

His time was fully occupied : his nights and days were crowded with incident. He did not distinguish between sleeping and waking, dreams and reality, because his life at this period was merely subjective. But the same events passed him in an orderly procession, and as by degrees he learnt to recognise and look for them, so they became dear and familiar. Sometimes they displeased him, and then he manifested his objection in indignant grief : but such a demonstration was a thing apart from his constitutional attacks of depression ; violent and vociferous as it was, he rather enjoyed it, although he paid for the expenditure of nervous energy by a subsequent period of exhaustion.

It was only lately that he had begun to distinguish people and things as separate entities, and to learn the meaning of a joke. His five senses had awakened simultaneously but very gradually, and after them there now came a sixth—the sense of humour. As yet he knew nothing of the theological virtues. Countless objects now occupied him in turn and filled him with a strange satisfaction : his brain was growing, his sensations quickening, he had become enormously interested in the world. People around him said : ‘Gervase Alleyne is a peaky baby, but he seems to have all his wits about him, and when he laughs he laughs with all his heart.’

He laughed now, for a great bluebottle had walked suddenly across the bar of sunshine, and he had noticed that before. Seen but dimly, the bluebottle struck him also as a peculiarly humorous object, made entirely in order to create laughter.