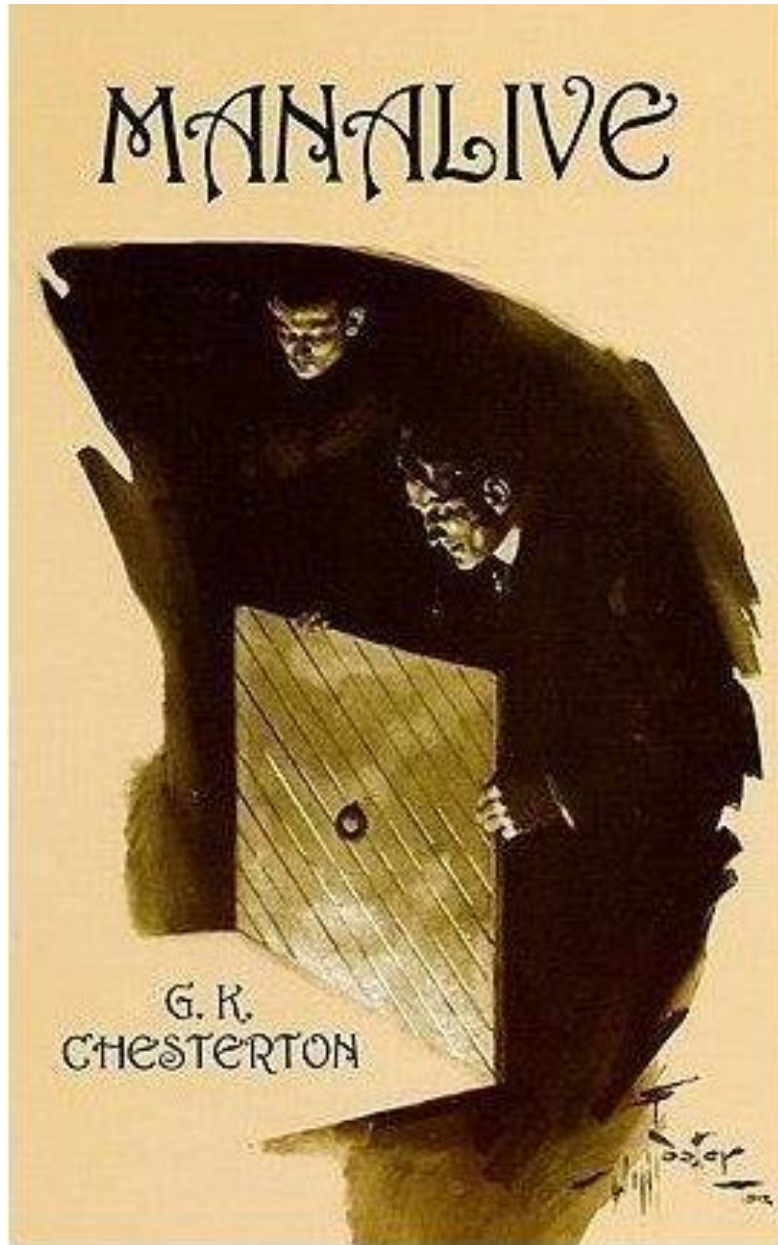


## A Summary of *Manalive* by G.K. Chesterton



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## About the Author

G. K. Chesterton was an astonishingly prolific, rotund, and revered author, poet, essayist, lecturer, radio personality, playwright, biographer, religious commentator, politico, travelogue, debater, and even illustrator. Born in 1874 in London, England, he was educated at University College, though he never received a degree. In his young adulthood he was captivated by spiritualism, but he returned to the Christian faith sometime after marrying Frances Blogg in 1901. He could quote whole chapters from famous authors at will, and often demonstrated his astounding memory and wit. He converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism in 1922, which stimulated him into writing his famous biographies of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Francis of Assisi. In 1925, he began to publish his “G.K.’s Weekly,” and continued to do so until his death. He died in 1936 after producing more than 100 books and numerous essays and stories, including his most famous character, the detective Father Brown. Other notable works include *The Man Who Was Thursday* (1908), *Orthodoxy* (1909), *What’s Wrong With the World* (1910), *The Everlasting Man* (1925), and *Autobiography* (1936).

## General Overview

This book is a jovial celebration of the sensations and vividness of being alive. Chesterton attacks the conventions of civilization in so far as they dampen one’s zest for living. Innocent Smith, a giant of a man, descends upon a boarding-house like a whirlwind and sets afire the imaginations of the stick-in-the-muds who inhabit the house. Some are too scientific and modern to appreciate Smith, but some have been secretly hungering for Smith’s influence. Smith shows them how to value life by turning everything on its head, from a pistol that deals life instead of death, to eloping with the same woman multiple times. The first part of the book describes his influence on the house, and the second deals with the explanations of his behavior.

## PART I: THE ENIGMAS OF INNOCENT SMITH

### Chapter I: How the Great Wind Came to Beacon House

A wind from the west decided to rip eastward across England. It brought drama into un-dramatic lives, refreshment, and astonishment. It blew down laundry on the line, lifted hammocks with delight and unconcern, and swept down great roads and small alleys. This was a good wind. At the point where the wind met London, in a small misnamed area called Swiss Cottage, was a boardinghouse called “Beacon House.” This house was tall, angular, and at the end of the street. At present Mrs. Duke, the proprietor of the rather cheerlessly decorated house was within. She was a rather helpless person who always smiled vaguely, and only managed to keep a young and listless clientele through the efforts of her strong-willed niece. Five of her boarders were in the garden at this moment: three men and two girls.

The wind seemed to blow the girls back into the house, but the men leaned against it stiffly. The girl in white was named Rosamund Hunt, an heiress who, though good-looking and good-natured, was yet unmarried. She always seemed unattainable to the crowd of young men around her. The girl in blue was named Diana Duke, the aforementioned prosaic and practical niece. She was the model of impatient efficiency. Rosamund cheerily mentioned the force of the wind, but Diana dismissed it immediately and unsentimentally and began to set out the tea.

The three men who remained outside had characteristically differing positions regarding hats. The tallest of the three had a high silk hat that he retained against the gale, the second had a straw hat which he had to hold in his hand, and the third had no hat at all. The man in the silk hat seemed to be silky and solid himself: big, bland, bored, and boring. He was a prosperous young doctor named Warner. He had a great deal of scientific knowledge and had gained some fame in those circles. The straw hat man was an amateur scientist who worshipped Warner: he was doomed to be good looking and insignificant. He was Arthur Inglewood, a man

people knew and immediately forgot. The hatless man was a lean Irish journalist named Michael Moon. Moon was a gentleman who liked low company, and hung around in bars even though he did not drink. He was an intellectual with no ambition, who was obscure and flippant. At the same boarding-house, though not present at the moment, was a small Jew named Moses Gould who displayed great vitality and vulgarity.

Moon asked Inglewood if the latter had any friends. Inglewood replied that he had lost touch with all his old friends, but his greatest school chum went by the name Smith. Smith had been a clever fellow, though odd, but all the latest reports were that he had gone off his head. Inglewood had received a telegram from Smith a year ago that convinced him of Smith's insanity. The telegram had simply said: "Man found alive with two legs."

Their conversation, trying to make sense of the nonsense, was interrupted by the arrival of a hat which flew up into the air and over the garden wall, landing at their feet. It was followed by a big green umbrella, which was hurled over the wall. Lastly came a bewildering scramble of a man, who was large, light-haired, and dressed in green holiday clothes. His head looked oddly small on his huge frame, and made him look like an idiot. Inglewood stepped forward to retrieve the hat, but the man bellowed at him, asking him to give the hat fair play. The hat went skipping along with the wind, the large man behind it, giving a running commentary. The man finally caught the hat with his feet and ceremoniously crowned himself with it. The three men who were already in the garden gaped, and suddenly Dr. Warner's hat flew into a tree. Immediately the large man bounded after it and climbed the tree, to the shock of the three men who had never considered climbing that particular tree. The large man retrieved the hat, hung downwards and attempted to crown Dr. Warner, who refused. The large man philosophized wildly about the necessity of wearing a uniform, came down from the tree, smashed the hat on Dr. Warner, and excitedly mentioned several other wind games that he had thought of that very day. Moon asked him where all this energy came from. The large man said: "I do it by having two legs." Inglewood, surprised, identified the stranger as Smith, who produced a strangely shaped card that the wind carried away.

## Chapter II: The Luggage of an Optimist

Smith appeared too large for everything, because he was too lively for his size (like an elephant with the jumping ability of a grasshopper). Smith requested rooms from Mrs. Duke, who goggled at him, and from her niece Diana, who signed the contract. He seemed to create an atmosphere of comic crisis, somehow getting the whole company to gather and follow (though in derision). Earlier these people had avoided each other, but no longer. The whole company is listed, along with another member, a young woman named Mary Gray (the only one who went to church) who served as a protégée and companion for Rosamund Hunt. Smith exclaimed that he liked to be tidy, to Diana's disapproval. "You can't climb a tree tidily," she said. He replied that he was simply tidying the tree of hats.

Smith was assigned a room on the top floor, and bumped his head on the highest ceiling, giving Inglewood the impression that the house had grown shorter. Inglewood was not sure if he recognized his old friend any more, either. Smith unpacked with a whirling accuracy, talking breathlessly all the while. His luggage seemed to make no sense: everything seemed to be there for the wrong reason. A pot was wrapped in brown paper, but it was the brown paper that was precious. A box of cigars was there, but he had brought them because of the box's wood. Bottles of wine were packed because of the beautiful colors of glass. Smith's bag had the initials I. S. upon it, standing for Innocent Smith.

Smith said that Diana Duke was rather like Joan of Arc, and that he could almost hear military music when near her. Inglewood, who had a mild crush on Diana but who had such romantic notions squashed out of him by Wagner's pulverizing rationalism, found himself oddly stirred by the imaginative description. And though the room was too small, Smith said he liked it because of the strange angles within it. He saw a door in the ceiling, and before Michael Moon could tell him about it, he was up through it. It opened directly to the roof. Inglewood and Moon followed, bringing wine and cookies, with the sensation that the door opening on the sky had opened the sky to them. Smith disappeared back downstairs to persuade Moses Gould to come up, and

Moon and Inglewood had a conversation regarding Moon's tameness under society. Moon savagely declared that he had never felt wild until just ten minutes ago. He tossed the empty wine bottle down to the street. Moon said there was some method in Smith's madness, turning anything into a wonderland. Inglewood responded with scientific platitudes, and Moon responded, "Let us go and do some of these things we can't do."

Smith had begun a "concert" downstairs, and called for Moon and Inglewood to come. On the way, they noticed a large pistol in Smith's luggage. Smith said, "I deal life out of that."

### Chapter III: The Banner of Beacon

The next day at Beacon, it seemed like everyone's birthday. When people are in high spirits, they create institutions, for the rules free us. It is when men are weary they fall into anarchy. Smith appeared to be the authority which finally declared liberty. Each person's hobby became a new institution: Rosamund's songs became an opera; Michael's jokes became a magazine, Inglewood's photography became a comic gallery, and even Diana Duke's domesticity took on new meaning (and continued to awaken Inglewood's passion). Smith seemed engaged in trying to draw Mary Gray into conversation, though her silence seemed a sort of steady applause. Mrs. Duke appeared to like this strange invasion of her home.

Michael Moon created the High Court of Beacon, in light-hearted mockery of pompous English law. When Smith was in wild spirits, he tended to become more serious; Moon was the opposite. Smith declared: "I believe in Home Rule for homes...Let's issue a Declaration of Independence from Beacon House." The others attempted to laugh at him for his wildness, saying that he wanted to find extraordinary things everywhere. Smith cried: "All is gold that glitters—especially now we are a Sovereign State. What's the good of a Sovereign State if it can't define a sovereign? We can make anything a precious metal." He said that gold was precious not because of its rarity, but because of its beauty, and proposed to find beauty in all kinds of ordinary things. He led them out onto the lawn in the garden, as for a dance. "And will you kindly tell me what the deuce is the good of a jewel except that it looks like a jewel?" He made up a poem on the spot, which ended: "All is gold that glitters, / For the glitter is the gold."

Rosamond said, to Moon, that Smith ought to be in an asylum. Moon replied that he already was, for Beacon House seemed an asylum to him, and that Smith was the only doctor. He declared that all the habits of the inhabitants were sure signs of mental disease, that all habits are bad habits. Inglewood encountered Diana with her hand on her chin, thinking; this was an astonishing sign. She, startled, said, "There's no time for dreaming." Inglewood replied, "I have been thinking lately that there's no time for waking up." Although eschewing drugs, Inglewood admitted that his habits were his drug: his speed, his business, and his hobbies. He thought there must be something to wake up to.

Rosamund Hunt broke in with astonishing news: Smith, having been in the house ten hours, had proposed and was going off with Mary Gray to get a special license.

### Chapter IV: The Garden of the God

Rosamund was especially upset because Mary seemed to *want* to marry Smith. She sought out Michael Moon's support, but he merely proposed to her instead! He decided that since Smith had brought a new reality to the house, that he would fulfill his long-suppressed desire. Rosamund resisted what she called an imprudent marriage, to which Michael replied that there was no such thing as a prudent marriage. "You never know a husband till you marry him." She was expecting perfection and complete happiness. With his wonderful backward logic, he overcame her resistance.

At the very same time, Inglewood was overcoming his innate shyness and timidity and boldly proposing to the intimidating Diana Duke. The four newly-engaged people met in the garden and felt new objectless and airy

energy. They twirled in a circle, then saw Dr. Warner and felt sorry for him since he did not know this new energy. Inglewood told him that health is catching, like disease. But Dr. Warner had come back in response to an earlier telegram from Rosamund that urged him to come with another doctor since Smith had gone crazy. She explained that now everything was different. Dr. Warner sought out Smith, however.

The four in the garden heard a gunshot from behind the house, and Dr. Warner came flying around from behind it with two holes in his hat. His colleague yelled, “Stop that murderer!” Smith came racing, chasing the doctor. Inglewood and the other doctor grabbed Smith, who stopped, laughing. The doctors took Smith into the house, and half an hour later, Dr. Warner emerged and thanked Rosamund for alerting him and enabling them to apprehend a pitiless and cruel criminal. Dr. Warner proposed taking Smith to a lunatic asylum

## Chapter V: The Allegorical Practical Joker

Dr. Cyrus Pym was the American criminal specialist who accompanied Dr. Warner. He had two half-conscious tricks: closing his eyes when being polite, and lifting his joined thumb and forefinger when hesitating over a word. Pym said that Smith was a new type of criminal, who lulled people by his childishness and popularity. Pym had collected documents proving Smith’s criminal background. Smith takes away young women with him (possibly murdered), takes away men’s lives, spoons, and more. Pym proposed to take Smith away, but Diana said that Mary Gray still wanted to go away with Smith. The women told Mary all about Smith, but she seemed completely unconcerned. She said, with a smile, “I know. Innocent told me.” She seemed madly and obstinately nonchalant about Smith’s former crimes and even his firing upon Dr. Warner.

Michael Moon prevented the doctors from taking Smith away to jail, saying that the High Court of Beacon ought to preside over this case. He said that Smith ought not to be put in a private hell simply on the word of two doctors who would not reveal their evidence. He believed that there was certainly an explanation owed, but the immediate assumption of lunacy was too much for him. Moon convinced the rest of the party that a public trial could be potentially embarrassing, and they decided to conduct a private inquiry in the Home Rule of the High Court of Beacon.

The doctors, representing Scientific Theory, as well as Moses Gould, representing Common Sense, believed Smith to be mad. Pym referred to Smith as a homicidal maniac, but Moon pointed out that all of them were still alive even though Smith had silently joined them. Smith went to retrieve his bag (on top of the hansom cab which was originally to take him away to an asylum), but the horse started running. Smith returned of his own will several minutes later. Moon and Inglewood decided to defend Smith. Moon noticed how Smith had done so much but said so little, and believed that Smith wanted to be tried by Beacon House. Inglewood looked up into a tree, saw a man, and asked, “Are you Innocent?” Smith refused to give a name, and Inglewood became frustrated, saying, “But, manalive!” Smith roared out, “That’s right! that’s right! That’s my real name!”

# PART II: THE EXPLANATIONS OF INNOCENT SMITH

## Chapter I: The Eye of Death; or, The Murder Charge

The dining room was the scene of the High Court. Mrs. Duke sat in a chair at the end of the dining table underneath an umbrella as canopy, and Smith sat opposite her as the accused. On the right side sat the prosecution, and on the left sat the defense, with the jury (the three young ladies, with Mary Gray in the middle) against the windows. Dr. Pym opened for the prosecution, saying that modern science has changed our view of death and murder, and made it social. Thus, Smith was accused not as a murderer, but as a murderous man. He brought forward evidence of Smith’s earlier murder attempts, and chose one in particular to focus upon. Documents were given in the form of two letters from Cambridge University. One letter was from Sub-



Warden Amos Boulter, who claimed that Smith shot twice at the Warden of Brikespeare while that gentleman hung in mid-air from an arch. Smith had laughed greatly and desisted, and the Warden was able to come down. The other letter was from Samuel Barker, porter of Brikespeare, which confirmed the other letter.

Moon rose for the defense, and said that if there is a kind of man who tends to murder, then there must be a kind of man who tends to be murdered. He said Dr. Warner might be this type. Moon produced two documents from people who had, respectively, thrown a saucepan at him and punched his nose, attempting to prove that Dr. Warner is clearly murderable. Moon said, "Place that man in a Quakers meeting and he will immediately be beaten to death with sticks of chocolate." Dr. Pym protested against Moon's use of jokes as a defense, and Moon replied dreamily that he had not yet begun the defense. Moon made the following points: 1) that although Smith was an excellent shot, he had never hit a victim; 2) no alleged victim of his violence was willing to come forward against him; 3) the Warden's evidence was actually favorable towards Smith, was co-authored with Smith, and was in the possession of the defense.

Inglewood rose to read the statement of the Warden of Brikespeare, which was surprisingly flowery (to Dr. Pym's dissatisfaction). Essentially, Smith was a melancholy and pessimistic young man. While visiting the Warden's house one evening, he found the Warden simply encouraging his pessimism and despair through philosophic discourses. The Warden mentioned that an omniscient god would just strike us dead rather than let us continue on a downward course, and Smith pulled out a revolver and offered to help the Warden's wish. Suddenly the Warden begged for his life and bolted for the window. The Warden leaped out and sat astride an antique arch, whereupon the two had a discussion regarding life and death, especially the Warden's sudden desire to return to life. Smith said he would let the Warden live if the Warden would sing a song, and that worthy gentleman complied. Smith urged the Warden to thank God for everything in the world, and he complied with that in desperation. Smith finally expressed his love for the man, even though the Warden spoke such nonsense, fired off a couple cartridges, and thereupon the Sub-Warden appeared in rescue. Smith later thanked the Warden for saving Smith from death, since he felt he had to prove the Warden wrong or die himself. "You were that to me; you spoke with authority, and not as the scribes. Nobody could comfort me if *you* said there was no comfort." This was the beginning of Smith's life as a man who would hold a pistol to the head of Modern Man, not to kill him, but to bring him to life.

From this history, Smith understood two things: 1) that murder was really wrong, and 2) that it is very dangerous when anyone thinks he really understands death.

## Chapter II: The Two Curates; or, The Burglary Charge

Inglewood concluded his case by saying that clearly Smith has the innocent purpose of giving a complete scare to those whom he regards as blasphemers, but the scare is so complete as to create a new birth for the victim. This is why no victim would speak against him, because they appreciated the benefits of Smith's actions. But yet Dr. Pym mentioned that Dr. Warner was a victim who was not appreciative. It turned out that just before the shooting, Smith had asked when Dr. Warner's birthday was celebrated, and Dr. Warner replied that he did not celebrate his birthday at all because his birth was nothing to celebrate. And this so completely wrapped up the defense's case that the Court moved on to the next charge.

Dr. Pym talked abstractly for an hour about theft, thieves, kleptomania, and the scientific attitudes towards them. Moon was annoyed because Dr. Pym could not get to the point. Dr. Pym's point was that Smith was a burglar and an unusual one, since burglary was the only type of theft that was marked more by business than by insanity. Dr. Pym read an account from Canon Hawkins of Durham, who claimed that after a meeting he attended that had been presided over by a Reverend Raymond Percy (a straightforward Socialist), this Rev. Percy had been questioned afterwards by a large man. This large man, covered in plaster dust, rushed the platform, but was stopped by another giant who ushered Percy and Hawkins outside. This giant encouraged them to engage in an act of social justice, with practical Socialism, to which Percy readily agreed. They followed a circuitous route and eventually climbed up on top of a garden wall. The giant admitted to being a

burglar and a member of the Fabian society, and Hawkins left his company after watching he and Percy climb up a roof in order to pierce a house. Canon Hawkins said that this morally despicable man was Innocent Smith.

For the defense, Moon established the date and place of the alleged burglary, and asked if a burglary did occur then and there, but no legal papers had been filed. He also asked if the prosecution could produce evidence from Rev. Percy, but Dr. Pym said that Percy had completely disappeared, clearly proving that he had descended into the criminal class. But Moon quickly produced a letter from that very same Rev. Percy, who wrote an indictment of Canon Hawkins as a helpless aristocrat who had caused a stampede against the platform. After following the giant up the roof, Percy watched the man push over a chimney-pot to reveal a large hole in the roof. Percy saw that the man had planned his burglary long before, and both men jumped in (while Percy contemplated how he had arrived in the house much like Santa Claus). He suddenly saw, while thinking of how Santa Claus is welcome, how burglary is really wrong. But, too late to turn back, he followed the big man down an attic trap-door into a sitting room. The large man made sure all was silent, then brought over a glass of port from the sideboard. Percy began to protest his actions in particular and theft in general. His companion gently played with a pistol while displaying an eerie knowledge of the house and its owner. Percy asked if the owner of the house knew and approved of the big man's actions, and the man replied, "God forbid, but he has to do the same." Footsteps along the hallway revealed a young woman who simply said, "I didn't hear you come in." Percy, in utter confusion, asked whose house this was. The big man replied, "Mine. May I present you to my wife?"

Mr. and Mrs. Smith talked with Rev. Percy for a while, and they exchanged life stories. Smith needed to prove to himself that he was alive by performing feats of incredible risk, and once sent a telegram to a friend simply recording this fact. Smith had capsized a canoe and endangered his life and that of a young lady in a nearby rowboat, and had shortly thereafter proposed and married her in a similarly exuberant fashion. They lived happily in this high, narrow house, but Smith could not be said to have "settled down". He would often pretend to be a stranger, in order to reawaken in himself a sense of reality and appreciativeness, such as when he would break into his own home. He oddly coveted his own goods rather than his neighbors, or pretends not to be married to remind himself that he was.

Moses Gould was shocked, not by the odd story, but by Smith's willingness to elope with Mary Gray in a cab after learning that Smith was married all along.

### Chapter III: The Round Road; or, The Desertion Charge

The next charges against Smith were polygamy and desertion. Dr. Pym, growing suspicious, asked if these defense documents were obtained from Smith. Moon replied that he obtained them not from Smith, but from Mary Gray, which indicated that Mary knew about the previous Mrs. Smith! Dr. Pym, disgusted, introduced a gardener who had served Mr. and Mrs. Smith who testified that Smith had two children and often did odd things, such as stand outside his bedroom window yelling to his wife, "I won't stay here any longer. I've got another wife and much better children a long way from here." Smith had then departed with a rake.

For the defense, Moon presented a letter from a French innkeeper who wrote that a large man with a rake climbed from a fishing-boat (across the English Channel, of course), and asked directions to a minutely described house. The innkeeper said that the house, from the description of a red pillar-box, said it must be in England, and the man said, "I had forgotten, that is the island's name." The innkeeper was astonished, since the man had clearly just come from England. The man said that the only good thing science discovered was that the world is round, and thus the shortest way to get anywhere is to go right round the world. He was going to find the wife he really married and the house which was really his: he left it to find it. He said that a true revolution just gets people to where they were before.

Next, Inglewood read a letter from a Russian train station-master, who recorded a meeting with a giant man with a rake that was looking for a house. The station-master mentioned "The Doll's House" by Ibsen, and the

large man said that Ibsen was so wrong: “The whole aim of a house is to be a doll’s house...A child has a doll’s house, and shrieks when a front door opens inwards. A banker has a real house, yet how numerous are the bankers who fail to emit the faintest shriek when their real front doors open inwards.” The man said that the way to make a large thing small is to get far away from it, and he looked forward to getting back to his doll’s house.

Another letter was read, this one from an Oriental temple-servant who, again, encountered a large Englishman with a rake, who was looking for a house. The Englishman apologized for being right in religion, because the Oriental’s idols and emperors were so old and wise and satisfying. Yet another letter was read, from a tavern-keeper in the Sierra Mountains, who encountered the same strange individual who was following an eastern star to a house and talked of eternity as the largest of the idols—the mightiest of the rivals of God. Lastly was the evidence of Ruth Davis, recent housekeeper for Mrs. I. Smith, who was present when a large, ragged, and hairy man vaulted himself over the garden wall with a rake and turned out to be Mr. Smith himself. He said, “Oh, what a lovely place you’ve got,” as if seeing it for the first time.

## Chapter IV: The Wild Weddings; or, The Polygamy Charge

The last charge, and the most serious according to the prosecutors, was that of wild polygamy and the irreverence towards marriage. Michael quickly replied that nobody has ever survived marriage: all those who were once married are now dead. Dr. Pym used a newspaper clipping to confirm the original marriage of Innocent Smith to a young lady. But he then presented evidence that Smith had repeatedly given offers to marriage to young ladies in many houses, and had eloped with them. Letters from a Lady Bullington, a publisher named Aubrey Clarke, and a lecturer named Ada Gridley confirmed this. The young ladies in question always seemed to have reddish-brown hair and to willingly follow the lunatic actions of Smith. The prosecution did not know what ever happened to all these girls.

Moon pointed out how little was known about these girls and how all of them seemed to be transitory: boarders, secretaries, working-girls. “We admit that all these women really lived. But we still ask whether they were ever born?” Moon asked. The fact that all the girls looked and acted similar led Moon to say that “they were all definitely alive, but only one of them was ever born.” The hair of the girls was all rather like Miss Gray’s hair, and their actions were all rather like Miss Gray’s actions. In fact, all the girls’ names were color names: Miss Green for Lady Bullington, Miss Black for the publishers, Miss Brown for the school, Miss Gray at Beacon House. Thus, Innocent Smith had many woings and many weddings, but only one wife.

Innocent Smith, said Moon, refused to die while he was still alive, and nothing he did was wrong in itself (firing off a pistol when you know you will not injure another person is not a wrongful act) but rather just a breach of civilization. He broke the conventions, but he kept the commandments. Moon said suddenly, “We have been sitting with a ghost. Dr. Herbert Warner died years ago.”

## Chapter V: How the Great Wind Went from Beacon House

Mary explained to Diana in the garden that this was all a game which lasted no longer than a fortnight at a time. She said, “Stick to the man who looks out of the window and tries to understand the world. Keep clear of the man who looks in at the window and tries to understand you.” A great shout came from the house, “Acquitted!” All the couples joined in merriment, but at the end of the evening Innocent and Mary Smith were nowhere to be found.