Hill Street again. Two or three little children were playing here, and screamed and scattered running at his apparition, and immediately doors and windows opened and excited mothers revealed their hearts. Out he shot into Hill Street again, three hundred yards from the tramline end, and immediately he became aware of a tumultuous vociferation and running people.

He glanced up the street towards the hill. Hardly a dozen yards off ran a huge navvy, cursing in fragments and slashing viciously

with a spade, and hard behind him came the tram conductor with his fists clenched. Up the street others followed these two, striking and shouting. Down towards the town, men and women were running, and he noticed clearly one man coming out of a shop-door with a stick in his hand. *"Spread out! Spread out!"* cried some one. Kemp suddenly grasped the altered condition of the chase. He stopped and looked round, panting. *"He's close here!"* he cried. *"Form a line across -"*

"Aha!" shouted a voice.

He was hit hard under the ear, and went reeling, trying to face round towards his unseen antagonist. He just managed to keep his feet, and he struck a vain counter in the air. Then he was hit again under the jaw, and sprawled headlong on the ground. In another moment a knee compressed his diaphragm, and a couple of eager hands gripped his throat, but the grip of one was weaker than the other; he grasped the wrists, heard a cry of pain from his assailant, and then the spade of the navy came whirling through the air above him, and struck something with a dull thud. He felt a drop of moisture on his face. The grip at his throat suddenly relaxed, and with a convulsive effort Kemp loosed himself, grasped a limp shoulder, and rolled on top. He gripped the unseen elbows near the ground. *"I've got him!"* screamed Kemp. *"Help! Help! hold! He's down! Hold his feet!"*

In another second there was a simultaneous rush upon the struggle, and a stranger coming into the road suddenly might have thought an exceptionally savage game of Rugby football was in progress. And there was no shouting after Kemp's cry - only a sound of blows and feet and a heavy breathing.

Then came a mighty effort, and the Invisible Man threw off a couple of his antagonists and rose to his knees. Kemp held on to him in front like a dog to a stag, and a dozen hands gripped, clutched, and tore at the Unseen. The tram conductor suddenly got the neck and shoulders and pulled him back.

Down went the heap of struggling men again and rolled over. There was, I am afraid, some savage kicking. Then suddenly a wild scream of *"Mercy! Mercy!"* that died down swiftly to a sound like choking.

"Get back, you fools!" cried the muffled voice of Kemp, and there was a vigorous pushing back of stalwart forms. *"He's hurt, I tell you. Stand back!"*

There was a brief struggle to clear a space, and then the circle of eager eyes saw the doctor kneeling, as it seemed, fifteen inches in the air, and holding invisible arms to the ground. Behind him a constable gripped invisible ankles.

"Don't you let go of him," cried the big road worker, holding a bloodstained spade; *"he's pretending."*

"He's not pretending," said the doctor, cautiously raising his knee; *"and I'll hold him."* His face was bruised and already going red; he spoke thickly because of a bleeding lip. He released one hand and seemed to be feeling at the face. *"The mouth's all wet,"* he said. And then, *"Good God!"*

He stood up abruptly and then knelt down on the ground by the side of the thing unseen. There was a pushing and shuffling, a sound of heavy feet as fresh people turned up to increase the pressure of the crowd. People now were coming out of the houses. The doors of the Jolly Cricketers were suddenly wide open. Very little was said.

Kemp felt about, his hand seeming to pass through empty air. *"He's not breathing,"* he said, and then, *"I can't feel his heart. His side - ugh!"*

Suddenly an old woman, peering under the arm of the big road worker, screamed sharply. *"Look there!"* she said, and thrust out a wrinkled finger.

And looking where she pointed, every one saw, faint and transparent as though it was made of glass, so that veins and arteries and bones and nerves could be distinguished, the outline of a hand, a hand limp and prone. It grew clouded and opaque even as they stared.

"Hullo!" cried the constable. *"Here's his feet showing!"*

And so, slowly, beginning at his hands and feet and creeping along his limbs to the vital centres of his body, that strange change continued. It was like the slow spreading of a poison. First came the little white nerves, a hazy grey sketch of a limb, then the glassy bones and intricate arteries, then the flesh and skin, first a faint fogginess and then growing rapidly dense and opaque. Presently they could see his crushed chest and his shoulders, and the dim outline of his drawn and battered features.

When at last the crowd made way for Kemp to stand erect, there lay, naked and pitiful on the ground, the bruised and broken body of a young man about thirty. His hair and beard were white - not grey with age but white with the whiteness of albinism, and his eyes were like garnets. His hands were clenched, his eyes wide open, and his expression was one of anger and dismay.

"Cover his face!" said a man. *"For God's sake, cover that face!"* and three little children, pushing forward through the crowd, were suddenly twisted round and sent packing off again.

Some one brought a sheet from the Jolly Cricketers; and having covered him, they carried him into that house.

The Epilogue

So ends the story of the strange and evil experiment of the Invisible Man. And if you would like to learn more of him you must go to a little inn near Port Stowe and talk to the landlord. The sign of the inn is an empty board save for a hat and boots, and the name is the title of this story. The landlord is a short and corpulent little man with a nose of cylindrical protrusion, wiry hair, and a sporadic rosininess of visage. Drink generously, and he will tell you generously of all the things that happened to him after that time, and of how the lawyers tried to do him out of the treasure found upon him.

"When they found they couldn't prove who's money was which, I'm blessed," he says, "they tried to make out I was a treasure trove! Do I look like a Treasure Trove? And then a gentleman gave me a guinea a night to tell the story at the Empire Music Hall - just tell them in my own words - except one."

And if you want to cut off the flow of his reminiscences abruptly, you can always do so by asking if there weren't three manuscript books in the story. He admits there were and proceeds to explain, with asseverations that everybody thinks he has them! But bless you! he hasn't. *"The Invisible Man it was who took them off to hide them when I escaped and ran for Port Stowe. It's that Mr. Kemp gave people the idea of my having them."*

And then he subsides into a pensive state, watches you furtively, bustles nervously with glasses, and presently leaves the bar.

He is a bachelor man - his tastes were ever bachelor, and there are no women folk in the house. Outwardly he buttons - it is expected of him - but in his more vital privacies, in the matter of braces for example, he still turns to string. He conducts his house without enterprise, but with eminent decorum. His movements are slow, and he is a great thinker. But he has a reputation for wisdom and for a respectable parsimony in the village, and his knowledge of the roads of the South of England would beat Cobbett.

And on Sunday mornings, every Sunday morning all the year round, while he is closed to the outer world, and every night after ten, he goes into his bar parlour bearing a glass of gin faintly tinged with water; and having placed this down, he locks the door and examines the blinds, and even looks under the table. And then, being satisfied of his solitude, he unlocks the cupboard and a box in the cupboard and a drawer in that box, and produces three volumes bound in brown leather, and places them solemnly in the middle of the table. The covers are weather-worn and tinged with an algal green - for once they stayed in a ditch and some of the pages have been washed blank by dirty water. The landlord sits down in an armchair, fills a long clay pipe slowly, gloating over the books the while. Then he pulls one towards him and opens it, and begins to study it - turning over the pages backwards and forwards.

His brows are knit and his lips move painfully. *"Hex, little two up in the air, cross and a fiddle-de-dee. Lord! what a one he was for intellect!"*

Presently he relaxes and leans back, and blinks through his smoke across the room at things invisible to other eyes. *"Full of secrets,"* he says. *"Wonderful secrets!"*

"Once I get the idea of them - Lord!"

"I wouldn't do what he did; I'd just - well!" He pulls at his pipe.

So he lapses into a dream, the undying wonderful dream of his life. And though Kemp has investigated unceasingly, and Adye has questioned closely, no human being except the landlord knows those books are there, with the subtle secret of invisibility and a dozen other strange secrets written therein. And none other will know of them until he dies.

The End

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