

that I may manage to wander in the flesh about this planet for another six months. After that I shall have to do what wandering I yearn for through the medium of my ghost. There is a certain humourousness in the prospect. Save for an occasional pain somewhere inside me, I am in the most robust health.

But this same little pain has been diagnosed by the Faculty as the symptom of an obscure disease. An operation, they tell me, would kill me on the spot. What it is called I cannot for the life of me remember. They gave it a kind of lingering name, which I wrote down on my shirt-cuff.

The name or characteristics of the thing, however, do not matter a fig. I have always hated people who talked about their insides, and I am not going to talk about mine, even to myself. Clearly, if it is only going to last me six months, it is not worth talking about. But the quaint fact of its brief duration is worth the attention of a contemplative mind.

It is in order perfectly to focus this attention that I have come to Murglebed-on-Sea. Here I am alone with the murk and the mud and my own indrawn breath of life. There are no flowers, blue sky, smiling faces, and dainty faces—none of the adventitious distractions of the earth. There are no Blue-books. Before the Faculty made their jocular pronouncement I had been filling my head with statistics on pauper lunacy so as to please my constituency, in which the rate has increased alarmingly of late years. Perhaps that is why I found myself their representative in Parliament. I was to father a Bill on the subject next session. Now the labour will fall on other shoulders. I interest myself in pauper lunacy no more. A man requires less flippant occupation for the premature sunset of his days. Well, in Murglebed I can think, I can weigh the *pros* and *cons* of existence with an even mind, I can accustom