

down the Bayswater Road, where the County Council carts were sprinkling the pavements with pale blue disinfectant water – I arrived at last at number 69, a little weary, but not too weary to face with equanimity the long climb that lay in front of me before I reached my bed. Up and up I went, curling round the great dim ochre well, round and up, until the dome loomed over me, and, looking over the banisters, I hung high in mid space, then turned, went up the six broad steps, then passed bedroom after bedroom, up and up still, leaving the nursery floor behind me, until I reached the bedroom, which, for the moment, was mine – almost at the very top of the house – at the back – overlooking, from an incredible height, a mews and roof and chimneys. I opened the door and went in, and immediately saw that the second bed – there was invariably a second bed in every bedroom – was occupied. I looked closer: it was Duncan; and I was not surprised: he had lingered on, no doubt, till it was too late to go home, and had been provided with the obvious accommodation. I undressed, oddly exultant, in the delicious warm morning. As I was getting into bed I saw that all the clothes had rolled off Duncan – that he was lying, almost naked, in vague pyjamas – his body – the slim body of a youth of nineteen – exposed to the view. I was very happy; and, smiling to myself, I wondered why it was that I did not want – not want in the very least – what the opportunity so perfectly offered, and I got into bed, and slept soundly, and dreamt no prophetic dreams.