

A MODERN ANTAEUS



CHAPTER I

THE NURSING OF ANTAEUS

THE Antaeus of Greek myth wins his fame before men's eyes only at the decisive moment when the gift of his birthright fails him. The contest which by fresh sips of strength he maintains against one stronger than himself, comes suddenly to an end, when Hercules, clipping him from his mother's embrace, has crushed and flung him back to earth like a squeezed orange. It is as though we only came on Achilles in overthrow, when the arrow of the Trojan pierces his heel; or on Meleager at the moment when his mother restores his fate to the flames; and the modern mind feels a longing to know more of a legend lovelier in itself than that of the arbitrary protection given by the gods to their chosen among mortals. For about the life of Antaeus there was a natural rather than a miraculous charm: he had but in excess the gift which lies, remote or near, in us all.

What, one wonders, must his childhood and growth have been like, from the moment when he emerged earthy out of some cleft of rocks which had once given