

THE DIVINE FIRE

not yet sure whether it belonged to him or he to it ; but in going to the Junior Journalists' he conceived himself to be going into society. So extreme was his illusion.

Mr. Rickman's place was in the shop and his home was in a boarding house, and for years he had thought of belonging to that club ; but quite hopelessly, as of a thing beyond attainment. It had never occurred to him that anything could come of those invasions of the friendly young men. Yet this was what had come of them. He was friends, under the rose, that is to say, over the counter, with Horace Jewdwine of Lazarus College, Oxford. Jewdwine had proposed him on his own merits, somebody else had seconded him (he supposed) on Jewdwine's, and between them they had smuggled him in. This would be his first appearance as a Junior Journalist. And he might well feel a little diffident about it ; for, though some of the members knew him, he could not honestly say he knew any of them, except Rankin (of *The Planet*) who possibly mightn't, and Jewdwine who certainly wouldn't, be there. But the plunge had to be made some time ; he might as well make it now.

From the threshold of the Junior Journalists' he looked back across the side street, as across a gulf, at the place he had just left. His eyes moved from the jutting signboard at the corner, announcing *Gentlemen's Libraries Purchased*, to the legend that ran above the window, blazoned in letters of gold :

Isaac Rickman : New & Second-Hand Bookseller.

His connexion with it was by no means casual and temporary. It was his father's shop.