"Oh, wearisome conditions of humanity!
Born under one law, to another bound,
Vainly begot and yet forbidden vanity:
Created sick, commanded to be sound.
What meaneth Nature by these diverse laws—
Passion and reason, self-division's cause?"
foul means as well as fair. Travelling about, being unfixed, being a spectator—that was like you. You're being compelled to do what's like you." There was a silence. "And living in a kind of dust-heap," Spandrell added, "that's like me. Whatever I do, however hard I try to escape, I remain on the dust-heap. I suppose I always shall." Yes, always, he went on thinking. He had played the last card and lost. No, not the last card; for there was one other. The last but one. Would he also lose with the last?

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Spandrell was very insistent that they should come without delay. The *heilige Dankgesang eines Genesenen an die Gottheit, in der lydischen Tonart* simply must be heard.

"You can't understand anything until you have heard it," he declared. "It proves all kinds of things—God, the soul, goodness—inescapably. It's the only real proof that exists; the only one, because Beethoven was the only man who could get his knowledge over into expression. You must come."

"Most willingly," said Rampion. "But..."

Spandrell interrupted him. "I heard quite by accident yesterday that the A minor Quartet had been recorded for the gramophone. I rushed out and bought a machine and the records specially for you."

"For me? But why this generosity?"

"No generosity," Spandrell answered laughing. "Pure selfishness. I want you to hear and confirm my opinion."

"But why?"

"Because I believe in you, and if you confirm, I shall believe in myself."

"What a man!" mocked Rampion. "Ought to join the Church of Rome and have a confessor."

"But you must come." He spoke earnestly.

"But not now," said Mary.

"Not to-day," her husband echoed, wondering as he spoke why the man was so strangely insistent. What was the matter with him? The way he moved and spoke, the look in his eyes... So excited. "I have innumerable things to do this afternoon."

"Then to-morrow."

As though he were drunk, Rampion was reflecting. "Why not the day after?" he said aloud. "It would be much easier for me. And the machine won't fly away in the interval."

Spandrell uttered his noiseless laugh. "No, but I may," he said. "I shall probably be gone by the day after to-morrow."

"You hadn't told us you were going away," said Mary.

"Where?"

"Who knows?" Spandrell answered, laughing once more. "All I know is that I shan't be here any more."
"All right," said Rampion, who had been watching him curiously, "I'll make it to-morrow." Why is he so melodramatic? he wondered.

Spandrell took his leave.

"What was wrong with him?" said Rampion, when he was gone.

"I didn't notice anything particularly wrong with him," Mary answered.

Rampion made a gesture of impatience. "You wouldn't notice the Last Judgment," he said. "Didn't you see that he was holding down his excitement. Like the lid of a saucepan on the boil—holding it down. And that melodramatic way of laughing. Like the conscious villain in the play..."

"But was he acting?" said Mary. "Was he playing the fool for our benefit?"

"No, no. He was genuine all right. But when you're genuinely in the position of the conscious villain in the melodrama, you inevitably begin to behave like the conscious villain. You act in spite of yourself."

"But what's he being a conscious villain about?"

"How on earth should I know?" said Rampion impatiently.

Mary always suspected him, by some mysterious and magical intuition, to know everything. Her faith sometimes amused and sometimes pleased, but sometimes also annoyed him. "Do you take me for Spandrell's father confesser?"

"There's nothing to fly in a rage about."

"On the contrary," said Rampion, "there's practically nothing not to fly in a rage about. If one keeps one's temper, it's because one lives most of the time with one's eyes shut, half asleep. If one were always awake, my God! There wouldn't be much cackery unmashed." He stalked off to his studio.

Spandrell walked slowly eastward from Chelsea along the river, whistling to himself over and over again the opening phrases of the Lydian melody from the *Heilige Dankgesang*. Over and over again. The river stretched away into the hot haze. The music was like water in a parched land. After so many years of drought, a spring, a fountain. A watering cart rumbled past trailing its artificial shower. The wetted dust was fragrant. That music was a proof, as he had said to Rampion. In the gutter a little torrent was hurrying a crumpled cigarette packet and a piece of orange peel toward the drain. He stopped whistling. The essential horror. Like carting garbage; that was what it had been. Just nasty and unpleasant, like cleaning a latrine. Not terrible, so much as stupid, indescribably stupid. The music was a proof;
from the printed reproduction of Beethoven's scribbles that music which Beethoven had never heard except in his imagination. Spiral grooves on a surface of shellac remembered their playing. The artificial memory revolved, a needle travelled in its grooves, and through a faint scratching and roaring that mimicked the noises of Beethoven's own deafness, the audible symbols of Beethoven's convictions and emotions quivered out into the air. Slowly, slowly, the melody unfolded itself. The archaic Lydian harmonies hung on the air. It was an unimpassioned music, transparent, pure, and crystalline, like a tropical sea, an Alpine lake. Water on water, calm sliding over calm; the according of level horizons and waveless expanses, a counterpoint of serenities. And everything clear and bright; no mists, no vague twilights. It was the calm of still and rapturous contemplation, not of drowsiness or sleep. It was the serenity of the convalescent who wakes from fever and finds himself born again into a realm of beauty. But the fever was "the fever called living" and the rebirth was not into this world; the beauty was unearthly, the convalescent serenity was the peace of God. The interweaving of Lydian melodies was heaven.

Thirty slow bars had built up heaven, when the character of the music suddenly changed. From being remotely archaic, it became modern. The Lydian harmonies were replaced by those of the corresponding major key. The time quickened. A new melody leapt and bounded, but over earthly mountains, not among those of paradise. "Neue Kraft fuehltend," Spandrell quoted in a whisper from the score. "He's feeling stronger; but it's not so heavenly."

The new melody bounded on for another fifty bars and expired in scratchings. Spandrell lifted the needle and stopped the revolving of the disc.

"The Lydian part begins again on the other side," he explained, as he wound up the machine. "Then there's more of this lively stuff in A major. Then it's Lydian to the end, getting better and better all the time. Don't you think it's marvellous?" He turned to Rampion. "Isn't it a proof?"

The other nodded. "Marvellous. But the only thing it proves, so far as I can hear, is that sick men are apt to be very weak. It's the art of a man who's lost his body."

"But discovered his soul."

"Oh, I grant you," said Rampion, "sick men are very spiritual. But that's because they're not quite men. Eunuchs are very spiritual lovers for the same reason."

"But Beethoven wasn't a eunuch."

"I know. But why did he try to be one? Why did he make castration and bodilessness his ideal? What's this music? Just a hymn in praise of eunuchism. Very beautiful, I admit. But couldn't he have chosen something more human than castration to sing about?"

Spandrell sighed. "To me it's the beatific vision, it's heaven."

"Not earth. That's just what I've been complaining of."

"But mayn't a man imagine heaven if he wants to?" asked Mary.

"Certainly, so long as he doesn't pretend that his imagination is the last word in truth, beauty, wisdom, virtue, and all the rest. Spandrell wants us to accept this disembodied eunuchism as the last word. I won't. I simply won't."

"Listen to the whole movement, before you judge." Spandrell reversed the disc and lowered the needle. "The bright heaven of Lydian music vibrated on the air."

"Lovely, lovely," said Rampion, when the record was finished. "You're quite right. It is heaven, it is the life of the soul. It's the most perfect spiritual abstraction from reality I've ever known. But why should he have wanted to make that abstraction? Why couldn't he be content to be a man and not an abstract soul? Why, why?" He began walking up and down the room. "This damned soul," he went on, "this damned abstract soul—it's like a kind of cancer, eating up the real, human, natural thing by this abstract cancer of a soul? The cancer may have a beautiful shape; but, damn it all, the body's more beautiful. I don't want your spiritual cancer."

"I won't argue with you," said Spandrell. "He felt all at once extraordinarily tired and depressed. It had been a failure. Rampion had refused to be convinced. Was the proof, after all, no proof? Did the music refer to nothing outside itself and the idiosyncrasies of its inventor? He looked at his watch; it was almost five. "Hear the end of the movement at any rate," he said. "It's the best part."

Rampion wound up the gramophone. Even if it's meaningless, he thought, it's beautiful, so long as it lasts. And perhaps it isn't meaningless. After all, Rampion isn't infallible. "Listen."

The music began again. But something new and marvellous happened in its Lydian heaven. The speed of the slow mel-
They listened, almost holding their breaths. Spandrell looked exultantly at his guest. His own doubts had vanished. How could one fail to believe in something which was there, which manifestly existed? Mark Rampion nodded. "Almost thou persuadest me," he whispered. "But it's too good."

"How can anything be too good?"

"Not human. If it lasted, you'd cease to be a man. You'd die."

They were silent again. The music played on, leading from heaven to heaven, from bliss to deeper bliss. Spandrell sighed and shut his eyes. His face was grave and serene, as though it had been smoothed by sleep or death. Yes, dead, thought Rampion as he looked at him. "He refuses to be a man. Not a man—or either a daemon or a dead angel. Now he's dead." A touch of discord in the Lydian harmonies gave an almost unbearable poignancy to the beatitude. Spandrell sighed again. There was a knocking at the door. He looked up. The lines of mockery came back into his face, the corners of the mouth became once more ironic.

"There, he's the daemon again," thought Rampion. "He's come to life and he's the daemon."

"There they are," Spandrell was saying, and without answering Mary's question, "Who?" he walked out of the room.

Rampion and Mary remained the gramophone, listening to the revelation of heaven. A deafening explosion, a shout, another explosion and another suddenly shattered the paradise of sound.

They jumped up and ran to the door. In the passage three men in the green uniform of British Freemen were looking down at Spandrell's body. They held pistols in their hands. Another revolver lay on the floor beside the dying man. There was a hole in the side of his head and a patch of blood on his shirt. His hands opened and shut, opened again and shut, scratching the boards.

"What has . . . ?" began Rampion.
ing a cheque for three months' salary. Any references she might require would always be forthcoming and he was hers faithfully. Burlap had tempered Mr. Chivers' business likeness with a letter of his own, full of regrets, and friendship, and jeremiads against a public that wouldn't buy the *Literary World*, and lamentations over the defeat of God, incarnated in literature and himself, by Mammon in the person of Mr. Chivers and all business men. He had spoken of her to his friend Judd of the *Wednesday Review*, as well as to several other people in the journalistic world, and would, of course, do everything in his power to etcetera.

Thank goodness, he reflected, as he walked along whistling "On Wings of Song" with rich expression, that was the end of Ethel Cobbett so far as he was concerned. It was the end of her also as far as everybody was concerned. For some few days later, having written him a twelve-page letter, which he put in the fire after reading the first scarifying sentence, she lay down with her head in an oven and turned on the gas. But that was something which Burlap could not foresee. His mood as he walked whistling homeward was one of unmixed contentment. That night he and Beatrice pretended to be two little children and had their bath together. Two little children sitting at opposite ends of the big old-fashioned bath. And what a romp they had! The bathroom was drenched with their splashings. Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE END.