Mr Hackett turned the corner and saw, in the failing light, at some little distance, his seat. It seemed to be occupied. This seat, the property very likely of the municipality, or of the public, was of course not his, but he thought of it as his. This was Mr Hackett's attitude towards things that pleased him. He knew they were not his, but he thought of them as his. He knew they were not his, because they pleased him.

Halting, he looked at the seat with greater care. Yes, it was not vacant. Mr Hackett saw things a little more clearly when he was still. His walk was a very agitated walk.

Mr Hackett did not know whether he should go on, or whether he should turn back. Space was open on his right hand, and on his left hand, but he knew that he would never take advantage of this. He knew also that he would not long remain motionless, for the state of his health rendered this unfortunately impossible. The dilemma was thus of extreme simplicity: to go on, or to turn, and return, round the corner, the way he
had come. Was he, in other words, to go home at once, or was he to remain out a little longer?

Stretching out his left hand, he fastened it round a rail. This permitted him to strike his stick against the pavement. The feel, in his palm, of the thudding rubber appeased him, slightly.

But he had not reached the corner when he turned again and hastened towards the seat, as fast as his legs could carry him. When he was so near the seat, that he could have touched it with his stick, if he had wished, he again halted and examined its occupants. He had the right, he supposed, to stand and wait for the tram. They too were perhaps waiting for the tram, for many trams stopped here, when requested, from without or within, to do so.

Mr Hackett decided, after some moments, that if they were waiting for a tram they had been doing so for some time. For the lady held the gentleman by the ears, and the gentleman's hand was on the lady's thigh, and the lady's tongue was in the gentleman's mouth. Tired of waiting for the tram, said Mr Hackett, they strike up an acquaintance. The lady now removing her tongue from the gentleman's mouth, he put his into hers. Fair do, said Mr Hackett. Taking a pace forward, to satisfy himself that the gentleman's other hand was not going to waste, Mr Hackett was shocked to find it limply dangling over the back of the seat, with between its fingers the spent three quarters of a cigarette.

I see no indecency, said the policeman.

We arrive too late, said Mr Hackett. What a shame.

Do you take me for a fool? said the policeman.

Mr Hackett recoiled a step, forced back his head until he thought his throatskin would burst, and saw

at last, afar, bent angrily upon him, the red violent face.

Officer, he cried, as God is my witness, he had his hand upon it.

God is a witness that cannot be sworn.

If I interrupted your beat, said Mr Hackett, a thousand pardons. I did so with the best intentions, for you, for me, for the community at large.

The policeman replied briefly to this.

If you imagine that I have not your number, said Mr Hackett, you are mistaken. I may be infirm, but my sight is excellent. Mr Hackett sat down on the seat, still warm, from the loving. Good evening, and thank you, said Mr Hackett.

It was an old seat, low and worn. Mr Hackett's nape rested against the solitary backboard, beneath it unimpeded his hunch protruded, his feet just touched the ground. At the ends of the long outspread arms the hands held the armrests, the stick hooked round his neck hung between his knees.

So from the shadows he watched the last trams pass. Oh not the last, but almost, and in the sky, and in the still canal, the long greens and yellows of the summer evening.

But now a gentleman passing, with a lady on his arm, espied him.

Oh, my dear, he said, there is Hackett.

Hackett, said the lady. What Hackett?

Where?

You know Hackett, said the gentleman. You must have often heard me speak of Hackett. Hunchy Hackett. On the seat.

The lady looked attentively at Mr Hackett.

So that is Hackett, she said.

Yes, said the gentleman.

Poor fellow, she said.

Oh, said the gentleman, let us now stop, do you mind, and wish him the time of evening. He advanced,
exclaiming, My dear fellow, my dear fellow, how are you?

Mr Hackett raised his eyes, from the dying day.
My wife, cried the gentleman. Meet my wife.
My wife. Mr Hackett.
I have heard so much about you, said the lady,
and now I meet you, at last. Mr Hackett!
I do not rise, not having the force, said Mr Hackett.

Why I should think not indeed, said the lady.
She stooped towards him, quivering with solicitude.
I should hope not indeed, she said.

Mr Hackett thought she was going to pat him on the head, or at least stroke his hunch. He called in his arms and they sat down beside him, the lady on the one side, and the gentleman on the other. As a result of this, Mr Hackett found himself between them. His head reached to the armpits. Their hands met above the hunch, on the backboard. They drooped with tenderness towards him.

You remember Grehan? said Mr Hackett.
The poisoner, said the gentleman.
The solicitor, said Mr Hackett.
I knew him slightly, said the gentleman. Six years, was it not.
Seven, said Mr Hackett. Six are rarely given.
He deserved ten, in my opinion, said the gentleman.
Or twelve, said Mr Hackett.
What did he do? said the lady.
Slightly overstepped his prerogatives, said the gentleman.
I received a letter from him this morning, said Mr Hackett.
Oh, said the gentleman, I did not know they might communicate with the outer world.
He is a solicitor, said Mr Hackett. He added, I am scarcely the outer world.

What rubbish, said the gentleman.
What nonsense, said the lady.
The letter contained an enclosure, said Mr Hackett, of which, knowing your love of literature, I would favour you with the primeur, if it were not too dark to see.
The primeur, said the lady.
That is what I said, said Mr Hackett.
I have a petrol-lighter, said the gentleman.
Mr Hackett drew a paper from his pocket and the gentleman lit his petrol-lighter.
Mr Hackett read:

TO NELLY

To Nelly, said the lady.
To Nelly, said Mr Hackett.
There was a silence.
Shall I continue? said Mr Hackett.
My mother's name was Nelly, said the lady.
The name is not uncommon, said Mr Hackett, even I have known several Nellies.
Read on, my dear fellow, said the gentleman.
Mr Hackett read:

TO NELLY

To thee, sweet Nell, when shadows fall
Jug-jug! Jug-jug!
I here in thrall
My wanton thoughts do turn.
Walks she out yet with Byrne?
Moves Hyde his hand amid her skirts
As erst? I ask, and Echo answers: Certes.
Tis well! Tis well! Far, far be it
Pu-we! Pu-we!
From me, my tit,
Such innocent joys to chide.
Burn, burn with Byrne, from Hyde
Hide naught — hide naught save what
Is Greh'n's. IT hide from Hyde, with Byrne
burn not.

It! Peerless gage of maidenhood!
Cuckoo! Cuckoo!
Would that I could
Be certain in my mind
Upon discharge to find
Neath Cupid's flow'r, hey nonny O!
Diana's blushing bud in statu quo.

Then darkly kindle durst my soul
Tuwhit! Tuwhoo!
As on it stole
The murmuring to become
Epithalamium,
And Hymen o'er my senses shed
The dewy forejoys of the marriage-bed.

Enough —

Ample, said the lady.
A woman in a shawl passed before them. Her belly could dimly be seen, sticking out, like a balloon. I was never like that, my dear, said the lady, was I?

Not to my knowledge, my love, said the gentleman.

You remember the night that Larry was born, said the lady.
I do, said the gentleman.

How old is Larry now? said Mr Hackett.

How old is Larry, my dear? said the gentleman. Larry will be forty years old next March, D.V.

That is the kind of thing Dee always vees, said Mr Hackett.

I wouldn't go as far as that, said the gentleman. Would you care to hear, Mr Hackett, said the lady, about the night that Larry was born?

Oh do tell him, my dear, said the gentleman.

Well, said the lady, that morning at breakfast Goff turns to me and he says, Tetty, he says, Tetty, my pet, I should very much like to invite Thompson, Cream and Colquhoun to help us eat the duck, if I felt sure you felt up to it. Why, my dear, says I, I never felt fitter in my life. Those were my words, were they not? I believe they were, said Goff.

Well, said Tetty, when Thompson comes into the dining-room, followed by Cream and Berry (Coulquhoun I remember had a previous engagement), I was already seated at the table. There was nothing strange in that, seeing I was the only lady present. You did not find that strange, did you, my love?

Certainly not, said Goff, most natural.

The first mouthful of duck had barely passed my lips, said Tetty, when Larry leaped in my wom.

Your what? said Mr Hackett.

My wom, said Tetty.

You know, said Goff, her wom.

How embarrassing for you, said Mr Hackett.

I continued to eat, drink and make light conversa-
tion, said Tetty, and Larry to leap, like a salmon.

What an experience for you, said Mr Hackett.

There were moments, I assure you, when I thought he would tumble out on the floor, at my feet. Merciful heavens, you felt him slipping, said Mr Hackett.

No trace of this dollar appeared on my face, said Tetty. Did it, my dear?
moustache, handsome in itself, was for obscure reasons unimportant. But one thought of him as the man who, among other things, never left off his cap, a plain blue cloth cap, with a peak and knob. For he never left off his bicycle-clips either. These were of a kind that caused his trouser-ends to stick out wide, on either side. He was short and limped dreadfully. When he got started he moved rapidly, in a series of aborted genuflexions.

He picked up Watt’s hat and brought it to him, saying, Your hat, sir, I think.

Watt looked at the hat. Was it possible that this was his hat.

He put it on his head.

Now at the end of the platform the newsagent came out of a door, wheeling his bicycle. He would carry it down the winding stone stairs and then ride home. There he would play a game of chess, between masters, out of Mr Staunton’s handbook. The next morning he would carry his bicycle up the stairs again. It was heavy, being a very good bicycle. It would have been simpler to leave it below, but he preferred to have it near him. This man’s name was Evans.

Watt picked up his bags and got into the train. He did not choose a compartment. It happened to be empty.

On the platform the porter continued to wheel cans, up and down. At one end of the platform there was one group of cans, and at the other end there was another. The porter chose with care a can in one group and wheeled it to the other. Then he chose with care a can in the other and wheeled it to the one. He is sorting the cans, said Watt. Or perhaps it is a punishment for disobedience, or some neglect of duty.

Watt sat with his back to the engine, which now, having got up steam, drew the long line of carriages out of the station. Already Watt preferred to have his back to his destination.

But he had not gone far when, conscious of eyes upon him, he looked up and saw a large gentleman sitting in the corner diagonally opposed to his. This gentleman’s feet rested on the wooden seat before him, and his hands were in the pockets of his coat. The compartment then was not so empty as Watt had at first supposed.

My name is Spiro, said the gentleman.

Here then was a sensible man at last. He began with the essential and then, working on, would deal with the less important matters, one after the other, in an orderly way.

Watt smiled.

No offence meant, said Mr Spiro.

Watt’s smile was further peculiar in this, that it seldom came singly, but was followed after a short time by another, less pronounced it is true. In this it resembled the fart. And it even sometimes happened that a third, very weak and fleeting, was found necessary, before the face could be at rest again. But this was rare. And it will be a long time now before Watt smiles again, unless something very unexpected turns up, to upset him.

My friends call me Dum, said Mr Spiro, I am so bright and cheerful. D-U-M. Anagram of mud.

Mr Spiro had been drinking, but not more than was good for him.

I edit Crux, said Mr Spiro, the popular catholic monthly. We do not pay our contributors, but they benefit in other ways. Our advertisements are extraordinary. We keep our tontsure above water. Our prize competitions are very nice. Times are hard, water in every wine. Of a devout twist, they do more good than harm. For example: Rearrange the fifteen letters of the Holy Family to form a question and answer. Winning entry: Has J. Jurms a po? Yes. Or: What do you know of the adjuration, excommunication, mal-ediction and fulminating anathematisation of the eels of
Como, the lurebres of Beaune, the rats of Lyon, the slugs of Mâcon, the worms of Como, the leeches of Lausanne and the caterpillars of Valence?

Now the fields flew by, the hedges and the ditches, ghastly in the train's light, or appeared to do so, for in reality it was the train that moved, across a land for ever still.

Though we know what we know, said Mr Spiro, we are not partisan. I personally am a neo-John-Thomist, I make no bones about that. But I do not allow it to stand in the way of my promiscuities. Podex non destra sed sinistra—what pettiness. Our columns are open to suckers of every persuasion and freethinkers figure in our roll of honour. My own contribution to the supplementary redemption, A Spiritual Syringe for the Costive in Devotion, is so elastic, and unrigid, that a Presbyterian could profit by it, without discomfort. But why do I trouble you with this, you, a perfect stranger. It is because to-night I must speak, to a fellow wanderer. Where do you get down, sir?

Watt named the place.
I beg your pardon? said Mr Spiro.
Watt named the place again.
Then there is not a moment to lose, said Mr Spiro.
He drew a paper from his pocket and read:

Lourdes
Basses-Pyrénées
France

Sir
A rat, or other small animal, eats of a consecrated wafer.
1) Does he ingest the Real Body, or does he not?
2) If he does not, what has become of it?
3) If he does, what is to be done with him?

Yours faithfully
Martin Ignatius MacKenzie
(Author of The Chartered Accountant's Saturday Night)

Mr Spiro now replied to these questions, that is to say he replied to question one and he replied to question three. He did so at length, quoting from Saint Bonaventura, Peter Lombard, Alexander of Hales, Sanchez, Suarez, Henno, Soto, Diana, Concina and dens, for he was a man of leisure. But Watt heard nothing of this, because of other voices, singing, crying, stating, murmuring, things unintelligible, in his ear. With these, if he was not familiar, he was not unfamiliar either. So he was not alarmed, unduly. Now these voices, sometimes they sang only, and sometimes they cried only, and sometimes they stated only, and sometimes they murmured only, and sometimes they sang and cried, and sometimes they sang and stated, and sometimes they sang and murmured, and sometimes they sang and cried and stated, and sometimes they sang and cried and stated and murmured, all together, at the same time, as now, to mention only these four kinds of voices, for there were others. And sometimes Watt understood all, and sometimes he understood much, and sometimes he understood little, and sometimes he understood nothing, as now.

The racecourse now appearing, with its beautiful white railing, in the fleeing lights, warned Watt that he was drawing near, and that when the train stopped next, then he must leave it. He could not see the stands, the grand, the members', the people's, so ? when empty with their white and red, for they were too far off.

So he settled his bags under his hands and held himself in readiness, in readiness to leave the train, the moment it came to a standstill.

For Watt had once been carried past this station, and on to the next, through his not having prepar-
ed himself in time, to get down, when the train stopped.

For this was a line so little frequented, especially at this hour, when the driver, the stoker, the guard and the station staffs all along the line, were anhelating towards their wives, after the long hours of continence, that the train would hardly draw up, when it would be off again, like a bouncing ball.

Personally I would pursue him, said Mr Spiro, if I were sure it was he, with all the rigour of the canon laws. He took his legs off the seat. He put his head out of the window. And pontifical decrees, he cried. A great rush of air drove him back. He was alone, flying through the night.

The moon was now up. It was not far up, but it was up. It was of an unpleasant yellow colour. Long past the full, it was waning, waning.

Watt’s way of advancing due east, for example, was to turn his bust as far as possible towards the north and at the same time to fling out his right leg as far as possible towards the south, and then to turn his bust as far as possible towards the south and at the same time to fling out his left leg as far as possible towards the north, and then again to turn his bust as far as possible towards the north and to fling out his right leg as far as possible towards the south, and then again to turn his bust as far as possible towards the south and to fling out his left leg as far as possible towards the north, and so on, over and over again, many many times, until he reached his destination, and could sit down. So standing first on one leg, and then on the other, he moved forward, a headlong tardigrade, in a straight line. The knees, on these occasions, did not bend. They could have, but they did not. No knees could better bend than Watt’s, when they chose, there was nothing the matter with Watt’s knees, as may appear. But when out walking they did not bend, for some obscure reason. Notwithstanding this, the feet fell, heel and sole together, flat upon the ground, and left it, for the air’s uncharted ways, with manifest repugnancy. The arms were content to dangle, in perfect equipendence.

Lady McCann, coming up behind, thought she had never, on the public road, seen motions so extraordinary, and few women had a more extensive experience of the public road than Lady McCann. That they were not due to alcohol appeared from their regularity, and dogged air. Watt’s was a funambulistic stagger.

More than the legs the head impressed Lady McCann. For the movements of the legs could be accounted for, in a number of ways. And as she reflected on some of the ways, in which the movements of the legs could be accounted for, she recalled the old story of her girlhood days, the old story of the medical students and the gentlemen walking before them with stiff and open stride. Excuse me, sir, said one of the students, raising his cap, when they drew abreast, my friend here says it is piles, and I say it is merely the clap. We have all three then been deceived, replied the gentleman, for I thought it was wind myself.

It was therefore less the legs that puzzled Lady McCann, than the head, turning stiffly at every stride, on its stiff neck, under its hard hat, through a quarter of a circle at least. Where had she read that even bears turn their heads, when baited? In Mr Walpole, perhaps.

Though not a rapid walker, because of old habit, perhaps, and of her feet, which were old and sore, Lady McCann saw all this in greater and in greater detail, with every step she took. For they were moving in the same direction, Lady McCann and Watt.

Though not a timorous woman as a rule, thanks to her traditions, catholic and military, Lady McCann preferred to halt and wait, leaning on her parasol, for the distance between them to increase. So, now halting, now advancing, she followed the high stamping mass.
at a judicious remove, until she came to her gate. Here, faithful to the spirit of her cavalier ascendants, she picked up a stone and threw it, with all her might, which, when she was roused, was not negligible, at Watt. And it is to be supposed that God, always favourable to the McCanns of [ ], guided her hand, for the stone fell on Watt’s hat and struck it from his head, to the ground. This was indeed a providential escape, for had the stone fallen on an ear, or on the back of the neck, as it might so easily have done, as it so nearly did, why then a wound had perhaps been opened, never again to close, never, never again to close, for Watt had a poor healing skin, and perhaps his blood was deficient in [ ]. And he still carried, after five or six years, and though he dressed it in a mirror night and morning, on his right ischium a running sore of traumatic origin.

Beyond stopping, and laying down his bags, and picking up his hat, and setting it on his head, and picking up his bags, and setting himself, after one or two false starts, again in motion, Watt, faithful to his rule, took no more notice of this aggression than if it had been an accident. This he found was the wisest attitude, to staunch, if necessary, inconspicuously, with the little red sudarium that he always carried in his pocket, the flow of blood, to pick up what had fallen, and to continue, as soon as possible, on his way, or in his station, like a victim of mere mischance. But he deserved no credit for this. For it was an attitude become, with frequent repetition, so part of his being, that there was no more room in his mind for resentment at a spit in the eye, to take a simple example, than if his braces had burst, or a bomb fallen on his bum.

But he had not continued very far when, feeling weak, he left the crown of the road and sat down on the path, which was high, and edged with thick neglected grass. He knew, as he did so, that it would not be easy to get up again, as he must, and move on again, as he must. But the feeling of weakness, which he had been expecting for some time, was such, that he yielded to it, and settled himself on the edge of the path, with his hat pushed back, and his bags beside him, and his knees drawn up, and his arms on his knees, and his head on his arms. The parts of the body are really very friendly at such times, towards one another. But this was a position that could not content him long, in the fresh night air, and soon he stretched himself out, so that one half of him was in the road, and the other on the path. Under the neck and under the distant palms he felt the cool damp grasses of the ditch’s edge. And so he rested for a little time, listening to the little nightsounds in the hedge behind him, in the hedge outside him, hearing them with pleasure, and other distant nightsounds too, such as dogs make, on bright nights, at the ends of their chains, and bats, with their little wings, and the heavy daybirds changing to a more comfortable position, and the leaves that are never still, until they lie rotting in a wintry heap, and the breath that is never quiet. But this was a position that Watt, after a short time, found himself unable to sustain, and one of the reasons for that was perhaps this, that he felt the moon pouring its now whitening rays upon him, as though he were not there. For if there were two things that Watt disliked, one was the moon, and the other was the sun. So, settling his hat firmly on his head, and reaching forward for his bags, he rolled himself over into the ditch, and lay there, on his face, half buried in the wild long grass, the foxgloves, the hyssop, the pretty nettles, the high pouting hemlock, and other ditch weeds and flowers. And it was to him lying thus that there came, with great distinctness, from afar, from without, yes, really it seemed from without, the voices, indifferent in quality, of a mixed choir (1).

(1) What, it may be enquired, was the music of this throne? What at least, it may be demanded, did the soprano sing?
This verse was followed by a second:

_Fifty-one point one_  
four two eight five seven one  
four two eight five seven one  
oh a bun a big fat bun  
a big fat yellow bun  
for Mr Man and a bun  
for Mrs Man and a bun  
for Master Man and a bun  
for Miss Man and a bun  
a big fat bun  
for everyone  
four two eight five seven one  
four two eight five seven one  
till all the buns are done  
and everyone is gone  
home to oblivion.

The singing then ended.

Of these two verses Watt thought he preferred the former. Bun is such a sad word, is it not? And man is not much better, is it?

But by this time Watt was tired of the ditch, which he had been thinking of leaving, when the voices detained him. And one of the reasons why he was tired
of the ditch was perhaps this, that the earth, whose contours and peculiar smell the vegetation at first had masked, now he felt it, and smelt it, the bare hard dark stinking earth. And if there were two things that Watt loathed, one was the earth, and the other was the sky. So he crawled out of the ditch, not forgetting his bags, and resumed his journey, with less difficulty than he had feared, at the point where it had been interrupted, by the feeling of weakness. This feeling of weakness Watt had left, together with his evening meal of goat's milk and insufficiently cooked cod, in the ditch, and it was with confidence that he now advanced, in the middle of the road, with confidence and with awe also, for the chimneys of Mr Knott's house were visible at last, in the light, of the moon.

The house was in darkness.

Finding the front door locked, Watt went to the back door. He could not very well ring, or knock, for the house was in darkness.

Finding the back door locked also, Watt returned to the front door.

Finding the front door locked still, Watt returned to the back door.

Finding the back door now open, oh not open wide, but on the latch, as the saying is, Watt was able to enter the house.

Watt was surprised to find the back door, so lately locked, now open. Two explanations of this occurred to him. The first was this, that his science of the locked door, so seldom at fault, had been so on this occasion, and that the back door, when he had found it locked, had not been locked, but open. And the second was this, that the back door, when he had found it locked, had in effect been locked, but had subsequently been opened, from within, or without, by some person, while he Watt had been employed in going, to and fro, from the back door to the front door, and from the front door to the back door.

Of these two explanations Watt thought he preferred the latter, as being the more beautiful. For if someone had opened the back door, from within, or without, would not he Watt have seen a light, or heard a sound? Or had the door been unlocked, from within, in the dark, by some person perfectly familiar with the premises, and wearing carpet slippers, or in his stockinged feet? Or, from without, by some person so skilful on his legs, that his footfalls made no sound? Or had a sound been made, a light shown, and Watt not heard the one nor seen the other?

The result of this was that Watt never knew how he got into Mr Knott's house. He knew that he got in by the back door, but he was never to know, never, never to know, how the back door came to be opened. And if the backdoor had never opened, but remained shut, then who knows Watt had never got into Mr Knott's house at all, but turned away, and returned to the station, and caught the first train back to town. Unless he had got in through a window.

No sooner had Watt crossed Mr Knott's threshold than he saw that the house was not in such darkness as he had at first supposed, for a light was burning in the kitchen.

When Watt reached this light he sat down beside it, on a chair. He set down his bags beside him, on the beautiful red floor, and he took off his hat, for he had reached his destination, discovering his scant red hair, and laid it on the table beside him. And a pretty picture they made, Watt's scalp and red-grey tufts, and the floor burning up, from below.

Watt saw, in the grate, of the range, the ashes grey. But they turned pale red, when he covered the lamp, with his hat. The range was almost out, but not quite. A handful of dry chips and the flames would spring, merry in appearance, up the chimney, with an organ note. So Watt busied himself a little while, covering the lamp, less and less, more and more, with
his hat, watching the ashes greyen, redden, greyen, redden, in the grate, of the range.

Watt was so busy doing this, moving his hat to and fro behind him, that he neither saw, nor heard, the door open and a gentleman come in. So his surprise was extreme, when he looked up from his little game. For it was no more than that, an innocent little game, to while away the time.

Here then was something again that Watt would never know, for want of paying due attention to what was going on about him. Not that it was a knowledge that could be of any help to Watt, or any hurt, or cause him any pleasure, or cause him any pain, for it was not. But he found it strange to think, of these little changes, of scene, the little gains, the little losses, the thing brought, the thing removed, the light given, the light taken, and all the vain offerings to the hour, strange to think of all these little things that cluster round the comings, and the stayings, and the goings, that he would know nothing of them, nothing of what they had been, as long as he lived, nothing of when they came, of how they came, and how it was then, compared with before, nothing of how long they stayed, of how they stayed, and what difference that made, nothing of when they went, of how they went, and how it was then, compared with before, before they came, before they went.

The gentleman wore a fine full apron of green baize. Watt thought he had never seen a finer apron. In front there was a great pocket, or pouch, and in this the gentleman's hands were buried. Watt saw the little movements of the stuff, the little bulgings and crumplings, and the sudden indrawings, where it was nipped, between forefinger and thumb probably, for those are the nippers.

The gentleman gazed long at Watt, and then went away, without a word of explanation. Then Watt, for want of something to do, went back to his little game, with the colours. But he soon gave over. And the reason for that was perhaps this, that the ashes would not redden any more, but remained grey, even in the dimmest light.

Finding himself now alone, with nothing in particular to do, Watt put his forefinger in his nose, first in one nostril, and then in the other. But there were no crusts in Watt's nose, to-night.

But in a short time the gentleman reappeared, to Watt. He was dressed for the road, and carried a stick. But no hat was on his head, nor any bag in his hand.

Before leaving he made the following short statement:

Haw! how it all comes back to me, to be sure. That look! That weary watchful vacancy! The man arrives! The dark ways all behind, all within, the long dark ways, in his head, in his side, in his hands and feet, and he sits in the red gloom, picking his nose, waiting for the dawn to break. The dawn! The sun! The light! Haw! The long blue days, for his head, for his side, and the little paths for his feet, and all the brightness to touch and gather. Through the grass the little mosspaths, bony with old roots, and the trees sticking up, and the flowers sticking up, and the fruit hanging down, and the white exhausted butterflies, and the birds never the same darting all day into hiding. And all the sounds, meaning nothing. Then at night rest in the quiet house, there are no roads, no streets any more, you lie down by a window opening on refuge, the little sounds come that demand nothing, ordain nothing, explain nothing, propound nothing, and the short necessary night is soon ended, and the sky blue again over all the secret places where nobody ever comes, the secret places never the same, but always simple and indifferent, always mere places, sites of a stirring beyond coming and going, of a being so light and free that it is as the being of nothing. How I feel it all again,
after so long, here, and here, and in my hands, and in my eyes, like a face raised, a face offered, all trust and innocence and candour, all the old soil and fear and weakness offered, to be sponged away and forgiven! Haw! Or did I never feel it till now? Now when there is no warrant? Wouldn't surprise me. All forgiven and healed. For ever. In a moment. To-morrow. Six, five, four hours still, of the old dark, the old burden, lightening, lightening. For one is come, to stay. Haw! All the old ways led to this, all the old windings, the stairs with never a landing that you screw yourself up, clutching the rail, counting the steps, the fever of shortest ways under the long lids of sky, the wild country roads where your dead walk beside you, on the dark shingle the turning for the last time again to the lights of the little town, the appointments kept and the appointments broken, all the delights of urban and rural change of place, all the exitus and redditus, closed and ended. All led to this, to this gloaming where a middleaged man sits masturbating his snout, waiting for the first dawn to break. For of course he is not as yet familiar with the premises. Indeed it is a wonder to him, and will remain so, how having found the neighbourhood he found the gate, and how having found the gate he found the door, and how having found the door he passed beyond it. No matter, he is content. No. Let us not exaggerate. He is well pleased. For he knows he is in the right place, at last. And he knows he is the right man, at last. In another place he would be the wrong man still, and for another man, yes, for another man it would be the wrong place again. But he being what he has become, and the place being what it was made, the fit is perfect. And he knows this. No. Let us remain calm. He feels it. The sensations, the premonitions of harmony are irrefragable, of imminent harmony, when all outside him will be he, the flowers the flowers that he is among him, the sky the sky that he is above him, the earth trodden the earth treading, and all sound his echo. When in a word he will be in his midst at last, after so many tedious years spent clinging to the perimeter. These first impressions, so hardly won, are undoubtedly delicious. What a feeling of security! They are transports that few are spared, nature is so exceedingly accommodating, on the one hand, and man, on the other. With what sudden colours past trials and errors glow, seen in their new, their true perspective, mere stepping-stones to this! Haw! All is repaid, amply repaid. For he has arrived. He even ventures to remove his hat, and set down his bags, without misgiving. Think of that! He removes his hat without misgiving, he unbuttons his coat and sits down, proffered all pure and open to the long joys of being himself, like a basin to a vomit. Oh, not in idleness. For there is work to do. That is what is so exquisite. Having oscillated all his life between the torments of a superficial loitering and the horrors of disinterested endeavour, he finds himself at last in a situation where to do nothing exclusively would be an act of the highest value, and significance. And what happens? For the first time, since in anguish and disgust he relieved his mother of her milk, definite tasks of unquestionable utility are assigned to him. Is not that charming? But his regret, his indignation, are of short duration, disappearing as a rule at the end of the third or fourth month. Why is this? It is because of the nature of the work to be performed, because of its exceptional fruitfulness, because he comes to understand that he is working not merely for Mr Knott in person, and for Mr Knott's establishment, but also, and indeed chiefly, for himself, that he may abide, as he is, where he is, and that where he is may abide about him, as it is. Unable to resist these interenerating considerations, his regrets, lively at first, melt at last, melt quite away and pass over, softly, into the celebrated conviction that all is well, or at least for the best. His indignation undergoes a similar reduction, and calm
and glad at last he goes about his work, calm and glad he peels the potato and empties the nightstool, calm and glad he witnesses and is witnessed. For a time. For the day comes when he says, Am I not a little out of sorts, to-day? Not that he feels out of sorts, on the contrary, he feels if possible even better disposed than usual. Hah! He feels if possible even better disposed than usual and he asks himself if he is not perhaps a little seedy. The fool! He has learnt nothing. Nothing. Pardon my vehemence. But that is a terrible day (to look back on), the day when the horror of what has happened reduces him to the ignoble expedient of inspecting his tongue in a mirror, his tongue never so rosy, in a breath never so sweet. It was a Tuesday afternoon, in the month of October, a beautiful October afternoon. I was sitting on the step, in the yard, looking at the light, on the wall. I was in the sun and the wall was in the sun. I was the sun, need I add, and the wall, and the step, and the yard, and the time of year, and the time of day, to mention only these. To be sitting, at so pleasant a juncture of one's courses, in oneself, by oneself, that I think it will freely be admitted is a way no worse than another, and better than some, of whiling away an instant of leisure. Puffing away at the same time at my tobacco-pipe, which was as flat and broad that afternoon as an apothecary's slice, I felt my breast swell, like a pelican's I think it is. For joy? Well, no, perhaps not exactly for joy. For the change of which I speak had not yet taken place. Hymenial still it lay, the thing so soon to be changed, between me and all the forgotten horrors of joy. But let us not linger on my breast. Look at it now — bugger these buttons! — as flat and — ow! — as hollow as a tambourine. You saw? You heard? No matter. Where was I? The change. In what did it consist? It is hard to say. Something slipped. There I was, warm and bright, smoking my tobacco-pipe, watching the warm bright wall, when suddenly somewhere some little thing slipped, some little tiny thing. Gliss — iss — iss — STOP! I trust I make myself clear. There is a great alp of sand, one hundred metres high, between the pines and the ocean, and there in the warm moonless night, when no one is looking, no one listening, in tiny packets of two or three millions the grains slip, all together, a little slip of one or two lines maybe, and then stop, all together, not one missing, and that is all, that is all for that night, and perhaps for ever that is all, for in the morning with the sun a little wind from the sea may come, and blow them one from another far apart, or a pedestrian scatter them with his foot, though that is less likely. It was a slip like that I felt, that Tuesday afternoon, millions of little things moving all together out of their old place, into a new one nearby, and furtively, as though it were forbidden. And I have little doubt that I was the only person living to discover them. To conclude from this that the incident was internal would, I think, be rash. For my — how shall I say? — my personal system was so distended at the period of which I speak that the distinction between what was inside it and what was outside it was not at all easy to draw. Everything that happened happened inside it, and at the same time everything that happened happened outside it. I trust I make myself plain. I did not, need I add, see the thing happen, nor hear it, but I perceived it with a perception so sensuous that in comparison the impressions of a man buried alive in Lisbon on Lisbon's great day seem a frigid and artificial construction of the understanding. The sun on the wall, since I was looking at the sun on the wall at the time, underwent an instantaneous and I venture to say radical change of appearance. It was the same sun and the same wall, or so little older that the difference may safely be disregarded, but so changed that I felt I had been transported, without my having remarked it, to some quite different yard, and to some
to what forces is the credit for its removal to be attributed? These are questions from which, with patience, it would be an easy matter to extract the next in order, and so descend, so mount, rung by rung, until the night was over. Unfortunately I have information of a practical nature to impart, that is to say a debt to pay, or a score to settle, before I depart. So I shall merely state, without enquiring how it came, or how it went, that in my opinion it was not an illusion, as long as it lasted, that presence of what did not exist, that presence without, that presence within, that presence between, though I'll be buggered if I can understand how it could have been anything else. But that and the rest, haw! the rest, you will decide for yourfelf, when your time comes. 'or rather you will leave undecided, to judge by the look of you. For do not imagine me to suggest that what has happened to me, what is happening to me, will ever happen to you, or that what is happening to you, what will happen to you, has ever happened to me, or rather, if it will, if it has, that there is any great chance of its being admitted. For in truth the same things happen to us all, especially to men in our situation, whatever that is, if only we chose to know it.

But I am worse than Mr Ash, a man I once knew to nod to. One evening I ran into him on Westminster Bridge. It was blowing heavily. It was also snowing heavily. I nodded, heavily. In vain. Securing me with one hand, he removed from the other with his mouth two pairs of leather gauntlets, unwound his heavy woollen muffler, unbuttoned successively and flung aside his great coat, jerkin, coat, two waistcoats, shirt, outer and inner vests, coaxed from a washleather fob hanging in company with a crucifix I imagine from his neck a gunmetal half-hunter, sprang open its case, held it to his eyes (night was falling), recovered in a series of converse operations his original
form, said, Seventeen minutes past five exactly, as God
is my witness, remember me to your wife (I never had
one), let go my arm, raised his hat and hastened away.
A moment later Big Ben (is that the name?) struck
six. This in my opinion is the type of all information
whatsoever, be it voluntary or solicited. If you want a
stone, ask a turnover. If you want a turnover, ask plumpudding. This Ash was what I believe is still
called an Admiralty Clerk of the Second Class and
with that a sterling fellow. Such vermin pullulate. He
died of premature exhaustion, the following week,
oiled and houseled, leaving his half-hunter to his house-
plumber. Personally of course I regret everything. Not
a word, not a deed, not a thought, not a need, not a
grief, not a joy, not a girl, not a boy, not a doubt, nor
a trust, not a scorn, not a lust, not a hope, not a fear,
not a smile, not a tear, not a name, not a face, no time,
no place, that I do not regret, exceedingly. An ordure,
from beginning to end. And yet, when I sat for Fellow-
ship, but for the boil on my bottom... The rest, an
ordure. The Tuesday scowls, the Wednesday growls, the
Thursday curses, the Friday howls, the Saturday
snores, the Sunday yawns, the Monday morns, the
Monday morns. The whacks, the moans, the cracks,
the groans, the welts, the squeaks, the shrieks,
the pricks, the prayers, the kicks, the tears, the skelps,
and the yelps. And the poor old lousy old earth my
earth and my father's and my mother's and my father's
father's and my mother's mother's and my father's
mother's and my mother's father's and my father's
father's and my mother's mother's and my father's
father's and my mother's father's and my mother's
father's and my mother's mother's and my father's
father's and my mother's father's and my mother's
father's and my mother's mother's and other
people's fathers' and mothers' and fathers' fathers' and
mothers' mothers' and fathers' mothers' and mothers' fathers' and
mothers' mothers' fathers' and
mothers' mothers' and fathers' mothers' and fathers' mothers' and fathers' fathers' and mothers' mothers' fathers' and
fathers' fathers' and mothers' mothers' fathers' and
fathers' fathers' and mothers' mothers' mothers'.

An excrement. The crocuses and the larch turning
green every year a week before the others and the
pastures red with uneaten sheep's placentas and the long
summer days and the newmown hay and the wood-
pigeon in the morning and the cuckoo in the afternoon
and the cornrake in the evening and the wasps in the
jam and the smell of the gorse and the look of the
gorse and the apples falling and the children walking
in the dead leaves and the larch turning brown a week
before the others and the chestnuts falling and the
howling winds and the sea breaking over the pier and
the first fires and the hooves on the road and the
consumptive postman whistling The Roses Are Blooming
in Picardy and the standard oillamp and of course
the snow and to be sure the sleet and bless your heart
the blush and every fourth year the February débâcle
and the endless April showers and the crocuses and then
the whole bloody business starting all over again. A turd.
And if I could begin it all over again, knowing what
I know now, the result would be the same. And if I
could begin again a third time, knowing what I would
know then, the result would be the same. And if I could
begin it all over again a hundred times, knowing each
time a little more than the time before, the result
would always be the same, and the hundredth life as
the first, and the hundred lives as one. A cat's flux.
But at this rate we shall be here all night.

We shall be here all night,
Be here all night shall we,
All night we shall be here,
Here all night we shall be.
One dark, one still, one breath,
Night here, here we, we night,
One fleeing, fleeing to rest,  
One resting on the flight.

Haw! You heard that one? A beauty. Haw! Hell! Haw! So. Haw! Haw! Haw! My laugh, Mr — ? I beg your pardon. Like Tyler? Haw! My laugh, Mr Watt. Christian name, forgotten. Yes. Of all the laughs that strictly speaking are not laughs, but modes of ululation, only three I think need detain us, I mean the bitter, the hollow and the mirthless. They correspond to successive, how shall I say successive... successive excoriations of the understanding, and the passage from the one to the other is the passage from the lesser to the greater, from the lower to the higher, from the outer to the inner, from the gross to the fine, from the matter to the form. The laugh that now is mirthless once was hollow, the laugh that once was hollow once was bitter. And the laugh that once was bitter? Eyewater, Mr Watt, eyewater. But do not let us waste our time with that, do not let us waste any more time with that, Mr Watt. No. Where were we. The bitter, the hollow and — Haw! Haw! — the mirthless. The bitter laugh laughs at that which is not good, it is the ethical laugh. The hollow laugh laughs at that which is not true, it is the intellectual laugh. Not good! Not true! Well well. But the mirthless laugh is the diastatic laugh, down the snout — Haw! — so. It is the laugh of laughs, the risus purus, the laugh laughing at the laugh, the beholding, the saluting of the highest joke, in a word the laugh that laughs — silence please — at that which is unhappy. Personally of course I regret all. All, all, all. Not a word, not a —. But have I not been over that already? I have? Then let me speak rather of my present feeling, which so closely resembles the feeling of sorrow, so closely that I can scarcely distinguish between them. Yes. When I think that this hour is my last on earth on Mr Knott's premises, where I have spent so many
of falling off that would very likely be the most worrying, and so on for the various other different types of men. Yes, these moments together have changed us, your moments and my moments, so that we are not only no longer the same now as when they began — ticktick! ticktick! — to elapse, but we know that we are no longer the same, and not only know that we are no longer the same, but know in what we are no longer the same, you wiser but not sadder, and I sadder but not wiser, for wiser I could hardly become without grave personal inconvenience, whereas sorrow is a thing you can keep on adding to all your life long, is it not, like a stamp or egg collection, without feeling very much the worse for it, is it not. Now when one man takes the place of another man, then it is perhaps of assistance to him who takes the place to know something of him whose place he takes, though to be sure at the same time on the other hand the inverse is not necessarily true, I mean that he whose place is taken can hardly be expected to feel any great curiosity about him who takes his place. This interesting relation is I regret often established by procuration. Consider for example the increeping and outbouncing house and parlour maids (I say house and parlour maids, but you know what I mean), the latter having bounced out before the former crept in, in such a way as to exclude all possibility of encounter whether on the drive or on the way to and from the tram-stop, bus-stop, railway-station, cabrank, taxi-stand, bar parlour or canal. Now let the name of the former of these two women be Mary, and that of the latter Ann, or, better still, that of the former Ann and that of the latter Mary, and let there exist a third person, the mistress, or the master, for without some such superior existence the existence of the house and parlour maid, whether on the way to the house and parlour, or on the way from the house and parlour, or motionless in the house and parlour, is hardly conceivable. Then this third person, on whose existence the existences of Ann and Mary depend, and whose existence also in a sense if you like depends on the existences of Ann and Mary, says to Mary, no, says to Ann, for by this time Mary is afar off, in the tram, the bus, the train, the cab, the taxi, the bar parlour or canal, says to Ann, Jane, in the morning when Mary had finished doing this, if Mary may be said to have ever finished doing anything, then she began to do this, that is to say she settled herself firmly in a comfortable semi-upright posture before the task to be performed and remained there quietly eating onions and peppermints turn and turn about. I mean first an onion, then a peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint, then another onion, then another peppermint, and so on, while little by little the reason for her presence in that place faded from her mind, as with the dawn the figments of the id, and the duster, whose burden up till now she had so bravely born, fell from her fingers to the dust, where having at once assumed the colour (grey) of its surroundings it disappeared until the following Spring. An average of anything from twenty-six to twenty-seven splendid woollen dusters per mensem were lost in this way by our Mary during her last year of service in this unfortunate house. Now what, it may well be asked, can the fancies have been that so ravished Mary from a sense of her situation? Dreams of less work and higher wages? Erotic cravings? Recollections of childhood? Menopausal discomfort? Grief for a loved one defunct or departed for an unknown destination? Daltonic visualisations of the morning paper’s racing programme? Prayers for a soul? She was not a woman to confide.