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KING JOHN OF JINGALO

THE STORY OF A MONARCH IN DIFFICULTIES

BY LAURENCE HOUSMAN

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KING JOHN OF JINGALO

CHAPTER I

A DOMESTIC INTERIOR

I

The King of Jingalo had just finished breakfast in the seclusion of the royal private apartments. Turning away from the pleasantly deranged board he took up one of the morning newspapers which lay neatly folded upon a small gilt-legged table beside him. Then he looked at his watch.

This action was characteristic of his Majesty: doing one thing always reminded him that presently he would have to be doing another. Conscientious to a fault, he led a harassed and over-occupied life, which was not the less wearisome in its routine because no clear results ever presented themselves within his own range of vision. By an unkind stroke of fortune he had been called to the rule of a kingdom that had grown restive under the weight of too much tradition; and constitutionally he was unable to let it alone. So must he now remind himself in the hour of his privacy how all too fleeting were its moments, and how soon he would have to project himself elsewhere.

Glancing across the table towards his consort he saw that she was still engrossed in the opening of her letters—large stiff envelopes, conspicuously crested, containing squarish sheets of unfolded note-paper; for it was a rule of the Court that no creased correspondence should ever solicit the attention of the royal eye, and that all letters should be written upon one side only. The Queen was very fond of receiving these spacious missives; though they contained little of importance they came to her from half the crowned heads of Europe, as well as from the most select circle of Jingalese aristocracy. They gave occupation to two secretaries, and were a daily reminder to her Majesty that, in her own country at any rate, she was the acknowledged leader of society.

Having looked at his watch the King said: "My dear, what are you going to do to-day?"

"Really," replied the Queen, "I don't quite know; I have not yet looked at my diary."

Her Majesty seldom did know anything of the day's program until she had consulted her secretaries, who, with dovetailing ingenuity, arranged her hours and booked to each day—often many months in advance—the engagements which lay ahead. Therein she showed a calmer and more philosophic temperament than her consort. The King always knew; every day of his life with anxious forecast he consulted his diary while shaving, and breakfasted with its troubling details fresh upon his recollection.

Having answered his inquiry the Queen relapsed into her correspondence, while the King resumed his newspaper; and the moment may be regarded as propitious for presenting the reader with a portrait of these two august personages, since so good an opportunity may not occur again. The kind of portrait we offer is, of course, of an up-to-date and biographical character, and does not limit itself to those circumstances of time and space in which the commencement of this history has landed us.

So, first, we take the King,—not as we have just found him, seated at a table with chair turned sideways and features sharply illuminated by the reflected lights of the journal he holds in his hands—for thus we do not see him to advantage, and it is to advantage that we would exhibit in its externals a character of which, before we have done with it, we intend to grow fond. Time and space must provide us with a broader view of him than that.

This King had been upon the throne for twenty-five years; and during that period, like a rich wine in the wood, monarchy had mellowed within him, permeating his system with its mild and slightly dry flavor; it had become as it were a habit, and he carried it quite naturally, almost unconsciously, though with just a suspicion of weight, much as a scholar carries his learning or a workman his bag of tools.

A pleasantly florid face, quaintly expressive of an importance about which its owner was undecided, imposed above a fullish waistcoat a chin which was now tending toward the slopes of middle age. The eyes were mild and vaguely speculative, the lips full and loosely formed, and when they smiled they began tentatively in a tremulous lift showing only the two upper front teeth—the smile of a woman rather than of a man. This smile—when it made, as it so often had to make, its appearance in public—was curiously suggestive of interrogation. "Am I now meant to smile?" it seemed to say. "Very good, then I will." This tentatively advanced smile of a countenance so highly exalted for others to gaze on, was peculiarly winning to those who were its

recipients; it suggested a gentle character, indicating through its shyness both the giving and the receiving of a favor; and among those in personal attendance on him the King was—perhaps on account of that smile—more liked than he knew. Servants whom the vastness of his establishments did not convert into total strangers found him a considerate master, full of a personal interest in their snug lives, and with a carefully practised memory for the numbers and names of their children; and the only complaint that even his valets had against him was that he remained his own barber and evinced a certain reluctance in casting his suits until they had begun to show a suspicion of wear. In outward relations he was a kind, touchy, companionable soul; inwardly he was one who suffered acutely from lack of companionship and conversation, not because he had not plenty of people to talk to, but because so many things came into his head that he must not say, while the correct substitutes for them only occurred to him later. And thus it came about that a good deal of his intercourse with humanity was limited to a pleasant expression of face, wearing generally, especially when it smiled, a wistful note of interrogation.

To present this face to the public in the regulation doses which were considered inducive to loyalty, he had sat thirty-nine times for his portrait to popular rather than famous painters, and to commercially successful photographers more times than any one could count. And painters and photographers alike had agreed that he was a steady and a patient sitter. They all liked him. He himself preferred the photographers; they came more often but they took less time and did not require the give-and-take of artificially made conversation. They were also more amenable to criticism, and kept behind the scenes for "touching-up" purposes wonderful anonymous artists who gave no trouble whatever, requiring no sittings and yet producing results that for tact and skill combined with accuracy could not be beaten. Occasionally, after having sat for his portrait to one of the painters, the King was advised to bestow on him a knighthood or an order. In his heart of hearts he would have much preferred knighting a photographer; but for some reason which was beyond him to discover this was not considered the correct thing, and the knighthoods went accordingly to the people who gave him the most trouble and the least satisfactory results.

It had never been the King's lot to be handsome; but now the approaches of age were giving to his countenance a dignity which in youth it had lacked. This was part and parcel of a certain mental obtuseness or obstinacy: when his Majesty did not understand, majesty became sedentary in his face. Often when it was the duty, or the device, of his ministerial advisers to confuse his mind with explanatory details about things which lay far beyond it, they would presently become aware that he did not in the least understand what they were saying, or that such understanding as he possessed at the beginning had become darkened by judicious counsel. This stage of the reasoning process was marked by a gentle access of majesty to the royal countenance; and when it appeared ministers were informed that, for the time being, their object was attained. When, however, the King did understand, or thought that he did, he was less majestic and more troublesome, and had to be circumvented in other ways; and a good deal of this history will be taken up with the circumventions practised by an astute Cabinet upon a monarch who was brought by accident to imagine that he really did understand the position of ignominy combined with responsibility in which the Constitution had placed him.

II

John of Jingalo had been in harness all his life: he had never known freedom, never been left to find his own feet, never been taught to think for himself except upon conventional lines; and these had kept him from ever putting into practice the rudimental self-promptings which sometimes troubled him. He had been elaborately instructed, but not educated; his own individual character, that is to say, had not been allowed to open out; but a sort of traditional character had been slowly squeezed into him in order to fit him for that conventional acceptance of a variety of ancient institutions (some moldering, some still vigorous) which, by a certain official and ruling class of monetarily interested persons, was considered to be the correct constitutional attitude. Monarchy, that is to say, had been interpreted to him by those who sucked the greatest amount of social prestige and material benefit from its present conditions as a "going concern"; and in that imposed interpretation deportment came first, initiative last, and originality nowhere at all.

In many respects, indeed, his training had been like that of a young girl whose parents have determined, without leaving her any choice in the matter, that matrimony is to be her single aim and the sphere of the home her outward circumference. Like a young girl whose future is thus controlled he had acquired a pleasant smattering of several social accomplishments; he had learned to speak three languages with fluency, to draw, to dance, to ride, to behave under all likely circumstances with perfect correctness, and to walk down the center of a large room with apparent ease. He had been trained, for review purposes and for the final privilege of carrying a cocked hat as well as a crown upon his coffin, in a profession which he would never be allowed to practise; and, having been "brought out" with much show and parade at an early age, had been introduced to a vast number of very important people, and dragged through a long series of social functions, which, however crowded, gave always a free floor for his feet to walk on and never presented a single back to his view. But as a result of all these crowds, with their bewildering blend of glittering toilet, deferential movement, and flattering speech, he knew no more of the inner realities of life than the young girl knows of it from a series of dances, flirtations, and afternoon teas. This polite and decorous, yet dazzling mask had been drawn between him and the actualities of existence, presenting itself to view again and again, and concealing its essential sameness in the pomp and circumstance with which it was attended. At

these functions thousands of brilliant and distinguished people had bowed their well-stored brains within a few inches of his face, had exchanged with their monarch a few words of studied politeness and compliment, now and then had even laid themselves out to amuse him, but never once had they imparted to his mind an arresting or a commanding thought, never once endeavored to change any single judgment that had ever been formed for him. Not once in all the years since he came to man's estate—except occasionally with his wife and on one isolated occasion with his father—had he ever found himself involved so deeply in argument, or in any difference of opinion, as to be forced to feel himself beaten. That single discussion with his father had been closed peremptorily—parental and regal authority combining had cut it short; and as for his wife—well, she was dear, amiable, and, within her limits, sensible; but intellectually she was not his superior. Thus there had come to him a good deal of social discipline, experience of a kind, but of education in the higher intellectual sense scarcely any. He had merely been taught carefully and elaborately to take up a certain position, and in a vast number of minutely differing circumstances (mainly of social formality) to fill it or seem to fill it "as one to the manner born."

In addition he had been trained, on strictly impartial and noncommittal lines, to take an interest in politics; to have within certain narrow and prescribed limits an open mind—one, that is to say, with its orifice comfortably adapted to the stuffing process practised on kings by the great ones of the official world; and when his mind would not open in certain required directions, well, after all, it did not much matter, since in the end it made no practical difference.

Under these circumstances he would have been a mere social and official automaton had not certain defects of his character saved him. Though timid he was impulsive; he was also a little irritable, rather suspicious, and indomitably fussy in response to the call of duty. Temper, fuss, and curiosity saved him from boredom; he was conscientiously industrious, and though there was much that he did not understand he managed to be interested in nearly everything.

In the fiftieth year of his age, this monarch, amiable, affable, and of a thoroughly deserving domestic character, was destined to be thrust into a seething whirlpool of political intrigue in which, for the first time, his conscience was to be seriously troubled over the part he was asked to play. And while that wakening of his conscience was to cause him a vast amount of trouble, it was to have as enlarging and educative an effect upon his character as her first love affair has upon a young girl. From this moment, in fact, you are to see a shell-bound tortoise blossom into a species of fretful porcupine, his shell splintering itself into points and erecting them with blundering effectiveness against his enemies. And you shall see by what unconscious and subterranean ways history gets made and written.

III

And now let us turn to the Queen. In her case less analysis is needed: one had only to look at her, at the genial and comfortable expression of her face, at the ample, but not too ample, lines of her person, to see that in her present high situation she both gave and found satisfaction. She did, with ease and even with appetite, that which the King, with so much anxious expenditure of nervous energy, was always trying to do—her duty. She had a position and she filled it. She was not clever, but her imperturbable common-sense made up for what she lacked intellectually. No one, except the newspapers, would call her beautiful; but she was comely and enjoyed good health, and she had what one may describe as a good surface—nothing that she wore was thrown away on her, and any chair that she occupied, however large, she never failed to adorn. There you have her picture: you may imagine her as plump, as blonde, as good-tempered, and as well-preserved for her age as suits your individual taste—no qualifying word of the chronicler of this history shall obstruct the view; and you may be as fond of her as you like.

The Queen was the head of Jingalese society, and of its charities as well. Her influence was enormous: at a mere word from her organizations sprang into being. Without any Acts of Parliament to control or guide them—merely at the delicately expressed wish of her Majesty—thousands of charming, wealthy, and influential women would waste spare hour upon hour and expend small fortunes of pocket-money in keeping uncomfortable things comfortably going in their accustomed grooves. It was calculated that the Queen's patronage had the immediate effect of trebling the subscription list of any charity, while the mere withdrawal of her name spelt bankruptcy. Her Majesty was patron to forty-nine charities and subscribed to all of them. For the five largest she appeared annually on a crimson-covered platform, insuring thereby a large supply of silk purses containing contributions, and a full report in the press of all the speeches. It was her rule to open two bazaars regularly each summer, to lay the foundation-stones of three churches, orphanages, or hospitals (whichever happened to require the greatest amount of money for their completion), to attend the prize-giving at the most ancient of the national charity schools, and every winter, when distress and unemployment were at their worst, to go down to the Humanitarian Army's soup-kitchen, and there taste, from a tin mug with a common pewter spoon, the soup which was made for the poor and destitute. This last performance, which took so much less time and trouble than all the rest, proved each year the most popular incident of her Majesty's useful and variegated public life, for every one felt that it provided in the nicest possible way an antidote to the advance of socialistic theories. The papers dealt with it in leading articles; and the lucky casuals who happened to drop in on the day when her Majesty paid the surprise visit arranged for her by her secretaries would report that they had never tasted such good soup in all their born days.

It may truthfully be said that the Queen never spent an idle day, and never came to the end of

one without the consciousness of having done good. All the more, therefore, is it remarkable that, as the outcome of so much benevolence and charity, the Queen knew absolutely nothing of the real needs and conditions of the people, and that she knew still less how any alterations in the laws, manners, or customs of the country could better or worsen the conditions of unemployment, sweated labor, or public morality. Her whole idea of political economy was summed up in the proposition that anything must be good for the country which was good for trade; and it may certainly be said that for the majority of trade interests she was as good as gold. Without caring too much for dress (being herself wholly devoid of personal vanity) she ordered dresses in abundance, and constantly varied the fashion, the color, and the material, because she was given to understand that change and variety stimulated trade. Her most revolutionary act had been to readopt, one fine spring morning, the ample skirt of the crinoline period in order to counteract the distress and shortage of work caused in the textile trade by the introduction and persistence of the "hobble skirt." As a consequence of this sudden disturbance of the evolutionary law governing creation in the modiste's sense of the word, there was a sharp reaction a year later, which—after the artificial stimulus of the previous season—threw more women out of employment than ever; new fancy-trades had to be learned in apprenticeships at starvation wages—with the result that wages had to be eked out in other ways. But of all this her Majesty heard nothing. It never occurred to anybody that these ultimate consequences of her amiable incentive to industry could possibly concern her; and the Queen, finding that people no longer knew how to adapt themselves to the long, full skirts of their grandmothers, accepted without demur the next wave of fashion that swept over Europe from London *via* Paris.

The Queen never herself opened a paper. Extracts were read out to her each day by one of her ladies; these being selected by another lady appointed for the purpose as those most likely to interest the royal mind. It was made known in the press that her Majesty never read the divorce cases; neither did she read politics or the police news. No controversial side of the national life ever entered her brain—until somehow or another it was reached by the dim uproar of the Women Chartists' movement. She expressed her disapproval, and the page was turned.

Her instinctive tastes stood always as a guide for what she should be told; and experience limited her inquiry. In all her life her influence had never been used for the release of an unjustly convicted prisoner, the abatement of an inhuman sentence, or the abolition of any abuse established by law. Queens who had done these things in the past were medieval figures, and such interference was quite unsuitable for a royal consort under modern conditions. Had Philippa of Hainault lived in these more enlightened times she would have been forced to let the Burghers of Calais go hang and restrict herself to making provision for their widows and orphans; for to arrest any act of government had long since ceased to be within the functions of a queen.

Like her husband, this royal lady was surrounded by officialdom, or, rather, by its complementary and feminine appendices—the wives and daughters of the aristocracy, of politicians, of ecclesiastical and military dignitaries: these to her represented the sphere, activity, and capacity of her own sex. Other women—pioneers of education and of reform, rescue-workers, organizers, writers, orators, had—the majority of them—lived and died without once coming in contact with the official leader of Jingalese womanhood; for they and their like were outside the official ranks, and stood for things combative and controversial and dangerously alive, and only a few of them had been brought to Court in their venerable old age, to be looked at as curiosities when their fighting days were over and their work done.

On the governing boards of the hospitals to which the Queen gave her patronage there was not a single woman—or a married one either; but when her Majesty visited the wards she was very nice to the nurses. She was, in fact, very nice to everybody, and everybody was very nice to her.

IV

A king and a queen take so long to describe that the reader will have almost forgotten how we left them at the breakfast table. But the Queen had her letters and the King his newspapers, and there, when we return to them in the historic present, they still are.

Yes, there they sit, an institutional expression of the nation's general complacency with the state of civilization at which it has arrived, interpreting in decorous form the voice of the articulate majority—the inarticulate not being interpreted at all. There they sit, he with his newspapers, she with her letters: the King a little anxious and perturbed, the Queen not anxious or perturbed about anything.

She was still enjoying her superfluous correspondence, he studying in a vague distrustfulness the various organs of public opinion which lay around him, doubtful of them all, yet wishing to find one he could rely on. For now they were all very full of the approaching constitutional crisis, and were adumbrating in respectful, yet slightly menacing terms, what the King himself would do in the matter. Whereas what he actually would do he had not himself the ghost of a notion,—did not yet know, in fact, what legs he had to stand on, having no information upon that point beyond what the Prime Minister had chosen to tell him.

And being puzzled he wanted to talk, yet not directly of the matter which perturbed his mind; but somehow by hearing his own voice he hoped to arrive at the popular sentiment. It was a way he had; and the Queen, who was often his audience, knew the preliminary symptoms by heart. So when presently he began crackling his newspaper and drawing a series of audible half breaths as though about to begin reading, his wife recognized the sign that here was something she must

listen to. She put down her letters and attended.

"I see," said his Majesty, culling his information from the opening paragraph of a leading article, "I see that the Government is losing popularity every day. That Act they passed last year for the reinstatement of turnpikes to regulate the speed of motor-traffic is proving unpopular."

"Is it a failure, then?" inquired the Queen.

"On the contrary, it is a success. But the system was expected to pay for its upkeep by the amount of fines it brought in, whereas the result has been to make the conduct of motorists so exemplary that the measure has ceased to pay. Unable to escape detection, 'joy-riding' has become practically non-existent, motor-cars are ceasing to be used for breaches of the peace, and the trade is going down in consequence by leaps and bounds. The fact is you cannot now-a-days put a stop to any grave abuse without seriously damaging some trade-interest. If 'trade' is to decide matters it would be much better not to legislate at all."

"My dear! wouldn't that be revolutionary?" inquired the Queen.

"Keeping things as they are is not revolutionary," replied his Majesty, "though it's a hard enough thing to do now-a-days."

"But," objected his wife, "they must pass something, or else how would they earn their salaries?"

"That's it!" said the King,— "payment of members; another of those unnecessary reforms thrust on us by the example of England."

"Ah, yes!" answered his wife, feeling about for an intelligent ground of agreement, "England is so rich; she can afford it."

"It isn't that at all," retorted his Majesty; "plenty of other countries have had to afford it before now. But it was only when England did it that we took up with the notion. We are always imitating England: the attraction of contraries, I suppose, because we are surrounded by land as they are by water. Why else did they start turning me into a commercial traveler, sending me all over Europe and round the world to visit colonies that no longer really belong to us? Only because they are doing the same thing over in England."

"They saw that you wanted change of air," said the Queen.

"Change of fiddlesticks!" answered the King; "I consider it a most dangerous precedent to let a sovereign be too long out of his own country. It makes people imagine they can do just as well without him!"

The Queen looked at her husband with shrewd and kindly furtiveness. She had a funny little suspicion that the ministry did at times greatly prefer his absence to his presence: and that "change of fiddlesticks" was really their underlying motive. About this monarch she herself had no illusions: he was a dear, but he fussed; and when once he began fussing he required an enormous amount of explanation and persuasion. Even she, therefore, was not at all averse to letting him go on these State outings in which she need not always accompany him. They gave him something fresh to think about, and to her a time of leisure when she need not pretend to think about anything she did not understand.

"Of course," went on the King, "it makes good copy for the newspapers. The press is powerful, and governments are obliged now-a-days to throw in a certain amount of spectacle to keep it in a good temper. We are sent off to perform somewhere, and after us come the penny-a-liner and the cinematograph."

"Oh! my dear, much more than a penny-a-liner," corrected the Queen; "I heard of one correspondent who makes £5,000 a year. And think how good for trade! Besides, do not we get the benefit of it?"

"Benefit!" exclaimed the King irritably, "where is the benefit to us of journalists who describe State functions as though they were jewelers' touts and dressmakers rolled into one? The vulgarity of people's present notion of what makes monarchy impressive is appalling. Listen to this, my dear! This is you and me at the Opening of Parliament yesterday." He unfolded his paper and read—

"The regal purple flowed proudly from the King's shoulders; above their three ribbons of red, green, and gold, the Orders of his ancestors burned confidingly on the royal breast. The Queen's diamonds were supreme; upon the silken fabric of her corsage they flashed incredibly; one watched them, fire-color infinitely varied, infinitely intensified, like nothing else seen on earth. As she advanced, deeply bowing to right and left, parabolas of light exhaled from her coronet like falling stars. When King and Queen were seated, their State robes flowing in purple waves and ripples of ermine to the very steps of the dais, the picture was complete. Single gems of the first water glistened like dewdrops in the Queen's ears, while upon her bosom as she breathed the three great Turgeneff diamonds caught and defiantly threw back the light. They became the center of all eyes.'

"I call that disgusting!" said the King. "Why diamonds should burn confidingly on my breast, and flash incredibly on yours, I'm sure I don't know. But there we are: a couple of clothes'-pegs for journalists to hang words on."

The Queen had rather enjoyed the description, it enabled her to see herself as she appeared to others.

"I don't see the harm," she said; "we have to wear these things, so they may as well be described."

"I wish some day you wouldn't wear them!" said the King. "Then, instead of talking of your trinkets and your clothes, they would begin to pay attention to what royalty really stands for."

The Queen was gathering up her letters from the table: she smiled indulgently upon her spouse.

"Jack," said she, "you are jealous!"

"I wish, Alicia," said the King testily, "that you would not call me 'Jack'; at least, not after—not where any of the servants may come in and overhear us. It would not sound seemly."

"My dear John," said the Queen, "don't be so absurd. You know perfectly well that it's just that which makes us most popular. People are always telling little anecdotes of that kind about us; and then, think of all the photographs! If people were to talk of you as 'King Jack,' it would mean you were the most popular person in the country."

"I wonder if they do?" murmured the King. "I wonder!" He felt remote from his people, for he did not know.

The Queen noticed his depression; something was troubling him, and being a lady of infinite tact, she abruptly turned the conversation. "What are you doing to-day, dear?" she inquired brightly.

"I have a Council at eleven," moaned the King, "and I really must get through a few of these papers first. It gives me a great advantage when Brasshay begins talking—a great advantage if I know what the papers have been saying about him. To-day it's the Finance Act. By the way, Charlotte was asking me yesterday to raise her allowance. Is there any reason for it?"

"A little more for dress would now be advisable," said the Queen. "She has lately begun to open Church bazaars: I thought they would do for her to begin upon. And the other day she laid the foundation-stone of a dogs' orphanage—very nicely, I'm told."

"Of course," said the King, "she's old enough, and it is quite time I asked for a definite grant from Parliament. But if one did that now they would probably not raise it afterwards. Very much better to wait, I think, till we have made a really brilliant match for her; then, for the sake of its financial prestige, the nation will do the thing handsomely."

"She has got an idea she doesn't like foreigners," said the Queen reflectively.

"She will have to like some foreigner!" said the King. "As the only daughter of a reigning monarch she must marry royalty, and we haven't any one left among ourselves who is eligible. Charlotte must get to like foreigners. Max has no objection to foreigners, I hope?"

The Queen gave her husband a curious look.

"From what I hear," she murmured, "I should say none: but it is not for me to make any inquiries."

"Dear me! is that so?" said the King. "Well, well! When did you hear about it?"

"Only yesterday; but it has been going on a long time."

"I suppose," sighed his Majesty, "I suppose one couldn't expect it to be otherwise. Well, I must speak to him, then; and we shall really have to get him married to somebody. The religious difficulty, of course, narrows our choice most unfortunately; and when we happen to be on bad terms both with Germany and England, through trying to be friendly to both, why, really there is hardly anybody left."

"I hear," remarked the Queen, "that the Hereditary Prince of Schnapps-Wasser is returning from his three years' exploration of central South America this autumn. Wouldn't he be worth thinking about?"

"You mean for Charlotte? But I expect he will be wanted at the Prussian Court."

The Queen shook her head. "Oh, no! He is out of favor there. They have never forgiven him his description of the Kaiser's oratorio as 'Moses Among the Crocodiles.' That is why I thought he might not be averse to looking in our direction. He used to be a nice boy; he is handsome according to his portraits, and Charlotte is not without her taste for adventure."

"That doesn't solve the problem about Max," said his Majesty discontentedly. "And, by the way, where is Charlotte?"

"She has gone to stay with Lady—oh, I have forgotten her name—the one who had a fancy for history and took a diploma in it. They are opening that new college for women, with a Greek play all about the Trojans, and Charlotte particularly wanted to go."

"H'm?" queried the King; "rather an advanced set for Charlotte to consort with—just now, I mean,—don't you think? There might be some of those Women Chartists among them."

"Oh, no!" replied her Majesty; "they are all quite respectable,—ladies every one of them. I took

care to make inquiries about that."

And then, quite contentedly, she made a final gathering of her correspondence, and sailed off for a preliminary interview with her two indispensable secretaries; while the King, selecting three out of the pile of newspapers, carried them away with him to his study. There was a sentence in one of them which he particularly wanted to read again. And with this vacating of the breakfast-chamber we may as well close the chapter.

CHAPTER II

ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN

I

The sentence which had attracted the King's attention, coming as it did from the newspaper on whose opinions he most frequently relied, ran thus—

"In this developing crisis the Nation looks with complete and loyal assurance to him who alone stands high and independent above all parties, confident that when the time for a final decision has arrived he will so act, within the recognized limits of the Royal Prerogative, as to add a fresh luster and a renewed significance to that supreme symbol and safeguard of the popular will which, under Divine Providence, still crowns our constitutional edifice."

The King read it three times over. He read it both standing and sitting: and read in whatever attitude it certainly sounded well. As a peroration its rhythm and flow were admirable, as a means of keeping up the courage and confidence of readers who placed their reliance mainly upon literary style nothing could be better; but what, by all that was constitutional, did it mean?—or rather, how did it mean that he, the high and independent one, was to do it? Point by point its sentiments were unexceptionable; but what it actually pointed to he did not know. "Add luster?" Why, yes, certainly. But was not that what he was already doing day by day on the continuous deposit system, even as the oyster within its shell deposits luster upon the pearls which a sort of hereditary disease has placed within its keeping? "Renewed significance?" But in what respect had the significance of the royal office become obscured? Was anything that he did insignificant? "Symbol and safeguard of the popular will?" Yes: if his Coronation oath meant anything. But how was he, symbol and safeguard and all the rest of it, to find out what the popular will really was? No man in all the Kingdom was so much cut off from living contact with the popular will as was he!

The King was in his study, the room in which most of the routine work of his daily life was accomplished—a large square chamber with three windows to one side looking out across a well-timbered park toward a distant group of towers. But for those towers, so civic in their character, it might well have been taken for a country view; scarcely a roof was visible.

Upon a large desk in the center of the chamber lay a pile of official letters and documents awaiting his perusal; and he knew that in the adjoining room one of his private secretaries was even now attending his call. But from none of his secretaries could he learn anything about the popular will.

He walked to a window and stood looking out into the soft sunlit air, slightly misty in quality, which lay over the distances of his capital. Away behind those trees, beneath those towers, sending toward him a ceaseless reverberation of bells, wheels, street cries, and all the countless noises of city life, went a vast and teeming population of men and women, already far advanced on the round of their daily toil. He was in their midst, but not one of them could he see; and not one of them did he really know as man to man. Everything that he learned about their lives came to him at second or at third hand; nor did actual contact bring him any closer, for wherever he moved among them they knew who he was and behaved accordingly. For twenty-five years he had not walked in a single one of those streets the nearest of which lay within a stone's throw of his palace. As a youth, before his father came to the throne, he had sometimes gone about, with or without companions, just like an ordinary person, taking his chance of being recognized: it had not mattered then. But now it could not be done: people did not expect it of him; his ministers would have regarded it as a dangerous and expensive habit, requiring at least a trebling of the detective service, and even then there would always have been apprehension and uncertainty. He was King; and though, whatever might happen to him, his place would be automatically filled, and government go on just as before, yet, as a national symbol, his life was too valuable to be risked; and so on ascending the throne he had been forced, as his father before him, to resign his personal liberty and cease to go out in the happy, unpremeditated fashion of earlier days.

He had long since got over the curious home-sickness which this separation had at first caused him, and as an opening to personal enjoyment the impulse for freedom had long since died within him; but his heart still vaguely hungered for the people who called him their King; and looking out into the pale sunshine that was now thinly buttering the surface of his prosperous capital, and listening to the perpetual tick and hum of its busy life, he knew that for him it was and must remain, except in an official sense, an unknown territory. And yet out there, in that territory

which he was unable to explore, the thing that is called "the popular will" lived and moved and had its being! Dimly he dreamed of what it might be—a thing of substance and form; but there was none to interpret to him his dream—except upon official lines.

Before his eyes, a salient object in the heavens surpassing the stony eminences which surrounded it, rose the tall spire of the twin Houses of Parliament. Upon its top swung a gilded weathercock; while about a portion of its base stood a maze of scaffolding, the façade of the building having during the last few months been under repair. There seemed, however, for the moment, to be no workmen upon it. Presently, as he gazed vacantly and without intent, something that moved upon the upper masonry engaged his attention. Slowly along its profile, out of all those hidden millions below, one of his subjects, a single and minute representative of the popular will, emerged cautiously into view.

The King was gifted with good sight; and though the figure appeared but as a tiny speck, it was unmistakably that of a man bearing a burden upon his back and ascending steadily toward the highest point of all. In a word it was a steeplejack. As the name passed through the King's mind it evoked recollection; and he said to himself again, "I wonder whether they call *me* Jack,—I wonder."

With a curious increase of interest and fellow-feeling he watched the distant figure mounting to its airy perch. And as he did so a yet further similitude and parable flashed through his mind. For the man's presence at that dizzy height he knew that the Board of Public Works was responsible: as a single item in the general expenditure the weathercock of the Palace of Legislature had had voted to it a new coat of gilt, and this steeplejack was now engaged in putting it on. He was there in the words of a certain morning journal, "to add fresh luster to that supreme symbol of the popular will which crowned the constitutional edifice."

As the words with their caressing rhythm flowed across the King's brain he discerned the full significance of the scene which was being enacted before him. This weathercock—the highest point of the constitutional edifice—requiring to be touched up afresh for the public eyes—was truly symbolical of the crown in its relation to the popular will; twisting this way and that responsive to and interpretative of outside forces, it had no will of its own at all, and yet to do its work it must blaze resplendently and be lifted high, and to be put in working trim and kept with luster untarnished it required at certain intervals the attentions of a steeplejack—one accustomed to being in high places, accustomed to isolation and loneliness, accustomed to bearing a burden upon his back before the eyes of all: one whose functions were rather like his own.

He saw that the steeplejack had now reached the point where his work was waiting for him, work that required nerve and courage. He wondered whether it were highly paid; he wondered also by what means the man slung himself into position, and by what process the new gold had to be applied so that it would stick. Perhaps he only polished up what was already there, coated and covered from view by the grime of modern industry. If so, how did he scrape off the dirt without also scraping off the gold? Perhaps, on the other hand, all the old gold had to come off before new gold could be put on. He wondered whether the man ever forgot his perilous position, whether habit did not make him sometimes careless, whether he ever felt giddy, and how far the exploit was really attended by danger to one possessed of skill and a cool head; and as he thought, putting himself in the man's place, his hands grew sympathetically moist.

Well, he was wasting time, he must really get to his own work now; that secretary would be wondering what had become of him. He glanced away over the distant roofs that here and there emerged above the trees, and then for a last look back again. And as he did so all at once he started and uttered an acute exclamation of distress. A dark speck had suddenly detached itself from the ball upon which the vane stood, and could now be seen glissading with horrible swiftness down the slope of the spire. It fell into the scaffolding, zigzagged from point to point, and disappeared. There could be no mistake about it, it was the man himself who had fallen: that single and minute expression of the popular will had passed for ever from view; and the smooth and equable hum of the unseen millions below went steadily on.

II

Fleeing from the sight still registered upon his brain the King rang for his secretary. A figure of correctitude entered.

"There has been an accident," said his Majesty. "Over there!" He pointed. "A steeplejack has fallen."

The secretary slid respectfully to the window and looked out. To that polite official gaze of inquiry the scene of the tragedy returned a blank and uncommunicative stare.

"Poor wretch!" murmured the King. "I actually saw him go! Ring up, and inquire at the Police Center; though, of course, the poor fellow must be dead!"

The secretary sped away on his errand, and the King, moving back to the window, gazed fixedly at the spire, as though it could still in some way inform him of the tragedy consummated below. Then he returned to his desk and looked distractedly at his papers, but it was no use—back he went to the window again.

Presently the secretary returned and stood drooping for permission to speak. Permission came. "The man is dead, your Majesty. He was killed instantly."

The King gave a sigh of relief. "Of course," he murmured, "from such a height as that!" He stood for a while still cogitating on the sad event: then he said, with that considerate thoughtfulness which habit had made a second nature, "Be good enough to find out whether the poor fellow was married. If so let a donation be sent to his widow,—whatever the case seems to warrant—more if there should happen to be children."

Over his tablets the secretary bowed the beauty of his person like a recording angel. Then he paused that the heavenly measure might be taken with accuracy.

"Shall it be five pounds, sir?" he inquired.

"Better make it ten," said the King; "I believe that pays for a funeral. In sending it, you might explain that I had the misfortune to be an eye-witness."

The secretary cooed like a brooding dove. Of course everybody would understand and appreciate. He made a memorandum of the ten pounds and closed up his tablets.

Meanwhile the King went on thinking aloud. "I wonder," he said, "whether they take proper precautions in a trade like that? I would like to look it up. Find me the 'ST' volume of the *Encyclopedia Appendica*."

And when the volume was brought to him the King sat down and read all about steeplejacks and climbing irons, and cranks, and pulleys, and all the other various appliances requisite for the driving of that dreadful trade; read also how the men were inclined to prime themselves for the task in ever-increasing measure, and so one day having over-primed to be found at the bottom instead of at the top, knowing nothing themselves of how they got there. It was all very interesting and very apposite, and rather pathetic; and when he had done he turned over the pages backward till he came from steeplejacks to "Statesmen" and "Statecraft" and "Statutes" and the affairs of State in general (it was from the *Encyclopedia Appendica*—a presentation copy—that he got most of his information upon practical things); and in these articles he became so absorbed that he quite forgot how time flew, until his chief secretary came formally to announce to him that the hour for appearing in Council had arrived.

This announcement, be it observed, was made by no ordinary working secretary, but by the chief of them all, the Comptroller of his Majesty's household, a retired general who had passed from the military to the civil service with a record brilliantly made for him by other men—adjutants and attachés and all those indefatigable right-hand assistants of whom your true diplomatist forms his stepping-stones to power. General Poast and the Prime Minister shared between them the ordering and disposal of the King's public services to the Nation, while over other departments impenetrable to the Premier the hand of the Comptroller was still extended. Though personally the King rather disliked him, he had become an absolutely indispensable adjunct to the daily life—so smooth in its workings, yet so easily dislocated—of the Royal Household; also, as a go-between for ministers whose intercourse with the Crown was purely formal, he had proved himself a very efficient implement when on occasion it became necessary to circumvent or reduce to reason the King's characteristic obstinacy in small matters of detail. He might, in fact, be regarded as the keeper not so much of the King's conscience, as of his savoir faire, and of that tact for which Royalty in all countries is conspicuous. Everything that related to the remembering of names and faces, of dates, anniversaries and historical associations, all those small considerate actions of royal charity which robbed of their due privacy have now become the perquisite of the press; all these things stood ranged under minutely tabulated heads within the Comptroller-General's department. He was, literally, the King's Remembrancer; and so, on this occasion also, he had come as intermediary to remind his Majesty that the hour for the Council was at hand.

But the Council was one of those functions in which it was held necessary that the part played by the King (albeit no more than a silent presidency at a Board where others spoke) should wear an appearance of importance. And so the announcement made by the Comptroller was merely preliminary to another and more flourishing announcement by an usher of the Court. Two lackeys threw open a door—other than that through which the General had just entered, and a bowing official, beautifully dressed and waving a fairy-like wand, announced from the threshold, "Your Majesty's Council, now in attendance, humbly begs audience of your Majesty."

III

Then followed a pause. The Comptroller-General with head deferentially bent waited to catch the royal eye. The King graciously allowed his royal eye to be caught; and the Comptroller-General, interpreting the silent consent of that glance, uttered with due solemnity the traditional form of words indicative of the royal pleasure. "His Majesty hears," he lowed in the correct "palace accent": and the usher bowed and retired.

All this helped, of course, to make the act of presiding in Council seem highly important and consequential to any monarch susceptible to ceremonial flattery. Whether it had originally been so devised may be questioned, for monarchs of old had needed no such ceremonial backing to their very practical incursions into ministerial debate. What we have to notice is that the ceremony had survived, while the other thing—the practice of substantial interference—had become obsolete.

The King passed from his private apartments to broad corridors and portals where resplendent footmen stood in waiting, where everything worked with silent and automatic precision to prepare the way for his feet, signaling him on from point to point as though he were a sort of special train for which the line had been expressly cleared and all other traffic shunted. And yet when he came to the small anteroom which opened directly into the Council Chamber he felt for all the world like a timid bather about to unbutton the door of his bathing-machine and step forth into a strange and hostile element. That moment of trepidation was one he never could get over,—to face his Council of Ministers was always a plunge; for here truly he felt out of his depth, aware that politically he was no swimmer. And now for a couple of hours he would have to endure while, thoroughly at home in their own element, twenty stout aquatic athletes tumbled around him.

The door was thrown open; and with an air of calm self-possession he walked to the head of the table about which his ministers stood waiting. "Be seated, gentlemen," he said, embracing in a single bow the obeisances of all; and like slow waves they closed in on him, subsiding in large curves and soft fawning ripples of hand-rubbing around the empurpled board at which nominally he was to preside.

When all were seated in order, he signed for the Prime Minister to open the proceedings, and thereafter had scarcely to speak; for at a King's Council only general reports were presented, no discussions took place, no fresh proposals were mooted; and so he sat and heard how this department or that was extending its beneficent operations, how statistics were completing to their last decimal places the prognostications of experts, and how along with these things imports and exports were balancing, trade declining, education advancing, and strikes growing every day more formidable and more popular.

It was only this last point that really interested him; for here he seemed to get a dim rumor of something that was part at least of that popular will which it was his duty to symbolize and to safeguard. But these official advisers of his were all for putting strikes down, and yet while putting them down they seemed to wish to curry favor with the strikers themselves. For on the one hand there was trade declining, if the strikes were not put down, to support fresh taxation, on the other the Labor Party, eighty strong, declining, if the strikes were put down, to support the Government. And with the Finance Act coming on the question was whether to accept an increasing deficit in the revenue or a declining majority in the Legislature. This could be read vaguely between the lines of the report presented by the Minister of the Interior. But all this time not one word was said about the coming constitutional crisis which was in everybody's mind. That had been thoroughly discussed by ministers sitting in real Council elsewhere, a Council at which the Head of the Constitution had not been present, and about which he would hear no more than the Prime Minister chose to tell him.

And so, smoothly, equably, and uneventfully the Council reached its conclusion; ministers one after another closed up their portfolios, and sitting mute in their places respectfully waited the royal word of dismissal.

Then the King rose: and all around the board the fawning ripples of hand-rubbing ceased, and the slow curving wave of the ministerial body receded to a respectful distance; while his Majesty passed forth to the adjoining chamber, there to give, as was customary, separate audience to those ministers who had any special memoranda to submit requiring the royal endorsement.

On this occasion he found his Comptroller already awaiting him, apologetic for what might seem intrusion on territory belonging more properly to the Prime Minister. Under the correctness of his department it was clear that urgency impelled.

"I have come, sir," he said, "to submit to your Majesty, before the matter goes further, a certain difficulty which has arisen in connection with your Majesty's gracious donation to the widow of the unfortunate workman who——" He paused.

"You mean the steeplejack?" queried the King.

The Comptroller-General bowed assent. "Your Majesty ordered inquiry to be made."

"I did. Has it been found whether he had a family?"

"A large family, sir: a wife and seven children."

"Ah," said the King, "then you would suggest that ten pounds is not quite——? Well, make it twenty."

"That, sir, is not the difficulty. The fact is we have discovered that the man was what in the industrial world is known as a 'blackleg.' As your Majesty may be aware there is at this moment a strike in the building trade: and this man was working against the orders of his Union. Under those circumstances a donation from your Majesty becomes pointed."

"Pointed at what?"

"At the Trades Unions, sir."

"But what," cried the King, astonished, "have a widow and children to do with the Trades Unions?"

"The man was working against orders, your Majesty."

"But at somebody's orders, I suppose? Anyway, it was for the Government."

"Oh no, sir!" Correctitude protested against so dangerous an implication.

"But surely! Wasn't he there at the orders of the Board of Works?"

"At the orders of the contractor, your Majesty."

"Who was under contract with the Board to complete by a certain date."

"That, sir, cannot be denied."

"Well, really then," said the King, "from what department does this objection to the donation emanate?"

"From no department, your Majesty. The objection is on general grounds of policy."

The King's pride and modesty were becoming a little hurt; he was annoyed that so small a matter of private charity should be thus canvassed and brought within the range of politics. Subconsciously he had also another and a more symbolic reason which helped him to show fight.

"Really, my dear General," he said, "I think we are discussing this matter very unnecessarily. The widow is still a widow, and the children, who you tell me number seven, are orphans; and surely at his death a man ceases to be either a blackleg or a trades unionist. He is not working against orders now, at any rate. Make it twenty! make it twenty." (His utterance grew hurried; a way he had when crossed and anxious not to have to give way.) "I can't hear anything more about it now: I have Brasshay waiting to see me." And as at that moment the Prime Minister was announced, the Comptroller-General, for the present at any rate, "made it twenty" and retired. But he did so with a wry and a determined face.

As for the King he was thoroughly put out; the steeplejack was by association beginning to assume in his mind a very particular importance; he had become a symbol not merely of the sovereign himself, but of that act of statesmanship which he had been adjured to undertake by his favorite newspaper. This man, his prototype, had failed to add in completeness that luster which he had set out to add; had even died in the attempt; and here, in seeking with all his sympathies aroused to provide for the widow and children, the King was finding himself thwarted, and thwarted, too, on purely political grounds. Well, it should be a test: he would not be thwarted. The Cabinet couldn't resign on this; so he would do as he liked! And under the table, on a soft deep carpet of velvet-pile he stuck his heels into the ground and felt very determined.

And then he found that he must attend to something else, for the Prime Minister was speaking, and now at last was speaking on a very important matter.

IV

"Your Majesty," said the Prime Minister, "the Bishops are blocking all our bills; the business of the country is at a standstill."

"Blocking?" queried the King; for he did know a little of contemporary history at all events.

"Amending," corrected the Minister. "Amending on lines which we cannot possibly accept."

"Some of them seemed to me quite excellent amendments," said the King. "But, of course, I don't know."

"They express, sir, no doubt, a point of view—quite an estimable point of view, if it were not a question of politics: they reflect, that is to say, the mind of the ecclesiastical side of the Spiritual and Judicial Chamber. Your Majesty's House of Laity sees things differently: I am bound, therefore, to submit to your Majesty certain important proposals for the relief of the impasse at which we have now arrived. As no doubt, sir, you are aware, we have the Judges, the Juridical half of the Chamber, for the most part with us, since for the last few years their appointment has been entirely in our hands. But the Bishops, with the exception of one or two, are obdurate and immovable. We select the most liberal Churchmen we can find: but it is no use; each new Bishop, adopted by Dean and Chapter, becomes when once seated in the Upper Chamber, merely a reflection of those who have gone before him: the Juridical minority is swamped, the Spiritual element remains supreme, and we have no chance of obtaining a majority."

"It is only because you will try to do things too fast!" said the King; but the Prime Minister continued—

"And now, sir, our one opportunity has come. The Bill for dividing the dioceses and doubling the number of the Bishops has just passed into law. I flatter myself that when the Prelates assented to that Bill they did not realize how its powers might be directed. It is the proposal of your Majesty's advisers to nominate to those Bishops only Free Churchmen, men whose political views coincide with our own."

"Free Churchmen!" cried the King, startled; "but they are outside the Establishment altogether."

"Merely on a point of Church discipline," answered the Prime Minister. "They are ministers properly ordained. When they seceded over the 'Church Government Act' they carried their full Canonical Orders with them: only as they had no Bishops they have become a diminishing body."

Their beliefs, or their disbeliefs (for on many points the churches are merely maintaining an observance of definitions which their intellects no longer really accept)—their professed beliefs, then, shall I say?—in all matters of doctrine are not more heterogeneous than those which distract the councils and the congregations of the Establishment. It is only on matters of administration and Church discipline that they fundamentally differ. We count upon the Free Church Bishops to give us a majority both on the secularization of charities and the opening of the theological chairs and divinity degrees of our Universities to all sects and communities alike. After that we shall be in a position to deal with State Endowment and with Education generally."

"But will the Chapters, under such circumstances, accept the Crown's nominees?" inquired the King. "And even if they do, may not the Bishops refuse to consecrate them?"

"The right in law of a Dean and Chapter to reject the Crown's nominee and to substitute one of their own has already been decided against them," said the Prime Minister. "As for the consecration, if the Bishops refuse their services we have an understanding with the exiled Archimandrite of Cappadocia to see the whole thing through for us."

"Good Heavens!" cried the King, "a black man with two wives."

"His orders," said the Prime Minister, "are perfectly valid, and are recognized not only by us but by Rome. Only last year the Bishops were making quite a stir about him; there was even a proposal that he should assist at the next consecration so as to clear away all doubts in the eyes of Romanists as to the validity of our own orders. It would, therefore, be a measure of poetic justice if now——"

"I don't think we ought to do it," interrupted the King.

"If the Bishops give way in time, sir, it will be unnecessary."

"Will you consent to my seeing the Archbishop about it?" inquired the King, much perturbed.

"Sir, I have already seen him."

"Well, what did he say?"

"He said a good many things, and said them very well. His general impression seemed to be that we should not dare to do it. That is where he is mistaken."

"You have to consult me also," remarked the King.

"Sir, that is what I am now doing." The Prime Minister bowed with the utmost deference.

"You put me in a great difficulty!"

"I am sorry that your Majesty should make difficulty," retorted the Premier dryly.

"You seem to forget," pursued the King, "that I am sworn to maintain both Church and Constitution as established by law."

"Sir, we propose nothing unconstitutional."

"Free Churchmen are not constitutional, they have no standing."

"They have a right to their opinions like all the rest of your Majesty's subjects."

"Not to be made Bishops."

"That merely legalizes their position."

The King shook his head. "I don't like it," he said; "I don't like it! And if you won't let me consult the Archbishop how am I to know what I ought to do?"

"If as advisers to the Crown we have had the misfortune to lose your Majesty's confidence," said the Prime Minister suavely, "I hope your Majesty will not hesitate to say so. But I am bound to inform you, sir, that should your Majesty be unable to accept the advice now offered, it will be the most painful duty of your Majesty's ministers to tender their resignation."

"I observe," retorted the King tartly, "that whenever you begin reminding me of my 'Majesty' you have always something unpleasant to spring on me! You are treating me now just as you have been treating the Bishops; you will not listen to advice; no, you will not accept amendments, you behave as though you were already a single Chamber Government. You ought to accept amendments! I don't like Free Church Bishops. If they want to become Bishops they can go to the Archimandrite for themselves. I suppose you are making it worth his while?" he added suspiciously.

"Doubtless there will be an arrangement," answered the Premier smoothly. "There again the Archbishop has already helped us. Less than a year ago he made representations to us on the subject, recommending the Archimandrite for a State pension."

"And pray, will that appear in the estimates?"

"There is no reason why it should not appear."

"I have noticed," commented the King, "that if people do an unscrupulous thing in the full light of day, it takes a certain appearance of honesty."

"A very statesmanlike observation, your Majesty," smiled the Prime Minister. "In this matter I may say we are without scruple because our case is unanswerable."

"You shall have my answer," said the King, "when I have had more time to think about it."

With which oblique retort to the Prime Minister's assertion he rose, and the interview terminated.

V

By this time he was thoroughly tired: he had done a hard morning's work; not only had he been harassed and annoyed, but he had been thinking a great deal more than he usually thought, and his brain ached. But even now his troubles were not ended; just as he turned to go the Minister of the Interior craved audience; and at his first word the King's irritation grew afresh, for here was dismissed controversy cropping up again.

While the King was receiving the Prime Minister his Comptroller-General had not been idle: indeed he never was idle. He had gone straight to the Minister of the Interior and had reported to him the failure of his efforts, for it was this minister who had in the first place come to him. The steeplejack had fallen, so to speak, right into the middle of his department; and with the King's donation coming on the top the catastrophe bulked large. For, be it known, on the order of the day for the morrow's sitting of Parliament was a motion of the Labor Party, directing censure on the Government for having brought pressure to bear on contractors and caused work to be continued upon Government buildings when Labor and Capital were at war. It was nothing to Labor that the hire of the scaffolding used in the repairs was costing the country a considerable sum of money while it stood uselessly waiting about the walls of the Legislature; blacklegs had gone up on it and blacklegs had been pulled down from it; and one particular blackleg had gone up on it and had come down without any pulling whatever—an accident over which Labor was savagely ready to exult and say, "Serve him right!" And how would it be if they saw in their morning papers, on the very day when the motion was down for debate, that the King had gone out of his way to make a handsome donation to the widow? The Minister of the Interior simply could not allow it; yet now word had come to him that his Majesty persisted in his intention. So when the Prime Minister came out the Minister of the Interior went in and put his case to the King, as I have put it here to the reader—only far more persuasively, and ornately, and at very much greater length. He also added to what has already been set forth, as a point making the man a less worthy object of compassion, that according to latest accounts he had gone to his work under the influence of drink.

"So do all steeplejacks," said the King, and quoted the *Encyclopedia*: "It is only when they are drunk that they can do it. *I know.*" He spoke as though he had tried it.

Before the minister had done the King was really angry. "Mr. Secretary," said he, "I don't care how many strikes there are, or how many Trades Unions, or how many motions of censure from the gentlemen of the Labor Party: they may motion to censure *me* if they like! The man is dead, and I was unfortunate enough to be a witness of his death. He died in an attempt to do a laudable action." (Here the King was tempted to quote the peroration from his favorite newspaper, but he checked himself: the minister would not have understood.) "His wife," he went on, "is now a widow, and his children are orphans; and if that twenty pounds may not go to them, then I am not master of my own purse-strings, or"—he added by way of finish—"of my own natural feelings and emotions as an ordinary human being."

And before that burst of eloquence the Minister of the Interior was abashed into silence, and retired from the royal presence discomfited.

The King's argument had heated him, like the royal furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, seven times more than he was wont to be heated. He so seldom argued with anybody, still less with his ministers: and here he had been arguing with one or another of them for half the morning. He almost felt as if something had happened to him; a touch of giddiness seized him as he turned to retire to his private apartments; and the thought struck him—if he was as much upset as this over a small side-issue, what would he be like when he had done adding that luster to the constitutional edifice which the nation in its crisis would presently be demanding of him? The wear and tear were going to be considerable.

Circumstance had departed as he retraced his steps to the domestic wing. The lackeys, having done their ceremonial duty, had disappeared: he was free to go unobserved. As he ascended the marble staircase which led from the great hall toward the private apartments he was still thinking of the steeplejack, the man who somehow seemed now to be an emblem of himself. This man, set to the superfluous task of regilding the weathercock of the Legislature, doing it in defiance of master craftsmen and fellow-workmen, lured to do it because the cost of the hiring of the scaffolding had become an expensive charge on the Board of Works, and then, after the custom of the Trade, primed, emboldened, and made drunk to do it, drunk to a point which had brought him to destruction—yes, he was like that man; his temptations, his perils, his essential superfluity were all the same. As he went up the stair he tried to imagine he was the man himself, going up and up, a solitary and uplifted figure, fixing his thoughts on things above in order that he might forget the gulf which yawned below. He took his hand from the balustrade, and gazing upward at the gilt and crystal chandelier suspended from the dome above, so entirely forgot his surroundings for one moment that, missing a step, he lost balance backwards and fell with

amazing thoroughness down the full flight of steps till he reached the bottom.

CHAPTER III

WILD OATS AND WIDOWS' WEEDS

I

Bump! bump! bump! went his head. Through a confused vision of stars, veined marble, stained glass, and flying stair-rails he saw his legs trail helplessly after, close in above, fling violently across him feet foremost, and dash out of view. In other words, having reached the bottom of the grand staircase he had turned a complete and homely somersault.

For awhile he lay half stunned, unable to move. Something had undoubtedly happened to his head, but he was still conscious. Cautiously he turned himself over and looked round. No one was about; no one had seen this ignominious downfall of Jingalo's topmost symbol on the too highly polished floors of its own abode; and nobody must know. It was not the right and dignified way for a royal accident to happen: falling down-stairs suggested the same failing as that to which steeplejacks were prone.

He picked himself up, and aware now of a sharp pain in the middle of his spine as well as at the back of his head, crawled slowly and in a rather doubled-up attitude toward the royal apartments.

As he moved cautiously along the private corridor, he met the Queen coming from her room, dressed for going out. She detected at once his painful and decrepit attitude. "What is the matter, dear?" she inquired.

"Nothing, nothing," mumbled the King, "only a touch of sciatica." And as he did not encourage her impulse to pause and make further inquiries, she let him go past.

He went into his room, and sat very carefully down, for he was still uncertain whether some vertebral bit of him was not broken. Then he put his hand to the back of his head and felt it. Yes, undoubtedly something had happened; at contact with his finger it made a sound curiously like the ticking of a clock, and under the scalp a portion of bone seemed to move. And yet he was not threatened with unconsciousness; on the contrary he felt very wide awake: shaken though he was, ideas positively bubbled in his brain, his whole being effervesced. For a moment a fear flickered across his mind that he was going mad. But if so it was a wholly pleasurable sensation, for though his fancy went at a gallop, it was orderly, logical, and consecutive, not like madness at all. He dismissed the notion; but further reflection confirmed him in his determination not to tell anybody; he did not want to explain how he had walked upstairs fancying himself a steeplejack. It would have sounded stupid.

Then all at once he felt very sick and giddy, and going to the couch he lay down on it, and there, finding relief in the horizontal position, he fell fast asleep.

When he awoke an hour later his head, except for an extreme local tenderness, felt all right again; but when he tested it the faint ticking sound was still there. His mind was now calm; his thoughts no longer went at a gallop, but they seemed—what was the word?—freer, more articulate, more at his beck and call; and in spirit he was far less harassed and anxious. Altogether he felt that he possessed himself more than he had ever done before: his mental views had become more open.

Then he remembered that he wanted to see his son Max, and talk to him about certain matters; and so, after a few more tentative touches to the back of his head to find if it was still ticking—which it was—he went into his study, and sending for one of his secretaries, got a message despatched. And only when he was well on in the routine of his afternoon's labors did he recollect that he had not lunched.

That break in the regularity of his habits seemed almost an adventure; but as he did not now feel hungry he plodded on, for this was his day of the week for signing accumulated arrears of documents, and several hundreds awaited him. So for a couple of hours he worked as regularly and monotonously as a bank-clerk, and while he was signing the less important papers, and passing them to one of his secretaries to be blotted and sorted, another read out to him those of which he wished to learn the contents.

This duty was generally performed by the Comptroller-General himself; but to-day he was missing, and the King, left to make his own selection, was rather startled to find what a number of really important documents had been left over for this day, devoted to what may be described as routine signatures. As a rule it was the Comptroller who, out of his long experience, selected those documents which must be read and, only after due consideration, signed. Now, by some accident, he had been prevented from attending, and here was a crowd of important documents, the terms of which the King had never heard. He began to wonder. At least ten or a dozen were strange to him: he ordered them to be set aside. And now very dimly, very gradually, he began to suspect his position, and to perceive that without watchfulness he might very easily become less

a conscious instrument of Government than a mere mechanism. What if he had become that already?

II

And then it grew dusk. The King dismissed his secretaries, and without turning on the light sat and thought alone. The effervescence had all gone from his brain, melancholy ruled him; and as he sat ruminating upon the past and his own present position his mind became obsessed by all the historical characters who had preceded him in the exercise of those royal functions now grown so exiguous in his hands, who had sat and labored at Statecraft in that very room, some of them, perhaps, in the very chair in which he was now seated.

They became almost present to his consciousness. How would they have behaved in the present situation? How would they have set to work to add luster to that supreme symbol which still crowned the constitutional edifice?

He could imagine his own father opposing over a considerable period the weight of his personal prestige to the importunacy of ministers, saying with stately ease: "We will speak of that, gentlemen, some other day," and so calmly turning from the subject in dispute—not solving it, but at least imposing delay as the penalty which ministers must pay for a difference of opinion. That policy of quiet procrastination no minister of his time would have dared to withstand without first making for it a certain time-allowance. So much at least would have been secured, not of right, but through the weight of a stronger personality.

And what about others before him? Slowly there dawned upon the King's vision—clear as though he had seen her but yesterday, the regal presence of a certain ancestress who more than any other had made the monarchy what it now was—an almost miraculous survival from the past. It was the old Queen Regent, the lady who for the last twenty years of her consort's reign, when his wavering mind had failed him, had ruled her ministers with a rod which was not of iron, but which, none the less, they had feared, and sought by many devious ways to evade. Out of some book of memoirs a vision of something that had taken place in that very room rose up before him. Around her a ring of Bishops, crowding the royal hearth-rug, each standing defenseless with deferential stoop, tea-cup in hand; and she, seated before them with plump hands folded in her lap upon a lace kerchief, or tapping now and again upon the arms of her chair to give emphasis, was laying down her word of law, and putting an end to revolt in the Church.

"I won't have it!" she cried. "I won't have it! This nonsense has got to be put down!"

And what could a Bishop do with a tea-cup in his hand? There she had got them, six or eight chosen Prelates, every one of them in a defenseless position; how could they argue an affair of State so? What could they do but assent to the incontrovertible statement that "nonsense" must and certainly should be put down—though knowing all the time that the particular "nonsense" in question, being a thing inbred in the minds of men, could not be put down by any act of Parliament and would persist even to the breaking-up of Church unity? And so a perfectly ineffective Church Government Act had passed into law, causing its honest opponents to secede, while its far more numerous dishonest opponents had remained; and the Queen Regent, having for the time being asserted her authority in the Church, had passed on the actual solution of the problem to later times.

Later times: the King's brain ceased to visualize, he came back to himself and to the accumulated problems now pressing for solution. Yes; for the monarchy, not only as she had made it, but as it had now become, that great little lady was almost equally responsible. Her genius had only arrested its decay by bottling it up in the clear preservative of her own virtues. It now stood out more conspicuously than ever, a survival from the past: it had not really moved on. Had it, under that preserving process, become more brittle? With a more open mind he was beginning to suspect that the ancient institution was crumbling in his hands; that a creeping paralysis had seized hold of it. Why? What had he done? Was simple honesty the last and fatal touch that had called these symptoms of death to light? Had he been too human for an office with which humanity was no longer compatible? It seemed a confounding charge to one whose soul was filled with a social hunger which ever went unsatisfied, whose official isolation from his people was a daily obsession. His doubt was whether he had been human enough? As he cogitated on the matter the suspicion grew in him that he had only been human domestically; outside his domesticity he had resigned his humanity and become an automaton, a thing in leading-strings. He had allowed constitutional usage, aye, and constitutional encroachments also, to crush him down. In constitutional usage he was as harnessed and bedizened as the piebald ponies who drew his state-coach when he went each year to open or shut the flood-gates of legislative eloquence. Constitutional usage, determined for him by others, was the bearing-rein that had bowed his neck to that decorative arch of mingled condescension and pride with which he received deputations, addresses, ambassadors. Constitutional usage had put a bit in his mouth and blinkers upon his eyes, so that now, even in his own Council Chamber, he was not expected to speak, was not expected to see unless his attention were specially invited. More and more the critical and suspensory powers of the Crown were coming to be regarded as out of place, a straining of the Royal Prerogative. The growth of the ministerial system had gone on; and he, shut off from growth in its midst, was being robbed of strength day by day. And all this was being done, not in the eyes of his people, but secretly, under smooth and respectful formalities, by a Cabinet insidiously bent on acquiring as its own that of which it robbed him. In this unwritten and unnoticed readjustment of the Constitution nothing was being passed on to the people's

representatives. They knew nothing about it; keeping all that to itself, the Cabinet, like the grim wolf with privy paw, "daily devoured apace, and nothing said."

So far (barring the quotation from Milton, a purely literary adornment on the author's part), so far he had got with drifting and despondent thought, when again that small regal presence, of low stature but ample form, became clearly defined, and he heard the soft staccato voice saying sharply: "I won't have it! I won't have it!"

The blood of his ancestors thrilled in his veins. There and then he formed a resolution—neither would he! He moved to his desk and sat down to write; and even as he did so material for the breaking of that resolve presented itself,—the Comptroller-General, calm and self-possessed, glided into the room.

He had a communication to make: the story did not take long to tell. He had been extending his inquiries—further and more particular inquiries into the life and domestic relations of the unfortunate steeplejack; and he had discovered, oh, horror! but just in time, that the woman who had lived with him was not his wife.

"But you told me they had seven children," said the King.

"That is so, Sir," replied the Comptroller-General; "it has been a relationship of long standing. Morally, of course, that only makes the matter worse."

The King did not know why morally the permanence of that arrangement should make it worse. It was a statement which he accepted without question; it came to him with authority from one whose guidance in such matters he had ever been accustomed to follow and find correct. Before the weight of the moral law, he bowed his head and gave up the ghost of the dead steeplejack. The widow and the seven orphans passed out of existence; they ceased any longer to be mouths and hearts of flesh, and became instead abstractions to be set in a class apart—one not eligible for rewards. To such as these no public declaration of the royal bounty could be made.

"Very well," said the King despondently, "strike off the memorandum! The twenty pounds need not go."

An hour later the Queen came in and found him sitting alone and miserable in his chair. She spoke to him, but he did not answer. Then as she drew nearer, to find out if anything were really the matter, his misery found voice.

"I can't move! I am unable to move!" he moaned.

"What is it, dear?" she inquired, "sciatica?"

His answer came from a source she could not fathom.

"No one," he murmured in a tone of deep discouragement, "no one will ever call *me* 'Jack.'"

III

Three hours later, after dinner, the King and his son, Prince Max, were sitting together in the same room. The King, feeling considerably better for a good meal, had given Max one of his best cigars, and having gone so far to establish confidential relations, was now trying to summon up courage to speak to the young man as a father should.

But here, as elsewhere, he was met by the old difficulty—he and his son were not intimates. They had drifted apart, not for any lack of filial or paternal affection, but simply because in the round of their official lives they so seldom met privately; and since the Prince had acquired an establishment of his own the King knew little of what he did with his daily life beyond the records of the Court Circular.

Max was now twenty-five; he was taller and darker than his father, more handsome and more self-possessed. In his appearance he combined the polish of a military training with the quiet air of an amateur scholar; his forehead was prematurely, but quite becomingly, bald, his mustache well groomed, his figure slight but athletic. He had inherited his father's full lips, but the glance of his eye was of a keener and shrewder quality, and it might be suspected that the eye-glasses which he occasionally put on were assumed more for effect than for necessity. Above all, he possessed what the King conspicuously lacked—self-assurance, and with it a sort of moral ease as though any error he might fall into would be taken rather as an experience to profit by than as an occasion for self-reproach. His face showed as he talked that quality of humor which enables a man to laugh at his own enthusiasms, and one could not always be sure whether he were serious or merely indulging in dialectics. To any one out of touch with his intellectual origins, he was a man difficult to know; and the King, being in that matter altogether at sea, knew really very little about him, and was in consequence a little afraid of him.

That fact made a frontal attack difficult; nevertheless, having screwed himself up to speak, he began abruptly.

"Max," said his father, "have you ever thought about marrying?"

Max smiled a little bitterly. "I started thinking about it," he said, "when I was seventeen; and off and on I have thought about it ever since." Then he added rather coldly, as though to warn off mere curiosity, "Why do you ask, sir? Has any proposal been made?"

"Well," said his father, "we might certainly arrange something. I feel, indeed, that we ought to—at your age. I only wanted first to know how you felt upon the matter. You see," he added, hesitating, "people are beginning to talk; and it won't do."

This oblique and cautious reference to his son's private life marked a new stage in their relations: it was actually the first occasion, in all their intercourse as father and son, upon which the sex-question had ever been broached between them. It was no wonder, therefore, that so far they had been rather strangers to each other. Now, however, having decided to speak, the King also decided that he must go on and interfere. It required some moral courage; for he had never failed to recognize his son as the stronger character, and, especially in intellectual matters, his superior.

"I have been told that you have been keeping a mistress," he said, avoiding the young man's eye.

"That," answered Max, "would, I suppose, be the generally received phrase for it."

"Who is she?" queried the King, pushing hazardously on, now that the danger-point had been reached.

"Do you wish to meet her?"

Parental dignity was offended.

"That is a suggestion you ought not to make."

"Then, my dear father, why inquire after her? She and I suit each other: to you she is nothing."

"How long has this been going on?"

"We have lived together for five years."

The King recalled a phrase that he had recently heard authoritatively spoken—"a relationship of long standing. Morally, of course, that only makes the matter worse."

"H'm!" he said aloud. "You started early, I must say!"

"You, sir, at that age were already a father," said Max correctively.

The King made an interjectory movement, but the Prince went on. "I was twenty, and I was still virginal. To speak frankly, I was amazed at myself, perhaps even amused. Yes, even now I am inclined to think that, among princes, my record must have been exceptional. This lady, to whom I owe nearly the whole of my domestic experience, saved me from an adventuress——"

The King lifted his eyebrows.

"One," went on the Prince, "who would have wrung from me in a single year far more, from a merely monetary point of view, than the whole experience has yet cost me."

The King was slightly bewildered. "This person," he said tentatively, "is not, then, of the adventuress class?"

"Nor was that other: by class she was one of the highest of our aristocracy. I believe that when she is received at Court it is correct etiquette for you to kiss her upon the cheek. The lady who did actually befriend me was her companion and secretary, an Austrian by birth. She had divorced her husband and possessed only a small annuity on which she was unable to live independently in the style to which she had become accustomed. Yet for the first year of our liaison she would accept from me no provision, and we saw each other but seldom. Strange as it may seem she taught me the value and the charm of conjugal moderation and fidelity. Just now she is receiving a visit from her son, on leave from his military services abroad; and respecting the ordinary moral conventions, which happen also to be hers, I do not go to see her while the son's visit is being paid. Yet I apprehend that he cannot be in ignorance of the facts."

"She has a grown-up son?" queried the King, still a little puzzled; and Max smiled.

"A polite way," said he, "of inquiring as to her age. Yes: she is on the verge of forty, and assures me that she will soon be showing it. You may be interested also to hear that she is a Roman Catholic, has attacks of devoutness which occasionally prescribe separation, and has twice threatened, not in anger but with a most sincere reluctance, to break up our peaceful establishment. I recognize that in the end her love for her Church will probably prove stronger than her love for me—at all events in practice. I have, indeed, some apprehension that her son's visit may result in a turning of the balance, since he has now inherited his father's property and can give his mother the position she has a right to expect. If that should be so, you will find me very attentive to any offer of marriage that any Court of western civilization (which now includes Japan) may have to make. Have I said, sir, all that you wish to know about my feelings in the matter?"

"What I don't understand," said the King, "is your idea about the morality of all this."

"Really," replied the Prince, "I hardly know that I have any. It has gone on so long; and anything that is regular and of long standing tends to produce a moral feeling."

This arrested the King's attention. "You think so?" he interrogated; but Max waived any decisive pronouncement.

"Perhaps," said he, "I do not quite know what morality means. I fancy sometimes that its full meaning may be sprung upon me when I find myself in love; or, if I am not destined to undergo that experience, on the day when I learn that I am to become a father without having intended it. Morality arises out of the proper or improper performance of social obligations; and I have sometimes wondered whether society's most insane treatment of illegitimacy would not have compelled me into a misalliance with my 'mistress,' as you call her, had she ever——"

"Max!" cried the King, "you are outrageous!"

"Is that really how it strikes you?" inquired his son. "I feared, rather, that it was an inexpugnable remnant of my religious training. If the notion is anarchic I can feel more at home with it. But do not forget that I am a doctor of divinity."

"You!" exclaimed the King.

"Had it escaped your recollection, sir? I confess that sometimes it escapes mine. Yes: I became a D.D. before I was sent down from College."

"You were not 'sent down!'"

"Not ostensibly, sir; I should have been. I left to take up my military—accomplishments, for I may not call them 'duties.' But you can hardly forget that I am the only man who ever dared to screw up the Master of Pentecost in his own rooms. While my associates were screwing up the Dean, I was screwing up the Master; it was one of my earliest attempts to be companionable with my fellow-men."

The King sympathized, but was puzzled. "Do you mean—with the Master?"

"No, sir, with my fellow-students, those of my own years, amongst whom I had been placed. But I found that it was impossible. They, for the lesser offense, were actually 'sent down'; I, having finished my thesis and obtained my doctor's degree, was merely passed on at a slightly accelerated pace to receive fresh honors. That gave me a lesson which I have never forgotten; no honor that has come to me have I ever fully earned; and no disgrace that I have earned has ever been visited upon me for the public to know. There in a nutshell you have the moral training of the heir to a modern throne. What chance, then, have I to know anything about morality?"

"My dear son," said the King, "don't say these dreadful things. Even if they are true, don't say them. They do no good."

But though he deprecated having to meet such thoughts clothed in the flesh of speech, he was really very much interested to find that Max had them; he was seeing his son in a new light. And meanwhile the Prince went on—

IV

"I often think, sir, of those two medieval institutions which we have now lost—I suppose irrevocably—the whipping boy and the court jester. What a pity that they cannot be revived! The whipping boy, a device to put princes on their honor to be neither negligent nor wanton in the fulfilment of their duties; and the jester to break us of our too self-conscious airs and exhibit to us our follies. See what we have done instead! When our growing sense of priggish decorum and our dishonest ceremoniousness of speech made the jester a figure no longer possible, we substituted for him the poet-laureate!—not to persuade us of our follies, but to chant our undeserved praises. And alas, how much more ridiculous, at certain times, he has made us appear—nay, be! With what lecherous sweetness or ponderous grief he has put us to bed with our wives or our ancestors, with what maudlin sentiment he has crooned over us in our cradles! And how poor a show we present when poetry thus tries to make our ordinary human doings appear so different from those of other men! England set us that bad example; and, as usual, we followed her. Only think how far more resplendent might have been her history had the Court of St. James's continued and developed the institution of the jester and let the laureateship go. If Pope could only have had the teasing of Queen Anne, and Swift the goading of the earlier Georges; if Johnson could have bumbled gruff wisdom into the ears of number three; and, following upon these, could Sheridan, and Hook, and Carlyle, and Sidney Smith (I pick up names almost at random) have had a really assured position and full plenary indulgence as commentators on the Court and aristocracy of the Regency, and of the early Victorian period which culminated in that middleman's millennium, the Great Exhibition, with its Crystal Palace so shoddily furnished to celebrate the expurgation of art from industry. If only that could have been allowed, think how England might have been standing now—honest in her faults as in her virtues, a beacon light to the whole world. But there! it is no use wishing such saving grace to a rival nation, when we are so out of grace ourselves."

Prince Max paused for breath. "And then the whipping boy," he went on, "think of him!"

"Yes, Max. I am thinking of him a good deal!" said the King, in a tone wherein sarcasm and indulgence were pleasantly blended.

"You mean that I myself need the discipline?" smiled Max, "that my political ideas are even worse than my morals? Well, here is what you should do. Choose for me an exemplary young priest of the Established Church, let him be gentle and comely to attract the hearts of women, athletic and erudite to command the respect of men; and when I become a cause of scandal or forget what is

due to my position, let him be set to stand in the old stocks at the doors of the Cathedral on a given day, for a given number of hours; let it be announced in the Court Circular that he is there to do penance for my sins, and let it be my privilege, if penitent, to come in person after the first hour and release him before the eyes of all. What more effective form of control could you devise for me than this? How could I remain impenitent and unsubmitive when for my faults an innocent man stood exposed in contumely to the public gaze? Sir, you would have me exemplary in a week, or a fugitive from that country which set so high a standard of honor for its princes. As it is, our whipping boys go unlabeled with our names; and our offenses are expiated by countless thousands who know not for whose sins they suffer."

"Max," said his father, "you sound as if you were quoting from some book."

"I am," answered the Prince; "it is one that I am writing myself, that being the only form of free action that is left to me. At the threshold of manhood I recognized what my fate was to be, and that I was not really intended to do anything. That is why I talk. Activity is necessary to me. To keep myself in physical vigor I run about and play; to keep myself in mental vigor I read, I examine life, and I propound theories. This book which I am now writing would probably excite no comment if published anonymously, but will be regarded as revolutionary when it is known to have been written by the heir to a crown."

"Do you mean to publish it, then?" cried the King in awestruck tone.

"Certainly," answered the Prince. "Has not the nation every right to know the opinions of its possible future King? Never shall it be said that Jingalo accepted me blindly under the dark cover of heredity."

At this news the King looked really aghast. "And you propose, while I am spending myself in trying to add luster——" he began, then checked himself; "you propose to publish a work which may destroy the confidence at present subsisting between the sovereign and the people?"

"Would not false confidence be a worse alternative, sir?" inquired Max.

"But you are doing it in my time," said the King plaintively; "it is my reign you are disturbing, not your own. I don't think you have any right."

"My dear father," answered the Prince, "the more impossible I prove myself to be, the more popular you will become."

But the King was not to be consoled by that prospect; he was working not for himself alone—not for himself, indeed, at all.

"Max," he said earnestly, "believe me, monarchy, even at the present day, is of the greatest social and political value. Unsettle it in the public mind, and you unsettle the basis of government and the sacredness of property; everything else goes with it. The hereditary principle has in its keeping all that makes for stability, continuity, and tradition; nothing can adequately take its place."

"Do not forget, sir," said his son, "that if we follow our heredity back far enough, ours is an elected monarchy. And if once you admit election you must admit also the right of the to-be-elected one to offer or refuse his candidature. The nation cannot play fast and loose, as it has done, with the principle of male primogeniture, and at the same time impose upon us, its candidates for election, an unavoidable obligation to accept the burden of heredity. No; let us have the matter quite clear. If the people—as they have done by others in the past—claim the right to reject me, should I prove myself an outrageous and impossible character, I equally claim the right to reject them; and I must see them capable of making a reasonable use of my services before I will consent to be made use of."

"Well," said the King, breathing in resignation, "I suppose I ought not to mind too much. 'After me the Deluge,' is a wise enough saying when one has no power to prevent it."

"'After me the Deluge,'" said Max, "has come down to us with a muddled application. If monarchy would only adopt it as its motto, monarchy would be good for another thousand years. Louis XV said it; and Louis XVI failed to give it effect. Had he but placed himself at the head of the Deluge, in the very forefront of its rush and roar, waved his hat to it and cried: 'After me!' like a captain to his company, and started off at a gallop, it would have obeyed and followed him. 'After me the Deluge!' should be the rallying cry of the monarchy for the renewal of its youth, not the quavering note of its dotage. That is the motto I am going to put on the title-page of my book."

"Good gracious!" cried the King.

Max was pleased to see what an impression he had made: he did not usually get so good a listener. "And to think," said he, "that all this talk came of your having asked me a question on a matter that is already five years old. I am sorry to have taken up so much time explaining myself."

"On the contrary," said the King, "I am glad. Five years? Yes, I am very glad to know that." He got up and moving to the table made a call on his private telephone. "Would you mind waiting a few minutes," he went on, "perhaps I shall need your countenance."

A secretary answered the call; and presently the Comptroller-General himself appeared to learn the royal pleasure.

"I am sorry, my dear General," said the King, "to trouble you at so late an hour. But about that matter of the widow—who is not a widow. I wish fifty pounds to be sent to her—anonously. Yes, fifty pounds. Will you see that it is done to-night?"

Turning to Max he said, as though referring to conversation already passed, "You have effectually interested me in her case."

Max saw that he was being used as a pawn in a game he did not understand, and held his tongue; and the Comptroller-General, finding himself dismissed, retired to do for once as he was told.

And so, by the inglorious device of anonymity and lavishness combined the King maintained his point, and sent his gift to the relief of one who was, as a matter of fact, just as legally a widow as any other you or I may like to name.

John of Jingalo had not yet broken the official leading-strings, but on this occasion he had circumvented them. Flushed with his triumph, he bade his son an affectionate good-night. "Come and talk to me again," he said. "I don't agree with anything you say, but you help me to think."

It was a sign of progress. Hitherto he had relied, with a far greater sense of security and comfort, on those who had enabled him not to think. Consultation with Max, insidious as the drug-habit, and as secretly employed, was henceforth to count for much in the development of the Constitutional Crisis. Hereditary monarchy had conceived the idea of turning its hereditary material to account. No doubt the Cabinet would have objected, preferring to keep its victim in complete mental isolation; but at present, the Cabinet did not know.

CHAPTER IV

POPULAR MONARCHY

I

That talk with Max formed the preliminary to a month of the most strenuous verbal and intellectual conflict that the King had ever known. Outside all was calm: the Constitutional Crisis was in suspension; by agreement on both sides hostilities had been deferred till trade should have reaped its full profit out of the Silver Jubilee celebrations. The papers spoke admiringly of this truce to party warfare as "instinctive loyalty" on the part of the people, "expressive of their desire to do honor to a beloved sovereign in a spirit undisturbed by the contending voices of faction."

There was no "instinctive loyalty," however, within the Cabinet! While streets were decorating and illuminations preparing, ministers were giving his Majesty a thoroughly bad time.

In a way, of course, he brought it upon himself, for at the very next Council meeting after his conversation with Max he did a thing which, so far as his own reign was concerned, was absolutely without precedent: he opened his mouth and spoke;—objected, contended, argued. And at the sound of his voice uttering something more than mere formalities, ministers sat up amazed, most of them very angry and scandalized at so unexpected a reversion to the constitutional usages of a previous generation.

Not a word of all this leaked out. The whole thing was an admirable example of that keeping-up of appearances on which bureaucratic government so largely depends. And it was, if you come to think of it, a very deftly arranged affair. There was the whole country bobbing with loyalty, enthusiasm, and commercial opportunism; the Cabinet unencumbered for a while by any parliamentary situation that could cause anxiety, and correspondingly free to direct its energies elsewhere; and there within the Council, and without a soul to advise him, was the King, scuffling confusedly against the predatory devices of his ministers. The poor man's knowledge of the Constitution was but scanty, and his powers of argument were feeble, for from the day of his accession the word "precedent" had governed him. Yet he had an idea, a feeling, that he was now being forced into a wrong position; the constitutional breath was being beaten out of his body, and he would pass from his levees, from his receptions of foreign embassies and addresses of loyalty and congratulation, to a conflict in Council which reminded him of nothing so much as a "scrum" upon the football field. Through one goal or another he was to be kicked—the exercise of the Crown's prerogative to nominate Free Church Bishops, or the refusal to exercise it. And whichever expedient he was driven to in the end, he knew that on one side grandiloquent words would be written about his fine instinct for the constitutional limitations or powers of monarchy, and on the other, pained, but deeply respectful words of regret that he had been so ill-advised by his ministers—or by others. Whichever side loses, it is the football which wins the game. That, however, is merely the spectator's point of view. The football only knows that it has been kicked. Yet the King was well aware that in Parliament at any rate appearances would be kept up; and that whatever corner of the field he got kicked to, the blame for it would be laid, ostensibly, on others; though, as a result, the monarchy to which it was his bounden duty to "add luster" would be either strengthened or weakened: and what course to take he really did not know.

His mind, in consequence, was greatly troubled. Being of conservative instincts he believed that,

in the main, the Bishops were right and the Prime Minister wrong. The Prime Minister had been harassing the country with general elections; and the country had had about as many as it could stand: yet without a fresh election no other ministry was possible. And now, at a moment when the country was bent on profiting by the revival in trade which the approaching celebrations had stimulated, nothing would be so unpopular as a fresh ministerial crisis; and he could have no doubt that, whatever the papers might pretend to say, the odium of that crisis, if due to his own action, would fall eventually upon himself.

And the Prime Minister knew it! Yes, just at that juncture, resignation, or the threat of it, had become an absolutely compelling card; and he was playing it for all it was worth. Free Church Bishops were to be promised for the ensuing year, or the Ministry would be bound to feel, here and now, that his Majesty's confidence in it had been withdrawn.

Resignation, aimed not against any opposing majority in Parliament, but against the demur and opposition of the Crown itself—that fact in all its political significance, with all its possible developments of danger for the State and of humiliation for the monarchy, was daily pressing its relentless weight against the King's scruples. The more unanswerable it seemed the more angry he became, the more keenly did he feel that he was being unfairly used. And then, one day, as he sat thinking at his desk, all at once a new thought occurred to him, throwing a queer radiance into his face, of joy mixed with cunning. And then, gradually, it faded out and left a blank; the old expression of anxiety and distrustfulness returned. He shook his head at himself, scared that such a thought should ever have come into it. "No, no, it wouldn't do!" he muttered. "Impossible."

All the same he got up from his desk, and in deep cogitation began walking about the room. The carpet with its rich variegated pattern, like Max's conversation, helped him to think; until certain deliveries of a royal courier from abroad came to divert his attention to more particular and family affairs.

Nevertheless his mind had again reverted to its vetoed notion when, an hour later, on his way to the Queen's apartments he met the Princess Charlotte tripping gaily along the corridor. She stopped to give him her "return home" embrace. "How well you are looking, papa!" cried she, admiring his flushed countenance. But the King, though he smiled, remained preoccupied with the embryos of statecraft.

"My dear," he said abruptly, "do you think that I am popular?"

"Why, yes, papa, of course!" she said, opening sweet eyes at him. "Doesn't everybody cheer you when you go anywhere?"

"I think," said her father dubiously, lending his ears in fancy to the sound, "I think that crowds get into the habit of cheering,—not because they care for me, but just because there are a lot of them, and they like to hear the sound of their own voices."

"But sometimes you have quite small crowds," said his daughter, "and still they cheer."

"Yes, yes," he allowed, "so they do. Yes, even the nursemaids, I notice, wave their handkerchiefs when I ride by them in the park. And I daresay some of them do it because they are sorry for me."

"Sorry for you, papa?"

"My dear, wouldn't you be sorry to have to be King now-a-days? It's no fun, I can assure you."

"I wouldn't like to be King always," said Charlotte, with honesty; "but you know, papa, with all the Silver Jubilee celebrations coming on you are quite immensely popular."

"Ah!" said the King. "Thank you, my dear, that is what I wanted to know."

He went on to the Queen's apartments, and Princess Charlotte stood looking after him. "Poor dear!" she said to herself. She was sorry for him too—very sorry just now; for she had a secret growing within her somewhere between heart and head which, if he knew of it—and some day he would have to know of it—would cause him a great deal of worry.

This young woman with her growing secret was at that time twenty-three.

II

The Princess Charlotte had a way of drawing in a breath as if to speak, and then bottling it. This little performance was at times very telling in its effect—it spoke volumes: it told of a long training in self-repression which still did not come quite naturally: it told of inward combustion, of a tightly cornered but still independent mind. Ladies-in-waiting had seen the Princess run out of her mother's presence to tabber her feet on the inlaid floor of the corridor, thence to return smooth, sweet-tempered, and amiable; for between Charlotte and the Queen there were temperamental differences which had to declare themselves or find safety through emergency exits.

The Princess had no such difficulties with her father, for imperturbability was not one of his characteristics, and imperturbability was the one quality in a parent which the Princess simply could not stand; it made her feel powerless; and to feel powerless toward one's intellectual inferiors is, to certain temperaments, maddening. Charlotte had long since been brought to recognize that her mother, in her own dear way, was quite hopeless: but she was able with

astounding ease to get upon her father's nerves and to trouble his conscience; for while the Queen remained impervious to all influences outside the conventions of her training and her habits, the King was as open to new scruples of conscience as a sieve is to the wind—fresh ideas rattled in his head like green peas in a cullender—when he shook his head it seemed to shake them about, and all the larger ones came uppermost; and the Princess Charlotte had in recent years acquired a habit of entangling her father, with the most engaging simplicity, in moral problems for which constitutional monarchy could find no answer.

She was evidently interested in politics, and when of late the King, wishing to check so dangerous a tendency, had sought to know the reason why, she had answered with perfect frankness: "Max says" (for to her, also, Max, the man born to inaction, had been talking), "Max says he is not sure if he means to come to the throne. If he doesn't, it is just as well I should know something of the business."

The young lady had a most disrespectful way of talking about the monarchy as "the business," and did not say it as if in joke.

"Are you going to business to-day, papa?" was actually the phrase uttered in all seriousness, which had met him one of the days when he went down to open Parliament. But though she spoke thus gracelessly of an important State function she attended it herself with grace, and behaved well.

The Princess Charlotte had learned many things alien to her nature; but she had never learned that correctitude of deportment which is supposed to accompany all those born in the regal purple from the cradle to the grave. She substituted for it, however, something much more individual and charming. Tall and abundantly alive, she moved in soft rushes rather quicker than a walk; and her manner of swimming down a room, with swift invisible run of feet, and just three long undulating bows on the top of all—those three doing duty for so many—was a sight on the decorum of which Court opinion was sharply divided. Yet every one admitted that though she might lack convention or anything in the least resembling "the grand manner"—she had a style of her own; many also—even those who disapproved—admitted her charm. As she talked to her chosen intimates, her two hands would go out in quick bird-like gestures of momentary contact, while her brightly moving face gave a constant invitation to the free entry of her thoughts. Barriers she had none. A dangerous young person for getting her own way; for in the process she often got not only her own but other people's as well.

At the moment when she makes her introductory bow from the pages of this history her main and consuming desire was to secure the ordering of her own dresses; and to obtain that preliminary measure of independence for the expression of her own character she was prepared, in the face of maternal opposition, to go to considerable lengths.

The King when he met her in the corridor was, as we have said, preoccupied with affairs of State. But his preoccupation was partly put on with intent for the concealment of other thoughts. The sight of his daughter at that moment, embarrassed him—gave him, indeed, almost a sense of guilt, for he held in his hand a letter from the Hereditary Prince of Schnapps-Wasser accepting the circuitously worded proposal, with all its delicate adumbrations of yet other proposals to follow, that he should visit the Jingalese Court early in the ensuing year—immediately, that is to say, upon his return from South America; and though in his reply the veiled object of that visit was not mentioned there was a touch here and there of compliment, of warmth, of a wish that the date were not so far off, which indicated "a coming on disposition."

And so, under the bright eyes of his daughter, the King was conscious of a sense of guilt, in that he was concealing from her something in which her future was very greatly concerned. It seemed hardly fair thus to be pushing matters on without letting her know: and yet—what else could he do? So, covering his affectionate embarrassment in inquiries about himself, he shuffled past; and when he had gone a little further, turned to take another look at her, and found, startled, that she too was looking at him. There, at opposite ends of the long corridor, father and daughter stood interrogatively at gaze, each feeling a little guilty, each wondering what, at the dénouement, the other would say. Then the charming Charlotte blew him a kiss from her hand, and his Majesty did likewise; and, off to the fulfilment of her destiny went the Princess; and off to his fulfilment of her destiny went he; each quite sure in their two different ways that they knew what was best for her.

III

The King found the Queen at her knitting, very placid and contented and well pleased with herself, for she had just been giving Charlotte a mild talking to. Charlotte had come home with adjectives in her mouth of which the Queen did not approve, and with enthusiasms that went riotously beyond bounds. She had talked of some Professor's translation of a Greek play as "glorious"; and of the play itself—a play all about expatriated women who, their proper husbands having been killed in a siege, were forced to accept at the hands of their enemies husbands of a less proper kind—she had talked of that play as "the most immense, immortal, and modern thing in all drama."

"I told her," said the Queen, "that she was talking about what she didn't understand; but she answered that she had seen it three times. *I* said, that to go and see the same play three times—especially a play with murders in it—showed a morbid taste. She didn't seem to mind: 'Then I *am*

morbid,' was her reply. And when I said, 'That comes of making friends with these intellectual women,' she only laughed at me. I shan't let her go again, it is doing her harm; she has far too many ideas, far too many: and where she picks them all up I'm sure I don't know; she doesn't get them from me!"

And then the conversation—though Charlotte remained its subject—took another turn, for the King put into his wife's hand the letter he had received from the Prince of Schnapps-Wasser, and immediately her comments began.

"He writes a nice hand," she said, "and expresses himself very well. Speaks of writing a book on his travels; he must be clever. Well, at all events, it's very evident that he means to come, and wants to. We must ask him to send his photograph. I think, my dear, we have made a very good choice, and Charlotte may consider herself very fortunate. But what a pity he's not coming sooner. Well, Charlotte must wait, that's all!"

And so in her own mind the matter was settled, and only the usual details waited to be arranged. She handed the letter back to him.

"Of course," she said, "before he comes Charlotte must have a bigger allowance." She became meditative. "By the way, you had better leave it in my hands; don't give it to Charlotte herself. She wheedles you, I know; but she has ideas about dress which I am not going to encourage; she makes herself far too noticeable as it is. Somebody has been talking to her about 'national costume' and the folly of fashions; and she actually said just now that she wanted to have some kind of dress that she could wear three years running! I told her that fashions were made to be followed, and that it was her duty to follow them. Oh, she was quite sweet about it, and said she supposed I knew best, which of course is true. But she had a sort of 'I'll ask papa' look in her eyes that made me suspicious. She went out just before you came."

"I met her," observed the King.

"And she said nothing?"

"Not a word about her dress allowance."

"Ah, that's all right, then: she takes what I tell her sometimes." Then with a quick glance the Queen asked abruptly: "Have you seen Max?"

"I fancy I may be seeing him this evening," returned the King casually, for he wished to conceal even from his wife the importance he had begun to attach to his son's visits.

"Something is happening," said the Queen pointedly; "at least, so I am informed. That—that person I told you about—she isn't there now."

"However do you come to know that?" inquired the King, surprised; but his question was ignored.

"She has gone abroad," went on his informant. "Had you said anything to Max?"

"I did speak to him."

"Then it seems to have had its effect."

The King very much doubted whether the effect was any of his doing; but he held his peace.

"Now we must find somebody for him," continued the dear lady, covering the past in a tone of charitable allowance.

"I think that Max will find somebody for himself."

But this was not to her taste at all. "How can he," she objected, "unless we send him abroad? I'm sure there's nobody here."

But the King had come recently to know more about Max than his wife did. "Max will find somebody for himself," he repeated; "and if he thinks it worth while, he will go all round the world on a wild goose chase to look for her."

IV

Could the King only have known it, Max had already found his choice nearer home. His domestic arrangements having been temporarily disturbed by a certain lady's departure to visit her son on his estates, he had gone off on a spurt of social curiosity to inspect the slums of his father's capital, and on the third day of his investigation had spied, under a nursing sister's habit, and above a gentle breast bearing an ivory cross, the face of his dreams. Having taken scientific steps to discover whether that particular garb entailed celibate vows, and learning that it did not, he had industriously run its wearer to sainted earth—had, that is to say, pursued her to a top-floor tenement and there found her upon her knees with sanitary zeal scrubbing dirt from the boards of poverty; and poverty upon its bed whimpering with rage and feebly cursing her for thus coming to disturb its peace. Thus they had met, and very promptly and practically had the wearer of the habit made him pay the price for his intrusion by setting him there and then to work of a kind he had never tackled before.

Who she was, and all the sacred dance that she led him on holy feet, before she gave him that reward which was his due, will be told in the later pages of this history. For the present Max had

hardly any idea how pure and deep a Jordan he was about to be dipped in, or how thorough a scrubbing he himself was to receive. His voice was still like the rollings of Abana and Pharpar, when he came on this next evening to discourse up-to-date wisdom in his father's ears; not a hair of his well-groomed head showed the ruffling of perturbed thoughts within, nor were his self-confidence and easy satisfaction in the moral and mental liberties wherein he ranged at large in any way diminished or disturbed.

When they had settled down to their talk, the King confidentially broached the proposed visit of the Hereditary Prince of Schnapps-Wasser and its intended significance. Max did not seem particularly impressed. "What does Charlotte say about it?" he inquired casually.

"Charlotte does not say anything. How should she? She does not yet know."

Max smiled. "It will be time, then, to talk about it when she does."

"But there is really nobody else; and Charlotte must marry somebody."

"Has she said so?" inquired Max. "My own impression is that she will have to get through at least one good healthy love affair of her own before she settles down to anything you or the Courts of Europe can provide. After that—if you let her plunge deep enough—you won't have any trouble; she will marry anything you offer. Of course, if you really believed in monarchy as a principle, and not as a mere expedient—a divine institution, and not as the last ditch in which the old class-barriers have to be maintained—you would let her marry any one she chose. It would do the monarchy no harm, and might do it good."

The King shook his head. "It's no use talking like that," said he. "We are not free, any of us. The more other ranks of society have become mixed, commercially mixed—for you know it is money that has done it—the more we must maintain ours. Royalty must not barter itself away."

"But you *do* barter it," said Max, "for rank if not for gold. And the one is really as base as the other. The great game for royalty to play now-a-days is courageous domesticity."

"There are limits," replied his father. "We must maintain our position."

"That is just where you make the mistake," retorted Max. "You and my dear mother are always ready to play the domestic game where it is not important. You allow photographs of your private life to be on sale in shop-windows; charming private details slip out in newspaper paragraphs; one of you behaves with natural and decent civility to some ordinary poor person, and news of it is immediately flashed to all the press. Two years ago, for instance, when you were triumphantly touring the United States you arrived by some accident at a place called New York; and there, early one morning, having evaded the reporters, you stood looking up at the sky-scrapers when you trod on an errand-boy's toe, or knocked his basket out of his hand; and having done so you touched your hat and apologized—you a King to an errand-boy! And immediately all America, which yawps of equality and of one man being the equal of any other, fell rapturously in love with you! You, I daresay, have forgotten the incident?"

"Quite," said the King.

"But America remembers it. When you left, with all the locusts of the press clinging to the wheels of your chariot, they dubbed you 'conqueror of hearts'; and it was mainly because you had knocked over an errand-boy and apologized to him. Now you do these things naturally; but they are all really part of the business: your secretaries report them to the press."

"What?" exclaimed the King, startled.

"Why, of course! The errand-boy didn't know you from Adam, and no one but your private secretary was with you at the time; at least, so I gathered: it was before breakfast and you had given the detectives the slip. Well, then, merely by letting your human nature and your sense of decency have free play you help to run the monarchic system—you almost make a success of it. But you stop just where you ought to go on. You are natural—you are yourself—where there is no opposition to your being so. If you would go on being natural where there *is* opposition—where all sorts of high social and political reasons step in and forbid—you would find yourself far more powerful than the Constitution intended you to be, for you would have the people with you. There is a mountain of sentiment ready to rush to your side if you only had the faith to call it to you. Have you not noticed, whenever a royal engagement is announced, how every paper in the land declares it to be a real genuine love-match? And you know—well, you know. I myself can remember Aunt Sophie crying her eyes out for love of the Bishop of Bogaboo whom she fell in love with at a missionary meeting and wasn't allowed to marry; and six weeks later her engagement to Prince Wolf-im-Schafs-Kleider was announced as a sudden and romantic love-match! Why, he had only been sent for to be looked at when the Bogaboo affair became dangerous; and so Aunt Sophie was coerced into that melancholy mold of a jelly which she has retained ever since.

"Now that is where my grandfather showed himself out of touch with the spirit of the age. Had he allowed Aunt Sophie to marry the Bishop and go out during the cool months of the year to teach Bogaboo ladies the use of the crinoline—it was just when crinolines were going out of fashion here, and they could have got them cheap—he would have done a most popular stroke for the monarchy."

"But you forget, my dear boy," said the King, "the Bogaboos were at that time a really dangerous

tribe—they still practised cannibalism."

"Yes, they still had their natural instincts unimpaired; the Christian substitute of gin had not yet taken hold on them, and their national institution still provided the one form of useful martyrdom that was left to us. Had Aunt Sophie, or her husband, been eaten by savages there would have been a boom in missions, and both the Church and the monarchy would have benefited enormously. Royalty must take its risks. Kings no longer ride into battle at the head of their armies: even the cadets of royalty, when they get leave to go, are kept as much out of danger as possible. But if royalty cannot lead in something more serious than the trooping of colors and the laying of foundation-stones, then royalty is no longer in the running.

"Now what you ought to do is—find out at what point it would break with all tradition for you to be really natural and think and act as an ordinary gentleman of sense and honor, and then—go and do it! The Government would roll its eyes in horror; the whole Court would be in commotion; but with the people generally you would win hands down!"

"Max, you are tempting me!" said the King.

"Sir," said his son, "I cannot express to you how great is my wish to be proud of your shoes if hereafter I have to step into them. Could you not just once, for my sake, do something that no Government would expect—just to disturb that general smugness of things which is to-day using the monarchy as its decoy?"

The King gazed upon the handsome youth with eyes of hunger and affection. "What is it that you want me to do?" he inquired.

Max held out his cigar at arm's length, looked at it reflectively, and flicked off the ash.

"Don't do that on the carpet!" said his father.

Max smiled. "That is so like you, father," he said; "yes, that is you all over. You don't like to give trouble even to the housemaid. Now when you see things going wrong you ought to give trouble—serious trouble, I mean. You ought, in vulgar phrase, to 'do a bust.'

"When I was a small boy," he went on, "I used to read fairy stories and look at pictures. And there was one that I have always remembered of a swan with a crown round its neck floating along a stream with its beak wide open, singing its last song. To me that picture has ever since represented the institution of monarchy going to its death. The crown, too large and heavy to remain in place, has slipped down from its head and settled like a collar or yoke about its neck. Its head, in consequence, is free, and it begins to sing its 'Nunc dimittis.' The question to me is—what 'Nunc dimittis' are we going to sing? I do not know whether you ever read English poetry; but some lines of Tennyson run in my head; let me, if I can remember, repeat them now—

"The wild swan's death-hymn took the soul
Of that waste place with joy
Hidden in sorrow: at first to the ear
The warble was low, and full, and clear;
And floating about the under-sky,
Prevailing in weakness, the coronach stole
Sometimes afar, and sometimes anear;
But anon her awful jubilant voice,
With a music strange and manifold,
Flow'd forth on a carol free and bold;
As when a mighty people rejoice
With shawms, and with cymbals, and harps of gold!"

"That, my dear father, is the song I wish to hear you singing—that I want to take up, I in my turn after you. I want your voice now to be awful and jubilant, and your carol to be 'free and bold' like the carol of that dying bird; and the sound of it to be like the rejoicing of a mighty people on a day of festival."

The King shook his head. "My dear boy," he said, "I don't understand poetry; I never did."

"Well," said the son, "let me interpret it then into prose. Monarchy as an institution is dying, and it can either die in foolish decrepitude, or it can die mightily, merging itself in democracy for a final blow against bureaucratic government. All that is written in my book. That is why I am now able to express myself so well: these periods are largely a matter of quotation. The right rôle for monarchy to-day is, believe me, to be above all things democratic—not by truckling to the ideas of the people in power—the 'ruling classes' as they still call themselves—but by daring to be human and natural, and to refuse absolutely to be dehumanized on the score of its high dignity and calling.

"If, for instance, I came to you to-day and said I wanted to marry one of my own nation—say even a commoner—in preference to the daughter of some foreign princeling, let me do it! It breaks with a foolish tradition—largely our own importation when, as foreigners, we were seeking to keep up our prestige—it may annoy or even embarrass the Government. Well! have they not annoyed and embarrassed you?"

The King nodded sympathetically, but in words hastened to correct himself. "One has often to make sacrifices in defense of an institution," he said. "That is a duty we both owe."

"Why," inquired the Prince, "should I make sacrifices to an institution I do not really approve? Why should I pretend to love some foreign princess if I have given my heart to one—I cannot say of my own race—for I remember that we are an importation—but of the country of my adoption? Do you really suppose that because it annoys the Prime Minister and disturbs his political calculations, an alliance within those artificially prohibited degrees imposed on royalty will lessen the influence of the Crown by a straw's weight, or quicken its demise by an hour? This country, like all civilized countries, is moving towards some form of republican government. If we are sufficiently human, if we show ourselves determined to call our souls our own—it is not merely possible, it is probable, that when the change comes we shall be called on by popular acclaim to provide the country with its first President. If we did we could secure for that presidency a greater power and prestige than any bureaucratic government would willingly concede. It may be that the real counter-stroke to the present increase of Cabinet control can most effectively be administered by a monarch who is not too careful to preserve the outward forms of monarchy. When that is done, by you, or by me, or by one who comes after us, I am confident that there will be the sound of a people's rejoicing."

"You have strange ideas," said the King, "for one who calls himself a monarchist."

"I am a republican," said the young man.

The King stared at him as though at some strange animal. "You don't say so!" he murmured half aghast. "Supposing the Prime Minister were to find out."

"He will soon," said the Prince. "I shall be sending him a copy of my book on the day of publication."

The King shook his head warningly. Then he smiled, a shy nervous smile. "It would be very awkward," he said slowly, "very awkward indeed, if you happened to come to the throne just now. I really don't know what Brasshay would do. But it's too late for me to begin that sort of thing—far too late now."

CHAPTER V

CHURCH AND STATE

I

All this while other swan-songs were in preparation to be forced down other throats (and thence presently to be rejected); forced with that gentle air of persuasion which rears its lying front over all forms of "peaceful picketing." Starvation and stuffing were the two methods to be employed.

While the Government was picketing the King with threats of withdrawal from office, and the Labor Party the Government with threats of a national strike, the Government was preparing to picket the Bishops by a process of forcible feeding—a plethora of their own kind be thrust upon them—of their own kind but of a very different persuasion. And now at last the Bishops understood that the doubling of their dioceses was but a device of Machiavellian subtlety for the halving of their temporalities.

The Bishops had just opened their holy mouths to protest when the approach of the Jubilee festivities shut them up. The Church of Jingalo was on a tight and established footing, and had to conform to the commercial, conventional, and constitutional requirements of its day; for you cannot, if you are by law established, play fast and loose with those institutions on which a nation bases its prosperity. So even when the Government proposed the creation of demi-mondain bishops, and the setting up of what amounted to a second establishment in the upper chamber of its spiritual spouse, the outward proprieties were still observed, and the sanctities of national interests respected. It is true that the Bishop of Olde, lifting from his bed a burden of ninety years, climbed up into the central pulpit of his diocese to preach a sermon which was ecstatically applauded by all Churchmen, and committed thereafter to the keeping of a carefully selected few. It won for him the affectionate nickname of "Never-say-die" and put his followers into a hole from which they never afterwards emerged. And so the Bishops entered into the loyal silence of the Jubilee truce with a flush of conscious rectitude upon their faces; while behind closed doors the Prime Minister and the Primate Archbishop of Ebury had met to talk business, to drive conditional bargains, and to kill time till such other time as seemed good to them.

They met at the town-residence of the one Bishop of the Establishment who had lent a favorable ear to the Prime Minister's proposals. Boycotted by his brother Bishops this solitary pelican in piety was still on terms of official acquaintance with his titular head. Placing his well-stored nest at the disposal of the two combatants, he retired for a discreet week-end into the wilderness; and the Prime Minister and the Archbishop, after announcing in the press that they also had gone elsewhere, came together by appointment for the indication of ultimatums and the fixing of dates when ju-jitsu was to commence.

When the Prime Minister arrived his Grace the Primate, attended by his chaplain, was already in the house. An ecclesiastical butler carried word to the chaplain, and the chaplain carried it to the

oratory.

The Archbishop finished his prayer; it served the double purpose of strengthening him in his resolve to present a firm front that for the time being could do no harm, and of keeping his opponent waiting. The effect did not quite come off. Under that enforced attendance, the Prime Minister had turned his back on the door, and wrapt in contemplation of the book-shelves stood as though unaware that the Primate had made his state entry. It was a pity that he should have missed it.

The Archbishop came into the room bearing in his hands a large Bible, subscribed for and presented to him by a general assembly of Church clergy and laity when the constitutional crisis first began to loom large. It was fitting, therefore, that it should now accompany him to the field of battle. Corners of silver scrollwork, linked together by bands and clasps of the same metal, adorned its surface, and over the glowing red of its Venetian leather binding, lambs, lions, eagles, doves, and pelicans stood lucently embossed, bearing upon their well-drilled shoulders the sacred emblems and mottoes of the ecclesiastical party. More important and more central than these showed the proud heraldic bearings of the metropolitan see of Ebury, crowned with a miter which its occupant never wore, and a Cardinal's hat for which he was no longer qualified.

All these collective sources of inspiration the Archbishop bore in monstrant fashion with hands raised and crossed, and, moving to the strategic position he had previously selected, set down upon the table before him. While thus designing his way he exchanged formal salutation with his antagonist.

"And now, sir," said he, bowing himself to a seat, "now I am entirely at your disposal."

"And I at yours," said the Prime Minister.

But the Archbishop corrected him. "I am here, I take it, rather to be informed of the latest novelties in statecraft than to admit that any fresh standpoint upon our side has become possible." Slowly and solemnly he rested his hands upon the presentation volume as he spoke; across that barrier, representative of the spiritual forces at his back, his small diplomatic eyes twinkled with holy zeal. He was an impressive figure to look at, and also to hear: over six feet in height, with dark hair turned silver, of a ruddy complexion, portly without protuberance, and with a voice of modulated thunder that could fill with ease, twice in one day, even the largest of his cathedrals. As a concession to the world he wore flat side-whiskers, as a concession to the priestly office he shaved his lip. By this compromise he was able to wear a cope without offense to the Evangelicals,—his whiskers saving him from the charge of extreme views. Under his rule, largely perhaps because of those whiskers, peace had settled upon the Church; and in consequence it now presented an almost united front to its political opponents.

All his life he had been accustomed to command. Even in the nursery, as the eldest child and only son of his parents, he had ruled his five sisters with that prescriptive mastery which sex and primogeniture confer. At school he had pursued his career of disciplinarian first as "dowl-master," then as captain of teams, then as prefect with powers of the rod over senior boys his superiors in weight. Continuing at the University to excel in games, he became at twenty-four a class-master in Jingalo's most famous public school. Marrying at thirty a lady of title, he acquired the social touch necessary for his completion, and five years later was appointed Head. Left a disconsolate widower at the age of forty-seven, he drew dignity from his domestic affliction, received a belated call to the ministry, took orders, and became Master of Pentecost, only on the distinct understanding that a bishopric of peculiar importance as a stepping-stone to higher things should be his at the next vacancy. The vacancy occurred without any undue delay; and from that bishopric, after three years of successful practice, he passed at the age of fifty-five to the crowning grace of his present position. Thence he was able to look back over a long vista of things successfully done and heads deferentially bowed to his sway—deans, canons, priests, sisters—a pattern training for a humble servant of that Master whose Cross, as by law established, he was now helping to bear. Even the Prime Minister, facing him with all his parliamentary majority at his back, knew him for a redoubtable opponent. This fight had long ago been foreseen by the Church party, and it was for the fighting policy he now embodied that Dr. Chantry had received nine years previously his "call" from collegiate to sacerdotal office. A large jeweled cross gleamed upon his breast, and a violet waistcoat that buttoned out of sight betokened the impenetrable resolution of his priestly character.

"And now, sir, I am at your disposal," said he; and sat immovable while the Prime Minister spoke.

II

The Prime Minister's argument ran upon material and mathematical lines; he imported no passion into the discussion,—there was no need. He had at his disposal all that was requisite—the parliamentary majority, the popular mandate, and, so he believed, the necessary expedient under the Constitution for bringing the Church to heel. Episcopalianism no longer commanded a majority of the nation; Church endowments had therefore become the preserves of a minority, and scholarship by remaining denominational was getting to be denationalized. Having laid down his premises he proceeded to set forth his demands. Henceforth the Universities were to be released from Church control, all collegiate and other educational appointments to be open and unsectarian, scholarships and fellowships, however exclusive the intentions of their pious founders, were to follow in the same course; degrees of divinity were to be granted irrespective

of creed, and chairs of theology open to all comers.

At this point the Archbishop, who had hitherto sat silent, put in a word.

"That will include Buddhists and Mohammedans. Is such your intention?"

The Prime Minister corrected himself. "I should, of course, have said 'all who profess themselves Christians.'"

The Archbishop accepted the concession with an ironical bow.

"Unitarians and Roman Catholics?"

"That would necessarily follow."

"I am ceasing to be amazed," said his Grace coldly. "We, the custodians of theological teaching, are to admit to our endowments the two extremes of heresy and of schism."

"If both are admitted," suggested the Prime Minister, "will they not tend to correct each other? We study history by allowing all sides to be stated, and we admit to its chair both schools, the scientists and the rhetoricians. Why, then, should not theology be studied on the same broad lines?"

"Will the chair of theology become a more stable institution," inquired the Archbishop, "by being turned into a see-saw?"

The Prime Minister smiled on the illustration, but his answer was edged with bitterness.

"That is a way of securing some movement at all events," he remarked caustically.

"The Church," retorted his Grace, "denies the need of such movement. Her firm foundations—we have scriptural warrant for saying—are upon rock. She is neither a traveling menagerie, a swingboat, nor a merry-go-round."

"Yet I have heard," said the Prime Minister, "that she takes a ship to be her symbol, and one, in particular, very specially designed to be a traveling menagerie—containing all kinds both clean and unclean."

"The unclean," said the Archbishop, "were by divine dispensation placed in a decisive minority."

"Yet they shared, I suppose, the provisions of the establishment?"

"They did not, I imagine, sit down at the table with the patriarch and his family."

"Perhaps the dogs ate of the crumbs?"

"It is not 'crumbs' that you are seeking," said the Archbishop with asperity. "From our chairs of theology we dispense to the Church the bread of wisdom from which she draws sustenance; and you ask us to let that source of her intellectual life become infected with microbes,—at a time when latitudinarian doctrines are sapping the unity of the Church and weakening her discipline, to allow their establishment as a principle in our centers of learning and in our seats of divinity! What claim to denounce heresy and schism will be left to the Church if in her very government heretics and schismatic teachers receive posts of influence, emolument, and authority? To what extremes may not the minds of our students be led, to what destruction of ecclesiastical discipline?"

"If you will admit free teaching in the Universities," explained the Prime Minister, "we shall not seek to touch your theological seminaries, or to invade your orders by an infusion of fresh blood."

"Invade our orders?" cried the Primate. "That you cannot do; no Bishop's hands would bestow them!" and he drew back his own with a declamatory gesture. "You yourself are not a Churchman, and you do not perhaps know what to us the Church means. We hold in sacred trust the power of the Keys—if we surrender those we surrender everything."

"They are in a good many hands already," remarked the Prime Minister blandly. "Episcopal power is not limited to the Church of Jingalo." And then for the first time, as a pawn in the political game, the Archimandrite was mentioned. The Archbishop could not believe his ears. "You would not dare," he said.

"I am sorry," replied the other, "that you should be under any such misapprehension. Let me remind you that only a year ago you yourself recommended him for an honorary benefice—a church that had not a parish."

"Yes, honorary; not with administrative powers."

"Yet I fancy it was devised in order that at a later date you might employ him—merely by accident as it were—for confirming the validity of your orders."

"While your device," said the Archbishop, "is to use him as a means for placing schismatics in a position of control and authority. Sir, I say to you that you would not dare. The nation will not allow it."

"Time will show," replied the other smoothly.

"Ah!" cried the Archbishop passionately; "you trust to time; I to the power of the Eternal. If such

an attempt is made to violate the body of our Mother Church then I pronounce sentence of excommunication upon all who take part in it."

"It would have no legal effect," said the Prime Minister. "You miss the point in dispute. We have not to discuss matters of faith and doctrine, but only of government. If you prefer—if you will give us your co-operation and consent—we are ready at any time to offer you the alternative of disestablishment. It is a solution which for the moment I do not press; but undoubtedly it would leave the spiritualities of the Church more free. Your real fear, I have gathered, is that it would prepare the way for extremes of doctrine, which you yourself cannot countenance. The Church Triumphant, I am told, would run the risk of a larger recognition than is allowed to it under present forms; and the limitations imposed by a State connection are your most hopeful means of retarding doctrinal development. Is not that so?"

"We have not to discuss matters of doctrine," countered the Archbishop stiffly, "but only of government. Our concern is not with the Church's teachings but with her powers for enforcing them upon her own members."

"Including," commented the Prime Minister, "what you have called 'the power of the Keys.' That power you seek to extend over temporalities to which we claim access; and to retain it you have in the past used political means; we are using them to deprive you of that power. I recognize that had your Grace occupied to-day the position of advantage which is now mine, you would have used it—and with justification—for the strengthening of your order; from the popular verdict you would have had authority to deliver sentence against me. Upon the same ground I now take the only sure means that are open to me to strengthen my own order and to safeguard its future liberty."

"What is your order?" smoothly inquired his Grace.

"My order is the representative system, which voices the popular will."

"Mine," said the Archbishop in richly reverberating tones, "is divine revelation, which voices the will of God."

"You claim a closer acquaintance with that Authority than I," remarked the Prime Minister. "Yet I, too, have faith in the efficacy of its workings."

"We base our faith differently," retorted his Grace. "I have my principles; you, as you have just boasted, have your opportunity. I do not think that opportunities are of the same eternal character as principles. To-morrow your opportunity which now seems to give you power, may disappear. My principles will remain."

"I shall always respect them, in their proper place. As an adornment to the Church I am sure they will continue to shine. In the State they have become an excrescence and an impediment."

"You are pushing your definition of impediments rather far when you plan a new thoroughfare, giving strangers the entrée to church premises."

"It is really your definition of 'premises,'" said the Prime Minister, "over which we are chiefly at issue. What right has the Church to regard as strangers any who are baptized Christians?"

The Archbishop seized his advantage exultingly. "I will only remind you," said he, "of the Church Government Act—a measure of no ancient date—by which Parliament forced the Church to expel from benefice those who would not accept her discipline in matters of outward observance. You yourself voted for that measure."

The Prime Minister had to acknowledge the stroke; but he made light of it. "I think that measure has already become obsolete. It was not put very thoroughly into practice even at the beginning."

"Let Parliament, then, admit its error," said the Archbishop, "and abolish the act and the principle which it enshrines before proceeding with other acts diametrically opposed to it. While the law claims a hold over the Church, the Church claims to hold by existing law."

"I may possibly, then, satisfy your Grace," insinuated the Premier, "if presently I propose the restoration of certain Free Church ministers by episcopal consecration to the fold from which they were expelled."

The Archbishop rose to his feet, and raising the presentation Bible high over his head brought it down upon the table with a bang. Then instantaneously conceiving his mistake, he laid his hands over it in the act of blessing.

"Never!" he said firmly and solemnly, with ever deepening inflection of tone, "never! never!"

"It is a measure that might be avoided," conceded the Prime Minister. "The alternative is before you. We have made you our offer."

"You have offered," said the Archbishop, "an alternative which I am not able to discuss. Roman Catholicism and Unitarianism in alternate doses is the price you ask us to pay. The Church of Jingalo will accept neither the Triple Crown nor an untrine Divinity as its guide." He drew himself to his full height. "That, sir, is her answer."

"So you really think," inquired the Prime Minister, "that yours and the Church's voice are one?"

"The blood of her martyrs," said the Archbishop, "has stained the very steps of that throne from which under divine Providence I am commissioned to speak with authority. I call on them to witness that never in her hour of need shall the Church surrender her divine mission to preach only pure doctrine and to defend the faith committed to the saints."

"I thought," said the Prime Minister, "that, officially at least, you did not invoke the dead."

"Sir, we have no need. Their record is our inheritance. It is they who invoke us from an imperishable past."

"Our discussion, then, seems to be at an end. We have gone back into the middle ages."

The Prime Minister, having got very much the answer he expected, here rose and began buttoning his coat. "Well, Archbishop," said he, as he thus trimmed himself to give a neat finish to the discussion, "before we part I will put the question quite frankly: Is it to be peace or war?"

"I am a servant of the Church Militant," answered his Grace.

And then they compared notes and settled dates as to when war was to be declared. Jingalo was about to exhibit to the world the continuity of her institutions, and with her mind thus carried back to ancient times modern controversy was an anachronism.

It was on those historic grounds that they arranged their armistice; but Recording Angels are more truthful than Archbishops or Prime Ministers; and the Recording Angel, having listened to their conversation, was led to set down upon his tables this notable memorandum—that on no account were popular pageantry or trade interests to be disturbed during so golden an opportunity as the Silver Jubilee. While that was going on defense of Church and State must be relegated to obscurity.

III

All this had taken place before the truce actually began (see, in fact, Chapter II). How much, or rather how little the King had heard of it we already know. How little the truce brought benefit to him we shall learn more fully in later chapters. Still for the moment he was not without comfort, for he had got Max to talk to. Every evening that they spent together much talk went on; and the King sat infected and edified while Maxian oratory flowed.

"How is it," inquired his father, "that you have been able to think of these things? I see them when you tell me; but how did they ever come to enter your head?"

"For some years," answered Max, "I had the advantage of being your youngest son. Until I was twenty, two lives stood between me and the succession, and while Stephen and Rupert were drilling I managed to get educated."

"Poor Rupert!" murmured his father, "he would have made a much better King than either of us."

"I don't think so," said Max. "He would merely have kept the monarchy to its old lines—that means sticking in a rut. If the monarchy is to mean anything it will have to move, not merely with the times but ahead of them."

"How can it move ahead of them?"

"How otherwise can it lead? That is what the heads of the privileged classes never seem to understand. Look at the Bishops! See what a spectacle they have made of themselves, all through not leading."

"Ah, yes," sighed the King; "I thought you'd be against the Bishops."

"Against them?" cried Max, "of course I'm against them! The Bishops are a set of prehistoric remains: and even if they were all up to date, a combined house of Bishops and Judges with full legislative powers is antediluvian (I'm speaking of the Deluge now in the sense in which Louis XV spoke of it)—it's an eighteenth-century arrangement.

"Yes, I'm against the Bishops, but I'm much more against the Cabinet. The Cabinet is seeking to control not only the Upper but the Lower Chamber as well, it is fighting the Bishops merely to delude the people; and there are the Laity so stupid, or so lazy, or so corrupt that they won't see it. Every one knows that the Government sells honors for party purposes, and then covers it up by pretending that contributions to the party funds are 'public services.' Everything now is to be had for a price, a Chancellery at so much, a Knighthood at so much more; an Order of the this, that, or the other, in exact proportion to its prestige or its rarity. Last year they had a debate on it in the House, a debate where, between them, the corruptors and the corrupted were in a majority! And they solemnly took a vote on it, and declared that there was no corruption, though everybody knew it to be a fact. The Opposition lay low because they mean to do exactly the same when their time comes. Oh, and it's not only the House of Laity: I daresay a bishopric has got its price if we only knew!"

The King would have rejected such a suggestion as fantastic only a month ago; but now with the Archimandrite in his mind he began to be suspicious. What price, monetary or political, might not the Free Churchmen be paying for their bishoprics, what secret bargain of which it was no one's duty to inform him? He lashed at his own impotence, for the ignominy of his position increased with his growing consciousness. Here was the Prime Minister respectful but compulsive, able to

threaten, to browbeat, to dictate terms; but he himself had no counter means to extract from that minister on what terms he was consenting to do these things or what price he was paying to get them done. How constitutionally was he to obtain knowledge of anything? And still, piling up the accusation, the voice of Max went on.

"I presume," said he, "that quite lately a list of Jubilee honors has been submitted to you for approval. What does your approval mean? Is a single one of them your own selection? Do you know what the majority of them are for?"

The King shook his head. "Mostly they are political," said he. "The Government has the right; I have no call to interfere. Isn't it perhaps better that I should not interfere?"

"It may be arguable, sir, that the uncomfortably high position to which we are born cuts us off from the more strenuously fermenting issues of the political game, and from the malignities and hypocrisies of that party system of which, as a nation, we pretend to be so proud, and are secretly so much ashamed. It may be well that some single authority should stand removed from and above party, if in the hands of that authority there is also left power of sentence and dismissal, power also to withhold unmerited reward. But that power you are no longer expected to exercise,—it lies like a china nest-egg never to be hatched, but only to promote the laying of other eggs.

"Yet while your prerogatives have been thus diminished, the claim that you shall act with judicial impartiality has increased, and has become a fetter. To oppose any course of ministerial action to-day is by implication to ally yourself with the other side. You are in the position of a judge whose directions the jury has authority to ignore, and from whose hands all power of imposing a penalty has practically been withdrawn. And these changes have been thrust upon the monarchy by the will, not of the people, but of that class or section which in the evolution of our political system happened at the time to be the ruling one. At one period it was the Church, at another the army, at another the landlord or the capitalist; it was never that latent force lying in the future, that peace-loving, industrial democracy which to-day we are still striving to hold back from its aim. These ruling powers of the past have now concentrated on the Cabinet as their last line of defense; and so at the present day it is the Cabinet which has the largest control not only of patronage (much of it corruptly applied), but of certain penalizing devices by which monetary pressure can be brought upon those who thwart its will. By its practical usurpation of the Crown's right to decree a general election, and by its control of the party funds, from which parliamentary candidates are subsidized and assisted to the poll, it is able to hold over the heads of its supporters a financial threat to which very few can remain indifferent. And this is how our so-called popular chamber is manipulated and run. The power of the purse (I speak now of the moneys voted for public service) lies almost entirely in the hands of those who themselves have the largest monetary interest for keeping away from their constituencies and maintaining their leaders in power; and as a consequence the Ministry's evasion of all regulations and safeguards, its increasing seizure of parliamentary time, its postponement of finance to a date in each session when the legislature's energies are exhausted, have become more and more corrupt in character. Why, the very minister whose duty it is to see that members are constant in their voting and their attendance is the one with whom lies, if not the distribution of patronage, at least its recommendation. He is the go-between, and they know it. How likely, then, are the rank and file to throw their Government out of office when the immediate result will be not only to transfer these bribes to the hands of their political opponents but to inflict upon themselves the cost of a contested election which privately they cannot afford, and to face which they are accordingly obliged to go, cap in hand, to the very men they have voted from power, but who still have absolute control of the party organization and its funds?"

Here Max stopped to take breath.

IV

"But can you suggest any other way?" questioned the King. "Surely we must have party?"

"I have no reason to suggest it," answered his son, "it stands written in history. Under our more ancient Constitution the House of Laity came pledged from its electorate to criticise, and to control (by the giving or withholding of supply) the acts of a separate and administratively independent body. Now Government is carried on by an administrative body, which, though nominally dependent, has at its back a majority of the elected pledged *not* to criticise. And the difference between the two systems is as the difference between darkness and light. That body is now forcing the monarchy also into the same non-critical attitude, or at least is securing that the criticism shall be impotent of result. And I have the right, sir, to ask what are you doing to-day to preserve for me the powers which you inherited?"

"To tell you the truth, my son," answered the King, "it is only lately that I have begun trying to find out what those powers are. It seems a strange confession to make after twenty-five years; but it is true. When I came to the throne, at a moment of great political changes, I was entirely uninstructed and quite naturally I made mistakes, letting things go when I was told to. From that false position successive ministries have never allowed me to escape; they have kept me (I have only just found it out) as uninstructed as they possibly could. They burden me with routine work, they busy my hands while starving my brain. One of their little ways—done on the score of relieving me of unnecessary trouble—has been to submit in large batches at intervals important documents requiring my assent, smuggling them in under cover of others. And when I find it out,

they plead unavoidable delay and urgency, as though it were quite an exception. But I tell you it has been going on, oh, dear me, yes, for a long time now; and the General has known of it as well as any of them! The other day I made one of my secretaries go through the entries, and I find that in the last year I signed sixty Acts of Parliament and about fifteen hundred other State documents, besides mere commissions, titles, diplomas, and all that sort of thing, and I tell you that I haven't a ghost of a notion of what more than a dozen were about! They don't give me time to digest anything; and you are quite right, it's a system!"

"Well," said his son, "at least they don't treat you much worse than they do the people's representatives. It has become their regular plan now to bring in six bills all rolled into one, in a form far too big and complicated ever to be properly discussed. They insert a lot of unnecessary contentiousness at the beginning, and all the really administrative part—the machinery which provides them with political handles throughout the country, and which they call the non-contentious part—at the end; and then—on the score of it being non-contentious, and because by the time they get to it the mind of the legislature is exhausted—then they shut it down with the closure. One result is that we have laws on the statute-book which don't even make grammar. Only last session the Minister of Education got a bill sent up to the Spiritual Chamber with three split infinitives in it."

"What is a split infinitive?" inquired his Majesty.

"Merely a grammatical error for which in your day school-boys used to be whipped. You were not. It's important, because when lawyers get on to the interpretation of the law, loose syntax gives them their opportunity; they make fortunes out of the grammatical errors of Parliament. And, of course, it was a lawyer who drew up this bill."

"Do you mean that some one paid him to put in the split infinitives?" inquired the King anxiously.

"That was quite unnecessary; the thing paid for itself; good drafting is never to the legal interest. But what I wanted to say was this: here, in a House of educated men dealing with education, nobody troubled to correct the grammar of the thing. That to my mind stands out as a moral portent of the first magnitude. The Bishops quite rightly sent it back again, but for the wrong reason. Their reason was pure blind obscurantism; if they had returned it because of its split infinitives and its slovenly drafting, and requested that it should be put into decent Jingalese so that they might pretend to understand it they would have had all the enlightened educationalists in the country with them. As it was they were against them. It is curious how the Spiritual Chamber always seeks its popularity among the fools instead of the wise. It treats democracy like a dog with a bad name, and yet it is to the dog's tail that it pins its faith: and so it wags with the tail."

The King was not happy at hearing the Bishops so abused; and now a word had fallen from his son's lips which enabled him to change the subject to a point which more immediately concerned him.

"Max," said he, "answer me truly, I don't want flattery. Do you think that *I* am popular?"

The young man viewed his father leniently, indulgently even; the worn, fussy, over-anxious face appealed to his sense of pity. "Oh, yes, I believe so," he said. "They think you are trying to do your best and all that sort of thing. You don't enthuse them as my grandfather used to do; but, then, he had the grand manner, and the grand way of speaking as if he were an oracle. You have put all that aside—except when you make speeches which have been written for you by your ministers. Well, decent people respect you for it; but it has its drawbacks; the crowd prefers the other thing occasionally;—it likes still to pretend, at moments of ceremony, that it believes in divine right and the hereditary principle, and so forth; and where it likes to pretend, the press and the Government are always ready to play into its hands. Yes; it's a mixture; you must attend sometimes to the unrealities,—then, with your real moments, you get your effect."

"Your grandfather," said the King, "never talked to me about anything. He didn't like the idea of being succeeded, hated to think of a time when affairs would have to go on without him. I fancy that he rather despised my mental capacity, or else thought that by just looking at him I should learn. So he never talked to me—not on these subjects I mean; and I am still not sure whether I ought to talk to you. I don't really know where State secrets begin and where they end, or whether I have the right to say anything of what goes on in Council to a single living soul. I wanted to consult the Archbishop the other day—merely to hear his statement of the case from his own side—but I was not allowed. I am the most solitary man in my kingdom; and am kept so, in order that I may remain powerless."

"As Charlotte would say," observed Max, "we haven't taught each other the business. And yet, isn't it strange? Here are we, a long-established firm ('limited, entire,' I suppose we should describe ourselves), existing upon the hereditary principle, and yet not allowed to extract any of its living values. As detached forces we succeed each other upon the throne, each in turn reduced in power and initiative by our official training and our inexperience. When shall we learn to organize our labor and combine like the rest of the world?"

"I think we are combining now," said the King.

"Yes," said Max, "I really believe we are—'John Jingalo and Son'—how nice and commercial that sounds!"

"I only hope the Prime Minister won't hear of it."

"I hope he will," said Max.

CHAPTER VI

OF THINGS NOT EXPECTED

I

"Charlotte!" cried the King, aghast, "what on earth is the meaning of this?"

"What is it, papa?" inquired the Princess innocently.

His Majesty shook at her the paper he had just been reading. "You have promised a hundred pounds donation to the Anti-vivisection Society! Here it is in large headlines: 'The Princess Royal supports the Anti-vivisectionists!'"

"Well, so I do."

"But you mustn't," said her mother.

Princess Charlotte made a face—rather a pretty one.

"I can't help having my opinions, mamma."

"Then you mustn't express them—not publicly."

"If I am not to express them," argued the Princess, "why do you send me into public at all? Isn't laying foundation-stones and opening bazaars a public expression of opinion? Don't I go because you approve of them?"

"That is a very different matter," said her mother. "Good objects like those no one can possibly object to."

"But I think anti-vivisection a good object."

"I don't care what you think," said her father, "you are perfectly free to think as you like. What I want to know is—who do you suppose is going to pay that hundred pounds?"

"You are, papa." She smiled on him sweetly.

"Indeed, your father will do nothing of the sort!" interposed the Queen, while the King was still opening his mouth in wonder at the suggestion.

"If he will only make me an allowance, he needn't," said Charlotte; and while her parents were giving weight to that pronouncement she went on.

"I am going to promise a hundred pounds to every deserving charity you send me to; and if you leave off sending me, I shall write and offer it. It will be in all the papers—it will become the recognized thing—people will begin to look for it,—me and my hundred pounds. And as soon as it is the recognized thing, you know quite well, papa, that you will have to pay."

"Why do you disapprove of vivisection?" inquired her father, finding this frontal attack unmanageable.

"Just a fellow-feeling, I suppose, through being myself a victim. Oh, I don't say there's any torture involved, but now and again mamma gives me an anesthetic, and when I wake up I find something has been done that I don't like—something vital taken off me."

"Nonsense!" said the Queen, "I never do anything of the kind."

But this statement corresponded so startlingly to his Majesty's own experience that he began to pay closer attention.

"When have I done it?" demanded the Queen.

"The last time was when you sent me to spend three weeks with Aunt Sophie in order to develop a taste for foreign missions. It didn't succeed. And when I came back you had changed my suite of rooms without asking me; and I was done out of my balcony!"

"I found her," the Queen explained, "going down by the balcony in the early morning, while the gardeners were still about, to gather flowers."

"I didn't talk to the gardeners."

"You went out when I told you not to."

"You see!" appealed Charlotte, "she does vivisect me. Last time Aunt Sophie was the anesthetic: sometimes it's even worse. You don't hear of these things, papa, because I don't often complain;

but there they are. And mamma is so pleased with herself about it—that's what tries me!"

"Charlotte," said her father, "that's not pretty—that's not respectful."

"No, but it's true."

The Queen attempted a diversion. "Why do you want an allowance? I give you pocket-money, and you get all the dresses you need."

"I get a great many more," admitted Charlotte; "but I don't get one that I really like."

"That shows your want of taste."

"Of course, I haven't your taste, mamma, you can't expect it; and what's too good for me doesn't suit me."

But this obliquity of speech missed its point, for of her own taste the Queen had no doubt whatever.

"But, my dear child," interposed the King, "do try to be reasonable! Whatever allowance we made you, you couldn't go on giving a hundred pounds to every charity. You'd have all the benevolent societies in the kingdom flocking about you; life wouldn't be worth living."

"Oh, I know that, papa," said the Princess, "I'm not charitable in the least. I'm only doing it to bring pressure on you; I haven't any other reason whatever."

At this brazen avowal the Queen gasped; but his Majesty became more sympathetic.

"I wanted," she went on, "to do it as nicely and respectably as possible, and I thought to give you away in charity was better than gambling or anything of that sort. Not that I haven't been tempted; for you know, papa, I could quite easily lose you a hundred pounds at every tea-party I go to. But now, if I'm asked to a bridge-table, all I can say is, 'Papa won't make me an allowance, so I can't play for money.'"

"Surely you don't say that!" cried the Queen in horror.

"No," answered the Princess slyly, "but I can say it. And, of course, I shall have to say it to the charities and the anti-vivisectionists if papa doesn't pay up. There'll be headlines about that, too," she added reflectively. "You see, I am in the business now that I've begun helping at sales."

The King got up from his seat, and began to pace the room. For the first time he had discovered in his daughter's character a resemblance to Max, and much as he was beginning to love certain mental values which his son possessed, it rather frightened him to see them cropping up in his daughter.

"Charlotte," he said, in a tone of affectionate appeal, "when have I ever denied you anything that was right and reasonable?"

"Never, dearest papa, never!" said his daughter. "And I'm sure you are not going to begin now. It's too late," she added mischievously.

Yes. It was too late. The King knew it. He had known it from the moment the discussion started. Even the Queen was beginning to know it. Charlotte, sweet, smiling, and determined, held them in the hollow of her hand. Newspaper headlines, if properly manipulated, will defeat in its own domestic circle any monarchy that is now existing.

So the long and short of it was that the King promised Charlotte her allowance; and the Queen sat by and heard, and did not object. And as the Princess passed out to follow her own avocations, whatever they might be, she gave each of her parents the nicest kiss imaginable, thanking them quite humbly for that which they had been powerless to withhold.

The King looked enviously on that bright presence as it flitted away, calm, wilful, and self-possessed; and much he wished that he could conduct his own affairs with the same gay insouciance, and emerge with as much success. Max might be able to manage it, but not he.

The Queen's voice broke in on his deliberations.

"Jack," said she, "we must get her married."

It was her Majesty's remedy for that new portent, the revolting daughter. And there and then she started to discuss ways, means, and dates for bringing the wished-for affair to a head. The dear lady was already exuberantly hopeful. A carefully selected portrait of the Hereditary Prince of Schnapps-Wasser now stood on the central table of her boudoir, and only two days ago she had spied Charlotte looking at it. A fine, adventurous figure, it stood out prominently from all the uniformed splendors surrounding it. "Who is this person in fancy costume?" Charlotte had asked, and the Queen, alive in certain fundamental instincts, had cleverly informed her that it represented one who had been driven by his musical taste to a three years' wandering in the wilderness, and who, though still sadly under a cloud, was now obliged to return to his princely duties. Charlotte did not know, as she looked with amused pity on that sunburnt visage of adventurous youth, that she was gazing on the remedy for her own ailments, nor did she or any one else guess to what surprising results the attempted application of that remedy would lead.

It was quite sufficient for the Queen's gentle lines of diplomacy that Charlotte now knew who he

was, that he was presently returning to Europe, and would, on his way or soon after, present himself at the Court of Jingalo. In another quarter her Majesty was less contented, she had not yet found any one good enough for Max; and as the quest added greatly to her daily correspondence, she felt it as a burden and an anxiety, for she did not want to hear of another case of morals.

II

To the King, on the other hand, Max had become a very real and positive relief. The "Max habit" had grown and flourished exceedingly; and as this history deals largely with the mental developments of King John of Jingalo we must follow him to his hours of training and set down their record wherever we can find room for them.

His Majesty told Max of the Charlotte affair that same evening.

Max chuckled. "So Charlotte is not to disapprove of vivisection?" he commented. "How very characteristic that is of the way we have to avoid giving countenance to any movement or change of opinion till it is backed by a majority."

"Is it not our duty to avoid all matters of controversy?"

"If it is we do not act on it. There is much controversy to-day on the subject of vivisection; but that did not prevent you quite recently from bestowing a high mark of favor on its foremost exponent. What you dare not do is bestow a similar mark on one who is opposed to it. Your favors go only to those who represent a majority; minorities are carefully shut away from your ken. You are taught to believe that they are unimportant. Whereas the exact opposite is the truth; for it is always the minorities who have made history and brought about reform."

"Are you still quoting your book at me?" inquired the King.

"I am always quoting it," said Max, "or, rather, I am composing it. Yes; this is the beginning of a chapter which I am about to put together with your help and assistance."

"Make it a mild one!" entreated his father.

"I assure you, sir, that throughout I am understating the case. We have already discussed the question of a monarch's relation to the political and religious controversies of his day. Is he any more truly in contact with the national life on its intellectual side? The only occasion on which I meet at your Court any representatives of literature, or art, is when popular authors and dramatists have come among a miscellaneous gathering of pork butchers, politicians, stock-brokers, bankers, and other prosperous tradesmen to receive at your hands the now somewhat tarnished honor of knighthood. They come in a strange garb hired for the occasion, and they go again. How much have we ever troubled ourselves about the value and quality of their work, or as to why they were selected? Are they the men, think you, who will be reckoned a hundred years hence the artistic and literary giants of their day? I doubt if anybody thinks so except themselves. Is it not rather because by winning contemporary popularity they represent the trade values of their profession, something that can be made to pay, and which, when it does pay, invites public recognition and encouragement? We give small pensions to the specially deserving, I know, to save them from the extremes of poverty and ourselves from disgrace; but to those pensions do we ever add a title? No; titles are the reward of prosperity."

"But, my dear Max," said the King, "how do you expect me to judge of such things? I should only make mistakes."

"You have for your advisers," answered his son, "some twenty men drawn from all departments of life; ought you not to be able to rely on them? When you came to the throne one of our greatest literary men lay bed-ridden, dying quietly of old age. He had received a State pension, for he was poor; he was a giant whose work was done; and he had never in all his life been to Court. Did it occur to you to go and pay this old man reverence? Did it occur to any of your advisers to suggest that you should? Yet in the past kings have done these things, and history has remembered to praise them for doing it. No, sir, we are out of touch with all the really great things that are going on around us in literature and art; for whenever anything new is really great it inevitably divides opinion; and wherever opinion is sharply or at all evenly divided we are out of place. You are under exactly the same orders as those which Charlotte received from my mother—you must not go down into the garden while the gardeners are actually at work; only when they have finished you may come and gather the results. You are run by the State merely to give prestige to the established order, and you must not support things that are not already popular."

"You are mistaken, Max," said his father, in despondent protest. "Nothing whatever prevents me; only I haven't anything to take hold of."

"Yet I have been credibly informed," replied Max, "that when you go to see a so-called problem play of the more intellectual kind, it is arranged for you to go in Lent, for the simple reason that during that period of fasting it is against etiquette for the papers to make any announcement of the fact."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the King.

"You were not aware of it, then? Yet it is all arranged for you by the Comptroller-General. Tell him that you wish to go and see *The Gaudy Girl* presently, on its five hundredth performance, and

he will raise no difficulty whatever. Tell him that you intend to be present at a performance of *Law and Order*, a piece that has managed to hold on through thirty performances in spite of the many interests opposed to it, and difficulties will immediately occur to him. Your going would revive the fortunes of that play; and as it makes a very direct attack upon our present judicial system, you can have nothing to do with it. Yet I hear that as a result of its production modifications in our criminal procedure have already been discussed."

"Max," said the King, "you are quite unfair! Our last State performance was of a play that attacked the very things you are always talking about, money-lending, gambling, commercial greed, and the rest of it; and it was the Comptroller-General himself who selected it."

"There!" exulted Max, "now you have given me an example, and I will tell you what happened. You had as your guest the king of a country possessing a real school of drama which is affecting the whole of the European stage. What did we do in his honor and for the honor of our dramatic literature? We chose a play of sixty years ago—our worst period—a piece of clever bombastic fustian mildewed with age; and we chose it merely because it contained the greatest possible number of small 'effective' parts in which 'star' actors could strut across the stage, make their bow before an extremely distinguished audience, and speak their lines in the ears of royalty as the accepted representatives of modern drama. And how they did speak them! How they clung to their entries and exits, how they gassed, and gagged, and threw in fresh 'business' to extend the all too brief time of their appearing; and what an abysmally boring performance the whole thing was! Over a score of these leading actors and actresses had appeared in a similar gala performance on the occasion of your coronation, twenty-five years ago. Most of them are now living on their past reputations, but they have become established; and so that woeful exhibition of utterly used-up material was royalty's public recognition of drama in this country! There, then, you have our connection with art! What good do you suppose we do by countenancing performances like that? We are merely employed to flatter the popular choice and to fatten out the drama in its most commercial connection. All that was done to suit the managers. It gave a pleasant little fillip to the star-system on which most of our theaters are now run; every theater contributed its quota and secured its proportion of reward."

"I was under the impression that they all gave their services."

"Just as you gave yours. You were all busily engaged in making each other popular, and in maintaining your prestige; and you were all very well paid for your trouble."

"But what else do you expect me to do?" exclaimed the unhappy monarch irritably. "All this destructive criticism of yours is so easy; but what does it lead to? Nothing!"

"Revolution," declared Max, "peaceful, bloodless revolution! Whenever any matter is submitted to you over which you have control and a deciding voice, do the unexpected, and you will nearly always be right! That is the biggest revolution in this unwritten Constitution of ours that I can suggest. Do it, and then watch the results."

"But, for instance, do what?"

"Well, go for a beginning to the very plays your Comptroller refrains from recommending or tries to dissuade you from. Oh, you won't come upon anything shocking; quite the reverse. That play, *The Gaudy Girl*, which I spoke of just now, is about to be revived in a new form—with additions. No doubt it will draw enormously; and as a fortune has been spent on it you would do a popular thing by attending the first performance. It is a risky and indecent piece, but no one will object, on that score, to its receiving the royal patronage."

"How possibly can it be indecent," protested the King, "when it has already run for five hundred nights at one of our leading theaters?"

Max smiled. "Father," he said, "in all your life have you ever once been in a crowd—formed part of it, I mean? Well, then, how can you tell? I have. There is plenty of indecency in a Jingalese crowd—especially indecent suggestion; and it is crowds the theaters have to cater for."

"Still, they have the Censor to reckon with."

"The Censor!" exclaimed Max. "Have you ever asked the Lord Functionary, who controls him, to show you the text of the plays he passes?—or gone further in order to compare them with those he does not pass? Till you have, you know nothing about the Censor's protective powers. He merely protects the existing order of things, like yourself; whatever is paying and popular it becomes his duty to countenance. Well, all that is strictly within your own department, for the supervision of the morals of the stage is still a royal prerogative outside parliamentary control. And I tell you this—that if you were to begin exercising your prerogative conscientiously you would get into more intimate touch with the popular will than would suit the calculations of your ministers. As for the Lord Functionary, he would probably resign. He might be glad of the excuse. Just now there is a considerable row on, and he finds himself in hot water. When you see him you had better ask him about it; and as he is technically the keeper of your conscience you really have a concern in the matter. What has he been doing? Oh, merely drawing the usual invidious distinction between adultery treated seriously and adultery treated as a joke. Under this latter and more popular form it is now occupying with success half the theaters in Jingalo. And if you want to see the deeps open, and understand what they contain,—well, there you have your cue: follow it! Only do that, and you will light such a candle—Ah! now I am quoting from English history; and as I am only concerned with that of Jingalo—I perceive that my present chapter has

come to an end. May I take another cigar?"

III

All this time the King had sat cautiously imbibing the stimulus of his son's words. They sent a curious glow through his system; for they touched on the very point which was now daily engaging his thoughts—how, in connection with his own ministerial problem, to do the thing which Brasshay did not expect without thereby involving the prestige of the monarchy in ruin. He looked at his son, so full of self-confidence, so easy and unconcerned in the opinions of others, and very greatly he envied him.

"Max," he said slowly, "you are a very dangerous character."

And Max was flattered, as your man of words and not of deeds always is flattered when the attributes which belong by rights to his betters are ascribed to him.

Nevertheless, in this instance the epithet was well earned, for these secret potations of Max were having their effect upon the King's brain; they reproduced in facsimile the cerebral excitement which had followed upon his fall, and touching the same spot kindled in him a curious mental ardor, which sent him to his Council a different person altogether, one whom his ministers were finding it difficult to recognize and still more difficult to reconcile to their plans. Only when the effects had died down towards the end of each day did the King become himself again. Obstreperous till noon, he would then quiet down by degrees till, at six o'clock, his spirits had reached a strange nadir of depression. Had Brasshay only caught him then, in that period of reaction, he would have found him unformidable as of old; but Brasshay did not know. And then, night after night, came Max with his tangle of words and whipped him into fresh revolt.

He still carried the memory of that last conversation—that chapter which Max had composed into the echoing cavities of his brain—when he next encountered the Lord Functionary.

Certain questions of court etiquette and procedure having been disposed of: "By the way," said his Majesty, "I was told yesterday that you are being criticised—in the play department, I mean."

The Lord Functionary had been spending sleepless nights in a scrambling attempt to acquire a literary education; but his own royal master was the last person to whom he would give himself away; so he only smiled with that air of deference and self-complacency which all court officials know how to combine. "I have heard rumors of it, sir," he replied, in a tone of easy detachment.

"Who are making the complaints?"

"Certain members of Parliament, I believe. They have constituents to satisfy; and under a democracy, of course, autocrats can never do right."

"Are you the autocrat?" inquired the King.

"At your Majesty's disposal," returned the Lord Functionary with a bow.

"Then you are not responsible to Parliament?"

The Lord Functionary smiled, with a touch of disdain. "I should not be holding office if I were," said he.

"Then you are not under the Prime Minister, either?"

"No more than your Majesty," said the magnificent one blandly. "In the order of precedence I am, indeed, several degrees above him. It is, of course, a Government appointment; but while I hold it my discretionary powers are unlimited."

This seemed a very great person, and the King looked on him with envy.

"To whom, then, are you actually responsible?" he inquired.

"To you, sir."

"To me alone?"

"My official title would make it indecent for me to consult any one but your Majesty."

"Ah, yes, you keep my conscience for me, don't you?" said the King. Max was right, then; here was something still left for him to do. He addressed himself to the previous question.

"What exactly is the trouble?"

"A self-advertising minority, sir, has been persistently submitting plays which it was quite out of the question to pass. Being annoyed, they are now attacking the plays which *have* passed."

"I should like," said the King, "to see some of these plays; to be in touch, if I may so put it, with my own conscience. Would you be good enough to send me three of those you have not passed, and three of the others which are now being attacked. I would like also," he added, "to see *The Gaudy Girl* in its new version."

The Lord Functionary raised his pale eyebrows.

"May I be allowed to know why, sir?" he inquired.

"Just curiosity," said the King. "I thought of going to see it, and I wanted first to be sure that there was nothing—nothing, you know—"

The Lord Functionary's face became wreathed in smiles.

"Why, certainly, sir. I will see that a copy is sent to your Majesty at once. It is, of course, work of a very light and frivolous kind—but it is popular and it does no harm." Then, as by an after-thought, the official countenance grew grave. "Was her Majesty also intending to be present?" he inquired.

The King, discerning that a negative was invited, gave the required assurance. "As a matter of fact," said he, "it was the Prince who asked me to go—suggested it, that is to say." And immediately official confidence was restored, for to the Lord Functionary Max as a reformer was still unknown, while his taste for frivolous diversion was more easily assumed. And so in due course a copy of the play reached the King's hands.

Perhaps it was through mere inadvertence that the other six did not accompany it. The King noted the omission; but when once he started to read the single play which had reached him he forgot all about the others, for he found that his hands were full. At one stroke of the scythe he had reaped a plentiful harvest.

Here was a play on the very eve of production, reeking with the sniggering improprieties which the keeper of the King's conscience had permitted to become the popular vogue. Suggestions and innuendoes to which the ordinary theater-going public had now grown accustomed, struck his inexperienced Majesty as bold and glaring novelties. The mere cheapness of the wit he passed uncritically by, but the indecencies were so bare and bald that even he, with all his innocence and inexperience, could not fail to understand them. The explanation, of course, was easy; this new version of an old and accepted play had received the official sanction through oversight. Providence had sent him to the rescue in the nick of time; and delighted to have found something which his hand really could do, he took up the blue pencil and set to work.

Snatches of dialogue, half lines of lyric—especially when it came to the last verse—here, there, and everywhere he scored them through with a ruthless hand; and with a renewed sense of usefulness, and a conscience well at ease, he returned the much deleted copy to the Lord Functionary.

Before long that official visited him, presenting a grave countenance. He was by no means enthusiastic over the royal handiwork; the production was about to take place; the play had already practically been licensed—silence up to so late a moment having virtually given consent; and—most difficult point of all—these things which the King was now ruling out had almost all of them been in the previously accepted version.

"Then I suppose," said his Majesty, "that nobody really reads the plays?"

"Oh, yes, sir, they are always read," corrected the Lord Functionary, "but our readers have necessarily to go upon certain lines. They are guided by precedent and custom, which it would be highly inadvisable to disturb."

So he pleaded that the *status quo ante* might prevail; and yet, man to man, he could not defend what the King showed him.

"Could you," inquired his Majesty indignantly, "read such things aloud to your own family? Could you comfortably, if I called upon you to do so, read them aloud to me?"

"The drama," explained the Lord Functionary, "is so different from anything else; it has not to observe the same conventions. In light comedy, especially, these things really do not count. People never trouble to think about them—they mean nothing."

"In that case," said the King, "no one will mind your cutting them out."

The Lord Functionary seemed not so sure,—his assurance went, in fact, in quite an opposite direction. He pleaded hard for the trade interests which he stood to represent. The play was in an advanced state of rehearsal; many thousands had been spent upon it; and, seeing that it was but a revival, no doubt about the new version passing had existed anywhere.

But to all his entreaties the King remained adamant.

"In this matter," said he, "you have to consult my conscience."

The point could not be further argued.

"It is very unfortunate," said the Lord Functionary in acid tones.

"I must insist," said his Majesty, "that you see to these omissions being made." And the Lord Functionary bowed his pained body over the hand which the King graciously extended.

"Your Majesty must be obeyed," said he.

It was a phrase that the King very seldom heard; it gave him a taste of power.

"Max," said he to his son, upon their next meeting, "I have been doing as you advised. And I do believe you are right."

"What did I advise?" inquired Max, assuming forgetfulness.

"That I should 'do a bust' was, I think, your expression; something unexpected."

"And how have you done it?"

"I have censored *The Gaudy Girl*."

Max whistled.

IV

The sibilations of that whistle were prophetic of atmospheric disturbance to come. In a week the storm broke.

The King happened to be away, paying a visit of complimentary inspection to frontier fortresses and heard nothing about it. But on his return Max came to him charged with tidings.

He stood over his father and looked at him with a note of satirical approval in his eye, which did not inspire the King with any confidence.

"Sir, do you know what you have done?"

His Majesty denied the impeachment. "I haven't done anything. Not yet."

"You have revolutionized the drama! Even now, at this very moment, the great heart of Jingalo is throbbing from pushed stalls to gallery stair-rail. Because of you *The Gaudy Girl* is playing its third night to an accompaniment of hilarious riot and uproar such as have not been known in our dramatic world since the public was forced to give up its right to free sittings."

The King was startled; some alarm crept into his voice. "Do you mean that I have done harm?"

"Not in the least; no, quite the reverse. But you have certainly doubled the play's fortune. The run is going to be tremendous."

His Majesty felt flattered; had he not reason? For this surely must mean that he had rightly interpreted the public taste, and that what the popular will really wanted was a pure and carefully expurgated drama.

But Max speedily undeceived him.

"What happened," said he, "is this. The Lord Functionary obeyed your orders, and less than a week ago word went to the management, happily engaged with its finishing touches to the play. Your share in the business, of course, was not mentioned; your cuttings had become the official act of the department. What that meant, you can perhaps hardly conceive. Here was popular musical comedy censored as it had never been censored before. Time was too short for negotiation; besides the whole thing was too drastic for half measures to be of any avail. Dullness, decorum, and disaster stared the management in the face. Suddenly perceiving that its strength lay in submission, it accepted the situation like a man, and in all Jingalo to-day, no hand is raised for the censorship. You have given it the *coup de grâce*—it will have to go; for you have enlisted the managers—the trade interest against it."

"I?" exclaimed the King.

"Its moral position, as I told you," went on his son, "had recently been shaken by the attacks of the intellectuals—a camp, however, so much in the minority that hitherto its hostility has not been seriously regarded. But now Jingalese drama, as a great commercial enterprise, an interest wherein hundreds of thousands of pounds are yearly invested, has been touched on the raw, and Jingalese drama has risen and shaken itself in wrath. The press, which depends on it for advertisement, has, of course, rushed to its assistance, and condemnation of the censorship now figures in stupendous headlines on all the posters. Leading articles, interviews, and indignation meetings are the order of the day; I wonder you can have missed them."

"I have been busy with other things," explained the King.

"Well, if you are not too busy to-night, I invite you to come and see your handiwork."

"I can hardly do that," said the King, "under the circumstances—if, as you say, there is disturbance going on."

"It is disturbance of a very unanimous kind," said the Prince; "the public is enjoying itself thoroughly. Did I not the other day advise you to reach out a fearless hand to democracy? Well, you have done so; and the dear, good beast has given you its paw."

"I don't think I can go."

"Then you will never understand. But, indeed, sir, I think that you should. I have taken a box under a private name and we can go unobserved; the play has already begun; and if you will keep to the back no one will know that you are there. Besides it is Lent, a season when the incognito of your visits becomes a recognized rule. Do you think you are justified in missing so vivid an interpretation of the popular will?"

The King's hesitation ended. "I suppose I must go on doing the unexpected," said he, "now that I

have once begun."

"You could not make a better rule," said Max.

And so, quite unexpectedly, and to the extreme bewilderment of a detective force taken suddenly by surprise, the King found himself in the theater where performance number three of *The Gaudy Girl* was going on.

The house was packed, tumultuous, and excited. As he entered the sheltering gloom of the box his Majesty recognized the words of the play, remembered, too, that a censored passage lay close ahead. It came.

A sumptuously bosomed figure stepped into the limelight and sang. In the second verse she threw out a rhyme that seemed to clamor for its pair—threw it out as the angler throws out his fly for the fish that is sure to rise. The King held his breath as the blue-penciled passage drew near. The voice quavered and broke; singer and orchestra stopped dead. The house roared. "Go on!" cried encouraging voices from gallery and pit. "Go on! Go on!" And the singer thus emboldened, and accompanied by one small piping flute, a ridiculous starveling of sound after all the blare that had preceded it, sang with a modest and deprecating air a line which fell very flat indeed—a mere nothing tagged from a nursery rhyme—obviously an importation. Stalls, pit, and gallery rocked and shouted with laughter. "Try again!" roared the crowd; and with small, frightened mimminy-pimminy tones the singer tried again. This time a snippet from the national anthem served her turn—but it was no good, the audience would have none of it; in a crescendo of uproarious demand it invited her to try again. Patient as a cat waiting for its chin to be stroked the conductor sat with extended baton. Down to the footlights she minced, delicately as Agag to the downfall of his hopes, thrust out an impudent face, and waggled it. "I can't! You know I can't!" she remonstrated in a shrill cockney wail. And straight on the anticipated word the house roared its applause. Off pranced the singer to her encore on cavorting toes, down flourished the conductor's baton in a crash of chords, and away to its fortunes sailed the play, more than ever a confirmed triumph in the popular favor.

"You see," whispered Max in the parental ear, "you see now what you have done."

"It's a perfect scandal!" exclaimed the King, much put out, for he could not but feel that he was being mocked.

"Not at all," said Max. "All the scandal has been eliminated."

"It ought to be put a stop to!"

"A law doesn't exist."

"This holding authority up to ridicule!"

"When authority has made itself absurd, could you wish it a better fate? To my mind, you have done a noble work."

"But this," said the King, "this is not what I intended at all."

Max smiled indulgently.

"So much the better," said he. "The unexpected is just as good for you, sir, as for others."

Then the King drew back again into his corner, to prepare himself for fresh shocks as the play went on.

The managerial device was simple, effective, and very easy to understand; and from start to finish it was played with little variation, though with ever-increasing success. Here and there, where for a long period no blue-penciled passage occurred, imaginary censorings had been inserted merely to whip curiosity, with the result that the atmosphere of innuendo and suggestion was greatly increased. Indeed, the whole piece reeked of it, new situations had been evolved which the play had not previously contained; and a stimulated audience sat metaphorically with its eye to an eye-hole from which the key had been accommodatingly withdrawn.

And then came the sensation of the evening.

Whether in the course of the performance the King had become so interested as to forget his caution, or whether between the acts too much light had penetrated the box at the back of which he had been sitting, it is now impossible to say. Just before the fall of the curtain he and the Prince got up and left, and traversing the still empty corridors unrecognized, returned to their carriage and the care of the anxiously waiting detectives. But somehow, as the play ended, a whisper got round from the stage and, like an electric flash, through the whole theater the fact of the royal visit became known.

Instantly, with cheer upon cheer, the audience broke into loyal and excited plaudits. The orchestra struck up the national anthem. Hands down popular opinion had won; for in this matter of "the new censorship" as it was called—in this attack upon the interests and liberties, not of a foolish minority, but of a sacred and freedom-loving public, Jingo and its monarch had joined forces, and bureaucracy was dethroned.

The next day it was on all the posters; newspapers celebrated the event in flaring headlines—"THE

KING CONDEMNNS THE CENSOR!" And before the week was over, the Lord Functionary had resigned his high office on grounds of health.

The King was much puzzled over the whole affair; and his advisers did their best to keep him mystified. Both the Prime Minister and the late Lord Functionary himself earnestly assured him that his conscientious interference had had nothing whatever to do with the latter's retirement; for at this juncture it would never have done for the monarch to suppose that he held so much power over the official lives of his ministers. Quite by accident he had come in contact with that great unknown quantity "the popular will," and, without in the least realizing what he was about, had first touched it on the raw, and then tickled it; and the "dear good beast," as Max phrased it, recognizing only the second part of his performance, had turned rapturously round and given him its paw.

The King had his scruples; he did not like thus to win popularity by accident, and yet, the more he looked into it, the more he saw this for a fact, that by committing a popular *faux pas* he had secured far more consideration from his ministers than by doing the correct thing.

John of Jingalo did not yet understand that his correctness of conduct was one of the chief factors relied on by a bureaucratic government for reducing him to political insignificance. He had yet to learn that a submissive and well-behaved monarchy was essential to its very existence.

CHAPTER VII

THE OLD ORDER

I

All this, the reader will remember, had taken place in Lent. The King had done something which according to the accepted canons was quite incorrect; he had been to a frivolous but popular play during the penitential season and it had got into the papers. But instead of being blamed for it he had gained enormously in popularity.

Now had his Majesty been merely aiming for this, as politicians aim for it (deserting principles for party, or party when its principles become a hindrance), he might have followed the lead given him by the people of Jingalo, and, recognizing that the Church Calendar had lost its hold upon the popular imagination, might thenceforward have secularized his conduct, and paved the way in Court circles for that separation of Church and State which his ministers were itching to bring about but did not yet dare.

But John of Jingalo had all the defects which belong to a conscientious character. He had not gone to the play for amusement, it had not amused him, he did not at all agree with the public's attitude towards it, and yet he was reaping the benefit; he was standing in a glow of popular approbation under false pretenses; and the more he thought about it the less he liked it—it gave him a bad conscience.

Yet, in spite of that, he could not but recognize that he had touched power; under a misapprehension the people had responded to him as never before; he had done what they regarded as a sporting thing in sending unpopular officialdom to the right-about; it was even possible that among theatrical circles when the exploit was talked of he was now known as "good old King Jack." All the same he did not feel that he had been good, and he wanted to make amends.

The highly colored conversations of Max, the talk about whipping-boys and Court jesters, and all those ancient divinities which had once hedged a King but were now mere barbed wire entanglements, had turned his attention toward certain medieval institutions the practice of which had lapsed, or had become reduced to a mere shadow of their former selves. And with a conscience ill at ease over the damage he had wrought to a season which he still regarded with a certain conventional reverence, his thoughts lighted upon Maundy Thursday, then less than a fortnight off.

He remembered having once watched from a private gallery in the royal chapel the impoverished ceremony which now did shabby duty for the old symbol of kingly humility and service. He had seen the vicarious sacrifice of silver pennies doled out by his almoners to a duplicated dozen of old men and women who had lost their better days in circumstances of the utmost respectability; and shocked at the poverty of the display he had been glad to learn that a more Christian gift of tea, clothes, snuff, and tobacco was added outside the Church door when the ceremony was over. But even so its ritual had not attracted him: it had lost its human values, and seemed to have been kept in life merely for archeological association.

Now on looking into the matter once more (the *Encyclopedia Appendica* gave him the required information) he was astonished to find that the old foot-washing ceremony of Holy Thursday was originally the chief function at which every year the Knights of the Holy Thorn were bound, if not unavoidably prevented, to appear and do service. Nay, when he turned to it, he found that it still stood so expressed in the Charter of the Order, and that each new Knight, upon admission

thereto, swore solemnly to keep and observe the same—so help him God—faithfully unto his life's end.

If he had had any doubt before, the terms of that oath, which he himself had taken—probably without understanding it since it had been read to him in Latin—were sufficient to decide him. Without loss of time he sent word by his Comptroller-General to the Prime Minister that he intended in the following week to revive the full ceremony and to recall the Knights of the Thorn to the duties they had so long neglected. The ceremony, as of old, was to take place in public at noon outside the doors of the metropolitan cathedral.

"The King is going off his head," said the Comptroller-General by way of preface to the announcement with which he was charged; and the Prime Minister was ready to agree with him when he heard it.

"Preposterous!" he exclaimed.

"He has got chapter and verse for it," lamented the Comptroller-General.

"Can't you persuade him that it's a forgery?"

"It's in the oath," replied the other; "you yourself have taken it."

"Oh, yes, the form; but the ceremony—the accompanying service, I mean—was cut out of the Church Prayers at the time of the Reformation. It has become illegal."

"Inside a church, yes; not outside. At least that is his contention. Oh, I have already done my best! He got quite excited when I ventured to discuss the matter,—asked me if I understood the nature of an oath, and whether I had ever taken one."

"Is he much set on it?"

"I have had to write to the Archbishop."

"What do you think he'll say about it?"

"Ordinarily he would oppose it as savoring of Rome; under present circumstances my impression is that he will welcome it as giving the Church an added importance. You don't like it?"

"Of course, I don't."

"Then you had better see the King yourself. You have only a week left; and he has already begun looking at the weather-glass and wondering if it's going to be fine."

"That's just like him!" said the Prime Minister.

"Yes, and he's getting more like himself every day. My part is not a sinecure, I can assure you."

Accordingly the Prime Minister went over to the Palace and saw the King. Informed as to what line of argument had already been tried and failed, he approached the matter from a new standpoint: he spoke in the name of Protestantism. This ceremony had only survived in Catholic countries; in Jingo the Reformation had killed it, and it had gone with graven images, the invocation of saints, and the worship of relics to the limbo of forgotten foolishnesses.

"The Charter of the Holy Thorn has not gone," said the King.

"Nor has your Majesty's title to the Crown of Jerusalem; but who ever thinks of enforcing it?"

"I am willing to resign it any day," replied his Majesty. "I can also, if you think it advisable, abolish the Charter of the Holy Thorn and the Knighthood with it. But I don't think the Knights would quite like that."

"If it comes to a question of liking," said the Prime Minister, "I do not think they will quite like washing beggars' feet in public."

"Oh, I do the washing and the drying," said the King. "They only carry the basins and put on the boots. I have looked up the whole ceremony; it's very impressive. You have only to read it and you will become converted: it is so symbolical."

The Prime Minister objected that though in its origin the ceremony might have had symbolic meaning and beauty, its performance now-a-days would be looked upon as a mere form and superstition, contrary to the spirit of the age.

This reminded the King of a certain "maxim."

"The spirit of the age," he quoted, "is the industrious collection of bric-à-brac—good, bad, and indifferent: this one happens to be good, and has been neglected. And talk about forms and ceremonies!—what can be more formal, superstitious, and idiotic than the procession of Court functionaries and King's Musketeers (with the Dean of the Chapels Royal carrying a candle) which, on every ninth of November—the anniversary of the Bed-Chamber Plot—comes to look under my bed to see whether assassins are not lurking there? On one occasion I was laid up with influenza, but I had to submit to that form and superstition because it had become traditional. And all the papers gloated over the fact, and called it 'a link in the chain of monarchy,' though as a matter of fact the conspiracy in question had been got up against that branch of the succession which we afterwards succeeded in dethroning. All the personal inconvenience I had to endure on

that occasion was as nothing in comparison to the satisfaction which the public got out of it. No, Mr. Prime Minister, if you are going to do away with things because they are forms and superstitions, then I institute the Order of the New Broom, and I make you the first Knight of it; and the rest of your life will have to be spent in sweeping." ("And oh!" thought the King, feeling himself in form, "I only wish Max could hear me now!")

Failing in his personal appeal the Prime Minister turned on the Departments, and the King fought them one by one: the Board of Works which wanted to have the roads up; the Clerk of the Weather who said that a depression unsuitable for open-air gatherings was crossing Europe; the Chief of the Police who said that so large an open space was bad for a crowd; the Minister of Public Worship who wished everything to be done—if done at all—indoors and unobtrusively, by preference in one of the Royal Chapels: the effect, he said, would be more reverent. And when all these in turn had failed, the Prime Minister asked for a Council on the subject, and was told it was none of the Council's business.

"I am Grand Master in my own Order," said the King, "and you, as one of its Knights, in any matter pertaining to the Order owe me your unquestioning obedience."

That was unanswerable; he did. And so the King got his way.

II

The revival proved a tremendous success, although it did not reproduce the medieval conditions in their entirety.

The twelve old women were left out; it was not considered decent for the King to wash their feet in public and the Queen absolutely refused to do so. Instead they were invited to take tea at the Palace, and afterwards were all presented with foot-warmers.

In other directions also invidious distinctions were attempted, and a certain amount of controversy was raised. The Bishops made a scrambling and desultory fight for it that, as the steps of the Cathedral were to be used, all the washen beggars should be actual communicants of the Established Church; but the demand died down when it was found that such a breed did not exist; and a rush of undesirables to the altar in order to qualify could hardly be welcomed as a tolerable solution.

There was a tussle, too, among the Knights of the Thorn as to how many towel-bearers there should be (the towels remaining perquisites afterwards); but the King and his Master of Ceremonies—the delighted Max helping them—were able to settle matters to the general satisfaction, and, by allowing a towel to each foot and twelve cakes of soap, provided a sufficient number of souvenirs to go round.

And so the day came, the weather was fine, and the attendant crowd rapturous. The King and his Knights, in nodding plumes and robes of thorn-stamped velvet, made the show of their lives; organ music rolled from within, bands played without, and massed choirs sang like angels from the parapets and galleries above the west doors of the Cathedral.

And when their ordeal by water was over, then the twelve beggars—all of guaranteed good character although not actual communicants—received with delight each a new pair of shoes and stockings, which they were able to sell at fabulous prices, immediately the ceremony was over, to collectors of curiosities, chiefly Americans. And that same night twelve very happy beggars, all more or less drunk, made their appearance on the largest music-hall stage in the metropolis, where the whole scene was elaborately re-enacted in facsimile, followed by a cinematograph record of the actual event.

The King was a little disappointed at these modern developments, they seemed to take away from the penitential character of the performance, and rather to weaken than restore in the public conscience the due observance of Lent.

Max, however, assured his father that he had made the greatest hit of his life; his personal popularity had been greatly enhanced. What pleased him better was that in feeling for the public pulse, by the light of his own conscience, he had proved that he was right and the Prime Minister wrong.

Yet, though ostensibly in the wrong, the Prime Minister had really been right. He had reckoned that the move might prove a popular one—for the monarchy; and though a dull average of popularity for that ancient institution suited his book for the present, he did not wish, in view of certain eventualities, to see it greatly increased, and still less did he wish the King to discover that by acting in opposition to his ministers he might gain in popular esteem.

As one of the Knights of the Thorn he himself had been obliged to attend the ceremony; and by some it was noticed that, as he stood holding a golden ewer in his two hands, he looked very cross. But all the other Knights of the Thorn—those who had towels and soap as perquisites—enjoyed themselves thoroughly and were already looking forward to a repetition of the performance next year. Even in their case, then, the King had proved to be right,—forms and ceremonies accompanied by fine clothes were still popular things; the Order of the New Broom would not be yet.

III

And then, with blare of trumpet and clash of drum, with troopings and marchings, with garlanded streets and miles upon miles of cheering people, came the great Jubilee festivities. Silver was the note of the decorations—silver in the midst of green spring. The Queen herself wore silver gowns and bonnets of heliotrope, and the King a uniform wherein silver braid formed the becoming substitute for gold. Corporations came carrying silver caskets; army pensioners and school-children, fêted at the public expense, received white metal mementoes which, while new at any rate, looked as real as any coin of the realm. For a whole week the piebald ponies really worked for their living, grumbling loudly between whiles in their stalls; for a whole week "loyalty" was the note on which the press harped its seraphic praises of monarchy and nation; and for a whole week people actually did drop politics, reduce their hours of labor, and run about enjoying themselves.

The poet laureate published an ode for the occasion; he remarked on the passing of time, said that the King had acquired wisdom and understanding, but that the Queen did not look a day older; said that the trees were green on that day twenty-five years ago when the King ascended the throne, and that they were green still; said that cows ate grass then, and were eating it now without any decrease of appetite; said, in fact, that nothing sweet, reasonable, or beautiful had really changed at all, and that the monarchy, taking its constitutional day by day, was the national expression of that unchangeableness.

The day after the appearance of his poem he received that titular recognition for lack of which a poet laureate must feel that he has lived in vain. And then, all this unchangeableness of things having been thus ratified and sealed with the official seal, the King, his ministers, and the whole political world advanced to the edge of changes such as the country had not seen the like of for the last hundred years.

CHAPTER VIII

PACE-MAKING IN POLITICS

I

Inside the Council, meanwhile, curious and uncomfortable things had been happening. The King's talkativeness had steadily increased; no one could reduce him to reason.

"He reminds me," said one of his ministers irritably, "of the school-boy's story of the tea-kettle which discovered locomotion. Off boiled the lid: 'Why!' cries the observant inventor, 'put that upon wheels and it would go!' So he put it upon wheels and it went. He is exactly like that tea-kettle on wheels, miraculously set going without any inside reason to guide him! In my opinion before long there will have to be a regency." He tapped his skull meaningly, but in the wrong place: he should have tapped the back of it.

"What? Prince Max!" ejaculated his auditor; "I should hardly call that a remedy!"

"Nothing can be worse," declared the other, "than things as they are!"

In that he made a mistake; they were going to be much worse. The King's new mental activities were only just getting into their stride; and from a very unexpected quarter he was about to receive aid.

At the Council board, where the King had now found voice, one alone sat humorously interested and amused—the Minister of Fine Arts. He was not an artist himself—had he been he would never have been allowed to occupy that position; he was a Professor of History, Teller by name, and more than any of his fellow-ministers he studied life. Nothing interested him so much as the human machine; and to see this rather humdrum monarch suddenly developing into a tea-kettle on wheels, as his colleague had so happily phrased it, filled him with profound interest and an underlying sympathy.

Dimly the King had become aware that somewhere in that body of adroit shufflers who were supposed to minister to his constitutional needs the confused cry of his conscience had evoked an echo. He saw under a high bald forehead kindly eyes watching him; and it was a kindly voice charged with considerateness which one day, over a matter in which time pressed, begged for a further interview.

International exhibitions had become the vogue; and in putting on its peace paint for the Jubilee, Jingalo had determined to maintain its prestige among the nations by holding a conversazione of the Arts. In matters of that sort his Majesty had no particular taste; but in an art exhibition it was his duty to be interested. If need be he would open it, and would say of art and of its relations to the national life anything that the commissioners required of him. He would also lend any pictures from the royal collection which did not leave too obvious a gap upon the walls. All this was a mere matter of course; but the occasion being important—one of the great events indeed of the Jubilee festivities—it was expected of him that he should give a rather special consideration to the final plans.

Though wearied by the circumlocutions of his Council which had lasted throughout the morning, he named an hour, and at six o'clock received his minister in private audience.

The Professor began to explain matters in the usual official tone, but before long perceived that the attention paid to him was merely formal. The King sat depressed, listless, and cold. This renewal of the official routine found him mentally fagged out; it was evident that his thoughts were elsewhere.

Making the matter as short as he could in decency, the Professor folded his memoranda and returned them to his pocket.

Recalled to himself by the ensuing silence the King spoke—

"I really don't know enough about it to say anything," he murmured. "No doubt you have arranged everything for the best." But still he remained seated as though the interview were not ended, and the minister had perforce to remain seated also.

"I fear that to-day we have wearied your Majesty," he said at last to fill up the pause. "The Council is sometimes very trying."

The King lifted forlorn eyes in a sort of gratitude upon this, the least troublesome of all his ministers. "You, at least," he answered, "have not to reproach yourself, for I noticed that you did not speak."

"I was listening," answered the Professor; "I was much struck by your Majesty's line of argument."

"You agreed?"

"I cannot separate myself from my colleagues," returned the minister cautiously; "but I recognized the strength of your Majesty's case. On its own premises, if well put, it becomes unanswerable."

"I hardly thought that I had put it well." The King's voice showed despondency.

"To be perfectly frank, sir," said the Professor, tempering the amiable twinkle of his gaze with a deferential movement of the head, "you did not. The historical argument requires a knowledge of history."

"You remind me of another of my deficiencies, Professor."

"It is shared, your Majesty, by nearly the whole of the Cabinet. Very few of us, sir, knew anything more of it than you; and those of us who did were intent on concealing our knowledge."

"Very considerate, I am sure."

"Not at all, sir: our knowledge would have given strength to your argument."

The King sat up a little at this confirmation of his suspicions. "Do you mean, then, that my ministers make it a part of their duty to conceal from me the truth?"

"Some truths, sir," submitted the Professor, "may have undue weight given to them, which it then becomes a councilor's duty to correct. After all, history is only history; if at times we cannot break from it we shall never get anywhere."

"Yet all to-day," protested the King, "history, precedent, and the Constitution are the words that have been drummed into my ears, for all the world as though I, and not you, were the preacher of subversive doctrine."

"Your Majesty will remember that in this country we have had three successful revolutions against the Constitution. In one the monarchy was successful, in two the people."

"Is that said as a warning?"

"By no means, sir; merely to show that precedents lie on both sides like dry bones in the wilderness. But it requires the power of a prophet to call those dry bones to life. At present I see no prophet in Israel."

"Yet every member of the Government prophesies."

"I noticed, sir, that you did not. Never once did you pretend to know what the future would bring forth: you only pointed to the past, deducing therefrom your duty, as you conceived it, to the Constitution. Conditionally that commanded my respect."

"Surely," said the King, "I am bound, whatever the conditions, to hold sacred a trust which has been committed to me by inheritance."

The Professor bowed. "With your Majesty," he assented, "the hereditary principle must naturally be strong: it is implanted in your blood. I have no such impulse in mine. My father was born in a workhouse."

"That is very remarkable," said the King. "To have attained to your present position, your life must have been full of interest and adventure."

"Full of interest—yes. Adventure—no. Very plodding, very uneventful, almost monotonous apart

from mental happenings. Now and then an unsought stroke of fortune. That is all."

"How did you ever get into the Cabinet?" inquired the King, in a tone that betrayed a sort of puzzled respect.

"Merely to fill a gap in a ministry whose days were numbered. Then an unexpected turn of the wheel kept us in power, and I remained. It was an inglorious arrival, but I found I could be of use: a sort of connecting line between incompatibles. I am not unpopular with my colleagues, and left alone in my department, I go my own way."

"And what is your way?" inquired the King, still searching for guidance.

"I do nearly everything as my permanent officials tell me, recognizing that while ministers come and go permanent officials remain and acquire experience from both sides. On the other hand, I use my own discretion in the hastening or suspension of the superannuation clause; I promote by results and not by seniority. My department, in consequence, is the most efficient in the whole Civil Service, and I have less work to do than any other minister. Thus I am left with more leisure and energy to devote to the consideration of policy, and affairs in general."

"And do you approve," inquired the King, "of the present policy?"

The minister paused. "I think the pace is about right," he said reflectively.

"The pace?"

"Yes; government to-day, sir, is largely a matter of pace, the actual measures do not so much matter. Modern democracy is making for something of which we are all really—the governing classes I mean—profoundly apprehensive: and the problem now is to let it come about without actual catastrophe. When I used the word 'pace,' I had a certain graphic illustration in my mind—an incident I once heard from the manager of a railway—the recountal of which will show your Majesty what I mean.

"A passenger train, before arriving at the head of a long, evenly graded declivity, had taken on three or four good trucks heavily laden. Owing to some carelessness in the coupling these wagons became detached on the very crest of the descent, and falling to the rear came almost to a halt. Not quite: sluggishly at first they began to move, and gathering impetus from sheer weight followed in the track of the proceeding train. Halfway down the declivity, the engine-driver discovered his loss and the danger that threatened him. Looking back, he saw in the distance the wagons weighted by the labor of men's hands drawing nearer with a speed that grew ever more formidable. His one chance, therefore, of avoiding a catastrophe was to put on pace in the hope of arriving at more level conditions before the impact took place. Yet he must still limit himself to a speed which enabled the train to keep to the rails on a certain sharp curve which lay ahead. That was the problem which the engine-driver set himself to solve: up to a certain point the more pace he could allow the greater his chance of safety, beyond that point a new danger arising out of pace lay ahead of him."

The minister paused.

"What happened?" inquired the King.

"He negotiated the curve with success, and had got so far ahead that when the wagons finally overtook him their impetus had been diminished by the more level conditions of the road, and the impact was but slight. Only the guard's van was smashed, and the guard himself rather badly disabled."

"And what happened afterwards to the guard and the engine-driver?" inquired his Majesty, much interested.

"The guard was pensioned for life: the engine-driver was promoted."

"And whose fault was it—the guard's?"

"Well, not exactly," replied the Professor; "the careless coupling was done by others, but the guard had the right, which he had not chosen to exercise, to refuse to accompany any train in which his van was not put last—so as to embrace the whole combination. At least, he had the technical right."

"I suppose he did not wish to give trouble," said the King meditatively.

"Very likely; for, of course, had he exercised his right the whole train would have been delayed by the extra shunting."

"And he in consequence a less acceptable servant to his employers."

"No one could have blamed him."

"Not for excess of caution?" queried the King. "Did you not yourself say that on those lines government would become impossible? You have to run your railway system, it seems, with a certain risk of accidents—otherwise you would never be up to time."

"That is so," said the Professor. "In every political crisis it is pace more than principle that I find one has to consider. If it is solved in such and such a way, our pace will be so and so, and the question—will it take us safely over the curve? If it is solved in another way so that the pace

slackens, those wagons in the rear may be down upon us."

"And the guard, whose control, while the train makes its running, is but nominal, is then the first to suffer!" He saw himself in the man's place. "Poor glow-worm!" he cried, "he may change the green light in his tail to red—or was it red to begin with? but it is no use! Those proletarian forces descending upon him from the rear are quite blind in their purpose: it is merely dead weight and impetus that send them along." And then he pulled up abruptly, astonished to find that he was talking in Max's manner. Was it so catching?

"Not wholly blind, sir," said the Professor; "believe me, they mean well—mainly to themselves, no doubt: that is only human nature. Every body in the community, whether energized or sluggish, has some weight attached to it; and the more that bodies can agree to combine the greater is their weight politically. One has to recognize that consensus of opinion carries with it a certain moral as well as physical force. Out of that springs the evolution of our governing system."

"Only I," said the King, "in the nature of things have always to stand alone."

"Sir, you have all history!" said the Professor.

"Which, as you have reminded me, I do not know."

"May I inquire, sir, whether you have a real wish to know?"

"Why, naturally!" exclaimed the King. Whereupon the Professor, as though laying aside something of his officialdom, took up an easier attitude and addressed himself to the point.

"It would, I think, sir, be quite compatible with my duty to my colleagues were I to send your Majesty a few volumes of constitutional history with certain appropriate passages marked. It would interest me very greatly to hear the argument developed on the lines you have already laid down. The history I would venture to send is a thoroughly reliable and standard authority, written by an eminent jurist to whose words we later historians still bow. As I said, sir, *pace* is today the thing which really matters; beyond a given pace we, certainly, are not able to go. Luckily for our present plans there is no source from which any forcing of the pace seems probable. I do not think this or any other ministry dare attempt it. Speaking for ourselves any increase of the present pace would, I conceive, become a grave embarrassment. If, therefore, your Majesty has been apprehensive of our adopting any increase of speed, I think you may be reassured. After the constitutional readjustment our pace is scarcely likely to grow dangerous."

The Professor had managed to indicate that these were—if so it might be allowed—his last words. The King rose.

"I shall be much obliged, Professor," said he, "if you will lend me the books you have mentioned. When may I look for them?"

"Sir," said the Professor, in smooth matter-of-fact tones, "it so happens that I have them with me in my carriage. I will have them conveyed to your Majesty immediately."

And therewith he bowed over the King's hand and departed.

II

Left to himself the King stood considering for a while. He was pleased, but puzzled. What had this man, wise and kindly, been telling him? What advice were his words intended to convey? He was quite sure now that this minister had come and talked to him for a purpose: and what he had mainly talked about was "pace." It was "pace" that mattered. That was all very well, but with pace he himself had nothing to do—except in a negative sort of way. He, occupying the position of guard with brakes to his hand but no steam-power, could only cause delay; he had no means, and no object that he could see, for accelerating matters. Besides, had not the Professor said that in his estimation the pace was about right? All his efforts to secure delay would—he was already aware of it—fail of their effect; ministerial resignation threatening, he would have to give in. The alternative, the mad alternative that had for a moment occurred to him—no, it would not do! The results might be too tremendous, might lead even to revolution and a republic, and so he gave the problem up. And then a pile of six large volumes "with Professor Teller's humble duty" was brought in and set down before him; and John of Jingalo sat down to read the marked passages.

It was a reading that for its completion extended over many days.

What first attracted his attention, however, was a chronological series of plates, showing the map of Europe in all its political changes from the tenth to the twentieth century. This was, in fact, a key to the whole work, for as the author rightly pointed out in his opening paragraph the history of Europe was inextricably bound up in the history of Jingalo, and the one could not be properly studied without some understanding of the other.

These maps of Europe he turned from century to century; and there, as he marked their many variations, there always to be recognized was Jingalo occupying its proud historical position—so often challenged, yet still on the whole unchanged. It had found room to live and breathe, not by its own strength, but by a careful adjustment of the political balance between others, and a neutralization artfully and sometimes treacherously contrived of greater forces than its own. It had for neighbors two great military states and several smaller ones; and had at some time or another been at war with nearly all of them. Often—generally in fact—it had come out of those

wars more vanquished than victorious (though Jingalese school-books carefully concealed the fact): it had lost, for proof, more territory than any other power in the world except England, and yet, like England, cherished the curious conviction that it had won all the really important battles and dictated each peace upon its own terms. Having been wholesomely driven out of France in the fifteenth century, it had captured and carried away with it as trophy the order of the White Feather, with its proud motto, "J'y suis, j'y reste." In the eighteenth century it had adopted by compulsion from Germany an alteration in its law of regal inheritance, and had marked its adhesion to the new formula by the institution of the order of the Dachshund, with the obsequious motto, "Das ist mir ganz Wurst," popularly mistranslated by the wags of the day into, "That is the worst for me." Beaten by the infidel in the Crusades it had joined thenceforth to its regalia the holy crown of Jerusalem; and having thrown over the Papacy at the time of the Reformation, had added to its armorial bearings the Keys of St. Peter, and to its royal claims and titles the Kingship of Rome. A frequent and murderous deposition of its kings had but accentuated its devotion to the monarchic system: while its solemn confirmation of each fresh breach of continuity had stood to reaffirm its general belief in the hereditary principle, and in divine providence as controlled by Act of Parliament. The only other country in the world which had acted with such scrupulous inconsistency, unrepentant and unashamed, was England. It was no wonder, therefore, that in their history the two countries had much in common; and it must have been through sheer inadvertence, in view of their rival claims to be the constitutional pace-makers of Europe, that while they had often stood badly in the way of each other's interests they had never yet fallen to blows.

International politics, however, were not for the moment the King's chief concern, and he turned back from the pages of Europe to study in detail the constitutional history of his own country and the powers it still reserved for its kings.

While he pursued these studies, many things new and strange presented themselves to his gaze. There were, he discovered, powers of the Crown still extant, though lapsing through gradual desuetude, of which he had never dreamt, and as to the existence of which no one had made it his duty to inform him. Some of them had been in regular practice less than forty years ago; they were becoming obsolete merely because the advisers of the Crown wished it. Just as the House of the Laity was now falling more and more under the control of a Cabinet whose powers waxed as the other's waned, so the King himself was in the hands of those whose interests were to conceal from him the powers he possessed.

He came on a page where the right of royal initiative in Council had been thoughtfully underlined by the Professor; and he discovered with astonishment that a whole series of constitutional questions lay altogether outside the competence of ministers to deal with until they had been first formally submitted to the King himself. Under this heading he found that no financial proposal touching on Crown lands, or on grants to the royal family, could become a matter of ministerial discussion without his consent first given; no proposal to alter the royal line of succession or the oath taken by the King at his coronation; no change of definition in the articles or creed of the Established Church; no alienation of Church lands; no fresh institution of any rank, title, order, or degree, nor the abolition thereof; no alteration in the laws governing the right of the voteless to petition the King against the acts of his ministers; no subsidy or treaty of war, and no surrender, barter, or exchange to a foreign power of any part whatsoever of the King's dominions; no appointment to a foreign embassy; no elevation of a commoner to rank or title; no issue of royal patents; no free pardons for criminals, and no change in the composition of either of the two Houses of Parliament. All these things must be formally submitted to the will of the Crown before being entered as items of the ministerial policy.

"My word!" cried the King, perceiving for the first time how unconstitutionally that word had been set at naught. He could hardly believe his senses. Here under his nose, all these weeks *lèsè majesté* had been rampantly disporting itself; and he knew nothing of it! Possibly the Prime Minister knew nothing of it either; had not the Professor said that many of his colleagues were as ignorant of constitutional history as the sovereign himself? But some knew—some must know! And the King, who but a few hours before had believed himself the most helpless of emblems, a mere ornamental topknot to the constitutional edifice, now found himself armed with weapons of far-reaching precision that would enable him to carry war into the enemy's country. Metaphorically he clapped his wings and crowed. Yes, it was as though that weathercock, to which hitherto he had likened himself, that toy of chance, swung this way and that upon a pivot with no will of its own, had suddenly taken to itself life and wing and power, and quitting its stake had descended into the arena with beak and claw stiffened for the fray. That board of tormenting ministers was now in his power—for a time at any rate.

In his excitement he got upon his feet and trotted about the room, and pausing now and again he gazed ahead with a gloating eye on a whole series of ministerial councils to come. For this monarch, you must remember, had been departmentalized all his life, and to that extent dehumanized; and it was only in a departmental way that he recognized his opportunity. The power to strike which he now visualized came through no intellectual enlargement, no opening up of moral vistas, but only through the discovery that he had on his side a mass of red tape the existence of which he had not previously suspected. In similar trammels to those which had so long hampered and restricted his own movements it was now possible for him to entangle the goings of his ministers. A hundred and one things had been done which were not merely out of order but—oh, blessed word!—unconstitutional; and in consequence the poor dear man's mind was in a welter of delight. At last he had a weapon to his hand whose reach and mechanism he

could manipulate. "Oh, dear me, yes!" he said to himself, and said it several times.

When a character of childlike simplicity has got hold of a loaded gun, it has a natural instinct to let it off. The actual direction, and what the target is to be, are not so important as the delightful sense of hearing the gun go off,—of proving by actual demonstration that it really was a loaded and dangerous thing, capable of causing consternation. John of Jingalo was simple, and when he got up from his first solid reading of the Professor's volumes he felt that he was well primed; and his instinct was to let himself go, to spread himself, to attack his enemy with extended front so that they would not know where to have him. Half-a-dozen small tags of red tape gave him a far greater sense of resource and opportunity for aggression than any one good piece of measurable length capable of being well wound and knotted. His powers, such as they were, were largely imitative; and now for some weeks the wordy Max had been coaching him. The Professor had supplied him with the material, Max with the method for applying it; the Professor had given him his head, Max had given him his tongue. Looking forward to the exercise of his new-found powers he meant, in a word, to be voluble; and when in later chapters he becomes yet more surprising, let the reader remember that fortuitous crack at the back of his skull through which the windows of his head were open and his brain-pan a place of draughts wherein any winds of doctrine might blow. A word of opposition, a mere gust of excitement, were now quite enough to set him going, and once started he was very difficult to stop.

For much the same reason, having once started to prance up and down the carpet—that carpet so variegated and Maxian in its pattern—he found it very difficult to sit down again; and would not have done so had not the measured striking of the clock upon the chimney-piece reminded him that he was expecting a visit from Max. Then a curious change came over his deportment; he stood considering, glancing from the telltale volumes upon the table to the door through which he was presently expecting his son to enter. Then with a secretive look and a shake of the head, "Oh, dear me, no," he murmured very softly; and taking up the books he put them away in a drawer and locked it, and, when presently Max came in, said nothing of his new discovery, but sat docile and listened, while the other drew out the shining length of his vocabulary, making words sound like deeds.

Not for nothing was John of Jingalo the son of his father, not for nothing a descendant of kings who so far as they consciously achieved power had always held it possessively and exclusively, withholding the key from their heirs. Post obits were not popular in that royal House of Ganz-Wurst which for two hundred years had ruled over Jingalo.

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW ENDYMION

I

Readers who have hearts will remember that while these things were taking place in the political world, something of more intimate and personal concern had happened to Prince Max. That young man, whose head was so crowded with ideals for others, had discovered—or glimpsed, it would be more correct to say—an ideal of his own, in the shaping of which he had nothing whatever to do. Goddess-like she had descended upon him from skies in which previously he had held no faith at all; and even yet it was a tussle for his conscience to accept anything coming from that quarter as really divine. He was agnostic; he did not like the Church, and he rather despised that attitude of mind which accepted miracle as a directing power in human affairs, and looked to an unseen world for the inspirations of life. It was as though some modern Endymion gazing up at the round and prosaic surface of the moon, and refusing to admit that there entered into its composition anything even of so low a vitality as green cheese—it was as though such an one had seen the affirmed negation suddenly take to itself life and form, and disclose from afar a whole heaven of thoughts, beauties, and aspirations which he had not believed existent. And then, having seen that gracious form so well defined that it must for ever remain imprinted upon his consciousness, he had watched it steal from him into obscurity, wilfully concealing its whereabouts, though ever since the silver haze of that hidden presence had permeated his world.

Concealment and flight are, we know, the very arrows of love when directed with subtle intent against the hunter's heart in man; and they are scarcely less powerful to kindle his ardor when undirected and without purpose, or, as in this case, of a purpose wholly negative and without lure.

His lady had disappeared, because in very truth parting was her intent; and in haunting for a while the dark and crooked ways which her feet had blessed, he had but the poor satisfaction of knowing that he was depriving of her ministrations lives inconceivably more miserable than his own. That consciousness when it came touched him in a point of honor, and forced him to relinquish the quest; but there remained with him thenceforth a maddening sense that if, accepting his withdrawal, she had resumed her avocations, he now knew daily where she was, and had only to break with his scruples in order to find her.

They had met less than half-a-dozen times; and he, driven by his mental pugnacity to test so

unreasonable an apparition, had spared neither himself nor her. The sincerity of her faith had angered him, though anything else, had he detected it, would have destroyed his dream; and when he had scoffed she had not troubled to rebuke him, had only glanced at him amused, not with pity or condescension or kind Christian charity, but with a very friendly understanding and often with what seemed agreement. He was astonished to find that a rippling sense of humor could go hand in hand with a blind gift of faith, and to hear sayings as bold as his own uttered as though they were the merest common-sense. "Why yes, of course," she admitted, in answer to one of his tirades, "if you want envy, hatred, and uncharitableness in a concentrated form you will find them in the Church; that stands to reason." And when he inquired why, she answered, quite simply, "Because a bad Christian is Satan's best material."

Nor had she any illusions about that particular branch of the Church militant for which she labored; she regarded it rather as a half-baked body of territorials than a regular army equipped for the field. Still it served a purpose, gave useful occupation to many, and stood for the time being against unreasoning panic or callous desertion of duty; nor would she surrender its few poor healing virtues for any of the nostrums he sought to set in their place. "It does more than you with all your talking," she said quietly, and, as they passed by, took him into a mission church where he might see—a small corrugated iron hut, set down in the midst of slums. Under the scent of incense the smell of disinfectants was strong; near a stove sat a lay reader, and about her a dozen poor weary women plying needle and thread. Two or three of them held children at the breast; in a pen near by lay half-a-dozen others asleep. Over the stove was a large boiler supplying hot water to poor parishioners; away by a small side altar knelt a single figure in prayer. Brightly colored "stations of the Cross," and something upon the altar that looked like a large tea-cozy, before which burned a light, told how here the law was systematically broken, and that the "nonsense" inveighed against by the old Queen Regent had not yet been put down.

"That is the bit of Christianity I work for," she said as she led him out again, "a sort of mother-hen whose cluckings, scratchings, and incubations are run in a parish of five thousand half-starved people on less than £300 a year. Have you anything better to show?"

"I want revolution," he said.

"Choose your own time," she answered mildly. "Here every day we are facing a far worse thing."

"Making it endurable," he objected. "These people are patient because of you and your like."

"Impatience would only make it harder for them," she returned. "You can't argue with them; they haven't the brains."

"Not in working order, I admit."

"Meanwhile they have to live."

"And when you help them to that end—are they at all grateful?"

"A few; yes, that is one of the hardest things we have to bear,—we who are living stolen lives; for whether we will it or not our vitality comes from them; daily we drain it from their blood, and nothing we can do will stop it."

"Are you in need of money?"

"Always; but five million pounds given us to-morrow would not go to the root of this."

"What would?"

"Nothing but true worship."

"You worship an alibi," said Max.

"What nearer divinity has brought you here?" she inquired. And he, too conscious of the personal motive, forbore to explain.

At their fifth meeting she told him quite frankly that he was interfering with her work, that she could not have him accompanying her, waiting for her, picking her up as if by chance.

"If you want to do work you must find it for yourself; you will if you are sincere," she said in answer to his request that she would commission him.

"But may I not be your follower?" he pleaded, choosing the word for its double sense.

"Lay sisters don't have followers," she replied. "They don't go with the costume."

"Then why wear it? Will you turn away a disciple for a mere matter of dress?"

"My dress," she said, "is of more use and protection to me than anything you can do or than money can buy. You have politicians who say that society is built upon force. My dress is the work of women; thousands of lives have made it what it is, and it will take me safely into slums where no policeman dare go alone. When your politicians can come here in coats of a similar make, then they will have begun to solve the problems which they are so fond of talking about. Now, will you please to walk on the other side of the road?"

He took her hand, saying earnestly, "When are we to meet again?"

She shook her head at him, smiling. "Truthfully I haven't time for you," she said, "and I can't make promises."

And then, just for once—for it seemed his last chance—Max fell into sentiment.

"One I want you to make," he insisted.

"What is that?"

"That you will pray for me!"

"Now you are asking for luxuries," she smiled; "you don't believe in prayer. But I will." Then, nodding confidently, she added, "And it will do you good."

And then, as he still lingered, with quiet business-like demeanor she crossed the street and disappeared.

It was true that in thus seeking her intercession Max had asked for a luxury. He did not believe in prayer any more than he had ever done; but he did very much like the idea of being prayed for by the woman he loved. Once, for a brief moment, he had seen her kneel before an altar empty to him of meaning; and as he then watched the serene joy and beauty of her face had realized with a jealous envy how in an instant all thought of him had passed from her mind. So in asking her to pray for him he had merely sought to penetrate by subtlety the unbelievable world of her dreams. And then, even as he reveled in the vision, the odd thought occurred in what terms would he obtain introduction? Once, when for the repayment of a borrowed cab fare she had asked his name and address, he had told her who he was, and she had not believed him; had, indeed, herself tantalized him in return with an address as little probable as his own. If, therefore, she prayed for him in words how would they run, or, if in thought, what character would it assume? "That man," "that nice man," "that talkative man," "that person who called himself Prince Max," "the tall stranger," "the man whom I sent away," "the man who emptied my bucket," "the man who brought in the bed," "the man who waited for me at corners," "the man who wanted to be my follower." All these variant products of a brief acquaintance, though he dwelt on them as luxuries, failed to give him satisfaction, they formed a fretful and at times a tormenting accompaniment to his unapportioned days. At his hours of rising and setting the thought would insistently recur to him: "Now, perhaps even now, she is praying for me." And straightway he would return to the task of trying to realize the nature of her prayer and with what label she pigeoned him in the columbarium of her soul.

Whether or no it could be said that this was "doing him good," he had certainly begun to apprehend the power of prayer; that dove-like spirit with overshadowing wing had found means to ruffle very considerably the even current of his existence. Even had he wished to he could not get her out of his thoughts. Fantastic and prosaic statements of his identity kept leaping into his mind. "The man with his trousers turned up" was one of them. Yes, he had done that in order to make their immaculate cut less noticeable; he had dressed as badly as he knew how, and yet—she might possibly be praying for him as "that well-dressed person." It was a ghastly thought, and he had brought all this purgatory upon himself merely by asking for a "luxury," for something in which he did not really believe. And then, at the thought of her deep sincerity, his mind revolted from all these bywords and subterfuges. "Oh!" he cried to himself, "she knows, she knows, she must know!"

And, of course, as a matter of fact she did. She knew that she had a lover, a young man who had nicknamed himself,—clever and handsome, evidently with time and money to spare, probably of some social position, and with an undeniable likeness to a Prince whom she only knew by his photographs. And for this young man, who on five or six separate occasions had so hindered her with his attentions, she had a deep and impulsive liking which, as it ran counter to her plan of life, she did not choose to encourage.

But if Max could only have known he would have been comforted: she prayed for him every day, morning and night, and taking him at his word, though not in the least believing it, it was as "my Prince Max" that she begged heaven to look after him. And when in her orisons that nymph remembered him she smiled a little more than was her usual wont—for truly he had amused her. In spite of dignified air and polished speeches and a belief in himself that never failed, she had discerned the stripling character of his soul; and greatly would Max have been surprised, and perhaps also a little shocked, could he have learned that he ranked in her mental affections as "rather a dear boy"; for it is woman's way to claim the privilege of a motherly regard without any seniority in age, and with a good deal of feeling that mere "mothering" will not satisfy.

II

Another lady, as to whose movements and plans Prince Max could not yet be indifferent, had meanwhile returned home, and he had been to see her.

The Countess Hilda von Schweniger had sent word that she had serious things to say to him; it was only thus that he received notice of her return. She had a tender weakness for talking seriously at intervals, for the periodic workings of her conscience were ever open to view. But whatever special seriousness of purpose was now perturbing her, this matter-of-fact return to the roof they shared seemed to give it contradiction,—did not at least suggest that any immediate breach in their present relations was to be looked for from her.

And so Max went to the interview wondering how he was going to behave over this new fact which had so largely entered his life; whether he was going to "behave well"—whether indeed it were possible at the same time to behave well and be honest and above-board. He was, in fact, up against the usual difficulty of the man who, having run domesticity on a temporary basis, has discovered grounds for wishing to exchange it for a more permanent one. And as he put his latch-key into the garden door of the quiet tree-shadowed house which for five years he had regarded as his second home, he uttered to himself a kind of a prayer that his relations with a good woman would not now have to be less honest than formerly.

It was evident that she had been on the lookout for him; a French-window in a creeper-covered veranda opened as he advanced, and gracious domesticity stood smiling in the green-lighted shade.

She laid her hands on his shoulders as she kissed him. "Well, mon Prince," she said, "are you glad to see me again?"

He took in all the pleasant and familiar appeal of her face before answering. "Yes, I am," he said, "very."

"That's true—really true?"

And at that challenge he gave a funny little duck of the head, known to her of old, and kissed her again.

She turned quietly and walked away into the room.

"I came back just to hear you say that," she murmured in a moved tone, and stood waiting with her face away from him.

The heart of Max was wonderfully relieved: gladdened also, for as he looked at her he realized that she remained dear to him. With her old simple directness she had let him know what was in her mind, and by her clean brevity of speech had already, in this their first moment together, saved him from the trap into which he might have fallen. Not that the ordinary male temptation to let her resolution stand as cover to his own did not for a moment occur to him. Nay, he could even suggest good reasons; for was not this the kindest reward now left within his power—to let her think that the wish was not shared—to show even a little resentment and reproach? Max, the satirical critic of human nature, could see clearly the attractiveness of such a course,—knew himself a sufficiently good actor to play the game at least well enough to satisfy his artistic taste. But he did not yield to the temptation; had he done so he would have formed a more moral emblem for the edification of my readers than I am now able to provide; and they must face instead the uncomfortable fact that out of this long and immoral liaison between a prince and his mistress certain moral values held good, and that being in need of a sincere friend and confidante he found it in the woman from whom he was about to separate.

He crossed to her side, and taking her hand kissed it with more frequency and fervor than he had kissed her face, and heard then her breath struggling against tears. She reached up her other hand and began stroking his head; and it is life's truth that these two still found attraction and comfort the one in the other.

"Then you are going back again?" whispered Max.

She nodded, saying "yes" afterwards on a catch of breath.

"When?"

She looked at him wistfully. "I didn't want to go—yet."

"Why should you?"

"It wouldn't worry you?"

"Not at all. Very much the reverse."

"I should want to see you, though."

Max smiled. "You mean, then, shouldn't *I* worry *you*—"

"I suppose I did mean that," she said, viewing him speculatively.

Then Max was tempted to show off. "Who gave me my first lesson in not worrying?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," she admitted, "but then, you see, I was yours. It has to be different now."

"I want it to be different too," he said; and as by that statement he wished to convey important inner meanings, he spoke solemnly.

She looked at him radiant, half incredulous—the pious wish shining in her eyes. "Oh, Max!" she cried amazed, "has it come to you too, then? Has Our Lady—"

But Max shook his head. "Your Lady is not my lady," he gently confessed.

"Oh!" her voice went down into the deeps of despondency. "Oh! is that what you mean?"

A solemn nod from Max informed her that it was.

"You always told me that it would happen some day."

"I hoped I should have gone."

"And I," said Max, "am glad that you have not. Selfish of me, isn't it?" Then he kissed her hand again.

She began a homely mopping of her face.

"Then it doesn't matter how I look now?" she commented, and paused. "How am I looking?"

"Well, and as dear as ever," he replied.

"That isn't what I wanted to know. You know it isn't."

"You are looking," he said, "just two evening moons older than when I saw you last."

"What have evening moons got to do with it?"

"They are your most becoming time."

She took the compliment with a sigh and a smile; then with an air of resignation sat down.

"Who is she?" she asked abruptly.

"I haven't a ghost of a notion. We haven't been properly introduced, she hasn't encouraged me, I haven't said a word, and I'm not to go near her any more."

This for a start. The Countess Hilda became deeply interested, and very much alarmed. "Then it isn't a princess?" she cried in consternation, "she isn't royalty?"

"Oh, no," said Max, "far from it. She is what you call a sister of mercy, and 'sister'—horrible word—is the only thing I am allowed to call her; she is a sealed casket without a handle."

"Oh, Max," cried his Countess, "don't do it, don't do it; it's wickedness! *I* didn't matter; but this—oh, Max, you don't know what a grief and disappointment you'll be to me if you—"

"Dearly beloved friend," interrupted Max, "do give me credit for a morality not very greatly inferior to your own. After all I am your pupil."

"But you can't *marry* her?" cried the Countess.

"Saving your presence, I mean to," asseverated Max.

"You! Where will the Crown go?"

"Charlotte will have three inches taken out of its rim and will fit it far better than I should—that is if anybody is so foolish as to object to my marrying where I please."

"Then in Heaven's name," cried the Countess, "why in all these years haven't you married me?"

Max smiled; they were back into easy relations once more. This was the lady with whom he had never spent a dull day.

"I did not wish to give you the pain of refusing me," said he. "Had I asked you you would have said that I was far too young to know my mind, and that you yourself were too old."

"Yes, I should," she admitted, "but you should have left me to say it." Then she returned to her original bewilderment. "But, my dear boy, if she is a sister of mercy she has taken vows."

"Oh, no, we don't do that in Jingalo. No Jingalese Church-woman may throw away her whole life on so problematical a benefit as a religious vow of celibacy. She may lease herself to Heaven for a given number of years, but freeholds are not allowed."

"And you call that a Church!" cried the Countess.

"Well," said the Prince, "I think that in this case she has got hold of a scientific point worth keeping. Seven years ago I was not, science tells me, the man that I am now; and seven years hence I shall be yet another. What right has my past man to bind this present 'me' in which he has no particle of a share?" And Max, having taken wing on a fresh notion, was off into flight when the Countess brought him to earth.

"And how long is your next lease going to be?" she inquired dryly, "if seven years is all you can answer for?"

"My next man will renew," said Max confidently.

"Sisters of mercy don't accept tenants on those terms," she retorted. And then, seeing that he looked at her with a benevolent eye, added, "Oh, yes, I know that I did, but that isn't the sort of mercy you are looking for now. You'll find, Max, that you need a religion in order to become a freeholder. Mark my word! There! I couldn't have put it better than that! And now as I've come to the end of *my* lease I had better retire and see to dilapidations and repairs."

She left him smiling; but he knew, in spite of her brave face and jesting words, that there was still trouble of spirit to be gone through; and the repairs took some time.

III

In the days that followed, Max, now launched on his new quest, had as good and sympathetic a listener as lover could wish. And while the Countess thus paid penance and endured some purgatory for a five years' breach with her own conscience, she found compensations, as all sensibly good women will when they come on logical results of their own making. In our conventional readiness to reverence the mother and disown the mistress as social institutions, we are apt to ignore, as though the mere suggestion were an impiety, the fact that in their instincts and affections they have often much in common. It is one of Nature's kindest and wisest economies; yet perhaps the woman treasures it secretly, because it is a quality of her sex scarcely to be understood by men. The chaste mistress sleeps in many a mother's breast, ready to welcome in her grown son that touch of the lover which nestles before it takes flight; and in the unchaste mistress, homely of heart, there is often more of the mother than her paramour has wit to discern.

The Countess Hilda, cut off from home ties and kindred in the very prime of her maternal powers, had cast her eye on Max with a possessive but with no predatory aim; and in her own illicit fashion, contrary to some qualms of conscience and the strict dictates of her creed, had mothered him through the dangerous years with as little damage to his moral fiber as seemed reasonably possible. And now, not without some pangs of maternal jealousy, but with none of the baser kind, she listened while he sat at her feet and talked of the woman he loved. But the real price to be paid, as she clearly saw, lay still in the future and in all those possibilities of beautiful domestic possession wherein she could have no part. Left to herself she sometimes wept in woeful abandonment at the thought that she and his children must for ever remain strangers; and then she dried her eyes and sat eager and attentive to learn what manner of woman their mother would be, if Max had his present will.

"I met her," said Max, "or rather found her again, washing the floor of a single-room tenement on a 'four-pair back' to the accompaniment of screams from its enraged occupant. And when, as a means of introduction, I tendered assistance, she sent me down to the basement to refill her bucket,—offered me a child's head to wash, and then as an alternative bade me bring in a mattress from a second-hand dealer who had neglected to send it. I went. Required to give proofs of my honesty by a shopman who rightly regarded all strangers with suspicion, I deposited the value, which I forgot afterwards to reclaim, and set off with my load. Before I reached the first corner I made the humiliating discovery that I did not know how to carry it. I was bearing it embraced like an infant in arms, but owing to its size my arms would not go round. Twice it unrolled itself and lay like a drunken thing in the gutter; small children stood round and laughed at me. From one of them came these words of wisdom: 'Lor', 'e's only a gentleman, he don't know nothing!' On my second attempt, not seeing well where I was going, I stumbled into an apple-stall; and immediately I, heir to a throne and engaged in a charitable action, found myself regarded as a criminal lunatic by people quite obviously my superiors in all honest ways of earning a living. A small boy took pity on me and offered to carry it on his back—any distance for a penny. That taught me; I gave him the penny and put it upon my own, and having disentangled myself from the crowd in which for foolishness I had become conspicuous, found with relief that thenceforth no one took any notice of me. The old scriptural act of a man carrying his bed struck nobody there as absurd; the streets of our sweated quarters are far more genuine and human than those in which we parade the clothes they make for us. Ah, yes; that statement, at which you show some incredulity, is directly pertinent to my story; for it was an endeavor to trace my clothes to their origin—over the many impediments and difficulties placed in my way—that had led me into those slums. I won't go into that just now, though it had an important connection with our future acquaintance.

"By the time I returned with the bed to the four-pair back attic I had received a better lesson in human values than in any previous half-hour of my existence. I was then given other commissions, and these without any word of apology; as I had volunteered so I was to be used without scruple or mercy, just as a millionaire's motor-car is used at election times, till scratched, battered, broken down, it creeps from the fray. 'We are all sweated workers here,' she said to me afterwards, and then I saw her uses of me explained; anything which came to that mill came to be ground, and the chaff to be cast out. I submitted to her test, and in that first day saw her only by glimpses; but in accompanying her back to the Home from which she emanated I told her why I had come—said that I wished to have a clear conscience and wear clothes upon my back in which there was no element of sweating. She told me it was quite impossible, impossible, that is to say, unless I controlled every stage of manufacture from the raw material to the finished article; and even then, I was warned, the paper cover, the cardboard box, and the string with which it was tied, would all be sweated products. And when I asked what I could do to help matters, she bade me go with empty pockets and see as much of the life as possible for myself, and make others like myself see it also. That is what she had been doing to me—rubbing my nose into it before I should get tired and run away. Even while accepting it she showed a fine indifference to my money. 'Don't let that salve your conscience,' said she, 'we can make it useful, but it won't change matters.' And had I given her a million pounds I do not think she would have thanked me any more."

All that Prince Max narrated of his charitable adventure would take too long to tell here. One thing the Countess noted, as a point well scored, he had begun to learn humility; his offers of service had been rejected as of little use, his company as a hindrance, his new lady had left him to feel small, and he had not resented it, had indeed owned that her judgment on him was just.

He had also put himself to her test of sincerity and failed. "I tried to go on with it," he confessed, "but it was no good. What my father says is quite true—we can't really get at the lives of these people, we are too cut off. We make use of them, they of us; but we are still hiding from each other round corners, or walking on opposite sides of the street. She, having become one of them, meant me to see that."

"But she doesn't know who you are."

"She knows what kind I am; it's all the same."

"You didn't cross after her?"

"How could I? It wouldn't have been manners."

"She presumed on your having them, then?"

"She has a generous nature."

"And then, for whole weeks, you did much more than cross after her; you hunted for her, lay in wait for her, doing nothing all the time. My dear grown-up man, wasn't that rather childish?"

"What else could I have done?"

"Made her miss you."

"Well, as we haven't seen each other since, it comes to the same thing."

"But she knows you've been there; she would have thought much more of you if you hadn't been."

"Why?"

"It would have made her more repentant. Now she only thinks that you've tired of it."

"Ah, well, she promised to pray for me," said Max.

"Oh, I pray for you, my dear," sighed the Countess; "not that I suppose that does any good!"

And therein may be discerned a difference between the two women who most concerned themselves for the good of Max's soul; for the other had been quite confident that her prayers would do good. And it is curious how often those who have faith prove to be in the right.

IV

Max had given up the quest, but he had not given up hope. Though love had humbled him, he yet believed in his star, and reminded himself that the world was small.

In the late spring the Jubilee celebrations took up some of his time; maneuvers followed. He went and played at soldiering for the public satisfaction; then returned to his more private and serious avocations, put the finishing touches to his book, and began to receive proofs from the foreign printing-house to which through the Countess's hands he had entrusted it. She herself with kind, charitable intent stayed on; more than ever now he needed some one to talk to and—he did not worry her. Others were trying to worry him. The Queen, after voluminous correspondence, had found and offered him choice of two German princesses whose photographs said flattering things of them; and, when he declined both propositions, had looked at him very sadly indeed—had almost broached the unmentionable subject. "Oh, Max, what are we to do with you?" she sighed; for she was still keeping herself badly informed of his goings-on. "That woman is back again," she informed her husband; "I really think we ought to consult the Archbishop."

The King saw no hope in that. "You must leave Max to take his own time," he said. He did not just then want to worry about Max, since he was preparing to plunge on his own account. "Alone I did it," was to be his boast, and he knew that if once he resumed fathering Max, Max would be fathering him, and his small spurt of initiative would be over.

But all that must be kept for another chapter. This one belongs to Max and his love affairs, past, present, and future; and it is still Max and his fortunes that we are following as we step back into the limelight of publicity.

At the first Court following on the Jubilee celebrations the Bishops appeared in force. It was their final demonstration of loyalty to the throne before the political battle joined, for they were now preparing to reject, just as a last fling, the whole of the Government's program, and then to see what the country thought of it.

As a bilious man sticks out his tongue toward the glass in order to know whether he looks as he feels, so the Bishops were sticking out their tongues toward the country in the hopes of looking as brave as they were pretending to be. And they came to Court that they might advertise their attitude.

They came in silken court-cassocks, preceded by their croziers and followed by their women-folk, a nice expression of that ecclesiastical and domestic blend on which the Church of Jingalo prided itself. These Church ladies were moral emblems in another respect as well: they had the privilege of appearing at Court functions more highly dressed—that is to say, less denuded—than others of a more aristocratic connection. The sacred and unflinching calling of a bishop threw a protecting

mantle over the modest shoulders of his wife and daughters; and these did not go unclad. In accordance with Pauline teaching they were covered in the assembly, expressing in their own persons that "moderation in all things" which was the accepted motto and policy of the Church.

The Archbishop of Ebury was there also; his crozier was different in shape from the rest, and as an addition to his silken cassock he wore a train. He was accompanied by his daughter. Daring in her assertion of the vocation which had withdrawn her from the gaities of life she wore the gray robe of a little lay-sister of Poverty.

"His Grace the Archbishop of Ebury, Prince Palatine of the Southern Sees, Archdeacon of Rome, Vicar of Jerusalem, and Primate of all the Churches," so, upon entry to the Presence, his full and canonical titles were proclaimed by an usher of the Court.

After so high a flourish more impressive in its way was the simple announcement that followed: "Sister Jenifer Chantry."

Dignity led, quiet unassuming modesty came after; indifferent to her surroundings, obedient to the call of duty, she advanced in her father's wake toward the royal circle. They bowed their way round; and there, suddenly before him, Prince Max beheld the face of his dreams.

The eyes of the beloved met his; and he, struggling desperately to conceal his excitement and emotion from those who stood looking on, saw himself recognized without shock or quiver of disturbance. No heightening of color belied that look of quiet assurance and peace; with disciplined ease, perfect in self-possession, she courtesied and passed him by. And suddenly it seemed to him that all the air was filled with a strange humming sound, soft yet penetrating, like the populous murmur of a summer's day. Above the rustle of robes, the patter of feet, the subdued murmur of voices, and the regulated tones wherein Court ushers were announcing fresh names, that high vibratory note went on; elated and thrilled he listened to it and wondered, not knowing its cause—the quickened murmur of his own blood at the touch of Love's index finger upon his heart.

Now at last he knew who she was; now he could find her again on unforbidden ground, follow her where she had no excuse to hide, and press against all obstacles for an earthly fulfilment of that unpractically directed thing called prayer. For now it should not be only her prayer for him, but his for her; her very name—Chantry—expressed the need he had of her. She was the shrine within which his soul kneeled down to pray—not to any God, but to life itself. Here was the matrix from which all his desultory and scattered forces had been waiting to receive form and direction; to his own small fragment of that general outpouring which we call life, purpose and destiny had come. He with his adventurous theories, she with her patient and unflinching practice, how gloriously together they could tumble old monarchy to the dust and build it anew. For the first time in his life he felt almost fiercely desirous to step into his father's shoes. Strange that such sudden ambitions should be sprung on him by contact with a heart which apparently held none.

All this while he was returning the bows of bishops and their wives. They flowed by in solid file forty or fifty strong; for this was a demonstration with political import behind it, this was going to be in all the press to be understood of the people; the Bishops about to fight for their own order were passing before the steps of the throne to indicate in dumb show that allegiance to Crown and Constitution which animated their hearts.

And then, gorgeous in cloth of gold and high funnel-shaped hat, introduced by the Minister of Public Worship but unaccompanied by his two black wives, came the Archimandrite of Cappadocia—a counter demonstration; and after him, forty Free Churches divines, all in black gowns, silkened for the occasion, but unenlivened by the moral emblems of their domesticity; a queer somber tail they seemed to that great eastern bird of Paradise under whose wing they would presently acquire the right to wear feathers as fine as his own.

Most of them had never been at Court before, and in consequence were not so well drilled as the Bishops. Some of them bowed too often, and too hurriedly, and before they need, beginning with the Lord Functionary whom they mistook for royalty; and they walked out sideways instead of backwards, reactionary methods of progress not being in their blood. Still, taking them for all in all, they were a very learned-looking body, and their presence in such uncongenial surroundings showed that they meant business.

And deficiency in their demeanor was quite covered by the deportment of the Archimandrite. In the new robe presented to him for the occasion by the Prime Minister (for the moth had got into his own) he looked superb, and behaved with a majesty beside which Jingalo's home-bred royalty sank into insignificance. Max frankly recognized his superior, and bowed low. "This is a descent of the spirit, Archimandrite," he said, as they touched palms; and as he did so a queer breath of eastern spices blew over him, for the man of God was chewing them.

And so, in this great overt act of respectful homage to the throne from both sides, the truce came to an end and the signal for fight was given. More important to Prince Max was the fact that it had revealed to him a certain lady's identity.

CHAPTER X

KING AND COUNCIL

I

During the weeks of the Jubilee recess the King had spent his spare moments in taking notes, and priming himself on fresh points of constitutional usage.

The Comptroller-General was greatly puzzled to see writing going on day after day in which neither he nor any of the secretaries were invited to take part. He was more puzzled still when, by means available to him, he obtained access to what the King had actually written.

After a single reading he felt it his duty to report to the Prime Minister.

"He seems to be writing a history of the Constitution," said the General. "Where he gets his facts from I don't know, but they don't seem to have come from you; quite the other side I should say."

On this note-taking, so voluminous that it resembled the writing of a history, the King was getting into his stride, and was discovering how very much better all these years he could have made his own speeches, had he only been allowed to. He had within him the gift of expression, though not the power of condensing it; he had industry, a good case, and now at last behind his back an unimpeachable authority. And so, at its next meeting he came down into Council stuffed full of facts and phrases, and quite determined that before things went any further his Ministry should hear them.

The constitutional crisis had reached a head as soon as Parliament again met. The defiant action of the Bishops had thrown the Government's program so much into arrears that a drastic quickening of the pace had become necessary; and if, in spite of scare and warning, the Bishops meant to go on doing as they had hitherto done it was evident that their constitutional powers must be limited. The Archimandrite and the Free Churchmen between them might supply the Government with a bare working majority; but that alone would not be sufficient to make legislation fruitful between then and the next general election. Unless the Government, after striking the blow, could come before the country bearing its sheaves with it, there was a very serious chance that its patriotic intention of continuing in power would be frustrated; and even a Government busily engaged in marking time to suit its own bureaucratic interests must appear to have covered the ground mapped out for it.

For this reason Cabinet ministers had been meeting and deciding on a good many things behind the King's back; and the "Spiritual Limitations Bill"—all the world has since heard of it—was the device they had adopted as most suitable to their needs. They proposed to bring it forward in a late winter session.

On the day before Council a draft of the proposed bill reached the hands of the King; and his Majesty on reading it and after referring once again to certain passages in Professor Teller's books of history, smiled gleefully and rubbed his hands; for though he had the heart of a vegetarian he was beginning to scent blood and rather to enjoy the smell of it.

II

The Council was already standing about the board when the King entered. Having bowed them to their seats he formally called on the Prime Minister to read the presented draft. This was done, and through the whole of it without a word of interruption his Majesty sat quiet and as good as gold.

Polite exposition was about to follow; but as the Prime Minister essayed an enlargement of his text his flight was stayed.

"Gentlemen," said the King, "I am dissatisfied with my position."

All turned amazed; the Professor with less amazement than the rest, for he observed, as confirmation of his suspicions, that the King's hand rested upon a bulky pile of manuscript.

"In this bill," said his Majesty, "you are proposing to remodel a Constitution that has lasted in an unwritten form for five hundred years. I see in your proposed emendations that the Crown is frequently mentioned, but its powers are nowhere defined—unless that constantly recurring phrase 'on the advice of his ministers' is a definition which you wish to see indefinitely extended. Otherwise there is no open indication that the Crown's powers are affected. But the question of constitutional rights as between the Bishops and the Laity to-day may to-morrow be a question involving the Crown also; and if you now mean to impose limits on one branch of the legislature, you must extend your definitions to cover the whole ground. I require, gentlemen, if this matter is to be carried any further, that my own powers and prerogatives shall be as accurately defined and set as much on a working basis as those of your two Chambers."

"'Working basis' is distinctly good," murmured Professor Teller, and looked admiringly at the King, whom the Prime Minister hastened to reassure.

"Your Majesty's powers," said he, "are in no way touched. At no single point of our proposals is any limitation suggested."

"Oh, I daresay not, I daresay not!" replied the King, "but though it isn't there in the text it is

between the lines; yes, written with invisible ink which will be plain enough to read presently. What I am thinking about is the future. You may be perfectly right as to the wisdom of change; but we must have chapter and verse for it. We can't treat these matters any longer as an affair of honor. It used to be: now it isn't. Honor to-day is not a help but an impediment; I've found that out. To me it has lately become a question—a very grave question—whether I can in honor accept the advice of my ministers; and I do not intend to leave so disquieting a problem for my son to solve after me. There, now you have it!"

The King panted a little as he spoke, like a dog that has begun to feel the pace of a motor-car too much for him.

"I'm sorry that your Majesty has found any reason to complain," said the Prime Minister in a tone of grieved considerateness.

"I am not complaining," answered the King, "I'm only saying. And what I say is, let us have chapter and verse for it from beginning to end. Define the powers of the Crown as they exist to-day—but as they won't exist to-morrow unless you do—and your proposals shall have my most sympathetic consideration; but not otherwise."

"Surely the question your Majesty raises," interrupted the Prime Minister, "is an entirely separate one."

"No doubt you would treat it so," replied the King. "Oh, yes—break your sticks one at a time as the wise man did in the fable!"

A breath of protest blew round the Council board. What would he be accusing them of next?

"I daresay you don't mean it," he went on; "but it will be said, at some future day, that you did. And either you do mean it, or you don't; so if you don't what can be your objection to having it put down in black and white? I'm sure I have none. I have got everything written out here ready and waiting." And the King fingered his manuscript feverishly.

"One very obvious objection," interposed the Prime Minister in alarm, "is that there is no demand for it in the country. No political situation has arisen—the matter is not in controversy."

"You must pardon me," said the King, "we are in controversy now. Though the country knows nothing about it, my position is affected; the demand is mine."

"It is quite impossible, your Majesty," said the Prime Minister, with a brevity that was almost brusque. "It would entirely confuse the issue in the public mind."

"Direct it, I think you mean."

"In a most dangerous and inadvisable way."

"Dangerous to whom?" the King inquired shrewdly.

"The functions of the Crown must not be involved in party politics."

"Though party politics are involving the functions of the Crown? Oh, yes, Mr. Prime Minister, it is no use for you to shake your head. I contend that, without a word said, this bill does directly undermine my powers of initiative and independence. You deprive the Bishops of their right to vote on money bills; very well, that will include all royal grants, whether special or annual,—maintenance, annuities, and all that sort of thing. At present these are fixed by law and cannot be disturbed without the agreement of both Houses. That is my safeguard. But in future you leave the Bishops out, and you have me in the hollow of your hand. Oh, gentlemen, you need not protest your good intentions: I am merely putting the case as it will stand supposing a—well, a socialistic Government, bent on getting rid of the monarchy altogether, were to succeed you. Where should I be then? That is what I want you to consider. Oh, you don't need two sticks to beat a dog with! If you mean that, let us have it all said and done with,—put it in your bill; and if the country approves of it, well, if it approves of it, I shall be very much surprised."

The Prime Minister rose.

"Does your Majesty suggest," he began, "that any such idea——"

But the King cut him short. "Oh, I don't know what your ideas were; this isn't an idea, it's a bill."

The Prime Minister sat down again; all the Council were looking at him with mildly interrogating eyes, wondering what they should do next. The King had often been voluble before, but this time he was reasonably articulate; and as his pile of manuscript indicated he had come armed with definite proposals.

"I am asking for safeguards," said the King. "How do I know, how do any of us know, at what pace things may not be moving a few years hence? It is the pace that kills, you know; yes, very important thing—pace." His eye caught a friendly glance; it twinkled at him humorously; he appealed to it for support. "Yes, Professor, have you anything to say?"

The Professor rose and bowed. "I am only a listener, your Majesty," he said, and sat down again.

"Pace," said the King again, having for a moment lost the thread of his discourse. Then, having clung to that anchor to recover breath, once more he plunged on.

"If any royal prerogatives still exist," said he, "if I am to be still free to act upon them, then I want to be told what they are, and to have the country told also; yes, before any more of them become obsolete! At present it seems to me that anything of that kind is obsolete when it becomes inconvenient to the party in power."

Once more a respectfully modulated wave of protest went round the board.

"Oh, yes, gentlemen, I have become quite aware from what has recently taken place that an unexercised authority, if not set down in black and white, comes presently to be questioned as though it did not exist. If the title-deeds are missing, then you are no longer on your own premises. Well, for the future, I want to be upon mine. And here you come to me with this bill, and not a single one of you has seen fit to advise me as to how my own position is affected by it; no, I have had to go to other sources, and find out for myself."

At these words the Prime Minister saw an opening, and also a possible explanation of the manuscripts which lay under the King's hand. He put on a bold front and spoke without waiting for the royal pause.

"Have I, then, to understand," he inquired, "that your Majesty's advisers have lost the benefit of your Majesty's confidence?"

"By no means," replied the King. "If I am not confiding in you now, I don't know what confidence is. I am putting all my difficulties before you, and asking for your advice. But I don't want to have it in a hole-in-corner way, a bit at a time, first one and then another. We are in Council, and it is from my whole Council that I want to know how these difficulties are to be met. When I am alone I can get anybody to advise me, go to whomsoever I like; there is no difficulty about that."

The Prime Minister bristled; he seemed now to be on the track. "I must ask further, then," said he, "whether upon this question of a new written Constitution your Majesty has thought fit to consult others—those, that is to say, who are politically opposing us?"

Under an air of the deepest respect a charge of unconstitutional usage was clearly conveyed.

"Oh, you mean the Bishops?" said the King. "No; since all this trouble began I have been deprived of the consolations of the Church; not a single one of them has dared to come near me, except in an official capacity. Though, as I say, I have the right to consult any one."

The Prime Minister raised his eyebrows, in order, while formally agreeing, to make denial visible.

"Of course if your Majesty informs us of it," he said, "we shall know where we are."

"That is what I am saying," persisted the King. "If we all consult about it, then you know where you are, and I know where I am. There are the twenty of you, and here am I, and this is the first time that we have exchanged a word on the subject. Isn't it unreasonable to expect me to come to you with my mind made up on a thing I knew nothing about till yesterday? Why, it was only then I discovered that for you to discuss such a bill among yourselves, without having first sought my permission—a bill affecting the Constitution and the powers of the Crown—was in itself unconstitutional."

What on earth did he mean? Ministers looked at each other aghast.

"There!" cried the King, "you are all just as surprised as I was. That is why I say we must get it put into writing. You didn't know that you were interfering with royal prerogative. No more did I: we had forgotten to look up history. Now I've done it, and I daresay that as an historian Professor Teller will be able to inform you whether I am right?" And here with a flourish the King named his authority.

"Your Majesty has stated the constitutional usage with accuracy," acknowledged the Professor. "Whether usage is decisive remains a question."

"There!" said the King triumphantly. "That is what happens if things are not actually set down in law. Now you see my point."

The Prime Minister's brow grew dark.

"I think, your Majesty," said he, "that this is hardly a question we can discuss in Council."

"In a way you are right," acknowledged the King; "it should not have been discussed here, as I said just now, without my permission. But as it has been brought forward we either do discuss it and all that I have to propose in the matter, or I rule it out of order; and we will pass on, if you please, to the next business."

The King had finished; he leaned back in his chair; and the Prime Minister, collecting authority from the eyes of his colleagues, stood up and spoke.

"I think your Majesty hardly recognizes," said he, "that we cannot legislate on a matter as to which there is no public demand. In regard to the status of the Crown no political situation has arisen such as would justify your Majesty's advisers in adopting a course which might seem to indicate a lack of confidence. Under representative government no ministry can propose legislation which has only theory to recommend it. If your Majesty will allow me to make my representations in private, I think I shall be able to show that the course we propose is the only practical one. I would, therefore, most respectfully urge that for the present the points your

Majesty raises may be set aside."

It was as direct a challenge of the royal will as one minister could well make in the presence of others; never before had a difference of opinion stood out so plainly for immediate decision under the eyes of a whole Cabinet.

The King heard and understood: it was a crucial moment in the exercise of his partially recovered authority; twenty pair of eyes were looking at him, curiously intent, one pair benevolently anxious. The Prime Minister was fingering his brief, ready to go on with the interrupted disquisition; he even looked surreptitiously at his watch to indicate that time pressed.

That little touch of covert insolence was sufficient; by a sort of instinct the incalculable values of heredity, training, and position asserted themselves. The King's lips parted in the shy nervous smile which charmed every one. "Mr. Prime Minister," he said, "I am perfectly willing to meet you at any future time you may like to name." He took up the agenda paper as he spoke and turned to the Minister of the Interior. "The Home Secretary," said his Majesty, "will now read his report."

Before they knew where they were the Council had passed on to its accustomed routine.

III

Nobody looked at the Prime Minister's face just then; for the moment he had been beaten, though the person who appeared least aware of it was the King.

But, of course, it was for the moment only. And when at a later hour of the day, with mind made resolute, the Prime Minister sought his promised interview, the monarch was no longer at an advantage. Dialectically he could not meet and match his opponent, and he had no longer that subtle advantage which presidency at a board of ministers confers. Speaking as man to man the head of the Government did not feel bound to observe that tradition of half-servile approach which in the hearing of others fetters the mouths of ministers.

The Jubilee celebrations were now over, the Parliamentary vacation approached; and what before had been mere talk and threat could now be put into instant action. And so when he had given the King his run, and listened to the royal obstinacy in all its varying phrases of repetition, contradiction, reproach, till it reached its final stage of blank immobility, he formally tendered the Ministry's resignation.

The King sat and thought for a while, for now it was clear that one way or the other he must make up his mind. All those strings of red tape, which he had meant to tie with such dilatory cunning hung loose in his grasp; to a Cabinet really set on resignation he could not apply them. Just as his hands had seemed full of power they became empty again. He knew that at the present moment no other ministry was possible, and that a general election was more likely to accentuate than to solve his difficulties; and so in sober chagrin he sat and thought, and the Prime Minister (as he noticed) was so sure of his power that he did not even trouble to watch the process of the royal hesitation resolving itself.

When after an appreciable time the King spoke he seemed to have arrived nowhere.

"This is the fifth time," he said, "that you have offered me resignation: and you know that I am still unable to accept it."

The Prime Minister bowed his head; he knew it very well, there was no need for words.

"And you know that I am still entirely unconvinced."

"For that," said the minister, "I must take blame; since it shows that my advocacy in so strong a case has been very imperfect."

"Oh, not at all," said the King. "I think you have shown even more than your accustomed ability."

"That is a compliment which—if it may be permitted—I can certainly return to your Majesty."

"I have felt very strongly upon this matter," said the King.

"We all do, sir—one way or the other. With great questions that is inevitable."

"You admit it is a great question?"

"I should never have so troubled your Majesty were it a small one."

The King's thoughts shifted.

"What a pity it is," said he, "that I and my ministers have never been friends."

"Have not loyal service and humble duty some claim to be so regarded?" inquired the Prime Minister. But the King let this official veneer of the facts pass unregarded.

"It would have helped things," he went on. "As it is, when I differ from my ministers I am all alone. It is in moments of difficulty like this that the head of the State realizes his weakness."

"There again, sir, you do yourself an injustice."

"Ah, that is easily said. But what does my power amount to when all is done? Perhaps at the cost

of constant friction with my ministers I have been able to delay things for a while—given the country more time to make up its mind; but then, unfortunately, it was thinking of other things, and I myself provided the counter attraction. What I was trying to do in one way I was rendering of no effect in another; all that I intended politically has been swamped in ceremony."

"Your Majesty was never more popular than to-day," observed the Prime Minister. "That in itself is a power."

The King paused to consider; then he said, "If I am prepared eventually to give way, what time of grace can you allow me?"

"We must have our bill ready for the winter session, sir."

"Will you allow me till then?"

"If I may know what is in your Majesty's mind."

"What is in my mind is that the country should know what it is about. This bill has not yet been seen; by the public nothing is known of it. Well, that is what I ask: put it before the country, let the terms of it be clearly stated, and if, when we come to the winter session, you are still determined that it must form part of your program, then,"—the King drew himself up and took a breath—"then I will no longer stand in your way."

The Prime Minister bowed low to conceal his proud sense of triumph.

"I have your Majesty's word for that?"

"To-day is the 27th," said the King, "you can claim the fulfilment of that promise in four months' time."

"And till then?"

"Till then," said the King slowly, "this question is not again to come before Council. I hold to my point that its introduction without my express consent was unconstitutional, and to maintain the Constitution I am bound by oath."

The Prime Minister yielded the point readily, seeing in it the effort of dull obstinacy to score a nominal triumph. "There is, however, the accompanying condition," said he, "necessary for the success of our scheme; and to that I must once more refer. In order to pass our bill we shall need the consecration of at least fifty new Bishops, nominated by the Government; to that, also, your Majesty has hitherto been opposed."

"Oh, you mean the Free Churchmen?" queried the King. "Ah, yes, and the Archimandrite."

"In that matter," replied the Prime Minister, "I have some reason to believe that the Bishops will eventually give way."

The King felt himself a little more alone. "Yes," he said, "I daresay they will; I shouldn't wonder at all."

"Then over that, too, I may look for your Majesty's consent?"

The King repeated his former word. "I shall not stand in your way," he said; and again the Prime Minister bowed low.

"I have to thank your Majesty for relieving me of a great difficulty."

"Oh, no, why should you? You have not persuaded me in the least; you have merely forced me to a certain course, in which I still cannot pretend that I agree."

"I shall always recognize that your Majesty has acted on the highest motives, both in opposing and in ceasing to oppose."

"I shall ask you to remember that," said the King.

"There shall never be any misunderstanding on my part," replied the minister; and applying a palm to the hand graciously extended as though its mere touch had power to heal, he took his leave, and the fateful audience was over.

For a long time after, the King stood looking at the door out of which he had gone.

"I think there has been a misunderstanding, though," he said to himself, with a slow, faint smile, "and I don't think it is mine——" He paused. "Perhaps, though, I had better write down exactly what I said." And going to his desk he made there and then a careful memorandum of his words.

He read them over, and once again he smiled. He was still quite contented with what he had done. "And I wonder," he said to himself, "what Max would say if he knew?"

There was a great surprise waiting for Max, and well might the King wonder what that interesting young man would make of it. Yes, it was just as well that Max should not know anything about it beforehand; Max might run away.

CHAPTER XI

A ROYAL COMMISSION

I

While the King and the Prime Minister had thus been giving each other shocks of a somewhat unpleasant character, Prince Max had received a far pleasanter one. Only a week after the holding of the King's court the lady of his dreams had written asking for an interview.

The letter was not dated from the Archbishop's palace, but from the Home of the Little Lay-Sisters; and it was thither that he repaired, in order to forestall her humble yet amazing offer to wait upon him.

In the bare, conventual parlor, with high walls that echoed resoundingly and boards that smelt of soap, they met once more face to face and alone. She courtesied low, addressed him formally as "sir," and thanked him with due deference for coming; otherwise there was no change in her demeanor. The flat-frilled cap showed within its border a delicate ripple of hair, and above the fair breastplate of linen the face shone with tender warmth like a white rose resting upon snow; and as her lips moved in speech he re-encountered with a fervor of delight that curious quality of look which had ever haunted his dreams—a communicativeness not limited to words. Though it remained still her whole face spoke to him; lips and eyes made music together—a harmony of two senses in alliance, as into morning mist comes the yet unrisen light and the hidden singing of birds.

And yet all the while she was but saying quite ordinary things, making brief the embarrassment of this their first meeting since their relative positions had become explained.

"I have taken you at your word, sir," she began. "When we last met you asked if you could not be useful. Now you can."

"Your remembrance makes me grateful," said the Prince.

"Perhaps I ought not to be so confident," she went on, "since the idea is only my own. It came from something I heard my father saying; and as he strongly disapproves of women taking part in politics it was no use saying anything to him."

"Oh, politics?" That explanation rather surprised him.

"Sometimes—just now and then," explained Sister Jenifer, "politics do touch social needs: and to their detriment."

"My acquaintance with politics," answered the Prince, "is very—Chimerical," he added after a pause, pleased to have found the term.

"Yes," she smiled, "I have heard you. You are full of happy ideas, many of them somewhat contradictory; but you have not yet fallen into any groove. To you freedom means rebellion; you represent no vested interest."

"Is that my certificate of character?"

"I had not finished," she said. "I was keeping the best to the last. You have a great position and an open mind."

"An important combination, you think?"

"An unusual one."

"And so you have an unusual proposition to make to me?"

"Yes, I suppose you will think so. There is a brand I want plucked from the burning—a Royal Commission saved from becoming merely official and useless."

"What is its subject?"

"All this!"—she made an inclusive gesture—"slums, the conditions of sweated labor, the daily material which we have to work on."

"About which you have taught me that I know really nothing."

"You said you were anxious to learn. At least half of that Commission will be anxious not to learn—or not to let others."

"Then you ought to be on it."

"No woman is on it."

"You wish them to be?"

She threw out her hands. "What would be the use? Their voices would have no weight."

"Whose would?"

"Yours," she said; and, eyeing him full, stopped dead.

"You wish me to go upon that Commission?" cried Prince Max.

"Yes."

"In spite of all my ignorance?"

"The sittings do not begin till late autumn; between now and then you could get more actual knowledge—brought home and made visible to you, I mean—than most of those who will form its majority."

"Then you think I could be of use?"

She looked at him, silent for a moment. "I think you have a mind capable of taking fire, when it learns the facts."

"Facts only deaden some people," said he.

"Yes; that is what crushes us here. We have such mountains of facts to deal with."

"And you want fire to come down from those mountains and consume me?"

She nodded prophetically.

"I know you wouldn't run away."

"I am trying to feel the call," said Max a little skeptically. And in truth he was of divided mind, not because he had any doubt of his ability, but because the temptation to insincerity was so strong. This would give him the very opportunity he sought—through a vale of misery he beheld the way to his own Promised Land; but was it fair that he should take advantage of it without a heart of pity and conviction? This Prince of ours rather prided himself on his conscientious scruples.

"Will you tell me from the beginning," he said at last, "what put this thought into your mind? I seem to be getting it only by fragments."

"Three days ago," she answered, "I heard my father talking with others of the projected Commission. They were dissatisfied at the Church not being sufficiently represented—so insufficiently, indeed, that they took it as an intentional slight, part of the Government's policy for depriving the Bishops of all standing. It was held that further representation was imperative."

"What?" exclaimed Max; "am I to represent the Bishops, then?"

She shook her head, laughing. "Oh, no!" she answered. "They found some one very much better for themselves. That is the really immediate danger. They are afraid that the Commission as it stands will issue findings of a one-sided and party character, and that any minority report, unless it obtained the chairman's signature, would have no weight. Their main hope, therefore, is to secure a chairman of high standing on whose help they can rely, and it is thought that the Government could not oppose the nomination of a member of the Royal Family. It would appeal to popular sentiment; and subject to his Majesty's assent, his Royal Highness the Duke of Nostrum has expressed his willingness to serve."

Max had no great opinion of the collaterals of his grandfather—this one least of all. "Oh, ye Heavens!" he exclaimed. "For what use these bones of my ancestors? Why, with him to direct its deliberations, the Commission will run on into the next century, and its report be only applicable to the last!" Then, as he took stock of the situation, "And are you expecting me to head the minority report instead of him?" he inquired.

"It is not their report I am concerned about," she answered, "and for party I care little; it is the majority I fear. On paper the Commission looks as if it meant business; Church and property have been squeezed into one small corner, but the trade-interest is very strong; it is there in concealed ways which outsiders cannot recognize, for even over our public and medical departments—and still more in the press—it has now got control. I can give you instance after instance of men known as philanthropists whose riches come from sweated labor, and whose munificent charities form not one tithe of their inhuman profits drained from the lives of the very poorest. Some of them, great advertisers, are to sit on this Commission, and all the press, irrespective of party, will praise their appointment; while to defend their interests others will be attacked. The Government may be quite ready as a temporary expedient to make scapegoats of the property-owners, but it is not so ready to antagonize trade. I believe, sir, that on this Commission the real source of evil will never be traced; we shall hear of the grinding middleman and the rack-renter, but nothing dangerous to these magnates, or to the trade-system itself—unless——" She paused, and left silence to carry her message.

"Unless," supplemented Max, "some one thoroughly indiscreet occupies the chair?"

"Somebody," she replied, "whose minority report of one would attract all the attention it deserved."

"Oh, you think——?" His mind sparkled at the prospect: to be in a minority of one had a peculiar fascination for him.

"Yes, I think it may come to that," she said, "if you will honestly open your eyes."

"Then you cannot promise me the support of the Church?"

She shook her head as though that were the last thing possible.

"I am to be all alone?" His tone invited commiseration, while his brain soared with the dreams of a hashish-eater.

"I think about three may be with you, not more," she said, letting him down to earth again.

"Why are you so confident about me?"

Her gentle gray eyes met his with friendly understanding.

"When I found out who you were," she said, "I saw"—then she hesitated—"I saw that you had the rare gift of doing naturally what one would never expect."

"In what way?"

"To begin with, in coming here at all. And then you did things which, I imagine, no prince ever did before, and did them quite easily—'for fun,' I suppose you would say. Well, if you could do all that for fun, what might you not do when you became serious? A man who doesn't mind being laughed at—whatever his position—is very rare."

"Ah!" cried Max, "but now you are giving me more credit than I deserve. You set me to do ridiculous things for you—ridiculous, I mean, in one dressed as I was for fashion and not for use—I was aware of it; but nobody was aware of me. When I come here into these poor streets, I am so unexpected that nobody recognizes me. If they thought that they did, they would not believe their eyes. In that alone there is a sense of enlargement and liberty which those who have not to live in our position can hardly realize. It was like holiday; I felt as though I had been let loose."

"And so became more yourself?"

"I cannot say; but I was happy while I was here. Why did you send me away?"

"For the same reason that I now ask you to come back. I wanted you to be of use—independently."

"Yet here I am dependent upon you again."

"No; you have this in your own hands: it is your position."

"That secures the chairmanship? But am I at all likely to be accepted?"

"From what I hear, nobody suspects you of taking any great interest in the life of the poor. They have therefore no reason to be afraid of you."

"I see," said Max. "As a figure-head chairman I might even be valuable."

"Very, I have no doubt."

"Part of the game?"

"Royalty and Trade are supposed to be natural allies," remarked Sister Jenifer.

Max was startled at her discernment. "Oh, but that is true!" he cried. "How wonderful, then, that you should be able to trust me at all."

This set her smiling. "I had the advantage to begin with of not knowing who you were."

"And that gave you a start."

"No, finding you out gave me the start."

"You certainly have not lost time."

"That I cannot say, till I have your answer." There was no temporizing here.

Max thought for a while, then drew breath and spoke. "I want you quite to understand," he said, "that if I take up this work it will be very largely for a personal reason. I daresay I shall, as you say, 'take fire' when I know more about it; but at present I am not so moved. Commissions do not attract me; and what I undertake I shall do solely on faith—faith in you. Are you content that it should be so?"

"For a beginning, yes."

"Very well; something else follows. I shall need you for my guide."

"I am always here at certain hours," she said. "But there are others who know far more than I."

He let that point go unregarded.

"Then I may come to you for help?"

"Always, if really you need it."

"My needs shall be as real as I can make them," said Max. "How am I to begin?"

She named one or two books. "If you follow up what you read there," she said, "you will find most of it practically demonstrated in this district alone. For instance, we have a strike on just now among our tailors and shirt-makers; the men have made the women come out with them; they did not want to—women can exist under conditions where men cannot. Go and mix with them, be among them for hours, attend their street-corner meetings; you will hardly hear two ideas of any practical value, but you will get many. It isn't theory that is wanted,—it is that the life which thousands are living should be known and realized. When the eye has seen, the heart follows. All we really want is brotherhood; but how are we to bring it about?"

"From that I am furthest away of all," said Prince Max.

"No, no," she cried; "that is the great mistake! If kings are not the very symbol of our community then they have no value left. May I tell you two of the most kingly things I ever heard done in the present day? The one was by the old King of Montenegro, the smallest of the Balkan States. He found that his chief gentry were becoming lazy, too proud to put their hands to labor—making idleness a class distinction. He sat down in the courtyard of his palace and began to make shoes, and went on making them daily while he held his Court and administered justice; and so the new folly died."

"And the other?" inquired the Prince.

"It may seem far-fetched in the present connection," said she, "yet as an expression of the real kingly instinct it has all that I mean. Some years ago the heir to the English throne—the one who died young—went out to India. One day he was holding a durbar of Indian chiefs, and they with their retinues stood drawn up in parade ready to offer homage as he passed along their ranks. Opposite was a great crowd of natives watching the spectacle, and at a certain point in that crowd stood, as a mere onlooker, one whom Britain had defeated and driven into exile, the old Ameer of Afghanistan. Just before he rode down the Prince heard of it, and had the man pointed out to him; and when he came there he wheeled his horse about and gave the full royal salute. And through all that great multitude went a thrill because the kingly thing had been done, and all had seen it."

Tears glistened in her eyes as she spoke. "He was rather a dull young man," she went on, "so one has been told, but that was better than brains, for that was the touch of human kindness done in the grand manner which royalty makes possible, and ought to make natural—done with a pride which has its place beside the humility of St. Francis."

"Well, well," said Max, "put me in touch then, and I will see what I can do. But I haven't the grand manner, you know."

II

The King was considering the request of his revered uncle, the Duke of Nostrum, to preside over the Commission on slums, when Max came, asking also to be made useful.

"What, you too?" cried his Majesty; "isn't one of us enough?"

"Quite," said Max. "I want to be that one."

"What are your qualifications?"

"Willingness," said Max, "a brain capable of taking fire at facts, a great position, and an open and rebellious mind. I am quoting from authority; I was given my certificate yesterday."

To his Majesty this was merely the voice of Max at his flightiest. "Well," he said, "your Uncle Nostrum happens to have come first."

"Do you always grant first applications?"

"He has had much more experience."

"Of slums?" inquired Max.

"Of commissions, and all that sort of thing. He has sat on them."

"So he has—the elephant! And they have died the death."

"He works," said the King, "and you don't! You only talk."

"I only talk!" cried the injured Max; his voice went up to Heaven appealing against parental injustice. "Has he ever in his life been down into the slums and spent whole days there, as I have? Has he carried buckets for washing-sisters of charity, as I have; and borne upon his back the beds of the dying, as I have?"

"You?" cried the King with incredulity.

"I do not publish these things upon the housetops," said Max, "but in the secrecy of your chamber and in strict confidence I tell you that they are true. And while I, for many anxious weeks, have been toiling to qualify for this post, he, this Nostrum, this patent-drug from our royal medicine-chest, this soporific sedative——"

"Max, Max!" reproved his father.

"He rushes in where an angel has feared to tread, and filches from me my reward!"

"My dear boy, are you serious?" cried the King.

"I was never more serious in my life, father," replied his son. "But in order to arrest your attention I have to be theatrical. Now if you will really believe what I am going to say I will drop play-acting. I have, as I tell you, been down into our slum districts, I have been among the slum workers, means have been offered me for studying these problems at first hand, and I am prepared,—from this week on when Parliament rises, and the metropolis empties itself of pleasure, and you have gone sadly to your annual cure at Bad-as-Bad,—I am prepared to devote the whole of my time and energy to qualifying for this post; and with Heaven helping me, I will make it the most astonishing and effective Royal Commission that ever sat down believing itself on cushions to find that it was on a hornets' nest."

"You are becoming theatrical again," said the King.

"No, no," said Max, "but my brain is taking fire; an angel warned me of it in a dream, and behold it has come true. I have been seeing things."

"Your Uncle Nostrum won't be pleased," remarked the King.

"He never is," said Max. "Discontent is his prevailing virtue. Give himself something to be discontented about, then he can go down to his house justified."

"The Prime Minister has already recommended him," went on the King, "at least, said he would not oppose; but I don't know what he'll say to this."

"Nor do I," said Max, "and I don't care; neither do you."

The King opened his eyes as though he had been surprised in some secret—how did Max know that? And then his mind traveled a few months further on; yes, it was quite true, he did not now care in the least. What he had made up his mind to do had released him from all ministerial terrors; and as he contemplated the relief in his own case his thoughts turned to that bright youth over whose head so unlooked-for a fate was now impending; how dramatic it would be! And here was Max, all unbeknownst, harnessing himself to the wheels of State, pledged, unable to run away. It was just one more turn in the toils which a simple-minded man of gentle and retiring character was able to wind around the scheming lives of others. By at last daring to be himself he had become a power.

"Very well. I will see that it is arranged," he said. "Yes, it is perhaps time you had some experience in presiding over—over boards and all that sort of thing. I shan't last for ever; I don't feel like it." And he shook his head sadly, for he liked to be sorry for himself; nothing helped him more to bear up under the troubles of life.

"My dear father," said Max, with some fondness of tone, "you know that the prospect of going for your cure always depresses you; but as you insist on doing it you must pay the penalty. And when you are taking those waters which so upset your digestion, and deprive you of the flesh which nature meant you to wear, then think of me—not talking any longer, but really up and doing—preparing myself at last to follow in your footsteps. Now in this land of Jingalo, in the very heart of its social and commercial system, I am going to make history."

"Oh, you think so?" said the King to himself. "Young man, before you have much more than begun, you may have to come out of it! You can't do that sort of thing when you are in my shoes."

And then he bade Max a benevolent good-bye and went off to his cure; and Max, assured of his seat upon the forthcoming Commission, went off to his.

III

"How am I to dress for this business?" Max had inquired; it was one of the first practical problems to be solved, and an important one.

"If you don't mind," said Sister Jenifer, "you had better dress like a Socialist. Wear a very soft hat, a very low collar, and a very red or green tie, done loose in the French fashion, and nobody will wonder at your looking clean, or at your asking questions. Young Socialists come here to study the social problem and to show themselves off, and in a vague sort of way the people have begun to understand them; and though they look upon them as cranks, they don't any longer think they are inspectors or charity agents—the two things you must avoid."

"Dress," said Max, "has a very subtle effect upon the character. At a fancy-dress ball, last season, I wore a Cardinal's robe—there is a portrait of one in the British National Gallery rather like me—and it took me a month to get rid of the effects. If I turn into a Socialist, therefore, it will be upon your advice."

"As far as politics go it matters very little what you turn into," said Sister Jenifer.

"What a statement!" exclaimed Max.

"It is perfectly true," she said. "At present what we are fighting is ignorance and indifference; in comparison to that the mere theory of government doesn't matter, for nothing is going to succeed while one half of society neither knows nor cares how the other half lives. Your politicians are

welcome to any theories they can find tenable, if only they will face facts."

"What are your own politics?"

"I haven't any; I haven't room for them. My only aim is just to get that one half of the community to come and look with understanding at the other half; and then service, I know, would follow. It won't until they do."

"Well, you are making me look," said Max.

"Yet I have not been able to make my father."

"Has he never been here?"

"He has opened churches."

"Well, you believe in prayer."

"That depends on how you define it."

"I wanted to ask you that. You are only a lay-sister; but some of you have taken vows—for a period, at all events."

"That is all the Church allows; but it makes little difference since they can always renew."

"Those who have taken vows—do they give themselves entirely up to prayer?"

"No, but they entirely depend upon it."

"Depend—how?"

"They could not do their work without it. You asked me for definition: I can only give you example. Some of our sisters quite literally cannot face what they have to do except after prayer; otherwise their flesh would revolt."

"Is it such horrible work?"

"They will not tell you so; but I know that it must be. You see I am rather an outsider. My father only allowed me to come here on certain conditions; and with the inner side of our work here I have nothing to do; I understand nothing about it."

Her face flushed slightly under his gaze, the faint, troubled flush of maidenhood which apprehends an evil of which it may not know the conditions; and he saw by swift intuition that this sincere spirit was ashamed of its own ignorance. His mind darted a guess that he had before him, in fact, an inexperience of life underlying intimate acquaintance with grief and poverty which he would not have believed to be possible. And oh, sexually, how it redoubled her beauty and charm! Yes, he could not deny that so unnatural a combination attracted him, and yet it enraged him also. A few moments ago he had heard from this woman's lips a declaration that no help could come till half and half made up one whole in knowledge and understanding; and yet there she stood—if his guess was right—hesitant and bashful on the borders of that great central problem about which parental authority had decreed she was to know nothing; an example set before him of that idealistic waste of womanhood which is for ever going on, and which for bad practical reasons society is always encouraging. For depend upon it the practical social result is what we men are really afraid of—not lest our women should lose either modesty or charm, but lest with knowledge they should apply themselves too ruthlessly to practical ends, and set upon their charm a price which hitherto we have avoided having to pay. And as he so moralized upon the relations of sex, a sentimental desire grew in him to kneel down there and then at her feet and tell her how good a young man from his point of view he had always been—and how bad a one from hers.

For the time being he resisted that temptation; other things that he was not yet sure of must come first; for before we can allow the beloved to think ill of us at all she must first think far better of us than we deserve. Then for the letting-down process there is a safe margin left, and confession becomes a luxury with no danger involved; since to see himself retrospectively pardoned by a heart virginally pure has surely restored to many a weary and disillusioned sensualist a better opinion of himself than he could ever have hoped to refurbish by his own efforts. That, oh ye men about town, is a good woman's mission in life; that is what she is for—when the watch has run down she winds it up again and sets it domestically ticking. And that she may continue to do so, let us keep her from all knowledge independently acquired. When we ourselves bring her the evidence, having first packed her fond jury of a heart, then we can also dictate verdict and sentence, and the world will run on in the grooves to which we have accustomed it.

All of which is a digression, and not in the least intended as being applicable to Max, unless, indeed, some reader of virulent morals so chooses to apply it; for far be it from this historian to prevent any reader forming his or her own judgment on the facts set forth. And if to any of these Max appears as one whose springs have run riotously down and now need setting up again—if his seems to be a heart that has never yet ticked domestically, because it had not been legally registered, I can at least promise them this—that before they come to the end of this history they will have an eminent ecclesiastical authority agreeing with them, and expressing their sentiments with an eloquence which I cannot hope to rival. And so having done with digression, let us return to the social education of Max, now trying to become acquainted with the lowest stratum of all.

IV

After a few weeks he began to distinguish in the squalor of the faces that surrounded him the separate causes of their malady—to know drink from disease, dissipation from destitution, the drug-habit from hunger. Complexion and facial expression stood more than dress as an indication of trade, habit, and environment; from physiognomy he began to learn history, and from Monday's streets a commentary on the linked sweetness long drawn out of Jewish followed by Christian sabbath. He became inured to smells, to the breathing of foul atmosphere, to contact with foul bodies, to a nakedness of speech such as he had not dreamed of, to a class-hatred that struck from eye to eye like murder, to an apathy of dead hopelessness that revolted him yet more. From Sister Jenifer he learned the hardest lesson of all, that to understand social conditions he must refrain from gifts of charity. And so, afraid of his own frailty, he came to his district with empty pockets, and going hungry himself spent hours among sale-dens, pawn-shops, the alleys where half-starved middle-men received the piece-work of sweated labor, and the black staircases where rent-collectors, hard-driven by competing agencies, plied a desperate piece-work of their own.

In every place he visited cleanliness was discouraged, and the water system seemed a mere after-thought. In most cases the taps were buttons requiring continuous pressure, and then yielding only an exiguous supply; a kettle took nearly a minute to fill, so that while one tenant drew service others stood waiting. He spoke indignantly of it to Sister Jenifer. What were the sanitary authorities doing? he asked.

"Oh, yes," she said, "those buttons are a new device; the old taps were taken away—they became too dangerous; these poor people found a way of turning them to effect."

"You mean they stole the fixings?"

"No; though they used to do that now and then. But this was at the last strike which happened to come during a drought. One of their leaders said to them: 'Take all the water you can; drain the city dry, make the rich give up their baths,—then perhaps they will attend to you.' They actually had the power; they organized the whole of the working district, and one night they turned on all the taps, the street fountains as well. And we, because at last they were taking their full share, were threatened with a water famine! Yes, if they had those tenement baths which the last Housing Commission recommended they could run us dry as their leader proposed,—hold the whole city up to ransom and dictate terms. As it was even those taps proved dangerous, so we gave them buttons instead; and of course the death-rate has gone up."

"And now the next strike has come."

"Ah, yes, but this is not such a large one and so, as it isn't reckoned 'dangerous,' the Government doesn't interfere, and no one outside troubles about the rights of it."

They were moving on the outskirts of a crowd in the center of which a demonstration of strikers was going on. Gaunt, hungry, apathetic faces formed the bulk of them; in their midst a man with a big voice talked heroically of the rights of labor and prophesied victory. They stood to listen for a while, then moved on. At the corner of a side-street which they crossed stood a smaller group; a woman, her hat tied round with a motor-veil, stood waving her arms from an orange-box.

"Who are those?" inquired Max.

"Women Chartists," said Sister Jenifer.

"What are they doing here?"

"They go wherever they can get a hearing."

Max stopped to listen a little satirically; he had never heard a woman speaking in public before. Presently he turned to his guide and found that her eye was on him. "Shall we go on?" he said.

"This does not interest you, then?"

"It is a subject about which I know nothing."

"But you came to learn."

"Well,—is that woman telling the truth?"

"No, not exactly."

"Does she know what she is talking about?"

"Not as well as she ought to."

"Then, isn't that sufficient?"

"You have listened to men here whose statements were just as wide of the mark, and whose proposals were just as useless."

"Yes, so you warned me; but what I find instructive is not the speaker but the crowd."

"You have a crowd here."

"A much smaller one."

"So you are for the majorities?"

Max acknowledged the stroke. "Very well," he said; "let us go back."

"No, I only wanted you to notice the crowd. Did they seem interested?"

"They listened."

"That is something, is it not, when she was talking of things that to their minds hardly concerned them?"

"But you say she was not telling the truth."

"She was ignorant, and she exaggerated; but for all they know what she is saying might be gospel."

"Is that how you would have it preached?"

"If gospels had to wait for the wise and prudent," said Jenifer, "they would wait till eternity. That woman was speaking not for an institution but for a movement."

"Do not such exaggerations condemn it?"

"By no means; if some did not exaggerate none of us would get a hearing—especially if we happened to be in a minority; and reformers always are."

"Though I embroider it for myself," said Prince Max, "from others I prefer to get plain truth."

"Plain truth," she replied, "is only that manner of dealing with a thing—with some wrong, say—which makes it plain to people that the wrong exists. Short of that you haven't got truth into them."

"Now you are preaching pragmatism," said Max.

"Do you suppose," she went on, "that to that dull, sunk, slow-witted crowd we have been looking at, a mere niggardly statement of facts would make the truth plain, or stir them to any action or feeling for others? That woman on some points over-stated her case quite ridiculously—especially as to the benefits and rewards which the women's Charter would bring—but the effect upon her hearers fell far short of what the real facts justify. Oh, people have to be bribed even to do no more than open their ears to the truth."

"By false promises of reward? Yes, you have the Church with you there. It deals with our ordinary everyday morality, in very much the same way. Tells a maximum of untruth so that a necessary minimum may spring out of it. How many Christians to-day really believe in the doctrine of hell?"

"Surely," she said, "to see the light of its fires in so many faces is proof enough."

"That is not the doctrine," said the Prince, "and you know it. Hell here and now may be very real; but it is not what your Church preaches. Many of those lit-up faces that you speak of are aglow with mere lustful enjoyment. But the Church does not teach that men can make the mistake when in hell of actually believing themselves in Heaven; that would be too dangerous. Turn on that tap, and the jasper sea in which your angels take their baths will run dry."

She looked at him half quizzically. "And what is your doctrine?" she inquired. "When you are enjoying yourself—saying things like that, for instance, hoping to hurt—do you ever think that you are in hell?"

"No," said Max, "I do not make enjoyment the test. Just now, for instance, I rather feel that I may be at the gates of Heaven; but I am not, therefore, superlatively happy. Can you promise me that the heavenly road is one of pure happiness?"

"To any one who accepted absolutely the Divine Will it must be."

"The Divine Will," said Max, "gave me my body and my reasoning power. You must not ask me to forfeit them. I agree with that old collegiate (a doctor of divinity like myself) to whom one of more austere piety had declared 'abject submission' the only possible attitude of the creature toward his Creator. 'No, no!' protested the Doctor, with outraged dignity, 'deference, but not—not abject submission!' Deference is all a man can honestly promise so long as reason remains to him; abject submission is fit only for lunatic asylums."

"And yet," she retorted, "abject submission to antecedents is all that science can infer when once it starts to investigate the springs of action."

"That is not to deny reason; that only conditions it. I wanted you to accuse me of blasphemy; but as you do not give me my legitimate openings I have to make them for myself. To me the abrogation of reason, on any pretense, is the most rooted blasphemy of which the mind of man is capable. Some modern Romanist penned once a hymn which had in it these or like words for its refrain—

'And black is white,
And wrong is right,
If it be Thy sweet Will.'

That, to my mind, is a blasphemous utterance, for it juggles with the fundamentals of all morality. The person who adopts that attitude as an act of surrender to earthly love is a sensualist. It is a form of sensualism rampant in women; and men encourage it by bestowing upon it the names of womanly virtues. To adopt a similar attitude in spiritual matters seems to me sensualism none the less. And what a hot-bed for that sort of sensualism the Church has always been and still is!"

His ugly talk roused her spirit of resistance.

"How can it be sensual," she protested, "when it results in self-denial and self-sacrifice?"

"Self-sacrifice," he replied, "may be merely sensualism in its intensest form; it is peculiarly a woman's temptation; the scientific name for it (since you throw science at my head) is 'negative egoism.' You yourself are quite capable of it; for you cannot get rid of the results of your training all in a day."

She did not flinch from his attack.

"What do you know of my training?" she asked.

"I know this: here are you the superior of any Bishop on the bench now preparing to play injured martyr at the loss of his political privileges; and what position of authority and influence has your Church to offer you—you and the thousands like you whose practical humanity alone has made its antiquated forms still possible? Yes, you are its life-preservers, and they tuck you away into subordinate positions and back slums where nobody hears of you. And you have been trained to think that it is right!"

"The training was all my own," she said. "I tucked myself."

"Wastefully, under parental conditions—you yourself have owned it."

"There is always more work than one can do."

"There is much more work that you could do; but here, what is your chance? Has it not struck you—if you had only the position given you, what a power you might be, in that direction, I mean, of bringing the two halves of society face to face, which you say is your main object? If that position were offered you would you accept it as a thing sent to you from God, or would you—?"

And then Max stopped abruptly, for he realized that in another moment he would have been offering her the succession to the throne, and he felt that the street was not exactly the right place for it. Not that he minded making the offer anywhere; but she, self-sacrificingly, might refuse; and a crowded street was not the place where he could tackle a refusal of the throne to advantage. It was not like an ordinary proposal; there were too many points to urge and objections to be met; while a certain amount of preliminary incredulity was almost inevitable. She might know that he loved her still; but it would take a considerable amount of knowing that he also wished her to sit with him upon the throne; nay, for that matter, to sit with him off it, if Court etiquette and the fates so ordained. And if they did so ordain, where would that great position be which he was proposing to offer?

And so as Max has ended his declaration abruptly let us also end the chapter abruptly, and wonder what the next, or the next but one may have to bring forth.

CHAPTER XII

AN ARRIVAL AND A DEPARTURE

I

Bad-as-Bad was a hardy annual which grew high up among the hills and pine-forests on the borders of Schafs-Kleider and Schnapps-Wasser. With its roots extending into both States it flourished exceedingly for three months of each year. During the winter it was bottled up in its native passes by snow, and for at least five months no visitors ventured thither to expose their constitutions to the rigors of its climate or of its waters. But in another bottled-up form, of a more portable character, it made a great trade and reputation for itself throughout Europe; and during the three summer months crowned heads visited it in turn (often by careful diplomatic arrangement when they or their countries happened not to be on good speaking terms), and drew after them a steady influx from that class of their communities on which a town composed almost entirely of hotels can most safely flourish.

The medicated springs, to which so many came but for which nobody thirsted, rose in Schnapps-Wasser territory; and being the property of the reigning house brought to it a huge revenue. Every red-stamped label broken so carelessly in the restaurants and sanatoria of Europe meant twopence halfpenny to the princely pocket of its highly descended ruler. And it was upon these proceeds that the young heir had absented himself for three years and fitted out an expensive expedition of a semi-military character to the unexplored wilds of South America.

Behind his back local warfare had gone on. Not for nothing had he said "crocodiles" to those

orchestral scramblings in the bass of an imperially inspired oratorio; and Schafs-Kleider, receiving certain mysterious grants in aid (for its own funds were nil), had started to sink shafts at a lower level on the outskirts of the town; and after many failures had secured at one point a trickle of water which tasted suspiciously like the real article, and was declared by interested experts to be chemically the same.

News had gone out to the Prince in the wilderness that by this earth-stroke his revenues from the retail business might presently be very seriously affected.

His remedy had been simple; he had directed the town authorities to lay out a new cemetery at a strategic point on the slopes lying towards Schafs-Kleider; and though it had little actual effect upon the chemical properties of this new breach in his patent it created a prejudice in unscientific minds, and the Schafs-Kleider variant of the Bad-as-Bad waters failed to "catch on." And thus it came about that on returning from his three years' exile Berlin had not restored him to favor, and he, one of the richest and least encumbered princes in Europe, was more or less going a-begging—an easy prey to the match-making net which, by assiduous correspondence, his aunts and others had prepared for him.

Bad-as-Bad, though economically its most important asset, was not the capital of the principality; but when the Prince arrived at Schnapps, thirty miles distant, Bad-as-Bad fired off a salute from a toy cannon in the gardens of the municipality, and hoisted the royal ensign on the flag-staff beside the kiosk. The principality having been without its head for three years had recovered it.

On hearing that salute her Majesty, Queen Alicia of Jingalo, at once knew what it referred to. "Ah!" she remarked, in a tone of complete satisfaction, "that means that the dear Prince has arrived. What a distance he has been! I was afraid we might miss him." And as she spoke her glance traveled across to her daughter Charlotte, and in the peace and plenitude of her domestic musings she smiled with more meaning than she was aware of. Princess Charlotte caught sight of that smile, and sitting observant saw presently that her mother was studying her with some attention.

"You are looking very well, child," remarked her Majesty. "I am sure that the place suits you."

"Getting out of the place suits me," said the Princess. "I like the hills, and the forest. Three miles away one meets nobody, except the peasantry."

"Well, be sure you don't overdo it; and don't let your face get too brown. Remember that sort of thing doesn't go with a low dress."

"But I am not wearing low dress while I am here."

"You may be before we go. We may have to give a dinner in the Prince's honor; or he in ours. Now he has arrived he is sure to come over and see us. What very nice-sized countries these principalities are! I wish we had them everywhere, then being kings and queens would be really no trouble whatever. If Jingalo had only been smaller how much younger it would have made your father; and, besides, it would have got rid of all that socialist element."

How it would have done so the dear lady did not stop to explain; she rattled on merely because she had become aware that Charlotte was looking at her with a suspiciousness that was rather disconcerting. In her heart of hearts she was a little bit afraid of Charlotte, or of what Charlotte might do. She had not the key to her character; and when the Princess took advantage of a so-called holiday and a change of locality in order to develop new habits and drop certain conventions—especially conventions of dress—her Majesty became uneasy. But just now she was trying for special reasons to drive with a light rein; she wanted Charlotte to enjoy herself, to feel that in this place she could have things more her own way than was customary, and so develop associations which would draw her back to the locality. So far the quite unusual experiment of accompanying the King to his cure had been a success; the people of Bad-as-Bad were delighted at the compliment of receiving Jingalese royalty in the form of a family party; all the aunts and other female relatives of the absent Prince had been most pleasant and attentive; and Charlotte herself had responded to the release accorded her from Court etiquette by becoming wonderfully well and looking really very handsome.

One day, quite unbeknownst to her mother, she had gone right up the inside of the green copper spire of the old Rathhaus, and there seated within its perforated cupola had drunk from a glass of native wine, and thrown the rest of it, glass and all, down the spire—an ancient custom which, as she only heard afterwards, entitled its performer, though of outside extraction, to make her own selection and marry locally.

"So now you have become a native of us," said a chuckling old Margravine, great-aunt to the Prince, when informed of the exploit by one of her grand-nephews who had mischievously lured Charlotte on. "Now you cannot go back!"

For these small princelings were ready enough to make a Jingalese princess feel at home in their midst. But the whole thing, in view of its local color, was rather precipitate and indecorous; and when the Queen heard of it, and of its special application, from the old match-making Margravine with whom she had shared confidences, she was aghast. "Charlotte," she cried, "whatever did you do that for?"

"I did it for fun, mamma."

"But, my dear, it was such a very—forward thing to do!"

Why it was so "forward" Charlotte afterwards found out; for the moment she only thought that she had broken the maternal conventions; things which she did not hold in much regard.

II

Bad-as-Bad had now been in the enjoyment of its Jingalese visitors for over a month. The town prided itself on knowing how to behave to royalty; and every day when the King went down to take the waters, or strolled in the municipal gardens, people pretended not to look at him; and only when he was not actually there did the conductor of the famous band, in the ranks of which operatic first-fiddles kept themselves in practice during their summer holidays—only then did the conductor throw out a delicate compliment, for chance ear-shot, by performing, with variations such as were heard nowhere else, the National Anthem of Jingalo. But each day the musical program was submitted for his Majesty's approval; and if he or the Queen made any suggestion—as it was always hoped they would—then so surely as they approached the kiosk the strains of that particular selection were heard, telling them that Bad-as-Bad was always in attendance upon their wishes, always anxious to give them pleasure, always appreciative of their presence in its midst.

Every day the King paid for his six glasses of water at the fountain-head; every day he bought a buttonhole from the pretty flower-seller in peasant costume who was not herself a peasant at all; every day he bought a Jingalese newspaper at the garden kiosk, and sat under the shade of the trees reading it; and nobody, looking at him, would know that even there he was assiduously followed, ringed round and watched by six detectives, nor could they have any idea how carefully the bona fides of each newly arrived visitor was examined, inquired into, and verified all the way back along the route from place of arrival to place of origin; nay, how thoroughly the luggage of any who were in the least suspicious was searched behind their backs in order to discover whether they had any political opinions likely to prove dangerous to a King taking his holiday.

When the Queen drove out little girls sometimes threw flowers into her carriage, but never often enough to make it a nuisance or to seem mechanical; and when they happened to be very small the Queen would stop and ask them their name and their age and how many brothers and sisters they had; and then a silver coin would pass to the hands of the patient little sentinel. And when the Queen had driven on, a large she-bear or elder sister would come out of the wood and devour it. But everybody would hear about the domestic inquiries and the gift, and would say what a really nice lady the Queen was. That is always the great surprise of the common people when they meet royalty.

But what pleased the inhabitants of Bad-as-Bad most of all was when the Queen came out and sat upon her balcony in the cool of the evening and knitted,—doing it, as someone who watched her through opera-glasses was able to affirm, in the German manner. It was even asserted that she could turn a heel and narrow at the toes without either looking or interrupting the flow of her conversation; and we who have had the cobbling habits of a king of Montenegro held up to us for admiration, must we not think that this also was a most queenly act and an example to all haus-fraus?

Princess Charlotte (the reason for whose being with her parents on this occasion was beginning to leak out) was more elusive in her habits and was seldom on view. She never took the waters, nor sat in the balcony to listen to the band; but kept unheard-of hours—early in the morning, late in the evening—slipping out by back ways and going off on long day expeditions with only one of her ladies. One day she even got lost and spent the night at a hill-chalet. On a lake she had been seen rowing: some said that far out from shore she had actually bathed, but that was not possible; probably she had only fallen in.

The Queen kept what count of her she could, and now and then would counsel moderation, or would try to impose it by getting some of the more elderly gentlemen-in-waiting to join her expeditions. They came home limping and exhausted; in her pursuit of health and vigor Charlotte was ruthless.

"They shouldn't come," she said. "If they do, and find it too much for them, they can sit down at the boundaries and wait for us."

And so she went her own way quite happily, till suddenly there came an upheaval and all semblance of moderation was thrown aside. The cause of this upset was the calculated indiscretion of a Berlin newspaper which had caught Charlotte's eye. There set forth was the story of her ascent of the Rathhaus spire, there also the local custom with its meaning carefully explained, there pointed inquiry as to its particular application if certain rumors were true; and then followed the circumstantial evidence.

The Princess flamed into her mother's presence, paper in hand. "Is this true?" she demanded.

"Dear, dear," said the Queen, having read no further than the preliminary anecdote; "well, you shouldn't do such things!" Then she came upon commentary and surmise, with dates, chapter, and verse. It did not amount to very much, but such facts as there were to go upon were insidiously underlined, and the Prince of Schnapps-Wasser was named.

"Oh, dear," she complained, "I do wish these papers would not be so previous and officious and

meddlesome and pretending to know so much."

"But is it true?" demanded Charlotte.

"Is what true?"

"Is it true that you have brought me here to meet him; that we have been waiting for him to come; that some one has sent him my photograph and that he—Oh, it is unbearable!" She broke off and snatched at the offending paper, that she might once more sear her vision with its triangular allusions.

"You oughtn't to read such tittle-tattle!" said her mother. "Why can't you leave the papers alone?"

It was nothing much in itself, the usual coinage of the society journalist intelligently anticipating events. It pointed with sleek pleasantry to the fact that the Prince of Schnapps-Wasser, returning to his inheritance after long exile, would find greeting awaiting him from a royal house which had apparently been very anxious to make his acquaintance. Then followed an account of the visit and prolonged sojourn at Bad-as-Bad of the royal family of Jingalo; the beauty of the Princess was spoken of, her accomplishments, her exploits in climbing and walking; it was rumored that even in South America her photograph had been seen and admired. It was known that the Prince had arrived unexpectedly at his port of departure, and finding a boat on the point of sailing had gone on board. Was it the knowledge that only till a certain date—? The rest we need not set down here. As though it would help her to blot out the record with its attendant circumstances, Princess Charlotte tore the paper into little pieces.

"My dear, don't be so violent!" said the Queen.

"I have been brought here so that he may come and look at me!" cried the Princess, white with wrath. The Queen took up her knitting.

"Nothing of the sort; you were brought here to be with us and to be kept out of mischief."

"Why are we staying a fortnight longer than we intended to?"

"I don't know what you mean by 'we'; I intended to stay till your father had completed his cure. This year it has taken longer."

"It hasn't! He is putting on weight again; only yesterday he told me so. You can't get more cured when that has begun, because it means that you are acclimatized."

"It's no use your talking as if you were a medical authority, my dear, and offering your advice, for we shan't take it."

Charlotte opened her mouth and bottled a breath before she next spoke.

"Who sent him my photograph?"

"Gracious me, child, anybody can get your photograph. Isn't it in all the shop-windows?"

"Not in South America."

"Oh, yes; they are getting quite civilized over there now."

Charlotte struck at a venture.

"*You* sent it; you know you did! Yes, and then he sent you that thing of himself."

"My dear Charlotte," said the Queen composedly, "you needn't get excited; these little exchanges do sometimes happen quite naturally in the course of correspondence, and I have a great deal of correspondence as you know. Now do forget everything that foolish newspaper has been saying, and look at the thing sensibly. Isn't it my duty to give you every chance of meeting those—those whom it is suitable for you to meet? Are you always going to begin by saying you won't know people?"

"Begin what?" Charlotte shot the question; the Queen turned it aside and went on.

"Now here is a case: this young man who has been away three years among savages—I wonder he wasn't eaten by them—running into all sorts of dangers and doing a lot of foolish brave things that he needn't have done; and then his uncle, the Prince, dying behind his back and everything left to a regency waiting his return. Isn't it quite natural, seeing how things are, that he should be wishing to settle down? Now I am going to be quite frank with you. He has seen your photograph, I know; but I didn't send it to him, and he didn't send me his. We heard that he intended coming to see us—to Jingalo, I mean—and after that I got it; as a matter of fact his aunt, the Margravine, sent it to me; and I, in exchange, sent her yours."

"Ah! so that was why she came to see us directly we got here, and why she looked at me so, and kept asking me so many questions about myself. I couldn't understand it at the time—her being so curious. But you knew, yes, you knew!"

"Well, what if I did?"

"Oh!" cried the Princess, "why, why was I born?"

And then her indignation broke loose, and she became, as the Queen afterwards remarked to her

husband when describing the scene, "most unreasonable, and more violent than any one could believe."

After about ten minutes of it her Majesty rose quietly from her chair and rang the bell.

III

A message came to the King that her Majesty wished to see him.

When he arrived in the Queen's boudoir he found his wife sitting in all her accustomed composure; and yet somehow the scene suggested disturbance. Away from her mother at the furthest window stood Charlotte, a charmingly disheveled figure; flushed and bright-eyed she was looking out over the Platz and mopping vehemently at her nose with a handkerchief.

"Don't do that there!" remarked the Queen, "any one might see you."

"Why shouldn't they? They'd only think that I had a cold."

"It isn't the time of the year for colds. Either leave off, or come away from the window."

"There, you see!" cried Charlotte, stung to fresh exasperation, "I can't even stand where I like now!"

"What is the matter?" inquired the King.

"Tell your father what you have been saying," said the Queen, finding it better that the culprit herself should explain.

"I don't know what I've been saying."

"I should think not; it didn't sound like it. Now that you've got both parents to listen to you, talk to them and tell them your mind."

This threw Charlotte into a fresh paroxysm. "Oh, why did I ever have parents?" she cried.

"Yes, that appears to be the trouble," said the Queen. "John, this is a revolting daughter. I've heard of them, and now I've got the thing brought home to me. Look at her!"

"What are you revolting about, my dear?" inquired the King kindly.

"Everything!" exclaimed Charlotte.

"Quite true," said the Queen, "everything."

"Well, begin at the beginning." And Charlotte screwed herself up to speak.

"I came to talk to mamma about something," she said, "something that mattered very much. I suppose you know about it too."

The Queen gave her husband an informing look.

"And what do you think she did?" Charlotte continued. "First she told me not to be foolish; and after that, to everything I said she went on—just as if she didn't hear me—knitting, knitting!"

"She says," interrupted the Queen, "that she is not going to marry anybody, and particularly not the Prince, because she hates him. I say how can she know when she hasn't seen him."

"I won't marry him!" cried Charlotte, "I've seen his photograph."

"Yes, and you liked it," said her mother. This did not improve matters.

"But nobody is forcing you to marry him," said the King. "I don't know why it has even been mentioned." And, seeking a clue, he cast a troubled glance at the Queen.

"It's in all the papers!" retorted Charlotte, indulging in poetic license. "And you know it! Yes, he is coming here to look at me, to see if he likes me, and to see if I can pretend to like him. But I won't be looked at, it's an indignity I won't stand. I'll not even see him!"

"But why ever not?" exclaimed her father.

Charlotte wriggled with impatience.

"Oh, can't you see? Supposing he comes and does look at me; and then goes away without—without caring!—That's what you are asking me to put up with. For me to know, and for him to know, and for him to know that I know! How would you like it yourself?"

"I tell her she is very ridiculous," said the Queen. "A Princess can't marry a mushroom. Does she want to fall in love with her eyes shut. Something has to be done beforehand, or we should never be anywhere—"

"I don't want to be anywhere," said the Princess.

"Outside a lunatic asylum," said her mother, completing the sentence.

"My dear child," put in the King, "don't you see that nothing is really settled—and will not be until you agree to it?"

"Then why did you ever tell him anything about it? Why couldn't we have just met? It's this picking of us out beforehand behind our backs, and then telling us of it; that's what I can't stand!"

"My dear, nobody is forcing you," repeated the King persuasively.

"Then I won't see him."

"I tell her she must," remarked the Queen in a tone of comfortable finality.

"Mamma, will you stop knitting!" cried Charlotte. "You treat me as if I were an insect!"

"You have got the brains of one," retorted her mother. "John, will you please speak to her? Perhaps you can understand what it all means; I can't. She has been talking Greek to me—something or other about the Trojans."

"Yes; the Trojan women," corrected Charlotte.

"She says she's like one of them!"

"So I am."

"I don't know which one, you mentioned so many."

"All of them. Yes, papa, they had to go and live with foreigners—men they had never seen."

"Don't say 'live with'; it's an objectionable term."

"Die with them, then: some did! One of them killed a king in his bath; at least his wife did, but it's all the same."

"Yes; she began quoting some verses to me about that bath affair," said the Queen. "And I must say they didn't sound to me quite decent."

Charlotte was quite ready to repeat it.

"Oh, don't quote poetry to me!" begged the King. "I don't understand it."

"And I try not to," said the Queen. So Charlotte's quotation was ruled out of the discussion.

"Don't you think, my dear," persuaded her father, "that meeting him here, as it just so happens, will seem sufficiently accidental?"

"Not after we've waited for him all this time; not after I climbed up that spire and threw my cap at him without knowing it," said the Princess. "Oh, you don't know what that paper has been saying!" And she pointed to the bits.

The King stooped and began gathering them up.

"It's all nonsense, John," said the Queen. "Don't indulge her by paying any attention."

And at that renewed proof of her mother's imperviousness of mind Princess Charlotte ran out of the room.

"Leave her alone!" remarked the Queen, sure of her own sagacity, "she'll calm down. My belief is that she really likes him. I saw her looking at his photograph; it wasn't only once, either."

IV

Three days later the King and Queen of Jingalo were at home by special appointment to receive a call of ceremony. The streets of Bad-as-Bad were hung with flags—here and there of the two nationalities, side by side, their corners (delicate symbol!) tied together by a knot of white ribbon.

Grooms of the Chamber had donned full Court dress for the occasion, and a complete staff of servants, equerries, attachés, and ministers in attendance lined the route from the portico of the converted hotel which served as the King's villa to the large private apartment where the actual meeting took place.

"His Royal Highness, Grand Duke and Hereditary Prince of Schnapps-Wasser," pronounced the Master of Ceremonies in that awestruck tone which is exclusively reserved for the introduction of crowned heads or territorial princes; and a youthful giant, six feet four in height, entered the room, struck his heels together with military precision, and bowed low.

He wore his own clothes—one of his own uniforms, that is to say—and the King of Jingalo wore one of his, for they had not hitherto exchanged regiments in token of peace and amity—a matter to be put right on a future occasion.

The Prince wore sky-blue trimmed with sable, and brightened with silver facings; tunic and trousers of an extremely tight fit set off a muscular frame. From his shoulders, presumably in case of accident, hung an extra tunic; but the other extra did not show. Boots reaching to the thighs and a head-dress of almost equal height borne upon the arm, completed the splendor of his array. Bowing his way in, he had so martial an air that the Queen's heart was quite won by it, and she regretted that Charlotte, belated in her attendance, had not been there to see.

The Prince uttered with correctness, though in a rather heavy German accent, the formula of royal greeting; and throughout the interview continued to speak in Jingalese. As soon as the doors were closed—leaving only royalty, he dropped into homelier speech. "I hope the cure has done you no harm," he said, "that it has not too greatly diverted your digestion; some people are much upset by it."

The King and Queen hastened to reassure him. Bad-as-Bad, its air, its waters, and its society had treated them in the handsomest way possible. "We are quite sorry," said the Queen, "that so soon we shall have to leave."

The Prince glanced round before asking abruptly: "And the Princess—she is still here?"

"She will be here presently," answered the Queen, "I am expecting her any moment. She goes on long walks," she added, by way of explanation.

"Ah, good!" commented the Prince.

Many minutes went by, conversation alternately flowed and halted. They were all conscious of an impediment, for still the Princess did not appear; and at last her Majesty was impelled to send one of her ladies to make inquiry. "She takes such very long walks," explained the Queen once more.

"Ah, good, very good indeed," remarked the Prince in a spirit of acceptance.

And then, after a little more waiting, the lady came back to say that the Princess could not be found; she and one of her ladies had gone out together.

"How very forgetful of her!" exclaimed the Queen.

Just then, very discreetly, but with a look full of meaning, a private secretary came and put a telegram into the King's hand. Excusing himself to the Prince he opened it; it was postmarked from the station office at Schnapps, and it read thus—

"I have gone home. Charlotte."

It was no use; the surprise of it was too much for him. "She has run off!" he ejaculated; the compromising phrase had slipped out before he was aware.

"Who?" cried his wife, though knowing quite well.

"Charlotte; she has gone home."

Husband and wife stared at each other mute and amazed; while the Prince sat trying with amiable look to excuse himself for being there.

Then the Queen did her best to cover matters; but it was not a great success. "I knew that she wanted to get home," she murmured. "And she is so impulsive; sometimes there is no holding her at all."

"I must apologize," said the King. "This is really quite unaccountable."

The Prince's eye flashed with a curious light; he smiled good-humoredly.

"I think it is very interesting," said he. "When will it be allowed that I shall see her?"

CHAPTER XIII

A PROMISSORY NOTE

I

On their return to Jingalo the Princess heard from her parents how badly she had behaved.

"But I had to do it!" she protested. "After what that paper had said, and all the other things, how else could I show that I hadn't come on purpose?"

"And pray, do you always mean running away from him?" inquired the Queen.

"I shan't go to Bad-as-Bad again, I know that."

"But if he comes here."

"Why, are you going to ask him?"

"He has asked himself," said her father.

"Oh!" This came as a surprise.

"But, of course," he continued, "if you mean to go on being rude to him, it wouldn't do."

"I have never been rude to him!" protested Charlotte. "I only refused to be trapped into meeting

him. I shouldn't have minded if it had just been by accident; but it wasn't."

"I'm afraid it can never be by accident now," replied her father. "But you needn't be here when he arrives, or when he goes; though in between whiles, of course, you would have to meet him. And then—well, if you wanted to see more of each other—he might come again."

Charlotte showed her distaste for any temporizing of that sort. "The only difference I can see," she remarked, "is that first you were for offering me to him openly and now I'm to be a sandwich."

"You are not to be anything you don't like, my dear," said her father with gentleness. "But you know, child, we have not the whole world to choose from; being kings and queens and princesses doesn't make life a fairy tale."

"But it does, when we have to end by marrying princes. That's the bother of it."

"Well, I am trying to make it easier for you. Oh, I admit the drawbacks; but why make them out worse than they are?"

Charlotte's moods always softened under her father's cajolery; not that she was more fond of him than of her mother; but these two had more ground for mutual sympathy and understanding; and pity for his vaguely harassed countenance was never far absent from her heart.

"I am having just now," the King went on, "a very trying and disturbing time—in ways that I don't want to talk about. Do try, child, not to add to my anxieties."

Charlotte, feeling compunction working within her, thought hard for a while. "Before he comes ——" she said, and stopped. "Papa, when does he come?"

"Not till after the winter session has opened—perhaps about Christmas."

"Well, before he comes, then, I want to go away quite by myself for three weeks or a fortnight, and then—I'll think about it. If, when the time comes, you want me to see him I will, and I promise not to be rude to him. But he shan't think that I have been waiting for him, or that I want to have anything to do with him; I shall make that quite plain."

"Then I do hope that you know what not being rude means," put in the Queen; "for I must say that doesn't sound like it."

"Oh, I will provide a safe margin," replied Charlotte. "He shall have nothing to complain of. If I do see him I will be as nice to him as ever I can; much nicer than you have been to me!"

"Now, my dear, don't begin scuffling again!" said her father deprecatingly. "Very well; that's settled then."

"And you will give me that fortnight?"

"Longer, my dear, if you wish."

"No," said the Queen, "a fortnight is quite enough, if she means to spend it pretending to be a Trojan woman."

"If I stay away longer than a fortnight," said Charlotte, "you can send and fetch me." Then she turned to her father. "I am very sorry, papa, ever to have to pain you: but you don't know how dreadful it feels if one isn't allowed to be oneself."

"Oh, don't I?" exclaimed his Majesty. "My dear, if you knew what being a king was really like—but there, we won't talk politics now! By the way, as you came back before we did, do you happen to know what has become of Max?"

"I haven't seen him," said Charlotte with a certain air of discretion; "but I had a line from him in answer to one I wrote on my arrival: and he does seem to have been doing something at last."

"What has he been doing?"

"Getting his head broken."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the Queen. "However did he come to do that?"

"He says he was working among the strikers and got hit. Nobody knows about it, and he doesn't want it known. He writes that he is being very well looked after at some private nursing place."

"Did he give you the address?" inquired her Majesty suspiciously.

"No; he said he would be home in a day or two, and then we might all come and see him."

"So this is what goes on while I am away!" complained the Queen, as though her being at home might have prevented it. "And I wonder how it was we didn't hear the news. To think of poor Max getting hit like that and the papers saying nothing about it!"

II

Later in the day the King heard more of the matter from the Comptroller-General. It had not been kept out of the papers quite as completely as it should have been. There were rumors, allusions;

but none of the leading dailies had said anything.

"I gather, sir," said the General, "that the Prince has been preparing himself very thoroughly for the work of the coming Commission, making personal investigations, mixing daily with the people in the very poorest districts. Of course it was the duty of the detective service to know of it and to take what steps they could to insure his safety. I am told that what actually happened was that on one occasion his Royal Highness went to the aid of the police, hard pressed by a gang of rioters; and he was injured in the general mêlée. It all took place in a moment and of course no one had any idea that he would involve himself in it. When he was picked up by the detectives he gave a certain address." Here the Comptroller assumed an air of the utmost discretion. "To that address he was taken; and there I believe, sir, still remains."

"Dear, dear," said the King, "very distressing, very unfortunate. I had hoped all that was over."

"There is no reason, sir, to doubt that he has been properly looked after; certificated nurses have been in attendance, and at no time was there any danger."

"And how much of this has got into the papers?"

"Nothing, sir, as to the origin of the affair; but there have been some interrogations as to his Highness's present whereabouts, and an idea is abroad that he is not where the Court circular continues to say he is. Of course, when such rumors creep out there are also undesirable suggestions, which it would be well to put a stop to as soon as possible. I am glad to hear from your Majesty that the Prince intends coming back into residence. I have been in communication with his secretary, but I have not that gentleman's confidence and he has told me nothing."

"Well," said the King, "at all events the cause of it all—however much the result of indiscretion—was quite reputable."

"Oh, quite."

"Commendable even."

"I am told that his Highness showed great dash and determination." Yet whatever he had been told, there was embarrassment in the General's manner.

"Very well, then," said the King, "if there is any more tittle-tattle—in the press, I mean—you might let the facts be known; surely they ought to strike the popular imagination; and I'm sure the police need all the support we can give them just now."

The General hesitated.

"Would not that tend somewhat to prejudice his Highness's position as an impartial head of the Commission? Talking to the workers themselves, before the sittings have yet begun, has a certain air of *parti pris*. Some of the Commission, I fear, would not like it."

"To tell the truth," said the King, "I very much doubt whether the Prince will serve upon that Commission at all. He will probably be called elsewhere."

The Comptroller seemed considerably relieved. "Ah, that, of course, entirely removes the difficulty. I am afraid, sir, things are in a very disturbed state; so many people with new ideas are airing them just now; sympathy is being shown for criminals, and respect for government is not increasing. I know that the Prime Minister is getting very anxious; he hopes that to-morrow he may see your Majesty."

The King did not welcome the news; during the past few months he had quite lost any remnant of liking that he might once have had for the head of his Government. But when the Prime Minister arrived they exchanged the usual compliments and each was glad to see the other looking so well after change of air and occupation. In the Prime Minister's case, however, that was already over; politicians were in harness again to their respective departments, and on reopening his portfolio he had found a pack of troubles awaiting him.

The nuisance of Jingalese politics was this, that the political situation never would keep itself within the bounds of the ministerial program; and to-day not only had certain voting interests become obstreperous, but other interests which had not the vote were obstreperous also. In these last few months, while its rulers had been taking their well-earned rest, Jingalo had remained agog, obstinately progressive on foolish lines of its own; nothing any longer seemed content to stay as it had been: movement had become a craze.

Under his monarch's eye the Prime Minister thumbed his notes. He spoke of falling revenue, stagnation of trade, strikes, and the increase of violence. Police had actually been killed and the riot leaders were on trial. Presently he came to lesser matters.

"Sedition," said he, passing them in review, "is now openly preached every week in the *Women's War Cry*."

"Why do you not suppress it?" inquired the King.

"It is difficult to do that, sir, without disturbing trade. The paper is highly offensive and seditious; but it has an enormous advertising interest at its back, and so we don't like to touch it. When shop-looting began three years ago as a form of political propaganda it was noticed that those firms which advertised in the *Women's War Cry* escaped the attentions of the rioters.

Immediately the rush to advertise in its pages became tremendous—especially as further loots were then threatening. It has now some forty pages of advertisement and can afford in consequence to retain upon its staff the best journalists and critical writers of the day. Its *War Cry*, printed separately, inserted as a loose supplement, and with the statement 'given gratis' stamped across it in red ink, occupies a comparatively small portion of its space; all the rest is advertisement and high-class journalism. The circulation has gone up by leaps and bounds, and the profits are very considerable. If we prosecuted we might only find that in law the two portions were wholly distinct and independent of each other (I am told that they have even different printers), and the failure of the Crown's case would be a blow to the prestige of the Government; while if we succeeded altogether in suppressing it we should be more unpopular with the great middle-class trade interests than we are already."

"Why should you try to be popular?" inquired the King.

"A Government cannot exist upon air," remarked the Prime Minister; "and, after all, we do endeavor to deal fairly by all the interests which go to make up the prosperity of the country."

"You mean the trade prosperity?"

The Prime Minister did; but he did not like it to be stated thus baldly. "I was only wondering," went on the King, "what price you were prepared to pay for it. We must tolerate sedition, it seems; must we also, in the same interest, encourage disease?"

"I fear that I do not follow your Majesty's argument."

"I was merely recalling what the Prince told me for a fact just before I went abroad. He had been informed of it by a social worker who gave him chapter and verse. Two years ago the medical profession published a book exposing all the fraudulent patents and quack medicines which occupy so large a space in the advertising columns of our newspapers. The book was put authoritatively upon the market, and, as I understand, was advertised in all the leading papers. When the paid-for advertisements terminated not a single paper would renew the contract. The holders of those quack medicines and patents had found means to shut down (so far as the advertising of it was concerned) a scientific work which threatened to diminish their profits. That is why I ask what price we are prepared to pay for the protection of trade interests."

"I should like to be assured of the truth of that statement, with all respect to your Majesty, before I pass any comment."

"You can write to the College of Medicine if you really wish for the facts. I myself made very much the same query, and was shown as proof a letter from its president to one of the medical journals."

But even this did not induce the Prime Minister to regard the matter very seriously. "After all, sir," said he, "viewed in a certain light it is only a method of trade competition; for when the sales of patent medicines decrease no doubt the doctors begin to profit."

"The State has thought it worth while," said the King, "to give to the medical profession a certificated monopoly. Is it outside its province to warn the public against charlatans?"

"Is not charlatans an extreme term? I believe, sir, that many of these patents are quite excellent and in their first effects a stimulant to health; and in these days when 'suggestion' and 'faith-healing' are so much talked of it is an arguable proposition that those drugs which give to mind and body a certain preliminary incentive afford the best leverage for faith to work on. Of course there are a great many matters which need control, supervision, and reform; vested interests do tend to create abuses; but I must remind your Majesty that in the pushing of its reforms the Government has not been quite a free agent. In many respects we have been greatly hindered; that is still the crux of the political situation."

"Ah, yes," said the King, "you do well to remind me. You are, I take it, now engaged in educating the country; the terms of your proposals are before it. May I ask whether your anticipations of popular support have proved correct?"

"We find no reason to alter our opinion as to the necessary solution."

"Or as to your determination to proceed with it?"

The Prime Minister was very urbane. "Your Majesty has been good enough to indicate a date when all difficulties will be removed."

It was a sufficient statement of what was in store.

"Thank you," said the King, "I did wish to know. Have you done well at the by-elections?"

"Beyond the inevitable tear-and-wear due to our period of office we have nothing to complain of."

"I have been longer in office than you," said the King, smiling rather sadly, "and I suppose that in my case the inevitable wear-and-tear has been proportionately greater. You will make allowances, therefore, if I have been slow in arriving at my conclusion. After the date we agreed upon I think you will have no ground for complaint."

"I hope your Majesty has never regarded as a complaint the advice which I have felt bound to offer."

"There is a complaint somewhere," said the King; "perhaps a constitutional one. All I wanted to avoid was quack remedies."

He was rather pleased with himself at thus rounding off the discussion: for while reiterating his promise he had indicated that his own opinion was quite as unchanged as that of his ministers. And so with a little time still left in which to turn round he bethought him of the duty which lay on him to set his house in order against future events. And then it struck him how very important it was that Max should now "settle down" and eliminate for good and all certain elements from his life. Yes, it had become quite necessary that Max should marry.

III

Max was back again in his proper quarters, and the Queen had been to pay him a visit of motherly condolence. She, too, was set upon eliminating from his life those things which ought not to be in it; and finding him still rather feeble from the blow that had fallen on him, and with a head still bandaged, she thought it a seasonable opportunity to press him in the way he should go. But she was not one of those who have any taste for probing into young men's lives; she had an instinctive feeling that such a line of ethical exploration lay entirely beyond her; and so when she approached the subject her touch was only upon the surface.

"Max, my dear," she said fondly, "I do wish you would marry."

Max smiled at her with filial indulgence, and then, perceiving that there might be entertainment in a conversation well packed with double meanings, he fell in with her suggestion.

"I wish I could," he said, "but there are difficulties that you don't understand."

"Oh, yes, I think I do," she answered. "Of course with us there are always difficulties. The choice is so limited."

"I should rather incline to say that it is fixed."

"You mean just to the two I told you of? But you wouldn't have either of them."

"Perhaps I ought to say that I am fixed, then; I can't very well see myself changing."

"Oh, no, Max, no! Don't say that!" cried his mother, alarmed. "It is so very important that you should marry. And people are beginning to expect it."

"Yes, but as I say, there are difficulties—religious ones."

This was strange news for the Queen. Had Max a conscience then? It was a portent for which she had not been prepared.

"Of course," she said, "I don't want to ask questions."

"Perhaps you had better not."

"But I do want you to settle."

"I am settled," said Max.

It was dreadful to hear him say so, and a horrible idea that he had contracted a secret marriage with that foreign woman crossed her mind. Was this the difficulty that she did not understand? She grew timorous, afraid that he was going to tell her something—set before her some moral problem which she could not possibly solve. What if he were trying to entrap her, to lure her into taking sides with him over something no King or Government could countenance? From such a danger as that all her conventional femininity gathered itself in a panic-stricken bundle and fled.

"Max, dear," she said, "I would much rather you didn't tell me."

"I quite agree," he replied.

"But——" She paused, searching her mind for succor; and then, having found it, "Why not see the Archbishop about it?" she urged; "I am sure he could remove all your difficulties."

Max almost jumped out of his skin before he perceived how guileless had been his mother's remark. But the opportunity was certainly not to be missed.

"I should be delighted to see him," he said. "Indeed, I think he more than any one might solve my difficulty."

"Then you shall!" cried his mother, and fondly believed that, without becoming entangled herself she had wrought a good work and provided means to a solution. The Archbishop would, of course, be able to solve for him any difficulties of conscience, and to put such things as—well, anything he might have done in the past—in its right and proper place.

Her Majesty had a great belief in archbishops. At the hands of one she had been confirmed, it had taken two of them to marry her, and by one or another each of her four children had been well and truly baptized. They had also preached sermons of eloquent optimism over the two who had so prematurely died. And since she regarded all that they had done for her as eminently successful in result, they stood out in her world as the most efficient aids to the spiritual etceteras of life; and if any moral difficulty dimmed for a moment the clear horizon of her soul she would turn to the nearest archbishop for advice and encouragement.

And so the Archbishop came to see Prince Max in his convalescence, and sat by his side and talked to him, and tried by various diplomatic shifts to draw his confidence in the salutary direction desired by her Majesty; for he and the Queen had held conversation together on the matter. And Max, lying back at ease upon his cushions, and pretending to be a little further from complete recovery than he really was, examined that face of stern ecclesiastical mold, and seeking therein for some likeness to his beloved found none.

Nevertheless he listened respectfully without protest to the voice of the Church, when at last the Archbishop started to deliver his charge: he heard how necessary it was for the nation that those who were its rulers should set before it an example of regular family life, and how inexpedient it was for that example to be too long delayed; he heard of duty as though it came by inheritance to the accompaniment of a position and a title, and of many other things that he had heard tell of before and profoundly disagreed with; but for once he was not argumentative. He let the Church speak to him and advise him to do the thing he was longing to do, and to leave that life which (without a word said on the matter) he was known to have been leading in the past. And when the Archbishop had quite done and taken his departure, then Max rose up from his bed of sickness and went down to Sister Jenifer and, presenting to her gaze a broken and a contrite head and a rather pallid countenance, spoke as follows: "I have been having a talk with your father, O Beloved, and he tells me that I ought to marry you."

IV

On the next day Max received a visit from his father.

"Well," said the King, wishing to bestow commendation on a wound honorably come by, "you have been on the side of law and order for once at any rate."

"I?" cried Max.

"I hear that you assisted the police."

"On the contrary," said Max, "I went to rescue a poor youth from their clutches."

"Good gracious me!" cried the King, horror-struck.

"Oh, they were quite right to arrest him, but having arrested him, they proceeded to assault him; and when I interfered they assaulted me. And had I not been the person I am, with detectives at my heels to vouch for me, I should have been doing a fortnight hard for interfering with the police in the execution of their duty."

"But I heard it was a beer-bottle thrown by one of the rioters!"

"Oh, no; a truncheon,—having I believe your image and superscription stamped somewhere upon it. Your own mark, sir." And Max pointed to the scar upon his head. "When I, in turn, have to wear the crown its rim will probably rest on that very spot. What a coincidence that will be!"

"Max, this is really too bad of you!" said his father.

"It comes of trying to mix with the people."

"Well, you shouldn't; for we can't do it."

"Not without paying the price. I have, and it was worth it."

"What good has it done you?"

"Can you not see how it has steadied me? You behold here a reformed character who is now only waiting for his father's blessing to lead a good and holy life ever after. Oh, yes, I know what you have come about, sir; my mother has been at me, the Archbishop has been at me,—you have all of you been at me one time or another; and so far as I am concerned, if we can only agree upon who the lady is to be, I am ready to marry her to-morrow."

Then, perceiving a terror in his father's eye (for the Queen had breathed in his ear some word of her apprehensions), Max, divining its cause, spoke to reassure him. "No," said he, "it is not the Countess; she had thrown me over, and is now only a second mother to me. This was largely of her mending." He again pointed to the scar. "Can such things be done, you wonder, in a second establishment? Well, remember it is now only a mausoleum. For three weeks I have lain there like a mummy with my head swathed in bandages."

"Max, I wish you would not talk like that," said the King. "I wanted to speak seriously to you."

"And I to you," answered Max. "But when I start I shall only shock you more."

"Well, we had better get it over, then. Say the most serious thing you have to say, and be done with it!"

Then Prince Max drew a bold breath. "Conditionally upon your consent, sir"—he began—"I myself regret the condition, but on that point the lady is adamant—I say all this in order to let the whole case be stated before giving you the necessary shock—"

"Oh, go on!" groaned the King.

"Conditionally, then, I am already engaged to be married."

The King's mind went vacuously all round the Courts of Europe, and returned to him again empty.

"Whom to?" he inquired.

Max made his announcement with stately formality.

"The lady who honors me with her affection is the daughter of our Primate Archbishop."

"Good Heavens!" cried the King. "Does *he* know of it?"

"No more than the babe unborn; two days ago he sat there telling me it was my duty to marry; and I thinking of his daughter all the time."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the King.

"I knew you would say that,—so did she. That I believe is why she gave me her consent."

"Then she does not really——"

"Love me? Very much, I believe. But her life is a strange mingling of sincerity and self-sacrifice; and it will in some strange way give her almost as much joy to have owned that her heart is utterly mine, and then to be irrevocably parted, as it would to share all the splendor of my fortune as heir to a throne."

"You know, Max, that it is quite impossible."

"Yes; by all the conventions of the last three hundred years, so it is. That is why I trust that you will rise to the occasion, sir, and do what is not expected of you. To allow your son and heir to marry the daughter of the great political antagonist of your present Prime Minister in itself creates an almost impossible situation—for party politics, I mean. But as party politics have already created an almost impossible situation for monarchy, the best thing to do is to have a return hit at party politics. I believe that the monarchy will survive."

"No, no, Max," said the King, "this won't do."

"You know that it would greatly upset the Prime Minister."

"I have other ways of doing that," said the King.

"Without upsetting yourself?"

This gave his Majesty a little start. "It depends what you mean by upsetting; perhaps it would upset you much more. But there, we won't talk about that!" For this was danger-point, and having touched it, he hurried cautiously away from it. Then he returned to the original charge: "Whatever put the idea into your head?"

"A vision of beauty that I had not believed to be possible."

"Is she so very beautiful, then?"

"You have seen her, sir, and you have not remembered her. I did not mean that sort of beauty."

"Ah, then, you are really in love."

"Ludicrously," confessed Max.

"My dear boy, I am very sorry for you."

"Oh, you need not be, sir; I am quite sure of myself at last; and by refusing to marry anybody else I have only to wait and you will have to yield to my request."

"You may have to wait a long time," began the King, and then he stopped; for looking into the future he saw Max in a new light, that same fierce light which had beaten upon himself for the last twenty-five years, preventing him from doing so many things he had wished to do. It would prevent Max too.

"But I want your consent now, father," said the young man; and there was something of real affection in his voice.

"Why can't you wait till I am dead?"

"That would be selfish of me. Do you not want to see me happy first?"

But to that the King only shook his head.

"It won't do, Max, it won't do. The Archbishop wouldn't like it either," he went on, trying to get back to the political aspect again. "It would be terribly damaging to him. With a connection like that, leadership of his party would become impossible."

"Have we to consider the political ambitions of an archbishop?"

"You would have to get his consent."

"I don't think so. All she bargained for was yours. I told her I would get it; and she did not believe

me."

"You make me wish that I were altogether out of the way."

"Quite unnecessary, I'm sure."

"Ah, but if you were in my position then you'd see—then you'd understand. You couldn't do it; you simply couldn't do it."

The King was now saying what he really believed, and at the sound of his own voice telling him he realized that all he had to do was to temporize and time would bring its own solution. If Max were King he could no more do this thing than he could fly. Why, then, should he trouble himself?

To cover his change of ground he continued the argument, and on every point allowed Max to beat him (he could not probably have prevented it, but that was the way he put it to himself), and finally, when he felt that he could in decency throw up the sponge, he let Max have his way—or the way to it, which was the same thing.

"Well," he said, "I can't give you my consent all at once. I must have time to turn round and think about it; you must have time too. But if——" here he paused and did a short sum of mental arithmetic. "Yes," he went on, "if in two months from now you find me still upon the throne—and I'm sure I don't know that you will with the way things are going and all the worry I've had—but if you do, and are still of the same mind about it, then you may come to me and I will give you my consent."

A quiet, rapturous smile passed over the face of Max. "May I have that in writing, sir?" he said.

The King was rather taken aback, and a little affronted. "Do you doubt my word?" he demanded.

"Not in the least, but it is your consent I have to get. You might have a stroke, or lose your memory; you might even die, and there should I be left stranded. My love is so great that I can let it run no risks. And therefore, sir, if you will be so good, a promissory note to take effect in two months' time."

"You won't tell your mother?" said the King, halting, pen in hand.

Max shook his head sagely. "Nobody shall know," said he. "No filter could contain such news as this." He took the precious document from the King's hand, folded it, and put it away.

"By the way, sir," he said, "in a week or two I shall be sending you my book."

"I am afraid it is going to shock people," said his father.

"Not nearly so much as this." Max touched his breast pocket and smiled. "I will confess now, sir, that I really had hardly a hope: if I said so just now, I lied. And if a son may ever tell his father that he is proud of him, let that pleasure to-day be mine."

They parted on the best of terms. "I wonder," thought the King to himself, "whether he will be quite so pleased and proud two months hence."

His countenance saddened, and he sighed. "Poor boy," he said. He was very fond of Max.

CHAPTER XIV

HEADS OR TAILS

I

It is no use pretending that all history is equally interesting, even though the facts which it contains are necessary for an understanding of what follows. And I am well aware that much of this history so far has been very dull. We have been exploring interiors, moldy institutions, cast-iron conventions, and one poor human mind,—with a tap on the back of its head as an incentive—wriggling to find a way out. But from this point on you see him wriggling no more; the slow wave of his resolve has crept to its crest and now breaks into foam.

A month has now passed by; and four weeks hence the enamored Max will be coming for his answer—Max asking for the impossible thing. Like the man who set fire to the tail of his night-shirt in order to stop the hiccoughs, so now John of Jingalo had at his heels that terror of his own planting driving him on. Perhaps nothing else would have given him the courage.

The day for the last Council meeting had arrived, the last before the closing of that long session of Parliament which, beginning in February, had run on at intervals into November. Then only a brief month, and the winter session with the new Government program would open.

It was to this Council that the Cabinet's latest scheme for squeezing the Bishops out of the Constitution was to be presented; and for that to be possible, since he was so great a stickler for constitutional propriety, the King's consent had been necessary. A few days before, therefore, the Prime Minister had once more formally submitted the question; and the King had given his leave.

"Produce what you like, Mr. Premier; I will no longer stand in your way."

The brief autumn session was closing with a clangor of agitation which had not been heard in Jingalo for half a century at least. Everybody outside the machinery of party was profoundly dissatisfied with the parliamentary system and with all its doings and undoings; and this general dissatisfaction was being quaintly expressed by a refusal to let Parliament rise. The Women Chartists were battering at its closed doors; and from peep-holes and other points of vantage within, smiling and indifferent legislators saw those bruised bodies, those strangely obsessed minds, those indomitable spirits carried off to magisterial lack of judgment and to prison.

With a good deal more concern they saw strikes breaking out in their own constituencies, and riot becoming the normal accompaniment of the industrial demand for better conditions. Three strike leaders were in prison under sentence of death for having killed by purposeful accident a few over-zealous policemen; and from great working centers over a hundred miles away thousands of men were marching to demand remittance of the death penalty.

The Government was, in consequence, in a great hurry to get the session closed. It was an undignified scramble of the red-tape worms of various departments to be well out of the way before those slow, heavily shod feet of labor arrived upon the scene. At every town they came to they stopped, made inflammatory speeches, gathered funds and adherents, and then, a swelled body of discontent, marched stolidly on toward the capital; and this not from one point alone but from half-a-dozen at once. If there was not to be conflict between the police and these converging forces, appeasement of some sort must be devised, or official vacuum must be there to meet them.

And behind all this was the ministerial fear that, if they were not quick about it, it would be impossible to close Parliament with due ceremony. The Lord High Functionary had put it bluntly to the Prime Minister. "If those men get here we can't have out the piebald ponies and the state coach; they wouldn't stand it."

And as the piebald ponies and the state coach were necessary for the prestige of the Government and for proof that the King and his ministers were working amicably together, therefore the red-tape worms were all wriggling their level best under pressure from above, and in the small hours every morning millions of public money were being voted into the hands of the Government by an obedient majority of sleepy legislators, bound by party loyalty neither to criticise nor to control.

It was in the midst of affairs thus disarranged that on a morning three days before the rising of Parliament the Royal Council met, and awaited with official calm the advent of its titular head.

Since his outbreak of a few months ago the King had once more become amenable to that deferential guidance which was his due; and now word had gone round that all further opposition was to be withdrawn, and the Ministry to have its way.

And so the *pièce de résistance* is at last in full brew and we see the twenty cooks of the national broth waiting without any trepidation of spirit for the royal flavoring to arrive. And they talk among themselves in carefully modulated tones; for it is not etiquette, when the doors are thrown open to the royal presence, that the King should hear conversation going on.

The Prime Minister enters a little later than the rest, carrying his brief, and moves to his place near the head of the board through a circle of congratulatory looks and smiles. For all know that in this long bout with titular kingship, obstinate for the preservation of its rights, the representative of Cabinet control has won, and that a new and very comfortable stage in the subservience of monarchy to ministerial ends has been attained.

And how quietly this important little bit of constitutional revolution has been carried through!—without any passing of laws or petition of rights, merely by internal pressure judiciously applied. And Jingalo, that well-represented State governed by the popular will, knows nothing of what has been done; like a body in absolute health it is unconscious of the working of those vital functions so necessary for its constitutional development. Oh, admirable popular will! in searching for your whereabouts and to come into touch with you, old monarchy has had yet another tumble—and at the right and preconcerted time will reach the ground without any outward revolution at all.

If these or suchlike thoughts were in the mind of the Cabinet, just then they were diverted by the sound of opening doors; and there entered, not the King himself, but a Court functionary in full dress attended by two others, and bearing before him on a crimson cushion a sealed document.

A few eyebrows went up; what revival of old forms was this? The functionary advanced and with a low bow presented the document not to the Prime Minister, but to the Lord President of the Council. "By his Majesty's gracious command," said he, "a message from his Majesty the King to his faithful people."

Then, with another bow, the Court functionary withdrew.

The Lord President looked at the seal in some embarrassment, for he did not quite know how to break it; it was very large, some three inches across, and was composed of a wax of specially resistant quality.

"Cut it!" said the Prime Minister, and to that end he presented his pocket-knife.

The document was opened; and the Lord President and Prime Minister, glancing together at its

contents, suddenly went white.

"Gentlemen," said the Lord President (his voice and hands trembled as he spoke), "his Majesty the King abdicates!"

II

Around that ministerial board it would have been amusing to an impartial onlooker to see how many mouths of grave and reverend Councilors did actually open and drop chins of dismay. A gust of horror and astonishment blew round the assembly; it was a word unknown in the Jingalese Constitution; no place had been there provided for it,—it had never been done. Strictly speaking—legally speaking, that is to say—it could not be done. Kings had been deposed, exiled, their heads cut off—all without their own consent—but never without the consent of Parliament, or of some portion of it at all events. Yet nothing whatever could prevent it; for clearly on this point the King could insist; but, if he did, the Constitution would be in the melting-pot, and the consequences could not be foreseen. What right had this pelican in piety to go pecking his own breast and shedding the blood of his ancestors? Viewed in any constitutional light it was a revolutionary and bloody deed.

The Prime Minister was not slow to see its bearing on the whole political situation and on the fortunes of his ministry.

"Gentlemen," said he, "if this abdication is allowed to take effect, our plans are defeated and the Government must go."

"You mean we shall have to resign?"

"We cannot even do that; we are forestalled. Though not yet publicly announced this is an absolute abdication here and now." And then that all might hear, the Lord President proceeded to read out the terms.

"WE, John, by the Grace of God, King of Jingalo, Suzerain of Rome, Leader of the Forlorn Hope, and Crowned Head of Jerusalem, do hereby solemnly declare, avow, render, and deliver by this as Our own act, freely undertaken and accomplished for the good, welfare, comfort, and succor of the Realm of Jingalo and of its People, that now and from this day henceforward. WE do utterly renounce, relinquish, and abjure all claim to rank, titles, honors, emoluments, and privileges holden by US in virtue of OUR inheritance and succession as true and rightful Sovereign Lord of the said Realm of Jingalo. And for the satisfying of OUR Royal Conscience and the better safety and security of those things aforesaid committed to OUR trust and keeping, under the Constitution of the said Realm of Jingalo; to the preservation whereof WE are bound by oath, therefore WE do now pronounce, publish, and set forth, that it may be known to all, this OUR ABDICATION, made in the 25th year of OUR reign and given under OUR hand and signet—"

Then came date and signature; and following these the old form of mixed German and Latin, without which no State document was complete—"Der Rex das vult."

When the reading ended there was a short pause. Here at all events, in their very ears, history was being incredibly made.

"Remarkably well drawn," observed Professor Teller, admiringly: "copied, you may be interested to learn, from the actual instrument wrung by Parliament out of King Oliver the Second under threat of torture four hundred years ago. As legal and regular a form, therefore, as it would be possible to devise."

"You mean we shall have to recognize it?"

"If we recognize anything at all."

"Gentlemen," said the Prime Minister, "it must not be recognized; it would mean for us not merely defeat but disaster. As against the Bishops we have a certain amount of popular opinion to back us; but if once it appears that dislike for our policy has driven the King into abdication, then our ruin will be immediate and irremediable. We have to recognize that during the past year his popularity has greatly increased, while our own, to say the most, is stationary."

"Yes, and he knows it!" said the Minister of the Interior, bitterly.

"I call it a treacherous and a cowardly act!" exclaimed the Secretary for War.

"He is trying to bully us!" said the Commissioner-General.

"I should say that he is succeeding," remarked Professor Teller in a dry tone. "Had we not better recognize, gentlemen, that his Majesty has made a very shrewd hit? Can we not—compromise?"

"Impossible!" asseverated the Prime Minister. "It is too late."

Professor Teller leaned back in his chair and let the discussion flow on. His attitude was noticeable; he was the only minister who was taking it sitting down.

"When does this abdication take effect?" asked one. "I mean, how long can it be kept from the press?"

"Who knows? If his Majesty has done one mad thing he may have done another."

"I must see him at once," said the Premier, "this cannot be allowed to go on."

"You will have to take a very firm tone."

"I would suggest that we all send in our portfolios."

"We have tried that once; he would not accept them now, and we have no power to make him."

"No; that is the damnable thing! That is what makes his position so strong."

"Do you think he knows?"

"Of course; why else has he done it? It's really clever; that's what I can't get over, he has done a clever thing!"

"Who can have put it into his head?"

"It is the most unjustifiable stretch of the royal prerogative that ever I heard of."

"There's no prerogative about it; it's sheer revolution and rebellion."

"An attack on the Constitution, I call it."

Thus they talked.

"Strange!" murmured Professor Teller, irritating them with his philosophic tone and his detached air,—"strange that when it threatens itself with extinction monarchy becomes powerful."

"It is no question of extinction," said the Prime Minister tetchily; "we should still have his successor to deal with; and Prince Max, I can tell you, gentlemen, is a very dark horse. You all know what happened three months ago; and now, within the last week, we have learned that he is publishing a book—a revolutionary book with his own name to it. You may take it from me that if he comes to the throne our present scheme for the evolution of the Cabinet system will be over. Anything may happen! Read his book and you will understand."

"Has any one yet seen it?"

"A privately procured copy has been shown me; it was by the merest chance we heard of it. I could only read it very hurriedly in the small hours; it had to go back where it came from."

"Is it a serious matter?"

"Perfectly appalling."

"And are you going to allow it to be published?"

"How can we prevent? It is being printed abroad."

And then spoke the Prefect of the Police, holding technical place upon the Council as Minister of Secret Service.

"Over the present edition, gentlemen, you may make your minds quite easy. I have received intelligence that last night the establishment at which it was being printed was burned to the ground."

The Premier cast a keen and confidential glance at his colleague.

"How much does that involve?" he asked.

"Only the insurance company, I should suppose."

"I meant of the book?"

"Oh! everything except the manuscript. There will be no publication this year at any rate."

"I make you my compliments," said the Prime Minister, "on the particularity and speed with which your department has become informed. That at all events gives us time."

"And meanwhile?"

"I must see the King immediately. It is no use our remaining here to discuss a situation that is not yet explained. The first thing to find out is whether this has gone any further; but I do not think his Majesty really means it as anything more than a threat."

"Had you no hint that it was coming?" inquired the Commissioner-General.

The Prime Minister was on his way to the door. "No," he said; "not a word." And then he paused, as the particular meaning of a certain carefully chosen and repeated phrase flashed on him for the first time. "He said to me yesterday—repeating what he said four months ago when we tendered our resignations—'I will no longer stand in your way.' And now I suppose we have it."

"Good Heavens!" cried the Minister of the Interior, "does he call this not standing in our way?"

The Prime Minister cast an expressive glance at his chagrined and embarrassed following—a glance of self-confidence and determination, one which still said "Depend upon me!"

But only from one of his colleagues was there any look of answering confidence, or speech

confirming it.

"When you are disengaged, Chief, may I have a few moments?"

It was the Prefect who spoke, a man of few words.

Eye to eye they looked at each other for a brief spell.

The Prime Minister nodded. "Come to me in two hours' time," he said. "We shall know then where we are." And so saying he left the room.

III

In the next two days a good many things happened; but carried through in so underground and secret a fashion that it is only afterwards we shall hear of them. And so we come to the last day of all; for on the morrow Parliament closes and when that is done the King's abdication is to become an acknowledged and an accomplished fact.

It was evening. His Majesty had just given a final audience to the Prime Minister; the interview had been a painful one, and still the ground of contention remained the same. But the demeanor of the head of the Government had altered; he had tried bullying and it had failed; now in profound agitation he had implored the King for the last time to withdraw his abdication, and his Majesty had refused.

"I will close Parliament for you," he said, "since you wish it; it will be a fitting act for the conclusion of my reign. But my conscience forbids any furthering on my part of your present line of policy; and as I cannot prevent that obstacle from existing, in accordance with my promise I remove it altogether from the scene."

"But your Majesty's abdication is the greatest obstacle of all, it is a profound upheaval of the whole constitutional system; and its acceptance will involve a far, far greater expenditure of time than we are able to contemplate or to provide for. I am bound, therefore, to appeal from the letter of your Majesty's promise (which no doubt you have observed) to the spirit in which as I conceive it was made."

"When I made it, Mr. Prime Minister, I had no spirit left. Nothing remained to me but the letter of my authority, and even that was dead. I told you that I would no longer stand in your way, and I will keep my word."

"By throwing us into revolution!"

"By throwing you upon your own resources. You have been working very assiduously for single chamber government, you may now secure it in your own way."

"Your Majesty takes a course entirely without precedent."

"What?—Abdication?"

"Against the wish or consent of Parliament."

"Ah, yes," said the King, "that is precisely the difference. Abdications have, like ministerial resignations, been forced upon us—I mean on kings in the past—at very unseasonable times and in most inconsiderate ways; and we kings have had to put up with it. Mr. Prime Minister, it is your turn now; and I only hope that you may find as clean a way out of your difficulty as I had to find when four months ago you threatened me with a resignation which you knew I could not accept."

The Prime Minister's face became drawn with passion; but there was no more to be said after that. "Is that your Majesty's final word?" he inquired.

"I hope so," said the King, rising and making a formal offer of his hand.

And so the interview ended.

Left alone the King felt badly in need of comfort, for now in the hour of triumph depression had begun to enter his soul. He did not like hurting people even when he was not fond of them; and on the Prime Minister's face as he went out he had seen something like tragedy. "Is he going to cut his throat?" he wondered; but, no, it was not the look of a beaten man—rather that of a gambler prepared to make his last throw.

The King had already made his own—he had nothing more to do; and now he wanted companionship, some one to humor him with more understanding and sympathy than his own wife could supply. And it so happened that just then his only two possible comforters were away. Max had gone to the Riviera to recruit before the regular sittings of the Commission began, and Charlotte three days ago had taken that leave of absence which had been promised her; for in less than a month's time the Prince of Schnapps-Wasser would be paying his promised visit.

As he could not have the society he craved he chose solitude, and wandered out into the deepening dusk of the November garden; and there, gazing up through its now thinned foliage at the quiet and misty heavens above him, thought of steeplejacks and the death of kings, and how at the root of every great downfall in history there had probably been some poor human heart like his own, conscious of failure, longing for the kindred touch which pride of place makes so impossible. And yet he knew that he had brought himself to a better end than, with all the defects

of his qualities, he could ordinarily have hoped to secure; perhaps this dramatic taking of himself off (which he felt in a way to be so out of character) would help Max to make something out of the situation startling and unexpected. But Max would have to give up the idea of marrying the Archbishop's daughter.

The quiet, dusky paths had led him to a point where high walls carefully shrouded in creepers shut off the royal stables from view. Through circular barred grilles he could hear the noise of horses champing in their stalls; and the comfortable sound drew him round to the entrance. Opening a wicket, he stood in a dimly lighted court, but the buildings surrounding it contained plenty of light, and in the harness rooms a brisk sound of furbishing went on.

Turning to the left he passed into the largest stable of all, a spacious and well-aired chamber of corridor-like proportions divided up into stalls. To right and left of him stood the famous piebald ponies, lazily munching fodder and settling down to their last sleep before the unusual exertions which would be required of them on the morrow.

But these pampered minions did not know as he did what the morrow had in store: how, for the sake of effect, they would be harnessed to a huge obsolete coach weighing a couple of tons, each clad in an elaborate costume of crimson and gold weighing by itself considerably more than a full-grown rider. To the King this presumed ignorance of theirs was a matter for envy; he knew his own part in the affair well enough; the thought of it oppressed him.

He walked down the double line—twelve in all—pausing now and then to take a closer look and judge of their condition, but keeping always at a respectful distance, for he was aware that almost without exception they were an ill-tempered crew. Contemplating the astonishing rotundity of their well-filled bodies, the spacious ease of their accommodation, the outward dignity of circumstances, and the absolute lack of freedom which conditioned their whole existence, he was struck with the resemblance between himself and them; and recalling how, with a similar sense of kinship, St. Francis had preached to the lower forms of life he too became imbued with the spirit of homily and prophecy, though it did not actually find its way into words.

"You and I, little brothers"—so might we loosely interpret the meditations of his heart—"you and I are much of a muchness, and can sing our 'Te Deum' or our 'Nunc Dimittis' in almost the same words. We are both of a carefully selected breed and of a diminished usefulness. But because of our high position we are fed and housed not merely in comfort but in luxury; and wherever we go crowds stand to gape at us and applaud when we nod our heads at them. We live always in the purlieu of palaces, and never have we known what it is to throw up our heels in a green pasture, nor in our old age are we turned out comfortably to grass—only to Nebuchadnezzar by accident came that thing, and he did not appreciate it as he should have done. Never shall we go into battle to prove that we are worth our salt, and to say 'Ha, Ha' to the fighting and the captains; nor is it allowed to us to devour the ground with our speed: whenever we attempt such a thing it is cut from under us. Little brothers, it is before all things necessary that we should behave; for being once harnessed to the royal coach, if any one of us struck work or threw out our heels we should upset many apple-carts and the machinery of the State would be dislocated. Let us thank God, therefore, that long habit and training have made us docile, and that our backs are strong enough to bear the load that is put upon them, and that if one of us goes another immediately fills his place so that he is not missed."

In a vague, unformulated way this was the homily which arose from his meditations; and if he thought at all specially of himself and present circumstances, it was merely as an insignificant exception which proved the general rule.

As he strolled back again he stopped at the door and spoke to the man in charge.

"They all seem very fit, Jacobs," said he. "They do you credit, I must say."

"Fit they are, your Majesty!" said the man, beaming with satisfied pride; "and so they ought to be, considering the trouble we've took with 'em. We've been polishing them like old pewter for days. Ah! they know what's coming; and you can see 'em just longing for it."

"Oh, they like it, do they?"

"Believe me, your Majesty, they couldn't live without it. It's in the blood—been in 'em from father to son. Why, if we didn't take 'em out to help us open and shut Parliament and things of that sort, they'd think we was mad."

This was a new point of view; the King listened to it with respectful interest, and then a fresh thought occurred to him.

"Jacobs," he said, "did one of them ever refuse to go?—on a public occasion, I mean."

"Well, yes, your Majesty, it did once happen; before my time, though. One of 'em—ah, it was at a funeral, too—he stuck his heels into the ground and couldn't be got to start, not for love or money."

"Which did they offer him?"

"Ask pardon, your Majesty?—Oh, just my manner of speaking, that was. Wouldn't go except on his own terms."

"And what were they?"

"Well, your Majesty, he was a clever one, you see, he was; they aren't generally. But he, he'd got a taste for his own set of harness—knew it by the smell, I suppose, and when they come to put it on him a bit of it broke, and he wouldn't wear anything else. That's how it all come about."

"They tried, I suppose?"

"Oh, they got it on him; and they got him out, before all the crowd, with the guns going and the handkerchiefs a-waving—Ah, no; but that was a funeral though—there weren't no handkerchiefs that day. Well, there he was; and when he felt they was all looking at him, and the perishables kept waiting behind—"

"The perishables?"

"The corpse, sir;—then he wouldn't move."

"Very embarrassing, I must say."

"You see, your Majesty, they couldn't beat him in public—not as he deserved; 'twouldn't have been respectful to what was there. They had to do that afterwards. But, believe me, he stopped the whole show for twenty minutes and more; and they never used *him* again."

"What became of him?"

"Oh, he was just kept, in case; but he weren't never used—he was reckoned too risky after that. Oh, and he felt it too; I haven't a doubt but he did. They don't like only to be one of the extras, they don't."

"What does that mean?"

"Why, you see, sir, there's always four extras here, in case of accident; and believe me, your Majesty, when the four extras to-morrow find 'emselves left out they'll squeal for hours, and it won't be safe to go near 'em, not for days. Blood's a wonderful thing, sir, wonderful! And they know, just as well as you or me."

"And what becomes of them when they grow old?"

"Well, sir, they make saddle-cloths of 'em for the band of the forty-ninth Hussars. Your Majesty may have reckonized 'em; most people think it's giraffe skin, but it's really our old ponies."

"So they come in useful even at the last?"

"Oh, yes, sir, they ends well, one can't deny that; and they have to be in pretty good condition too. So they aren't none of 'em what you might call really old."

"Very interesting," said the King. "What a great deal there is in the world that one doesn't know till one comes to inquire."

"About horses? Your Majesty's right there!" said the man; and his tone spoke volumes of the things which would never be written, but which those who had the care of horses knew.

As the King moved away from that brief colloquy, one phrase in particular stuck in his mind. "He was reckoned too risky after that." Was that, he wondered, what the Prime Minister was thinking about him now; had he, indeed, proved himself too risky for future use? If so there would be no yielding at the eleventh hour; and perhaps it was as well that to-morrow would see him harnessed to the royal coach for the last time.

CHAPTER XV

A DEED WITHOUT A NAME

I

The King and Queen sat in their state coach responding with low bows to the plaudits of the crowd. Their velvets and ermines lay heavy upon them, for although it was now November, the day was close and warm, and there seemed to be thunder in the air.

The King, in this his Jubilee year, had resumed wearing his crown on great State occasions, for he found that the people liked it. He had worn it at the Foot-washing; and every one then admitted that it gave the true symbolic touch to the whole ceremony. And now for the last time he was wearing it again.

Artistically he was right; a cocked hat, of nineteenth-century pattern, does not accord well with robes in the style of the sixteenth. In some countries that mistake is made by royalty out of compliment to the army; but if on these State occasions sartorial compliments are to be paid irrespective of the general effect, then surely your monarch should wear a wig as representative of the law, lawn-sleeves in honor of the Church, and divide the rest of his person impartially between the army, the navy, and the doctors. Thus all the great professions would receive their due recognition, and we should presently find so symbolical a combination just as harmonious

and dignified, and as pregnant with meaning, as we do the heraldic quarterings by which the mixed blood of ancestry is so proudly displayed. We can get accustomed to anything if there is a good reason for it; but when we cease to be reasonable, beauty should be our only guide. In this case reason as well as beauty had induced King John of Jingalo to reject the cocked hat and to resume the crown.

The royal coach had already borne its occupants along two miles of the route; and continued exercise was making them warm.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the King, "it's very stuffy in here; I feel as if I were in a furnace. Why did you ask to have the windows closed, my dear?"

"It makes one feel so much safer," said the Queen, keeping her stereotyped smile, and sweeping a bow as she spoke.

"Safer from what?" Here his Majesty responded to a fresh burst of cheers.

"Accidents," replied his consort; "one never knows."

"Glass, my dear, does not protect one from the accidents of Kings. Glass can't stop bullets, you know."

"I didn't mean that sort of accident; and I wish you wouldn't talk about them just now."

"You always take out an umbrella when you don't want it to rain; and if one talks about accidents then they don't happen. At least that has always been my experience. What sort of accident do you mean?"

"Dust, and microbes, and infection, and all that sort of thing. There must be a lot of it about in so large a crowd; I wonder how many people with measles."

"What an idea!" exclaimed the King: "people with measles don't come out to see shows."

"Oh, yes, they do,—nursemaids especially. They all catch it from each other in the public parks; at least so I've been told. And whenever I see a perambulator now, I think of it."

"There are no perambulators here to-day," said the King, "so you needn't think about measles. Smallpox if you like; though it strikes me that all I have yet seen are remarkably healthy specimens—considering how many of them there are." And he bowed to the healthy specimens as he spoke.

"Very enthusiastic," murmured the Queen appreciatively.

"Yes; I wonder if presently they will be as enthusiastic about Max."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing. I was only thinking ahead, in quite a general sort of way. We seem lately to have become quite popular."

"I think we have always been."

"Yes, you have, my dear; about myself I was not so sure. Well, it's very gratifying to come upon it just now."

His Majesty felt a little guilty, for he had not yet told the Queen of what lay ahead; it was so much better that she should not know beforehand what she would never be able to understand.

Then for a while they relapsed into silence, each attending to what Charlotte would have described as their "business"—a carefully regulated succession of bows accompanied by a smile which never quite left off.

Presently the King spoke again. "By the way, where has Charlotte gone to?"

"Well, I hardly know," said the Queen. "She wrote to me from her first address—that college place; but said she was going on elsewhere, and I thought you settled that we were to leave her alone."

"I think she ought to have waited till to-morrow. As Max is away, she at least should have been here."

"So I told her; but she said she had a very particular engagement which she must keep; and I could see that, relying upon your promise, she meant to have her own way, so I said nothing."

"I hope they are going to like each other," said the King, his thoughts carrying on to the meeting which was now near.

"She and the Prince? Oh, yes, I think there's no doubt about it. Strange, wasn't it, that her running away actually pleased him?"

"I suppose it was so very unusual. We don't as a rule get people to run away from us. It's generally all the other way. Look at this crowd! I wonder how the police manage to keep them back."

Smiling and bowing, the Queen replied: "They are so well behaved; and see, how patient. Many, I

daresay, have been here for hours. Doesn't that show loyalty?"

"It isn't all loyalty, my dear; they like the whole spectacle, the troops, the coach, the piebald ponies. Last night I went to look at them; four of them have been left out."

"What a strange thing to do."

"But some have to be."

"No; going to see them, I mean."

"Well, I don't know; they play a very important part in the proceedings, and in a way they are heroes, for wherever they go with us they share our danger. I heard quite a lot of interesting things about them."

At this moment they were approaching a part of the route which separated them for a while from the popular plaudits. In the forefront was a deep archway, and beyond it was a brief stretch of road shut in by hoardings and dominated by high masts of scaffolding, behind which new Government buildings were in process of erection. Across each front to left and right a few strings of bunting fluttered to give festive relief; for here there were no stands filled with spectators, no pavements lined with shouting crowds; and behind the palisades work had been knocked off for the day. The cry of the populace lulled down to a mere murmur, and the trampling of the hoofs echoed strangely as they passed under the vaulted arch and along the walled-in track with its huge baulks of timber on both sides supporting the growth of stone walls.

Ahead stood a wide gateway opening by a sharp turn into Regency Row, whose broad thoroughfare of cream-tinted façades, now bright with flags, formed an ideal rallying-ground for the sightseeing multitude.

"Now there," said the King, pointing ahead to a high triangular building facing the gates through which they were about to emerge, "there is the place that I always think a bomb might be thrown from with much certainty and effect, plump into the middle of us, just as we are turning the corner."

"I do wish you would leave off talking about such things," said the Queen reproachfully, "or wait till we are safe home again. How can I keep on smiling, if you go putting bombs into my head?"

"I was only saying, my dear——"

Suddenly, from behind, an amazing detonation seemed to strike at the smalls of their backs, throwing them half out of their seats. The glass slide upon the Queen's side of the coach ran down with a crash, and one of the large gilt baubles from its roof toppled and fell into the road. At the same instant a great blast and swirl of smoke blew by, shutting for a moment the outer world from view. Then loud cries, hullabalooings, shoutings—a scramble and clatter of hoofs as though three or four horses had gone down and were up again—a capering flash of pink silk calves—as the six footmen exploded upon from the rear sought safety in front where the eight piebald ponies were all standing on end with men hanging on to their noses. And then further disorder of a less violent kind, runnings to and fro, and from the crowd waiting ahead a vast and tumultuous cry rather jovial in its sound.

The King had risen from his seat, and trying to look out and see what was going on behind had put his head through the glass, his crown acting as a safe and effective battering ram.

"I do believe there has been an attempt," he said, drawing his head in again. "That certainly sounded like a bomb; not that I have had much experience of such things."

Then he did what he should have done at first, and let down the glass.

"I am going to faint," sighed the Queen, sinking back in her seat.

"Nonsense!" said the King sharply. "Pull yourself together, Alicia! You are not hurt."

"I think I am," she said. But the sharp tone acted as a tonic, and she settled herself comfortably in her corner and began quietly to cry.

There was still plenty of confusion going on. The piebald ponies had been brought to a standstill, and some of them were now showing temper. A voluble and excited crowd was trying to break through the police lines and grasp the whole situation at a run. Troops were coming to the rescue; horsemen from the rear dashed by. Then a staff officer galloped up to the coach window, and reining a jiggetty steed saluted with agitated air and a rather white face.

"The danger is over, your Majesty," he gasped, a little out of breath, "only a few horses are down; no one is killed."

The King nodded acceptance of the news; and as he did so noticed a tiny fleck of blood upon the officer's cheek—no more than if he had cut himself in shaving. It seemed to give the correct measure of the catastrophe, and to assure him more than words could have done that the damage was really small.

Except for that one moment when he had impulsively put his head through glass, the King had kept his wits and remained calm; and now his royal instinct told him the right thing to be done.

"If you want to manage that crowd," he said, "we had much better drive on. Until we do they may

think that anything has happened. Tell them to start, and not to drive fast."

The officer went forward bearing the royal order.

"Alicia," said the King, "there really is nothing to cry about; the most important thing is to show the people that we are not hurt. Pull yourself together, my dear. There! now we are starting again. And if you think you can manage it, stand right up at your window and I will stand at mine; then nobody can have any doubt at all."

He removed some shattered glass from her lap as he spoke, and gave an encouraging squeeze to her hand; and as the coach moved forward they stood up and confidently presented themselves to the public gaze.

Sure enough that sight had a magical effect equal to the controlling force of a thousand police. The crowd recovered its wits and allowed itself to be shoved back into place. Out through the gates sallied the piebald ponies; and from end to end all Regency Row broke into a roar. Ahead went the troops and the police, pressing back the once more amenable crowd; men and women were weeping, moist handkerchiefs were ecstatically waved, quite new and reputable hats were thrown up into air, and allowed to fall unreclaimed and unregarded. And truly it was a sight well calculated to stir the blood, for there, emerging unhurt from dust and smoke, from rumor and sound of terror, came the monarch and his Queen standing upon their feet and bowing undaunted to a furore of cries.

Through all that vast multitude word of the outrage had sped, like a black raven flapping its wings, charged ominously with tidings of death; and as confusion had spread wide nothing more could be heard, till once more a resumption of the processional movement was seen. Then came white-faced footmen quaking at the knees; after them eight piebald ponies rather badly behaved and requiring a good deal of holding in; and then Royalty, itself smiling and quite unharmed. And straightway the ordinary loyalty of a sightseeing Jingalese crowd was merged in a passionate and tumultuous cry of jubilant humanity; and the royal procession became a triumphal progress.

II

The Queen was still crying a little when they reached their destination; but she was very happy all the same, for she felt that between them they had risen to the occasion and had passed exceedingly well through an ordeal that falls only to few.

And now at the House of Legislature itself a strangely informal reception awaited them. Word of what had happened had gone in to the two Chambers, and human nature proving too strong, rules and regulations of ceremony had been dispensed with, and out had streamed judges, prelates, and laity in full force, to attend upon their own front door-step the belated arrival of their mercifully preserved Sovereign and his Queen.

And when they did arrive, the whole House of Laity there assembled broke into cheers; and not to be behindhand in demonstrations of loyalty, the Judges and the Bishops cheered too—a thing that none of them had done individually for years; and in their official and corporate capacity, judicial and ecclesiastical, never in their lives before.

Then as spokesmen for their respective parties, for Ministerialists and for Opposition, came the Prime Minister and the Archbishop, giving voice to the thankfulness that was felt by all.

The Archbishop performed his part the better of the two; for between him and his sovereign there were no strained relations; he was also on closer terms of reference to the Powers above; and so, while giving earthly circumstances their due, he rendered grateful thanks to a Beneficence which had guided and directed all. The Prime Minister did not.

The King, in recalling afterwards the happy impromptus of that scene when Prelates and Laity were vying with each other in the expression of their relief, remembered how once or twice the Prime Minister had halted and gone back to the repetition of a former phrase, like one who having learned a lesson had momentarily lost the hang of it.

The circumstance did not greatly impress him at the time, he was ready to make allowances, for between him and his minister the situation was somewhat embarrassing. They had parted with unreconciled views, and by no stretch of terms could their relationship any longer be regarded as friendly. All the same, on such an occasion it was incumbent upon the Prime Minister to say the correct thing, and he had said it: he had described the outrage as "a dastardly attempt," and the immunity of his sovereign as "a happy and almost miraculous escape" for which none had more reason to be thankful than himself and his colleagues; he had also said that the passionate attachment of the people of Jingalo to the person of their ruler had now been made abundantly evident, and he trusted might ever so continue.

Later in the day, when the short ceremony of Parliament's closing was over (for it was impossible under the circumstances to return to stiff formality, no one being in the mood for it), later in the day, he again presented himself, and besought a private audience. And then—while once more repeating what he had said previously, almost in the same words,—he showed that he had something very serious of which to deliver himself.

He began with a great parade of leaving the matter to the King's decision only; his duty was merely to state the case as it would strike the world.

"We are in your Majesty's hands," he said, "and I have no wish to revive a discussion in which your Majesty has by right the last word. I have only to ask whether the circumstances of the last few hours have in any way affected your Majesty's decision."

As usual this formal insistence upon his "majesty" aroused the King's distrust; with his ministers in privacy he always disliked it. But all he said was: "Why should it?"

The Prime Minister pursed his lips and elaborately paused, as though finding it difficult to express himself. Then he said—

"After an attempted assassination so nearly successful, abdication would have a different effect to what your Majesty presumably intended."

"How?" inquired the King. But though he asked he already knew; and mentally his jaw dropped, as a new apparition of failure rose up and confronted him.

"It might seem to reflect upon your Majesty's personal courage: about which, I need hardly say, I myself have no doubt whatever."

"I see," said the King. His voice sounded the depression which had again begun to overwhelm him.

"I have no wish to press your Majesty," the Premier went on; "but at the present moment we are still under orders that to-morrow the definite and irrevocable announcement is to be made public."

Again he paused; and the King did not answer him.

"I wish to ask, therefore, whether it is your Majesty's wish that the announcement of the abdication shall be postponed?"

"Yes," said the King, and his words came slow, "I suppose that it must be—as you say—postponed."

"Does your Majesty wish to suggest any later date?"

The King thought for a while before answering.

"Is there any reason that I should?" But though he thus spoke to temporize over the position in which he now found himself, he knew that his opportunity was gone never to recur.

"Merely for our own guidance," explained the Prime Minister. "There is to be a special Cabinet meeting to-night."

"What are you going to discuss?"

"Should your Majesty remain, it will be our duty to present an address of loyal congratulation immediately on the reassembling of Parliament; and that, under the new circumstances, must take place almost at once. In any event some address will, of course, have to be moved; but if what has happened to-day is followed by an abdication, then regrets and deep gratitude for all the gracious benefits of the past would have to be added, and the whole form of it most carefully weighed and considered. I may say, therefore, that we are even now awaiting your Majesty's instructions."

"And you can do nothing till I decide?"

"Nothing practical, sir."

Their eyes met with a lurking watchfulness; and it was not difficult for each to read something of the other's thought. The King knew that behind all that aspect of deference and humility lay a sense of triumph, almost malignant in its intensity. He knew that circumstances had beaten him; and that the bomb of some wretched assassin had made his abdication impossible. The Prime Minister had said that he had no wish to press him; but what a pretense and hypocrisy that was, when that very night the Cabinet would have to meet and register its decision in one of two alternative forms totally distinct. Yes; the Ministry had him now in a cleft stick; and no pressure was to be put upon him only because there was no possibility for his decision to be delayed.

Defeat, following upon the terrific events of the day, filled his brain with weariness. At the moment when he had hoped to be free of his persecutors he had come once again to a blank wall. Further progress was barred, further thinking had become useless, events must take their course; once more he felt himself the sport of fate—a mere chip floating with the stream.

"Very well, Mr. Prime Minister," he said with resignation, "the Abdication is withdrawn."

He sighed deeply; and then (when left alone to his cogitations), for such weak comfort as the mere saving of his face could lend, this thought occurred to him,—"What a good thing that I told nobody about it." Even Max did not know.

And so in the year of his Jubilee, and the plenitude of his popularity, John of Jingalo continued to reign; and was, in consequence, the most saddened and humiliated monarch who ever bowed his head under a crown and resigned his freedom to a mixed sense of duty and a fear of what people might say.

CHAPTER XVI

CONCEALMENT AND DISCOVERY

I

There was plenty of hue and cry to discover the perpetrator of the outrage, but nothing came of it. From somewhere in that labyrinth of unfinished building and scaffolding fenced in by high hoardings a bomb had been thrown of insufficient power to do much damage to anybody. The Prefect of Police, riding in close attendance on the royal carriage, had himself vaulted the barrier, on the side whence it had seemed to come, and reported that he had found no trace of any one. Pieces of the shell had been collected upon the spot, they had not flown very far, nor were they much broken; and experts of the detective department had been busy putting together the bits.

The whole performance turned out on investigation to have been so feeble and amateurish that suspicion rapidly descended from the more experienced practitioners of anarchy, imported from other countries, to home-products of later growth—strikers made desperate and savage by the recent sentences upon their leaders, or, as some would have it, the Women Chartists, hoping by an attack upon royalty to bring a neglectful ministry to its senses. As there were no real clues except those which industriously led nowhere and which the police seemed delightedly to follow, everybody was free to lay the charge against any agitating section of the community which they happened to regard with special disfavor; and for that reason the Women Chartists did, in fact, get most of the blame.

But in the process they also reaped a certain advantage; the mere suspicion, though malice directed it, was good for them. Had it been possible to convict them, their cause would have gone down for another generation; but there was really nothing to catch hold of, and the power of any organization to commit such an outrage without being detected—to break the glass of the King's coach and make the eight piebald ponies rise up on end in horror—was a power which raised them greatly in the eyes of all law-abiding people; it suggested an unknown potency for mischief far more ominous than had discovery and conviction followed. And so, while squibs and crackers were being thrown at them and sham bombs hurled into their meetings to show how greatly the law-abiding people of Jingalo disapproved of them for incurring such suspicion—politically, the unjustly suspected ones moved a little nearer to their goal.

As for the King and Queen, they were simply inundated with telegrams and letters of congratulation. In many instances the loyalty shown was extraordinarily touching: one instance will suffice. Every schoolboy in every public school in Jingalo contributed a penny from his pocket money to a congratulatory telegram sent in the name of the school; and when, as sometimes happened, the school numbered over six hundred boys the telegram had necessarily to be lengthy, and proved a severe tax upon the literary ability of its senders.

Amid all this influx—this passionate outpouring of loyalty to a King who had stood only a few days before within an ace of abdication, there were of course messages of a more intimate and personal kind. Every crowned head in Europe had written with that fellow-feeling which on such occasions royalty is bound to express. "I know what it is like myself," wrote one who had had six attempts made on him; "but I have never had it done to me from behind. How very devastating to the nerves that must be!" The Prince of Schnapps-Wasser wired that he could find no language to express himself, but hoped in a few weeks' time to come and show all that he felt. Max after a brief wire had flown back to town; and his obvious perturbation and demonstrative affection had made it a happy meeting.

But, while all these messages flowed, there was one inexplicable silence. Charlotte neither wrote nor telegraphed; nor did she return home. That portent dawned upon their Majesties as they breakfasted late the next morning with correspondence and telegrams piled up beside them.

"What can have become of Charlotte?" cried the Queen. "She must *know*!"

"If she knew, she would be here," said the King, confident in his daughter's affection.

They stared at each other in a surmise which turned gradually to dismay. This unfilial silence upon their escape from the bomb of the assassin told them with staggering certainty that Charlotte was missing.

"She has run away!" cried the Queen.

"But she must be somewhere," objected the King; "and wherever she is she would surely have heard the news."

"She may be quite out in the country," suggested the Queen, picking up hope.

"Still she has friends who must know where she has gone."

"It's incredible!" cried her Majesty; "heartless, I call it."

"No, no, she simply doesn't know!" said the King; of that he was quite certain. "We are sure to

hear from her in the course of the day," he continued reassuringly, "meanwhile we shall have to make inquiries."

But the day went on, and no sign from Charlotte; nor did inquiries bring definite news up to date. She had arrived with her expectant hostess on the day appointed; but after staying only one night had gone elsewhere, and from that point in place and time no trace of her was to be found.

Before the day was over the King and Queen had become terribly anxious, and by the end of the week they were almost at their wits' end.

And here we get yet another instance of the drawbacks and dangers which attend upon royalty. Had Charlotte belonged to any ordinary rank of life, it could have been announced that she was missing; her description could have been issued to the press, and search for her made reasonably effective. But, as things were, this could not be done, Charlotte was impulsive and did indiscreet things; and until one knew exactly what it portended, to publish her disappearance to all the world would have been too rash and sudden a proceeding. Once that was done there could be no hushing up of the matter; all Jingo, nay, all Europe, would have to hear of it, including, of course, the Prince of Schnapps-Wasser; and so, at all costs of private strain and anxiety, it was necessary to conceal as long as possible that the Princess was not where she ought to be, and was perhaps where she ought not to be.

Now please, do not let my readers at this point think that it was Charlotte who had thrown the bomb. Even for the sake of literary effect, I would not for one moment deceive them. It was not Charlotte; Charlotte had nothing to do with it, and did not even know of it. And yet—I will give them for a while this small problem to grapple with—Charlotte was quite well, was in possession of all her senses, was thoroughly enjoying herself, and was not outside the land of her inheritance. Most emphatically she had not run away.

And there for the moment we will leave the matter, and attend to things more important.

II

The King had caught sight in the newspaper of something which annoyed him very much; annoyed him all the more because it seemed to betoken that the moment his abdication was withdrawn the old ministerial encroachments on the royal prerogative had begun again.

"We are officially informed," so ran the paragraph, "that the Minister of the Interior has advised his Majesty to grant a reprieve to the three strike leaders now lying under sentence of death for their part in the recent riots and police murders. It is understood that the sentences will be commuted to penal servitude for life."

And this was the first the King had heard of it!

He sent at once for the Home Minister; and within an hour that great official stood before him.

"Mr. Secretary," said the King sharply, as he laid the offending paragraph before him, "since when, may I ask, has the Crown's prerogative of mercy become the perquisite of the Home Office?"

"I do not think, sir," submitted the Secretary with all outward humility, "that any such change has come about. In this case the circumstances were special and very urgent."

"Why, then, was I not consulted?"

"There was hardly time, your Majesty."

"I was here."

"I apprehended that the recent event—so very upsetting to your Majesty——"

"Come, come," interjected the King, "if I was able to read my speech immediately after it—as I did—I was quite able to attend to other business as well; and you ought to have known it."

The King did not thus usually speak to one of his ministers; but, having just had to face so heavy a defeat of his plans for honorable retirement, he was the more bent on asserting himself.

"Your Majesty will pardon me, it had to be issued to the press without a moment's delay. We had received information which made the matter of great urgency."

"I will hear your explanation," said the King coldly; and the Secretary went on.

"You are doubtless aware, sir, that about these sentences there has been a very considerable agitation among the workers; and the utter failure of the strike has not improved matters."

"I am aware of that," said the King.

"It had always been my intention, as soon as the march of strikers had been dispersed in an orderly manner, to recommend the exercise of the royal clemency. It was in fact merely a matter of hours, when circumstances forestalled us. The session closed before any of the strike marchers could arrive upon the scene; and then came the event which diverted popular attention. It was for that reason, I presume, that only yesterday certain of the men's leaders made very inflammatory speeches—of a kind which it would be extremely difficult for the authorities to overlook or make

any appearance of yielding to. One speech in particular, calling upon the hangman to refuse to perform his duty and threatening his life if he did so, was of a peculiarly seditious character; for I need hardly point out that if that functionary is not protected in the fulfilment of his official duties the downfall of law and order has begun. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, to forestall any reports of that speech in the metropolitan press. For a few hours we were able to keep back the news; your Majesty's clemency was announced in the late issues of all the evening papers, and the 'Don't Hang' speech was not reported till this morning; and thus, coming after the event, has fallen comparatively flat. I think that now your Majesty will understand the position."

The Secretary had finished.

"And that is your explanation?" queried the King.

The minister bowed.

"I have to say that it does not satisfy me."

The minister lifted sad eyebrows, but did not speak.

"You tell me that for many days this recommendation of mercy has been your fixed intention. Why, then, did you not consult me? Why did you assume that, at a moment's notice, I should be able to fall in with your suggestion; why, even, that I should think the dispersal of certain riotous assemblies a convenient signal for the exercise of the royal prerogative?"

"I have merely followed, sir, the ordinary course of procedure observed in my department."

"Until, being unexpectedly pressed for time, you departed from it. After all the telephone was between us; I was here. I might not have agreed: but at least I should have been consulted!"

The minister pursed his lips; to this sort of hectoring he had really nothing to say. It did not comport with his official dignity.

The King rose. "Mr. Secretary, as I have already said, your explanation does not satisfy me. I shall communicate my sentiments to the Prime Minister."

His Majesty did not extend his hand; but by a motion of the head showed that the interview was over; and there was nothing left for the Minister of the Interior to do but retire from the room.

And the next day he retired from office; for though the Prime Minister urged many things in his defense, and more particularly the misapprehension which his present retirement might cause, the King remained obdurate; he was bent upon making an example. In the great political game he had miscalculated and lamentably failed, but red-tape was still his cherished possession; and you can do a good deal with red-tape when you have an unquestioned authority to fall back upon. Professor Teller's volumes of Constitutional History still lay upon a retired shelf in the royal library (indeed it was from one of them that he had extracted with slight changes his formal pronouncement of abdication); and if he could not get anything else out of his ministers he was determined to secure official correctness. Though they slighted his opinion, they should recognize his authority; punctiliousness at least they should render him as his one remaining due.

And so when the Prime Minister urged how small and accidental was the omission, his Majesty remarked that it was one of many; and when he argued how any delay might have proved dangerous, the point at which delay had begun was again icily indicated. More pressingly still did he invite the King to consider in what light, if unexplained, this resignation would be popularly regarded; would it not be taken as an admission of blame by the head of the Home Department for the occurrence of the late outrage?

"Very likely," assented the King; "after all it took place on Government premises." Whereat the Prime Minister, looking somewhat startled and distressed, inquired whether any such imputation of blame had been his Majesty's ulterior motive for his present action.

"I have no motives left," said the King wearily; "I am merely doing my duty."

In which aspect he was proving himself a very difficult person to deal with. "I am not arguing, I am only telling you," was an attitude which put him in a much stronger position with his intellectual superiors than any attempt at converting them to his views. From this day on he stood forth to his ministers as a rigid constitutional reminder; and with six volumes of the minutiae of constitutional usage at his fingers' ends the amount of time he was able to waste and the amount of trouble he was able to give were simply amazing.

The Prime Minister had been quite right; the resignation of the Home Secretary caused just that flutter of unfavorable suspicion which he had expected. For some reason or another he was extremely distressed by it, and begged from his Majesty the grant of a full State pension to the retired minister. But the King would not hear of it. "It is not my duty," he said, "to grant full pensions to those who fail in their official obligations. Where I am more personally concerned I have not pressed you; I have not asked for the resignation of the Prefect of Police, though I think I might have some reason to show for it. He prevented nothing, and he has discovered nothing. Do you expect me to open Parliament for you again next week, with the same ceremony, along the same route, and at the same risk?"

He was assured that every precaution would be taken.

"I hope so," he said in the tone of one who very much doubted whether the ministerial word was now worth anything.

Under this harassing and unhandsome treatment the Prime Minister was beginning to show age; and the coming session gave no promise that his cares in other respects would be less heavy than before; the Women Chartists were threatening a bigger outbreak in the near future, and Labor was now claiming to be freely supported from the rates either when out of work or when on strike. And when the Address to the Throne was being moved Labor and the Women Chartists would be in renewed agitation, asking for things which would make party politics quite impossible, and which it was therefore quite impossible for party politics to grant. If the Government had not still got that thoroughly unpopular House of Bishops to sit upon and coerce, things would be looking very black indeed.

III

And meanwhile where was the Princess Charlotte? Seven horrible days had gone by; and the inner circle of the detective force had been running about in padded slippers, so to speak, giving an accurate description of a lady whose name nobody knew, and who had been last seen in the vicinity of a college for women. Very privately and confidentially the titled lady who was the head of that institution had been interviewed; but her information was limited.

"She came to me only for one day," said the Principal, "though I thought she was intending to stay a week. I hardly know when I missed her; she had laid it down so very emphatically that she was to be left free and treated without ceremony, that really I did not trouble to look after her. Whenever she was here her Highness always mixed quite freely with the students; I know that with some of them she had made friends. They are far more likely to know what her plans were than I am."

Further inquiry in the direction thus indicated had to be carried on elsewhere, since the students had now separated for the vacation; and wherever inquiry was made the same stealthy secrecy had to be adopted; nobody must be allowed to suppose that the Princess Royal of Jingalo was missing. And so—on a sort of all-fours not at all conducive to speed—the quest went on.

On the fifth day, however, some relief had arrived to reduce the parental anxiety to bearable proportions. A letter, dropped from nowhere, bearing the metropolitan postmark, came to the King's hands. It gave only the barest, yet very essential information.

"Dearest papa," it ran, "I am quite well, and enjoying myself. I shall be back in a fortnight."

News of the arrival of this letter was immediately conveyed to the Constabulary Chief; and after three days of deep cogitation the absence of all reference to the outrage and to the risk run by those near and dear to her seemed to strike him as peculiar, and supplied him with what hitherto the police had lacked—a clue. And after two more days of strenuously directed search it bore fruit.

Late one afternoon the King was sitting at work in his study when his Comptroller-General entered hastily and in evident excitement; for though the King was then busily engaged in writing he presumed to interrupt, not waiting for the royal interrogating glance to give him his permission.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, in a tone of very urgent apology.

"Well, well?" said the King rather testily, for he did not like his writing-hour to be thus disturbed, "what is it?"

"The Prime Minister wishes to see you, sir, on a matter of extreme urgency."

The King had so long been pestered by ministers on matters which they considered urgent and which he did not, that he had little patience for such pleas, coming at the wrong time.

"What about?" he inquired curtly.

The Comptroller-General, who was supposed not to know, replied discreetly but in a tone of veiled meaning, "Something in the Home Department I believe, sir. Just now, while there is no chief secretary, the Prime Minister himself is seeing to matters."

"Dear, dear!" sighed his Majesty, "I do wish he would manage to get his urgent business done at the proper time!"

"I think, sir," said the General, "that this matter is one of sufficient importance to justify a suspension of the ordinary rules." He paused, as though about to say more, but thought better of it; after all the matter did not lie within his department.

"Very well," said the King, "let him come in, then!" And in due course the Premier entered.

It was evident at a glance that he was the bearer of important, nay, even alarming, intelligence; his eye was startled and anxious, his manner full of discomposure, and without waste of a moment he opened abruptly upon the business which had brought him.

"I have come to inform your Majesty," said he, "that we have at last discovered the Princess Charlotte's whereabouts."

"Oh?" said the King, excluding from his tone any indication of gratitude over the too long delayed discovery. "And pray, where is she?"

"I regret to say, sir, that her Royal Highness is at this moment in Stonewall Jail."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the King, startled out of his coldness. "Whatever took her there?"

"She was taken, sir, in a 'Molly Hold-all'^[1] along with several others. And she has been there for the last ten days."

"Yes, yes; but what I want to know is what has she been doing? In this country one doesn't get put into prison for nothing, I should hope."

"The charge, sir, was for assaulting the police. No doubt there has been a very regrettable mistake; there was, unquestionably, in the magistrate's court, some conflict of evidence."

"Assaulting the police!" exclaimed the King petulantly.

"But what else are the police there for?—when there's trouble, I mean. And how many of them did she assault, pray?"

"I believe only one, sir," replied the Prime Minister; "at least only one of them gave any evidence against her, and there were five witnesses to say that she did not assault him. The magistrate who convicted, however, accepted the constable's evidence; he is, I believe, rather hard of hearing; and I am told that he thought the witnesses in her favor were all giving evidence against her. If that is so, it sufficiently accounts for the conviction. On the other hand there can be no doubt that the Princess did intend to get arrested."

"When did all this take place?"

"In the course of the last Chartist disturbances, three days before the rising of Parliament. Some sixty or seventy women then caused themselves to be arrested, and it seems that the Princess was one of them."

"She must be mad!" exclaimed the King in bewilderment. "Whatever could have induced her?"

"Was your Majesty aware that she had any leanings towards politics?"

"She has ideas," said the King, "like other young people; but she is generally very busy changing them; and, beyond a notion that a woman ought always to have her own way, and never be asked to do what she doesn't want to do, she——" And then it began to dawn upon him—though only darkly—what Charlotte was really after: she was demonstrating madly, extravagantly, her claim to personal freedom. And to prove how much she meant it she had gone to these wild lengths. Well might her father, in his essentially middle-aged mind, wonder what the younger generation was coming to.

"Poor dear silly child!" he exclaimed in fond irritation. "Why ever could she not have waited?"

That was a question the Prime Minister could not answer.

"Well, well," he went on, endeavoring to be philosophical over the business, "she has had her lesson now; and after all there is no real harm done."

"Your Majesty must pardon me; it has become a very serious matter," said the Prime Minister gravely.

"Why? Who knows anything about it? Who need know? She wasn't sentenced in her own name, I suppose?"

"Certainly not, sir; had she been recognized the thing could never have happened. She must to some extent have altered her dress and her appearance: as to that I have no particulars. The name she actually went in under was Ann Juggins."

"Preposterous!" exclaimed the King. "And supposing that were to come out!"

"That is the trouble, sir. Without the full and immediate exercise of your authority, I fear it may. As a matter of fact, that is why she still remains where we found her."

"Oh! Stuff and nonsense!" cried the King. "You don't come for my authority in cases of this kind. Let her out, let her out! and say nothing more about it!"

"The Prefect, sir, has already been to see her, and she refuses to be let out; that is to say, declares that if she is not allowed to serve her full sentence she will make the whole of the affair public."

"Public?"

"Name and all. There was her ultimatum; she made a special point of it. Her Highness seems somehow to be aware that the name is an impossible one, a weapon against which no Government department could stand. The word 'Juggins,'—only think, sir, what it means! Here we have a ridiculous, a most lamentable blunder committed by the police, sufficient of itself to cause us the gravest embarrassment; and then to have on the top of it all this name with its ridiculous association rising up to confound us. We should go down as 'the Juggins Cabinet'; the word would be cried after us by every errand-boy in the street—the Government would become

impossible."

The King did his best to conceal his delight at the predicament in which Charlotte's escapade had, by the confession of its Chief, placed the Cabinet. This tyrannical Government, in spite of its large majority, its strong party organization, and its bureaucratic powers, was unable to stand up against ridicule; a mere breath, and all its false pretensions to dignity would be exposed, and its dry bones, speciously clad in strong armor, would rattle down into the dust.

And if he chose to use this knowledge suddenly gained, what a power it would give him! Yes; he had only to send for Charlotte and bid her cry 'Juggins,' and that which, with so many months of anxious toil and with threat of abdication, he had failed to bring about, would immediately accomplish itself in other ways. But unfortunately the King was a man of scrupulous conscience, and was bound by his ideas of what became a monarch and a gentleman. He may have been quite mistaken in regarding as unclean the weapon with which Heaven had supplied him; but as he did so regard it, one must reluctantly admit that he was right to throw it aside.

"Well," he said, when the Prime Minister had finished, "she must be made not to tell, that's all!"

"I fear, sir, she is very determined."

"Determined to do what?"

"To serve out her sentence."

The King sat and thought for a while. He knew his Charlotte better than the police did; and, besides that, during the past week he had quite made up his mind that the Prefect of Police was in some matters a blunderer. "I wonder how he tried to get her out," he meditated aloud. "Did she send me any message?"

"Nothing direct, sir, that I know of; but I take it that her ultimatum was also directed against any possible action on the part of your Majesty. She was quite determined to do her full time; said indeed that you had promised her a fortnight. What that may mean, I do not know."

"Oh, really!" cried the King, "the folly of the official mind is past all believing,—especially when it concentrates itself in the police force! Let somebody go to that poor child and tell her that her father and mother have had a bomb thrown at them, and are trying to recover themselves in the grief caused by her absence! And then unchain her (you keep them in chains, I suppose?), open the door of her prison, and see how she'll run! And tell the Prefect," he added, "that I cannot present him with my compliments."

The King was quite right. In case Charlotte should refuse to believe the official word, she was shown a newspaper with lurid illustrations; and within an hour's time she was back at the palace, weeping, holding her father and mother alternately in her arms, and scolding them for all the world as though they had been guilty of outrageous behavior, and not she.

And, after all, it was a very good way of getting over the preliminaries of a rather awkward meeting.

IV

But when the first transports of joy at that reunion were over, they had to settle down to naughty facts and talk with serious disapproval to Charlotte of her past doings. And as they did so, though she still wept a little, the Princess observed with secret satisfaction that she had at any rate cured her mother of one thing—of knitting, namely, while a daughter's fate was being dangled in the parental balance.

From that day on when Charlotte showed that she was really in earnest the Queen put down her knitting; and those who have lived under certain domestic conditions where tyranny is always, as though by divine right, benevolent, wise, self-confident, and self-satisfied to the verge of conceit, will recognize that this in itself was no inconsiderable triumph.

Charlotte was quite straightforward as to why she had done the thing; she had done it partly out of generous enthusiasm for a cause which she did not very well understand, but to which certain friends of hers had attached themselves with a blind and dogged obstinacy (two of those friends she had left in prison behind her); but more because she wished to supply an object lesson of what she was really like to the Prince of Schnapps-Wasser.

She insisted that he was to be told all about it. And the Queen was in despair.

"Tell him that you have been in jail like a common criminal for assaulting the police? I couldn't, it would break my heart! I should die of the shame of it."

"Very well," said Charlotte, "I will tell him myself, then; you can't prevent me doing that! No, I'm not going to be headstrong, or foolish, or obstinate, or any of the things you said I was: now I've made the exhibition of myself that I intended making, I'll be a lamb. If I like him enough, and if he likes me enough, I'll marry him. But I shall have to like him a great deal more than I do at present; and he will have to want me very much more than it's possible for him to do until he has seen me——"

"Oh, don't be so conceited, my dear!" said the Queen, her good-humor and confidence beginning to be restored as she watched the fair flushed face, and those queer attractive little gestures

which made her daughter's charm so irresistible.

"Before anything will induce me to say 'yes,'" concluded Charlotte.

And then, as though that finished the matter, and as though her own naughty doings were of no further interest, she cried: "And now tell me about the bomb!" And the Queen, who still liked to dwell upon that episode of sights, sounds, and sensations, strangely mingled and triumphantly concluded by a popular ovation such as she had never met with in her life before, started off at once on a detailed narrative, corrected now and then by the King's more sober commentary, and aided by the eager questions of her daughter, who sat in close and fond contact with both of them, mopping her eyes alternately with her mother's handkerchief and her own.

"Oh! why wasn't I there?" she cried incautiously, when word came of the great popular reception crowning all.

"Ah! why weren't you?" inquired the King waggishly. And when he had made that little joke at her, Charlotte knew that all her naughty goings off and goings on were comfortably forgiven and done with.

"But you know, papa," she said later, when for the first time they were alone together, "I have found out quite a lot of things that *you* know nothing about: quite dreadful things! And they are going on behind your back, and women are being put into prison for it."

All this was said very excitedly, and with great earnestness and conviction.

"My dear," said the King, "it's no use your talking about those Women Chartists to me."

"But I'm one of them," said Charlotte.

"Nonsense; you are not."

"I am. I signed on. I couldn't have gone to prison for them if I hadn't."

"Do any of them know who you are?" cried the King, aghast. It was a disturbing thought, for what a power it would be in their hands, and he had always heard how unscrupulous they were.

"Only one or two," declared Charlotte, "and they won't tell unless I tell them to. They are wonderful people, papa!"

The King sighed; for the very name of them had become a weariness to him. The whole agitation, with its dim confused scufflings against law and order, and its demonstrations idiotically recurring at the most inopportune moments, had profoundly vexed him. Years ago he had received the bland assurance of his ministers that the whole thing would soon die down and cease; but it was still going on, and was now taking to itself worse forms than ever.

"What is it that they want?" he exclaimed, not quite meaning it as a question; rather as expressing the opinion that the subject was a hopeless one.

"They want a great many things," said his daughter; "they've got what they call 'grievances'; I know very little about them; they may be right or wrong—that isn't the point. The only thing that concerns you, papa, is that they want to come and see you; and they are not allowed to."

"Come and see me?"

"Yes; bring you a petition."

"What about?"

"To have their grievances looked into."

"I can't look into their grievances."

"No; but you can say that they shall be."

The King shook his head. Charlotte did not know what she was talking about.

"Yes, papa, that is the position. Of course you haven't the right to make laws or levy taxes, but you can send word to Parliament to say something has got to be considered and decided. And about this, Parliament won't consider and won't decide. And that is why they are trying to get to you with a petition; so that you shall say that it is to be looked into."

"But I can't say that sort of thing, my dear."

"Yes, you can, papa! It's an old right; the right of unrepresented people to come direct to their sovereign and tell him that his ministers are refusing to do things for them. And your ministers are trying to keep you from knowing about it, to keep you from knowing even that you have such a power; and by not knowing it they are making you break your Coronation oath. Oh, papa, isn't that dreadful to think of?"

"My dear, if that were true——"

"But it is true, papa! These women are trying to bring you their petition, and they are prevented. The ministers say that you have nothing to do with it; so they go to the ministers—they take their petition to the ministers, and ask them to bring it to you, so that you may give them an answer. Have any of them brought you the petition, papa?"

The King shook his head.

"You see, they do nothing! And so the women go again, and again, and again, taking their petition with them; and because they are trying to get to you—to say that their grievances shall be looked into, and something done about them—because of that they are being beaten and bruised in the streets; and when they won't turn back then they are arrested and sent to prison."

By this time Charlotte was weeping.

"They may be quite wrong," she cried, "foolish and impossible in their demands; they may have no grievances worth troubling about—though if so, why are they troubling as they do?—but they have the right, under the old law, for those grievances to be inquired into and considered and decided about. And Parliament won't do it; it is too busy about other things, grievances that aren't a bit more real, and about which people haven't been petitioning at all. But you, papa (if that petition came to you), would have the right to make them attend to it. And they know it; and that's why they won't let you hear anything about it."

The King's conscience was beginning to be troubled. He had no confidence either in the good sense or the uprightness of his ministers to fall back upon; and he saw that his daughter, though she knew so little about the merits of the case, was very much in earnest. She had caught his hand and was holding it; she kissed it, and he could feel the dropping of warm tears.

"Very well, my dear," he said, "very well; I promise that this shall be looked into."

"Oh, papa!" she cried joyfully. "It was partly for that—just a little, not all, of course—that I went to prison."

"Then you ought not to have been so foolish. Why could you not have come to me?"

"I don't think you would have attended; not so much as you do now."

And the King had to admit how, perhaps, that was true.

"Well, my dear," he said again, "I promise that it shall be seen to. No, I shan't forget."

And then she kissed him and thanked him, and went away comforted. And when he was alone he got down the index volume of Professor Teller's *Constitutional History*, and after some search under the heading of "Petitions" found indeed that Charlotte was right, and that the power to send messages to Parliament for the remedying of abuses was still his own.

CHAPTER XVII

THE INCREDIBLE THING HAPPENS

I

Since the break-up of his plans the King had been finding consolation in his son's book, an advance copy of which had reached him while Max was still abroad. Consolation is, perhaps, hardly the right word; it had distracted him in more ways than one; partly, and in a good sense, from his own personal depression over things gone wrong, but more with a scared apprehension of the terrible hubbub that would arise when its contents became known. The title, *Government and the Governed*, was sober enough, and the post-diluvian motto once threatened by Max had been omitted; but the contents were of a highly revolutionary character, and the bland "take-or-leave me" attitude of the author toward the public he would some day be called upon to rule was on a par with that statement of her prison doings which Charlotte was preparing for the delectation of Hans Fritz Otto, Prince of Schnapps-Wasser. In neither case did it seem likely that such a confession would draw parties together.

And so before the King had even finished reading he felt it his duty to write imploring his son not to publish.

Before an answer could reach him important events supervened. The reverberations of the bomb brought Max flying back to the bosom of his family; and then the Charlotte episode had followed, over which Max had not been at all sympathetic, for in spite of his emancipated views about things in general, he had still the particular notion that revolution belonged only to men, and that women, incapable of conducting it efficiently, had far better leave it alone.

And so it was that only when things had begun to resettle themselves was any fresh reference made to the book's forthcoming publication.

As soon as the subject was broached Max presented a face of polite astonishment.

"I thought you knew, sir," he said.

"Knew what?"

"The most important event in recent history; I even thought you might have instigated it."

"I don't know what you are talking about."

"Then I must break the news. My book has been burned to the ground." He spoke as though it had been an edifice. "I am told, for my consolation, that it burned extremely well—'fiercely,' the papers said—and gave the firemen a lot of trouble. Your letter and the news reached me almost simultaneously; I knew, therefore, that you would be glad."

"No, no, don't say 'glad,'" protested the King; "in a way I am sorry, even. I only wanted it to be anonymous. One can do things anonymously. How did it come about?"

"It was the work of an incendiary."

"How do you know that?"

"There was absolute proof,—something which refused to burn,—a box of matches made in Jingalo, or some other fire-resistant of a similar kind. The perpetrator got off. Yes—the House of Ganz-Wurst certainly seems at the present moment particularly to attract the attentions of these obscurantists in politics. Who knows whether the hand which threw the bomb at you had not already been dipped in the petrol which had given so flaming an account of my claims to authorship?"

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Reprint, I suppose, as soon as I can afford it, or do you still wish me not to? You hold almost the only copy that is left."

The King shook his head. "As I told you, Max, I think publication would be very unwise; you would be sure to regret it afterwards. Remember that some day you will come to the throne; and what you think you can do now you can't do then. All at once it becomes impossible."

And then the King gave a queer consternated gasp, for he himself remembered something—something he had conditionally promised, believing that the conditions would never be fulfilled; and now fate had brought them about; and if Max so willed it a thing would presently be taking place much more disturbing to the institution of royalty than the publication of a mere book.

To the King's last remark Max merely replied: "At present, sir, it is you who are upon the throne and not I—a circumstance over which I have very particular reasons for being glad. And now, sir, something has just occurred to me: do not think that I am going to anticipate the date you fixed, that is not till next week, but when all is settled, as it so soon will be if I remain of sane mind, then I will present all the preserved copies of my book to the lady whom you so disapprove of, and she shall do with them exactly as she wishes—order a new edition, or put them on the fire to help her make soup for the poor. That is a little device of mine, sir, for bringing her into your good graces; for if I know anything of her mind she will maintain that to publish such a book without a full intention of putting its principles into practice is a mere parade of insincerity and foolishness. And so—from your point of view—she will be saving the monarchy from a danger which no one else can avert; for I am not prepared to surrender my power to do mischief into any hands but hers. A copy of the book, you may be interested to hear, has already gone to her; and her silence about it warns me that the epoch it so strenuously makes for is not the one that she desires."

"You are still talking like a book, Max," said the King sarcastically, wishing to divert discussion for the time being from that which he was referring to.

"Ah, yes," said Max; "as a bird who mourns his mate. Why, for a while, should I not indulge my grief? I shall never write another; all I had it in me to say was said there. In future—though you may hear in my voice an echo of that lost romance—I am going to be a man not of words but of deeds."

The King smiled.

"You look incredulous, sir; but I have already startled that Commission you put me on, and compelled it to include in the scope of its inquiry things which it did not want to inquire into at all. Believe me, sir; if we get before us all the evidence that I intend we shall find ourselves forced into making a very unpopular report—far more unpopular than my book would have been, and far more subversive of the established order of things than at present you can have any idea. Even your coats, sir—exorbitant though their price now is—are going to cost you more as a result of this Commission, unless we can so arrange that in future a little less shall be paid for the 'cut' and a little more for the needle and thread that join the cuttings together. I am going to have it said in this report of ours—for I have discovered it to be a fact—that the very clothes which are your daily wear (and mine) are put together by men and women paid at something less than twopence-half-penny an hour. And I am going to get it put in that scandalously personal way (your clothes and mine—the clothes we go to open Parliament in, and set the fashions in, and when we have worn them some half-dozen times hand on to charity), I am going to have it thus put that all may be conscious and ashamed when they see us so exhibiting ourselves, and no longer think a well-cut coat under modern commercial conditions a fit adjunct for royalty. That, sir, will do a great deal more harm to 'trade' than my book would have done. The public conscience does not like to have these things brought home to royalty itself; we and the 'social evil' are in no way to be connected with each other, lest it should be seen that we help to make its ways easy. Only the other day I was credibly informed that a man who headed with twenty thousand pounds the list of a charity bearing my mother's name, has been allowed by the police

to get out of this country scot free—though guilty of infamous conduct,—merely because the contribution of that tainted donation to a royal fund would not have 'looked well.'

"Oh, stop talking to me, Max!" cried the King, made irritable by his increased sense of helplessness. "Go and do what you like, say what you like, report what you like; you've got the Commission to play with; run it for all it is worth; but for Heaven's sake let me have peace for a while! Why should you trouble me? You know that I can do nothing."

"You have done a great deal," said Max, whose admiration for his father had grown very considerably during the past year.

"I have missed doing a great deal; but of that you know nothing, and I'm not going to tell you." And then he could stand it no more. "Do you imagine I should have made you that idiotic promise," he cried, "if I had supposed for a moment that I should still be here when you came to claim it?" And so saying he got up and, diplomatic in retreat, hurried out of the room.

Max, left to his own surmisings, opened wide and wondering eyes. "Did he throw that bomb at himself?" he murmured in astonishment. "It looks very much as if he did."

II

Parliament opened again without any difficulty in the middle of December; and the enormous popularity of the King and Queen was greatly enhanced by the circumstance of their reappearance within so short a time for an occasion so closely similar. Only another bomb could have increased the favorable impression made upon the populace by their affable return to the charge—if a slow walking-pace may be so described—within three weeks of the attempted outrage.

As the Prime Minister had promised the police spared no pains to insure their safety, and behind the hoardings of the new Government offices detectives were packed like herrings in a barrel, with special eye-holes bored through so that they might note the actual passing of the royal carriage, and have it well under observation at the point of danger which was, presumably, that at which the last explosion had occurred. Then the whole police force held its breath, and the coach got past without any difficulty; and immediately the waiting multitude in Regency Row became violently demonstrative as though some great acrobatic feat had been achieved. And the piebald ponies came stepping like rope-dancers each held by a groom; and everything—except the fresh bomb for which so many stage preparations had been made—went off with all the success imaginable.

The King did not read his own speech: he had a sore throat for the occasion, and only with his ears did he swallow the bitter pill of that foreshadowed scheme which he had so long and vainly resisted; for now he was bound by his own promise, and could no longer "stand in the way."

And so, by the mouth of the Lord High Commissioner, the Bishops heard under its smooth-sounding title the plan for their approaching doom read out from the steps of the Throne, and as soon as the King and the Queen had retired, budding members on the ministerial side in both Houses rose up to congratulate the Cabinet and the country on those wise and statesmanlike proposals, and hardened veterans upon the other, the Archbishop included, rose up to condemn them. And after that, for three or four days a general wrangling—all leading to nothing—went on.

But while Parliament talked vacuously within, outside came rumblings of storm; the discontent of certain sections of the community with conditions unsettled or unattended to was gathering to a head. And on the third day after the session had opened, Charlotte said to her father with rather a tragic look, "Papa, do you know what is going to happen to-night?" And then she told him.

It was those Women Chartists again.

The King had been true to his word, he had made inquiries; in a way he had even "looked into the matter," and had received from the right and official quarter bland assurances that there was nothing in it—merely a general obstreperousness and a wish to cause trouble to the police. But his conscience, which so often ran away with him, was still troubled; and so when the evening came he sent once again for the newly appointed Home Minister; and in reply to rather anxious questions was given confidently to understand that the police arrangements were quite adequate for the occasion, that everything would be done as quietly and as leniently as possible; and that no edge of the disturbance would in any case be allowed to overflow in the direction of the royal palace. As he listened to the cocksure tone of this new minister, and the almost patronizing air with which he exposed his official fitness for the post so recently conferred on him, the King ceased to ask questions—let the man talk himself out,—and then, when silence seemed to give consent, got rid of him.

It was now time that he should go to dress for dinner, but the motive force was absent. He stood for a while considering, then went to the window, and opening it let in the distant hum of the city traffic.

All sounded as usual, pleasant, busy, peaceable. Yet if what his daughter told him was true, within half-an-hour those quietly-sounding streets would be thronged with thousands upon thousands waiting for the arrival of the women to claim their old historical right of petition; and serried lines of police—thousands of them also—would be standing to bar their way, whatever direction they might go in quest of the governing authority. And in the hands of these women

would be petitions personally addressed to himself; yet never had any minister put to him the question whether he would be willing to receive them and hear what they had to say; such an idea seemed not to have entered their heads—or was it the fear lest such a reception might give the cause too great an importance in the public eye? Here, once again, then, proof met him of the conspiracy of modern government constantly going on to bring about disconnection between the Crown and the real life-needs and aspirations of the people. Suffocating traditions closed him round making a cypher of him—to himself a scorn and a derision, and a monster unto many—just as much, by this denial of petition, a breaker of his Crown oath as those who in the past had paid penalty for it with their lives!

There outside, in the nipping wintry air, he could hear the sounds of a liberty he no longer shared: the trotting of cab-horses, the cry of newsboys, the whiffle and hoot of motor-cars. Up through the bare trees of the park swam a soft radiance of light from the lamps below, and emergent like a full moon on a misty sky the face of the great Parliament clock dawned luminous to his gaze.

So long he stood, and listened, and waited, that before he closed the window again the clock had told the three-quarters to eight. Then he hesitated no more; passing out of his study and down to a lower corridor he came presently to the cloak lobby, and selecting a rough full-length overcoat, a motor cap, and from a drawer a pair of clouded snow-glasses, arrayed himself in these, and with flaps drawn down and coat collar turned high, passed out by a small side-entrance which led on to the terrace.

Chill air and a bosom of darkness received him; through the thick barrier of trees skirting the walled precincts scarcely a light winked; only the large domed conservatory behind him threw a pale radiance before his feet as he crossed the terrace and moved off by a winding path in the direction of a small postern concealed in shrubbery.

As he quitted the grass, the sound of his own footfalls upon firm gravel made him guiltily afraid; and it was not without some moral effort that he, a king in his own domain, kept himself from stepping back secretively to the turfed edge. Suppressing the inclination, he proceeded at a smart pace, and coming presently to the door with a slip-latch on its inner side he opened it and passed through.

At the sound of opening a policeman stationed outside turned and stood passively regarding him; his muffled appearance seemed sufficiently in keeping with the uses to which this particular exit was put by others to awaken neither suspicion nor surprise. With a half-waggish air of respect the man touched his helmet. "Good-evening, sir," said he, as though there subsisted between the habitués of that door and himself a sort of understanding.

To make a quicker escape from the man's scrutiny and the glare of the lamp commanding the entrance, the King crossed the road, and took up his course along the more dimly lighted footway on the further side. At this hour the park row in which he found himself was almost deserted; now and again single pedestrians went by, and as he received from none of these more than a cursory and inattentive glance, his sense of incognito increased, and he stepped out more confidently to the task that lay ahead.

Presently he was passing along the palace front and under the eyes of sentries standing motionless at their posts; and again he had satisfaction in perceiving that as he went by there was no inclination on the part of any one of them to present arms. He glanced up at the palace façade, with its windows softly lighted through blinds. He could pick out his own sitting-room, and the Queen's, where probably she was now reading the note he had sent to inform her that urgent business called him away. There were the lights of the smaller dining-hall, within which a table richly adorned with gold and silver plate stood even now waiting its twenty accustomed guests—the minister-in-attendance and the higher permanent officials of the Court. No one else from outside was coming to-night except Prince Max. That was fortunate, Max would take his place.

As soon as he was outside the borders of the park the King quitted the main thoroughfare for narrow and dimly lit alleys, avoiding the streets of wide pavements and shops which had scarcely yet begun to close; and before long found that he had lost his way.

The fact was sufficiently absurd; here within a stone's throw of his own palace, and stretching almost to the doors of the House of Legislature whereto he went in so much state every year, lay an unknown territory which he had never thought to explore. The intricacy of back streets was quite unknown to him, and he seemed at almost every corner to be stepping into yards and cul-de-sacs, from which he had perforce to turn back again. In a short time all sense of the points of the compass was gone.

A small ragged urchin asked him the time, and that casual touch of communalism made him feel more at home. He took out his watch—it was already five minutes past eight: over those high narrow streets, with their thin strip of sky, the big clock of Parliament had boomed the hour and he had not heard it. Away scurried the urchin as though already late for something, excitedly calling on others to follow; and the King, with the presumption that these running feet would be sure to lead him in the direction where he wished to go, followed them round two corners. After that all trace of them was gone.

A sound of shrill singing now struck his ear. He was in a narrow asphalted way surrounded by workmen's tenements. Right in the middle, occupying the place of the non-existent traffic, ten or

a dozen children were dancing a sort of figure, and singing the while. As he drew near he caught snatches of the words.

Of an elder child, who stood looking on, he stopped and asked the way. She told him, gesticulating as to which corners he was to pass, pointing all the time to the promised goal. Incautiously he dropped a coin into her hand; and, as kings do not carry coppers, immediately there was a cry. The singers stopped and surrounded him, stretching up clamorous palms; a whole dozen were now feverishly anxious to show him every step of the way.

"It's the 'Chartises' as you want to see, arn't it, mister?" inquired one. "I'll show you where they go; I know all of 'em."

The King pressed hurriedly on, hoping to get rid of them; but his flustered air appealed to the tormenting instincts of youth, and told them that here they had got some one capable of being worried into surrender. Still clamoring and thrusting up hands for backsheesh they kept pace with him. A few of them started singing again, and the rest joined in: perhaps singing was what the gentleman liked best—and so a better way for gaining their end. The shrill voices fell into chorus; and to a queer lilting tune the words rang clear.

"Come to me
Quietlee,
Do not do me an injuree!
Gently, Johnnie of Jingalo."

"What's that?" cried the King, stopping short in his amazement; "what's that you say?" A new bewilderment seized on him. It was impossible—quite impossible that the children should know who he really was, yet there were the words with their implied accusation, as though personally directed at him, and at him alone.

The small street singers, taking the inquiry for an encore, sang it again; and this time the words had a curious flirtatious meaning which made them even worse. What was he being charged with?

"Where did you get that from?" he inquired, hot of face.

"One of the Chartises taught it us," said a child more ready of speech than the rest. "They all sings it now. It's one of their songs, that is!" So with reduplicating speech she conveyed intelligence to his mind.

Never before had any word of poetry struck him a blow like this. He had said that he did not understand poetry, but here was meaning only too clear; in this song—so gentle, pleading, and pathetic in character, he, John of Jingalo, stood publicly accused of all the injuries that were being done to women in that necessary defense of law and order against which, petition in hand, they were so obstinately setting themselves. What was all his popularity worth, if by the mouths of little children his name was to be thus cried in the streets? It was scandalous, indecent; and yet—was it altogether without justification?

To be rid of his small tormentors and free for his own meditations, he took the most practical means that suggested itself.

"There, there!" he cried. "Run away, run away, all of you!" and throwing a random coin into their midst moved hastily away. Behind him as he went he heard battle royal being waged; liberal though the donation, and sufficient to distribute sustenance to all, each was now claiming it as her own perquisite.

And so at his back the shrill sounds of wrath and contention went on till they became merged in a louder roar, the origin of which was presently made apparent.

He turned a corner and saw before him a huge crowd, and Regency Row packed with seething humanity from end to end.

III

For the first time in his life the King formed part of a crowd, and knew what it was like to feel his body and limbs packed in by the bodies and limbs of others and to have the breath squeezed out of him. In this crowd the proportion of men to women was as ten to one; from the physical point of view, therefore, the chances for these conflicting women were nil. All the same they were there in large numbers, and not for the first time; many of them were already sufficiently well known to the police.

A curiously corporate movement possessed this crowd; when it shifted at all it shifted in large sections—three or four hundred at once; a whole street-width of men driving forward at a lunge, before which the strongest barrier of police momentarily gave way. And wherever this kind of movement went on a few women formed the center of it.

Small bundles of humanity, they shot by in the grip of that huge force, mischievous and uncontrolled; tossed, touselled, and squeezed, shedding as they went small fragments of their outer raiment, lost momentarily to view in the surging mass of men, cornered, crushed back, held down as within a vise—emerging again like popped corks followed by a foaming rush of shouting youths, jeering or cheering them on; and still through all that pressure obstinately retaining their

human form, and enduring with a strange silence what was being done to them by this great roaring mob which had come out "for fun."

Some went their way wide-eyed, with terror in their looks, yet still set to their end; some with rigid faces and eyes shut fast, as though scarcely conscious—their souls elsewhere, submitting passively to the buffetings of fate; and a few—strangest sight of all—smiling to themselves, almost with a look of peace, as though in the very violence by which they were assailed they discerned a triumph for their cause.

And with all the screwing, pushing, and wrenching, the driving forward and the hurling back, scarcely one woman's arm was raised, except now and again to protect her breast from the lewd or wanton assaults of the crowd. Some held, tight clasped in their hands, crumpled bits of paper—the petition, presumably, over which all this trouble arose—stained, torn, almost illegible now, useless, yet still a symbol of the fight that was being waged. Now and then above the turmoil, in the dimness that lay between the lighted streets and the crowning darkness of night, went sudden flashes like sheet-lightning in storm; and at the stroke horses plunged, and youths screamed, facetiously imitating the voice of women. It was the work of photographers, securing, from some point of vantage overhead, flashlight records for the delectation of the music halls. Again and again, with pistol-like report, the monstrous dose was administered, the night took it at a gulp, and the rabble responded with noise and shoutings.

The genial voice of a mounted policeman working his way through the crowd sounded humanly above the din.

"I'm coming! I'm coming! I'm coming! I'm coming!" There was a touch of humor in the cry; for it was like the voice of a showman advertising his wares to a pack of holiday-makers anxious to buy; and wherever he went pleasantness reigned, and an element of good temper and considerateness mingled itself with the crowd.

"Oh! I'm coming! I'm coming! I'm coming!" Away he went on his disciplined errand of mercy, a man of kindness, good counsel, and understanding, carrying out his orders in as human a way as was possible.

"Now then! Now then! Now then! I'm coming. Oh, I'm coming!"

The roaring multitude swallowed him; his cry grew faint, merged in the general din.

By the gradual compression and movement of the multitude toward some fancied center the King had been borne a good many hundred yards from his original point. Presently he found himself in a large open space, with its low-railed inclosure guarded by police. Here the crowd was denser than ever and its sway harder to withstand. A woman's form was driven sharply against him. To avoid elbowing her off he offered the shelter of his arm; and she, finding herself up against something not immediately repellent, stayed to breathe. He saw the sweat pour from her skin, and as she panted in his arms she had the rank scent of a creature when it is hunted. Yet in her face there was no fear at all, only the white strain of physical exhaustion nearing its last point.

"Are you hurt?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"The police; are they treating you properly?"

"I have nothing to complain of," she said.

"Won't you go home? You must see it is no use."

She turned away as though she had not heard him, and threw herself once more against the barrier she was unable to overcome. Into the shock of it she went, with "nothing to complain of," forgetful of self, forgetful of all but her blind unreasoning determination to gain her end. Her passive yet battling form was borne away from him in the huge eddies of the crowd.

"Hot work!" said a voice at his side; a little man, with keen, appetized face, ferreting this way and that, was hurriedly taking notes as though his life depended on it. The King looked at him in surprise, and wondered what it meant.

"Got any news?" inquired the man, still scribbling at his notebook.

"What kind of news?"

"I'm not particular; anything suits me. I'm the Press."

"The Press?"

"Yes, reporter." And, as one proud of his great connection, he named the King's favorite journal.

Never it is to be hoped to his dying day did that poor penny-a-liner know what a piece of news he allowed in that moment to slip by—news which to him would have meant almost a fortune; and here he was actually rubbing shoulders with it; and making no profit.

"How many arrested?" he inquired.

"I don't know."

"Any of the leaders yet?"

"I have not heard."

Unprofitable company; the man moved away. They were separated by a fresh movement of the crowd.

A royal mail-van drove through the square, the police with difficulty making way for it. And the crowd, mistaking it for something else, rushed off to gaze and cheer excitedly at the prisoners within. The postman who sat mounting guard over the netted window at the rear smiled wittily at the popular error which made him for a few brief moments so conspicuous a figure. No doubt the incident gave the newspaper-man some copy, and the van, having contributed its share to the general amusement, rolled on its way.

Again the crowd made a rush; on the other side of the square a woman had managed to get arrested, and a strong body of constables was escorting her across to the police-station. Captors and captive walked quickly, anxious to get the thing through. The woman had a scared yet triumphant look in her eyes: she had succeeded in making the police do what they did not want to do; and now for a fortnight, or a month, or for two months—according to what these men might swear to, or the magistrate think—she and a few score of others would find in a criminal cell that temporary goal at which they had aimed; and the press would quiet the public conscience by saying that they had done it "for notoriety."

Always friendliest when it saw a woman actually under arrest, the crowd broke into applause—dividing its cheers impartially between prisoner and police. For this was what it had come out to see: this was why it had paid tram-fares from distant slums, sacrificing its evening at the "pub" and its pot of beer. These men of hard toiling lives and dull imagination were there to see women of a class and education superior to their own break the law and get "copped" for it, just like one of themselves.

"Quite right too! teach them to be 'ave as they ought to," was the comment passed here and there—though as a matter of fact it had already been abundantly proved that it taught them nothing of the kind. But that, after all, is "Government" as understood by the man in the street; he is still the intellectual equal of the rustic, or of the child, who, smiting the reptile upon the head, "learns him to be a toad"; and it is down to his imagination that modern government has to play. And so, to ambiguous cheers uttered by rival factions, the triumphal procession of prisoner and escort passed on its way.

"Three cheers for the Women's Charter!" cried a voice somewhere in the crowd; and there went up in response a genial roar, half of derision, half of sympathy.

"Give 'em hell!" cried a wild little man, his face contorted with rage and the lust which finds satisfaction in a blow. He went fiercely on, butting his shoulder against every woman he met. Nobody arrested him; nobody cried "shame." "Give 'em hell!" he cried.

"They're getting it!" laughed a pale youth with an underhung jaw.

Wherever the eye turned hell could be seen having its will, and deriving a curious satisfaction from its momentary power to do foul things under the public eye.

"Oh, save me! save me! save me!" whimpered a woman's voice. Down in the gulf below, buried under the shoulders of men, a small elderly figure was clinging to the King's arm.

"Oh, can't you do anything for me?" wailed the poor little Chartist, with nerve utterly gone.

"Why don't you go home?" inquired the King kindly.

"I want to go home!" she said. "Take me!"

"The first thing, then, is to get out of this crowd. Keep hold of my arm."

"No!" A perverse tag of conscience held her back. "I don't want to! I've got a petition; it has to go to the King. Oh, if he only knew!"

"Give it to me! I will see that he gets it."

"You? You'd only throw it away when my back was turned."

"No; I promise you I would not. Give it me! It shall really go to him."

"You are not making fun of me?"

"Indeed I am not. Here, where is it? Give it to me, quick!"

She put the precious crumpled document into his hand. Poor nameless soul, unconscious of what she had achieved—"I hope I've done right," she said.

A fresh movement of the crowd drove them against the railings. The elderly little woman cried out like a frightened child.

"Oh, oh! They are killing me!"

The King lifted her up and put her over into free space on the other side.

"Here! none of that!" cried a big voice beside him. A rough hand seized hold of him and wrenched him back; he turned round and found himself in a policeman's charge. Then another came and took hold of him on the other side.

Incredibly the thing had happened: he was arrested. Triumphantly, through a roaring, eddying crowd, the strong arm of the law bore him away.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE KING'S NIGHT OUT

I

The King sat in a large square chamber with barred windows, awaiting his turn to be attended to.

The crowd of prisoners seated on benches round the walls had become attenuated; only about a score of them now remained. Women had been dealt with first, the residuum were men; the general charge against these was pocket-picking.

He had been sitting there for hours. It was now one o'clock.

"Now then, you!" said the voice of the sergeant in charge. His turn had come.

In an adjoining room he found his two accusers awaiting him. He was led up to a table where sat an official in uniform making entry of the names. A charge-sheet, nearly full, was spread on the table before him.

The policeman who had made the arrest gave in the charge.

"Name?" said the sergeant-clerk sharply, suspending the motion of his pen.

The King, still wearing his cap, took off his snow-glasses and turned down the collar of his coat.

It was no use. The officer looked at him without recognition.

"Name?" he said again; and the policeman upon his right, giving the King a rough jog, said, "Tell the sergeant your name!" And so, it appeared, the useless formality must go on.

The King gave the two essentials—first-name and surname—out of a long string of appendices for which half the sovereigns of Europe had stood as godfathers.

But the three words "John Ganz-Wurst" meant nothing to the official ear. Over the patronymic he paused in doubt when only halfway through. "Spell it!" he said, and, at the King's dictation, altered his V into a W.

"Foreigner?" he grunted; Jinglese names he could spell properly.

"Of foreign extraction," said the King, "my great-grandfather came over to this country and was naturalized."

"Oh, we don't want to hear about your great-grandfather!" said the sergeant, cutting him short.

At this moment one of the higher inspectors came into the room.

"Address—occupation?" went on his interlocutor, busy with his form.

The King named the dwelling from which he emanated.

"Come, come!" said the official voice, "no nonsense here! What address?"

The inspector was now looking at the prisoner. He touched the sergeant upon the shoulder, and made a gesture for the two constables to stand back.

"Will you please to come this way, sir?" he said, in a tone of very marked respect.

The King followed him to an inner room.

The inspector closed the door. "I beg your Majesty's pardon," he said. "This is a most regrettable occurrence. Fortunately, none of those men know."

The King smiled. "I tried not to give myself away before I was obliged to," he said.

"Your Majesty must think we are all quite mad."

"Not at all. So far as I know, every man I have encountered has merely done his duty. Your methods of arrest are a little—arbitrary, shall I say?"

"That is unavoidable, sir, when we have large crowds to deal with."

"I can understand that. A woman was being crushed; I helped her to get over the railings. I suppose that was wrong?"

The inspector smiled apologetically. "Men have been fined for it, before now, sir," said he.

"Very well, I will pay my fine," smiled the King. "And then, if you don't mind, I will go home."

His Majesty's kindly humor won the inspector's gratitude. "I'm sure it's very good of your Majesty to treat the matter so lightly."

"It was entirely my own fault," said the King. "How was I to be recognized?"

"You took us off guard, sir. We were not informed that your Majesty would be going anywhere to-night."

"Is that the rule?"

"It is always our business to inquire."

"I should not have told any one."

"It would still, sir, have been our business to find out."

"You surprise me!" said the King. It had never dawned upon him that he was so watched. "And so to-night, for the first time, I gave you the slip?"

"I take the blame, sir," said the inspector; his voice was grave.

"Why should you? No harm has been done. The only question now is how am I to get back?"

"I can get you a cab, sir, at once. Or would your Majesty rather I sent word to the palace?"

"No, certainly not. If I have not been missed, nobody need know."

"Your Majesty was missed by us four hours ago. That is what brought me here."

"You come from the palace?"

"Yes, sir. As head of the special department, I have to be there every night."

"I'm sorry to have given you so much trouble."

"Oh, not at all, sir."

And then, a cab having been summoned, he led the way out.

No one was by; the street had not a soul in it, and the King knew that once more foresight and care were watching over him.

"I have paid the cabman, sir," said the inspector, as he closed the door. "And, sir, would you kindly say where he is to go?"

There was a hint of discretion in the man's tone.

"Ah, yes," said the King, "to be sure—yes. Tell him to stop at the park gates."

The inspector, saluting, gave the required direction, and the cab drove off. Arriving a few minutes later at his destination, the King got out, and passed in through the gates.

The palace was now shrouded in gloom; only in the guard-room, within the high-railed quadrangle, a light still burned. Dimly through the night a sentry could be seen pacing up and down.

By a subconscious instinct the King was returning along the same route that he had come. Only as he approached the postern in the wall did it occur to him that it would almost certainly be locked; and yet for no other door had he a key. Attended constantly by servants, and leading a scrupulously regular life, requiring neither secret passages nor late hours, he had never possessed a latch-key of his own.

How, then, was he to get in now without attracting attention?

Having come so far, however, he went forward on chance and tested the door. The attendant policeman was no longer there, the road-lamp had been turned low, giving only a glimmer.

He tried the handle, but found that it would not respond. A figure glided forward and inserted a key. "Allow me, sir," came the inspector's voice.

"You?" exclaimed the King, surprised.

"It was my duty to see your Majesty safe home."

"Very kind of you, I'm sure." He passed in, and the inspector followed.

"Pardon me for asking, sir. Was this the way your Majesty came out?"

"Yes."

"Ah, that accounts for it! We never thought of your Majesty coming this way, and the man put here was only on beat, not on point duty."

"He was here when I came out," said the King.

"He did not report, sir."

"Are they all bound to?"

"Oh, yes, sir, of course we have to know."

The King smiled. "I suppose he did not recognize me. Remember, I was not quite myself."

"All the same, sir, he should have known. It's what he is trained for."

The King's surprise grew. "I never guessed that I had to be guarded like this."

"Of course, sir, we try to keep it out of sight as much as possible. It isn't pleasant always to feel yourself watched."

"I make you my compliments," said the King; "I had not the remotest idea. Whereabouts are we now?"

The walls of the palace loomed black above them; the night was dark.

"Small stair entrance on the north side, sir. If your Majesty is without a key——"

"I have no key at all."

"Then kindly allow me, sir." And again to the inspector's pass-key a door opened.

The King entered, and the inspector still accompanied him. "There may be others locked inside," he said, by way of explanation.

They passed through a short corridor and ascended stairs; a small electric pocket-lamp of the inspector's showing them the way. Three doors he unfastened in turn. Having opened the last he switched on the light, then respectfully drew back, presuming to come no further. "This is where your Majesty's private apartments begin," said he; an indication that his task as conductor was over.

"Ah, yes," replied the King, "now at last I know where I am. Till this moment I felt myself a stranger. I have to thank you, Mr. Inspector, for the kind way in which you have done me the honors of my own house; and," he added, "of the police-station."

"I am very sorry, sir, that any such thing should have happened. I can promise it won't occur again."

"No," said the King, smiling, "I suppose not. But pray do not be sorry! I have seldom spent a more interesting time; or—thanks to you and others—had more things given me to think about."

The inspector did not reply; he stood looking down, pensive and resigned—tired, perhaps, now that the anxieties of the last few hours were over.

"Good-night," said the King.

"Good-night, sir," replied the inspector. He withdrew and the King heard him locking the door after him.

II

The King went into his study, turned on a light, and sat down. He had, as he had told his guide, many things to think about. It was no use going to bed, for he knew that he could not sleep.

These last few hours had been the most wonderful, and the most crowded—yes, quite literally the most crowded—that he had ever experienced. At last he had really taken part in the life of his people, and had come into direct contact with things very diverse and contradictory, representing the popular will. He had talked with street urchins, and visionaries, had rubbed shoulders with men of brutal habit and vile character,—with knaves, cowards, fools; he had been shut up with drunkards and pickpockets, policemen's thumbs had left bruises upon his arms, and all his mind was one great bruise from the bureaucratic police system which had him fast within its grip.

Now at last he knew that he knew nothing; for only now did he realize it. To what was going on outside his ears had been stopped with official lies; morally, intellectually, and physically he was a prisoner, just as much as when, to the cry of "Old Goggles," from a jeering crowd, he had marched captive to the police-station. He knew now that even his private life was watched and spied on—always, of course, with the most benevolent intentions. This was the price he paid for modern kingship; and what was it all worth?

Out of his pocket he drew a small sheet of crumpled paper. In order to get this to him, a poor, timid woman had gone out into a raging crowd, had borne its brutality for hours, and then, a piteous bundle of broken nerves, had by sheer accident accomplished that which hundreds of others, braver, abler, more confident, and more deserving, had tried to do and failed. Morally this small slip of paper had upon it the blood, and the tears, the sweat, the agony, and the despair of all the rest; and only by accident had he ever come to know of it!

Here, almost within a stone's throw of his palace, he had seen something taking place which tomorrow the papers would deride, and of which the official world would deny him all cognizance. Whether these women had truly a grievance, any just and reasonable cause for complaint, he did

not know. But he knew now that, with the most desperate earnestness and conviction, that was their belief, and that in getting their petition to his hands they saw the beginning of a remedy.

He spread out the paper before him, and for the first time read the words—

"Humbly showeth that by your Majesty's Ministers law and justice are delayed, and prayeth that your Gracious Majesty will so order and govern that your faithful subjects' grievances may forthwith be sought and inquired into, and remedy granted thereto by Act of Parliament. And your petitioners will ever pray."

That was all. What the grievances might be was not stated. He knew that to hear argument for or against a given case was outside the functions of the Crown; but he knew equally well that to order inquiry to be made lay still within his right, though every minister in the Cabinet except one would seek to deny it to him. And so he sat looking at the crumpled sheet which meant so much to so many thousands of lives; and slowly the night went by.

Long before the first chitter of awakening birds, and before the first hint of light had crept into the east, he heard outside the slow stir of the city's life breaking back from short uneasy slumber. With stiffened limbs he got up from his chair, for the room had grown cold and his body ached with all the strain and exertion it had so recently undergone. Slowly he moved off towards his own sleeping apartment, in case the Queen, when she awoke, should send to inquire after him. And on his way, as a short cut, he crossed the minstrel gallery, which divided one from the other the two state drawing-rooms,—a broad half-story colonnade, with central opening and corners draped into shade.

Halfway across this elevation he paused to look down into the vast chamber below. At some point among its chandeliers burned a small pinhole of light that revealed in a strange dimness various forms of furniture, showing monstrous and uncouth in their night attire. Night-gowns rather than pajamas seemed the general wear; only a few legs were to be seen. In this, its sleeping aspect, the place was certainly more harmonious and more chaste than by day; mirrors and pictures loomed from the white walls with a mystery that would disappear when the lustres contained their light; and the King lingered to take in the pleasant strangeness of it all, and to wonder what was this new quality which so attracted him.

As he did so his ear caught from without a faint reverberation of muffled sound; even and regular in its beat, it drew near.

At the far end a door was thrown open; a flush of light entered the chamber, and there came following it a troop of men wearing felt slippers and long linen aprons, and bearing upon their shoulders brooms, feather-heads, wash-leathers, brushes, dusters, steps, vacuum-cleaners, and other mysterious instruments of an uninterpretable form.

With the regularity and precision of a drilled army, and with no word spoken, they moved forward to the attack. Curtains were drawn, cords pulled, blinds raised, steps mounted. Lustres jingled to the touch of feathers, cornices shed down their minute particles of dust to the Charybdean maw of traveling gramophone. Over the carpet metallic cow-catchers wheezed and groaned with a loud trundling of wheels, and departed processionally to the chamber beyond. Then by a triple process, simultaneously conducted, the furniture-sheets were lifted, drawn off, and folded; a large wicker-table on wheels received and bore them away. A cloud of light skirmishers followed after; and over every cushion and seat and polished surface plied their manicurist skill. Then a storming-party escalated the gallery from below and the King, to avoid the embarrassment of an encounter with a body of servitors who had not the pleasure of his acquaintance, was at last obliged to retire.

But what a wonderful machine had been here revealed to his gaze—manipulated without a word, marshaled by signs, and composed entirely of strangers! And to think that all this insect-like marvel of industry, so expeditious, and done on so huge a scale, had been going on daily under his own roof, and he had known nothing of it! So this was how his palace was cleaned for him, and why it never showed a sign of wear or the marks of muddy boots? Yet never before had any thought on the matter occurred to him. And what if some fine day those insects, fired by revolutionary zeal, had taken it to heart to rise up in their dozens by those escalating ladders to the first story and rush the private apartments, and murder him in his morning bath or in his bed! What a surprising and unexplained apparition it would have been! But now, and for the future, he would know that daily about this time a large ant-like colony was running about under him, very strong of arm, very active of leg; and what protection, he wondered, from peril of sudden inroad was that search under his bed on the ninth day of every November? Did that really meet and counter modern methods of conspiracy and assassination, or the growing dangers of labor unrest? He very much doubted it.

And so, with his head very full of the wonder, the order, and the underlying disturbance of it all, he passed on to his own inner chamber, and had now something to tell the Queen as to how their immediate domestic affairs were conducted which should entirely put aside all awkward questions as to what he had been doing the evening before and where he had spent the night.

But, as a matter of fact, sleek officialdom had sheltered the Queen from all anxiety, and she had not a notion that the King had been anywhere except to some consultation with ministers, and thence late to bed.

In order that his valet might find him there he got into it, and when, a couple of hours later, he

greeted her Majesty he found that sanguine mind looking eagerly ahead and concerning itself very little over things which were past.

"Remember, my dear," she said, looking up from her letters, "that in three days' time the Prince of Schnapps-Wasser comes. I do hope, while he is here, that you will be fairly free."

"Not so free as I thought I should be," said the King, and he sighed heavily.

III

His Majesty had a good many things that day to discuss with the Prime Minister when at a later hour they met. He began on the matter which was most regular and formal; had he been at all likely to forget it the Queen's observation would have reminded him.

"By the way, Mr. Premier," he said, "as you already know, the Prince of Schnapps-Wasser arrives in a day or two; and there are certain possible eventualities arising out of his visit which we must be prepared for. Hitherto the Princess Charlotte has had no definite grant made to her. While she was still living with us, without an establishment of her own, I preferred to let the matter stand over. But now—well, now a change may be necessary."

The Prime Minister's face beamed with congratulatory smiles. "Your Majesty may be sure that the matter shall have immediate attention."

"There will be no difficulty?"

"Oh, none whatever."

"I will leave all question of the amount to be discussed later. I believe that it is etiquette, in the case of a reigning Prince, for him also to be consulted."

"That is so, sir."

"The Prince himself is very wealthy; and I think that you will find him disinterested. Still there is, of course, a certain balance to be observed."

"Oh, quite."

"I leave the matter, then, entirely in your hands."

The Prime Minister bowed.

And then the conversation changed.

"You know what happened to me last night, I suppose," said the King.

"Ah, yes, indeed, sir! You will pardon my silence; I was most horrified. But I thought that perhaps your Majesty did not wish to speak of it."

"On the contrary," replied the King, "I have got a great deal to say." And then, with much detail and particularity, he narrated his experience—all those hours which he had spent in the crowd; and the Prime Minister listened, saying nothing.

"Well," said the King, when he had done, "that is what I have seen; and you cannot tell me it is something that does not matter."

"By no means, sir; I admit that it is very serious."

"I was never told so before."

"We did not wish unnecessarily to trouble your Majesty. This is hardly a case for Cabinet intervention; the Home Office does its duty, takes preventive measures as far as is possible, and puts down the disturbances when they arise."

"Yes, yes," said the King, "but is nothing going to be done?"

The Prime Minister raised his eyebrows, as though asked to reply once more to a question already answered.

"Everything possible is being done, sir."

"Legislatively, I mean."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed the head of Government in a tone of the most deferential protest, "that surely is a matter for the Cabinet."

"Quite so," said the King. "That is why I ask."

So then the Premier explained circumstantially and at great length why, in that sense, nothing whatever could be done. We need not go into it here—those who read Jingalese history will find the Prime Minister's reasons published elsewhere; and it all really came only to this: "It is the duty of a government to keep in power; and if it cannot do justice without endangering its party majority, then justice cannot be done."

You could not have a more satisfactory, a more logical, or a more unanswerable argument than that. And at all events—whether you agree with it or not—it is the argument that all ministers act upon now-a-days, even when, in the House of Legislature which sits subservient to their will,

there is a majority ready and waiting which thinks differently of the matter, but fears to act lest it should lose touch with the loaves and fishes. For now it is on the life not of a Parliament but of a Cabinet that losses are counted. And the reason is plain; for every member of a Cabinet has to think of saving for himself some £5,000 a year together with an enormous amount of departmental power and patronage; while an ordinary private member of Parliament has only his few hundreds to think about and his rapidly diminishing right to any independence at all. The life and death struggles of a ministry are bound, therefore, to be more desperate, more unscrupulous, and more pecuniarily corrupt than those of any other branch of the legislature. And, of course, when we put all the leading strings into fingers so buttered with gold, political corruption is the necessary and inevitable result, and such incidental things as mere justice must wait.

But the Prime Minister did not explain matters to the King in such plain and understandable terms as these; and, as a consequence, his explanation being incomplete, his Majesty's mind remained unsatisfied.

"Very well," said he, when the ministerial apologia was concluded; "I will consider what you say, and when I have quite made up my mind I will send a message to Council with recommendations; I still have that right under the Constitution."

The Prime Minister stiffened. Here was conflict in Council cropping up again; it must be put down.

"That right, sir," said he, "has not been exercised for nearly a hundred years."

"I beg your pardon," said the King, "I exercised it only two months ago, when I sent in the message of my abdication."

"Which your Majesty has been wise enough not to act upon."

"Which, nevertheless, you were forced to accept, and would have had to give effect to, ultimately, by Act of Parliament."

That was true.

"By the way," went on the King, "arising out of that withdrawal of my abdication which you say was so wise, there has come a difficulty I had not foreseen. Believing that by now my son would be upon the throne instead of me, I gave my consent to his marriage with the daughter of the Archbishop. Yes, Mr. Premier, you may well start: I am just as much perturbed about it as you; for the Prince now comes to me and claims the fulfilment of my promise."

"Impossible, sir!" exclaimed the Prime Minister.

"That is what I tell him. He does not think so."

"But, your Majesty, this is absolutely unheard of. The whole position would be intolerable!"

"I indorse all your adjectives and your statements," said the King coldly; "but the fact remains."

"Then, sir, I must see the Prince, immediately."

"It is no use, no use whatever," replied his Majesty. "Besides—the matter is still rather at a private stage. You had much better wait till the Prince comes to you; otherwise he may accuse me of having been premature."

"But what does the Archbishop say?" cried the Premier, aghast.

"That is the point; I believe he does not yet know. Technically speaking, the engagement is scarcely a day old. The Prince's note claiming my promise reached me only this morning, and I imagine it is only now that the Archbishop will have to be informed. Hitherto the matter has been in suspension. You will understand it was dependent—on my abdication, I might say."

"In that case, sir, the conditions are not fulfilled."

"I fear they are," said the King; "the Prince has my promise in writing; and abdication is not mentioned. You see, it was the bomb that made all the difference. Very provoking that it should have happened just then; it upset all my plans!"

The Prime Minister began to look very uncomfortable.

"Oh, no," went on the King, observing his change of countenance, "don't think that I am blaming you. What you said was quite true; abdication after that became impossible; I am only saying it as an excuse for the position in which I now find myself. It was not I who made the mistake, it was that poor misguided person who threw the bomb; he ought to have killed me. I am confident that, had the Prince been actually on the throne, the situation would have been radically altered, that he would not have persisted—that he would have seen, as you say, how impossible the position would be. Very unfortunate—very—but there we are!"

"But again I say, sir, that even now, though the Prince is not on the throne—and long may your Majesty be spared!—the whole thing is absolutely and utterly impossible."

"I quite agree," said the King; "but that is the situation. Before now I have found myself in similar ones, and have tried to get out of them; yet I have seldom succeeded."

"But this, sir," persisted the Prime Minister, "is politically impossible. Things could not go on."

"And yet, Mr. Premier, you know that they will have to; that is the very essence of politics."

"I tell your Majesty that rather than admit such a possibility the Ministry would resign."

"Very well—then it must," said the King. "But you will find that the Prince will not regard my inability to secure an alternative Government as any reason why he should not marry the lady of his choice. I may as well tell you, for your information, that he has revolutionary ideas, and this is one of them."

"I am confident," exclaimed the Prime Minister, with a gleam of hope, "that the Archbishop himself will forbid it."

"Very likely," replied his Majesty; "but I am not sure that he will succeed. I wish he could; but from all I hear the lady herself is of a rather determined character. Women are very determined now-a-days."

He thought of Charlotte and sighed; and yet, in his heart, he could not help admiring and envying her.

"We will talk of this all again some other time," he went on, tired of the profitless discussion. "After all the marriage is not going to take place the day after to-morrow."

"Sir," said the Premier, "over a matter of this sort any delay is impossible—the risk is too great. I must see the Prince myself."

"Very well," said the King, "do as you like. After all I ought to be glad that it is with the Prince you will have to discuss the matter, and not with me."

And he smiled to himself, for he very much liked the thought of the Prime Minister tackling Max.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SPIRITUAL POWER

I

But the Prime Minister, though he lost no time, was unable to catch his quarry. Prince Max had gone out; and his secretary could give no information as to his whereabouts. "His Highness told me that he had a very important engagement; he did not say with whom." To apprehensive ears that phrase sounded ominous; and fearing what risks delay might entail the Premier drove down to Sheepcote Precincts, the archiepiscopal residence; and there for three mortal hours he and the Archbishop sat with heads together (yet intellectually very much apart) discussing what was to be done.

It was during those three hours that his Grace of Ebury performed his most brilliant feat of statesmanship, and redeemed that local off-shoot of the Church of Christ over which he ruled from the political slough whereinto it had fallen. To him solely—by means of his daughter, that is to say (but in politics women do not count)—is due the fact that the Church of Jingalo still stands on its old established footing, and that her Bishops have a decisive modicum of political power left to them.

The Archbishop was, in his heart of hearts—that last infirmity of his noble mind—quite as much horrified at the news as the Premier had been. But scarcely were the dread tidings out of the minister's mouth when, perceiving his opportunity, he rose to it as a fish rises to a fly, and pretended with all due solemnity to be rather pleased than otherwise. Though his daughter's elevation to princely rank and to the prospect of future sovereignty would assuredly seal his political doom, he professed presently to see in it a fresh stepping-stone to influence and power, or, as he conscientiously phrased it, to "opportunities for good." His approach to this point, however, was gradual and circuitous.

"Of course it is a great honor," he began, deliberately weighing the proposition in earthly scales, and seeming not wholly to reject it.

"That goes without saying," replied the Prime Minister, "and hardly needs to be discussed. Our sure point of agreement is that it must not be."

His Grace lifted his grizzled eyebrows in courteous interrogation, and beginning delicately to disentangle the gold strings of his pince-nez from the pectoral cross to which like a penitent it clung, said, "Of course I perfectly understand how great a shock this has been to you. To me also it comes as an entire surprise: my daughter has told me nothing, and therefore—in a sense—I can say nothing till I have seen her."

"You have influence with her, I suppose?" said the Premier.

"Oh, undoubtedly."

"I am confident, then, that your Grace will use it to the right end."

"It has never been my habit, I trust, to neglect my parental responsibilities," replied his Grace.

"I was thinking, rather, of your responsibilities to the State."

"Those, too, I shall have in mind. There is also the Church."

The Prime Minister was puzzled.

"This matter does not seem to impress your Grace quite as it does me. I should have thought there could be no two opinions about it."

"That was too much to hope, surely? Our points of view are so very different."

The Premier felt that plain dealing had become necessary. "It would make quite untenable your position as leader of a party," he remarked grimly.

"I was not concerned about myself," replied his Grace with wonderful sweetness. "As for that, I am growing old."

"But surely you agree that the thing is wholly impossible?"

"Impossible is a strong word."

"That it would profoundly alter the constitutional status of the Crown?"

"Possibly. I think not."

This slow weighing of cons in the balance was having a devastating effect upon the minister's nerves; he got upon his feet.

"Does your Grace mean to tell me that this thing is even conceivable?"

"Conceivable? I wish you would state to me, without any fear of offense, the whole body of your objection. I recognize, of course, that the Royal House, in the direct line, has made no such alliance for over two hundred years,—never, in fact, since it ceased to be of pure native extraction. I also admit that for myself as a party politician (if you impose upon me that term) it is inconvenient, destructive even to certain plans which I had formed. But putting myself altogether aside, and allowing that for a precedent we have to go very far back into the past, what real objections have you to urge?"

The Prime Minister was beginning to get thoroughly uncomfortable.

"It is a breach—a fatal breach to my mind," said he, "in that caste distinction which alone makes monarchy possible under modern conditions. I mean no personal disrespect to your Grace: were it a question of my own daughter, I should take the same view. It disturbs a tradition which has worked well and for safety, and has not been broken for hundreds of years. But most destructively of all it threatens that aloofness from all political entanglements—that absolute impartiality between party and party—which to-day constitutes the strength of the Crown."

"I might be quite prepared," said the Archbishop slowly, "in such an event, to withdraw myself from all political action of a party character."

"You cannot so separate yourself from the past," objected the Prime Minister.

"I do not see the difficulty. You yourself, in a long and varied career, have twice changed your party, or deserted it. If that can be done with sincerity, it is equally possible to become of no party at all."

The Prime Minister flushed at this attack on his past record, and struck back—

"Not for an Archbishop," he said, a little sneeringly. "The Church now-a-days has become not merely a part of our political system, but a stereotyped adjunct of party, and a very one-sided one at that."

"To answer such a charge adequately," replied his Grace, "I should be forced into political debate foreign to our present discussion. What concerns me here and now is that something has taken place—pregnant for good or ill—which you regard as impossible, and which I do not. In either case—whatever conclusion is reached—I am called upon to make a sacrifice. Of that I do not complain, but what I am bound to consider, even before the interests of the State (upon which we take different views), are the interests of the Church. When we last met you were preparing to do those interests something of an injustice: and your more recent proposals do not induce me to think that you have changed your mind. If the Church is to lose the ground she now holds in the State she must seek to recover it elsewhere. I cannot blind my eyes to the fact that, in the high position now offered to her, my daughter will be able to do a great work—for the Church."

"I believed that you had no sympathy with the intrusion of women into the domain of politics."

"Not into politics, no; but the Church is different. We have in our Saints' Calendar women—queens some of them—who were ready to lay down their lives for the Church, and to secure her recognition by heathen peoples and kings. Why should not my daughter be one?"

He spoke with an exalted air, his hand resting upon his cross.

"Your Grace," said the Prime Minister in a changed tone, "may I put one very crucial question? Have you a complete influence over your daughter?"

"That I can hardly answer; I will only say that she is dutiful. Never, so far as I am aware, has she questioned my authority, nor has she combated my judgment in any matter where it was my duty to decide for her what was right."

On this showing she seemed a very estimable and trustworthy young person; and with a sense of encouragement the Prime Minister went on—

"Then upon this question of her marriage with the Prince, would she, do you think, be guided by you?"

"She would not marry him without my consent."

"And your consent might be forthcoming?"

"Under certain circumstances, I think—yes."

"And as the circumstances stand now at this moment?"

The Archbishop paused, and looked long at the Prime Minister before answering.

"How do they stand?" he inquired.

II

That evening when Jenifer returned home the Archbishop was waiting her arrival. The door of his private library stood ajar. "Come in, my dear," he called, hearing her step in the corridor, "come in; I wish to speak to you."

She entered with a flushed face. "*I* wanted to speak to you, father," she said.

He saw that she was come charged for the delivery of her soul, and perceiving what a strategic advantage it would give him to hear the story first from her own lips, he waived his prior claim. "Very well, my dear," he replied, "for the next hour I am free, and at your disposal."

"It may take longer than that," she warned him; "I have something to tell you that seems to me almost terrible."

"Anything wrong?"

"Oh, no, but so tremendous I hardly know how to begin." Her breast labored with the burden of its message, but in her face was a look of dawn.

"Has it to do with yourself?"

"Yes, papa. I am engaged to marry Prince Max."

The Archbishop paused for a moment, thinking how best to avoid any appearance of foreknowledge.

"My child," he said, "what Prince Max do you mean?"

"The only one that I know of," she answered.

"You mean the heir to the throne?"

"Yes, papa."

"You say you are engaged to him?"

"Yes."

"With whose knowledge, may I ask?"

"The King knows; he has just given his consent. That is why I am telling you now."

"Why only now?" There was reproach in his tone.

"Until we had his consent we were not engaged."

"And now—being engaged—you come for mine?"

"No, papa; only to let you know." She paused. "Of course I should be glad of your approval."

The Archbishop sat silent for a while. "How long have you known Prince Max?" he inquired at last.

"About six months."

"Is not that rather a short time?"

"Yes."

"For so important a decision, I mean."

"Yes; it is, I know."

"For learning a man's character, shall I say?"

"Some characters one learns more quickly than others. I know him, papa, better than I do you."

"That may well be, youth does not easily understand age. And so my question remains: Do you know him well enough to marry him?"

"I want to marry him," she said.

"You know there are objections?"

"Oh, yes."

"Very serious ones."

"Yes, I told him; I said it was quite impossible. He said he could get the King's consent. I did not think so: I felt sure, indeed, that he could not. But to-day he came and showed it to me in writing—a promise made conditionally more than two months ago."

"Conditionally?"

"Yes; it named a date. That is why until to-day there was nothing that I could tell you."

"Not even the fact that he had asked you to marry him?"

"I could not wish that to be known, if nothing was to come of it—not by any one."

"It would have been better, my child."

"No, papa; why should you, or any one, know what I had had to give up?"

"Of course, it would have been painful; that I can understand."

"I can smile at it now," she said; "but at the time it was terrible! For I found, then, how much I loved him."

The Archbishop withheld all speech for a moment, then said tenderly—

"I am very sorry for you, my child."

"Ah, but there is no need to be now!" she cried joyfully.

Once more he paused; then he repeated the words.

There was quick attention then in her look, but she showed no fear; and he shifted to easier ground.

"Tell me," he said gently, "how all this came about. How did you come to know the Prince?"

"Only by seeing him at the Court; then I recognized that we had met often before, when I had not known who he was."

"Why should he have concealed it?"

"He did not; one day he told me, and I would not believe him, it seemed so unlikely. Neither did he believe me when I told him who I was; he said that the facts were incompatible, and that mine was the more unlikely story of the two."

"Did you—did you begin liking him very soon?"

"I began by almost hating him. He used to scoff at everything, he seemed not to believe in anything that was good. Almost the first time that we met he told me that the dress I wore was 'provocative'—'a lure of Satan's devising' he called it, and said that nothing tempted men more than for women to wear what he described as 'the uniform of virginity.' He declared that it was because of my dress that he got lost following me through the slums."

"Did not that warn you what sort of man he was?"

"No; for it was not true. We just happened to meet, and he helped me when I was single-handed. He confessed afterwards that he had said everything he could to shock me—to put me to the test. He has grown up distrusting all religious professions."

"A scoffer? Did not even that warn you?"

"No; under the circumstances it seemed the most natural thing; it showed me that he was honest."

These sounded dreadful words to the Archbishop, coming from his daughter's lips; he felt that, in passing from theory to practice she had become shockingly latitudinarian in her views; and again, cautious and circumspect, he shifted his ground.

"My dear," he said, "you do realize, I suppose, that from a worldly point of view the Prince has committed a very grave indiscretion."

She smiled. "He tells me so himself; it rather pleases him. But now the King has given his

consent."

"Yes, nominally he has," replied the Archbishop. "But in that there is a good deal more than meets the eye. When his Majesty first gave that promise he never intended that it should take effect."

She paled slightly at his words, and he saw that only now had he scored a point.

"Why do you think that?"

"I do not think it, I know; but I am not at liberty to reveal secrets of State. Let us put that aside, I cannot give you proof; if you wish to disbelieve it, do. But now I come to my main point. There is a side to this question about which you know nothing, but you know that in the State to-day the Church has her enemies. This indiscretion on the part of the Prince, supported by a promise from which the King cannot in honor withdraw, has suddenly put into my hands a great opportunity which must not be missed."

"Into *your* hands, papa?"

"Under Providence, yes; I say it reverently. You are my daughter, and in service and loyalty to the Church you and I are as one."

She looked at him steadfastly, but did not respond in words.

"A great opportunity," he said again; "a great power for righteousness, to save the Church in her dire need. That is a great thing to be able to do—worth more than anything else that life can offer. To you, my daughter, that call has come; how will you answer it?"

Her face had grown white, but was still hard to his appeal; he had not won her yet.

"Yes," she said, "I do partly understand. I will do all for you that I can."

"Then you will release the Prince from his bond."

"He does not ask to be released."

"That may be."

Then there was silence.

"My dear child," murmured the Archbishop; there was emotion in his voice, and putting out his hand he laid it upon hers.

She drew herself gently from the contact.

"Only if he wishes it," she said.

"He will not wish it."

"Then he has my word."

"Your life contains other and holier vows than that, my child."

She did not seem to think so. "Father," she said, "this is the man I love!"

"That I realize," he replied gravely. "The question is which do you love best,—him or the Church?"

Jenifer opened her eyes in a limpid and childlike wonderment. How could he ask a question the answer to which was so obvious? "Why, him!" she cried; "there is no possible comparison!"

The Archbishop was deeply shocked as well as nonplussed at such an answer coming from his daughter; and meanwhile with clear sincerity of speech she went on—

"You mean the Church of Jingalo—do you not, papa?"

Of course it was the Church of Jingalo that he meant, but it would not do at this juncture to say so. His daughter might be one of those dreadful people who believed that the Church would get value out of disestablishment.

"I meant the Church of our fathers," said he, "the faith into which you were baptized,—the spiritual health and welfare of the whole nation."

"I do not think that by marrying the Prince I shall do it any harm. I am sure that he means none."

Her idea of the power of Princes struck him as curiously feminine; how little she understood of politics!

"It is rather a case," said he, "of harm that you cannot prevent, except in one way. What have you in your mind? Is it the wish to sit upon a throne?"

"Oh, no!" she said; "I shall never like being queen." Then, after a pause, she added honestly, "All the same, I could do things, then—things which I have longed to do; and I know that he would let me."

Her face glowed at the prospect; and suddenly she turned upon him a full look of self-confidence and courage, and there was challenge in her tone.

"I know far more about the poor than you do, father," she said, "and much more of their needs. If I were queen I would have a house down among the slums; and I would never spend Christmas, or Easter, or Good Friday in any other place." Her voice broke. "I would try—I would try," she said, "to set up Christianity in high places. That has been my dream."

"Have you told your dream to the Prince?"

She smiled tenderly, and with confidence. "He is already helping to make it come true. I asked him to be upon the Commission. That is why he is there."

"You?"

The Archbishop was now realizing that he knew very little about his daughter, and she not only amazed him, she frightened him. For the first time he feared that he might lose the great stakes for which he was playing; and one thing was essential—this woman, this domestic pawn which he held in his hand, must never be allowed to become queen.

And so with great pain he forced himself, and spoke on. How right he had been when he told the Prime Minister that in one way or another sacrifice would be required of him! For now he was going to sacrifice his most sacred conventions, his ideal of how an unmarried woman should be trained.

"My child," he said, "do you think that you know this man?"

"Yes; I know him better than any one else in the world."

"Do you also know his life?"

Jenifer's look turned on him a little curiously.

"I know," she said, "that he is not really a Christian."

"Ah!" he exclaimed, in a sort of joy, decorously flavored with grief, "that I did not know! Of course that explains everything. The rest inevitably follows."

"What follows?"

"No man who is not a Christian leads a life that will stand looking into." And then, avoiding her eyes, he spoke of things which he knew; some of them in certain quarters were almost common property; of others he had only recently become informed.

And as he spoke he felt, with a strange oppression, the heart beside him grow dumb. For this woman, with her clear and gracious understanding of so many human ills and weaknesses, had been kept in one matter, the most important of all, with the mind of an undeveloped child. Evil things she knew of—they had an existence, a place, and a name—but for her no reality except in their awful results. All that she had hitherto seen of "irregular living" bore the stamp of betrayal and disease, a thing more grossly criminal than anything else in the social body. She did not know how that body was permeated, and how no class and no ordinary standard of morality was free from the taint.

And now she heard that the man she loved had been keeping that thing called "a mistress"—housing her in luxury, visiting her day after day, not very greatly troubling himself whether the fact remained secret or became known. Then dates were mentioned; and she was given to know how those visits had still gone on while her lover had been offering her the devotion of his heart. It was there, after his recent accident, that he had gone to be nursed.

The Archbishop was extremely well informed, and he told nothing which he did not absolutely believe to be true. And now at last all the advantage was on his side, for ignorance left her almost without defense; with no sense of proportion she stood looking out into a non-dimensional world.

Dimly her mind made a struggle to escape.

"But what, what does it mean?" she asked. "There must be some reason for it. Is it a kind of disease?"

"A corrupt nature," said her father solemnly; "these are what the Church calls in her teaching 'the sins of the flesh.'"

She shuddered, for to her by religious training "flesh" had come to have a dreadful sound. In her spiritual world she pictured it as a shop hung with butcher's meat; yet why it was dreadful she did not know.

"Tell me," she murmured with pained speech, still trying for a way out, "it isn't—natural, is it?"

"That doctrine is preached by some," said her father; "Christianity forbids any such view."

"He said," she went on, "he said this, when he first asked me to marry him: 'I have done some natural things which you would hold to be wrong. I have loved,' he said, 'for mere comfort, not for honor or life.' He asked me if I understood; I said 'Yes.' 'That is my confession,' he said. 'I have been,' he said, 'no better than others; I hope not worse.' And that was all. I thought he meant that he had been selfish and worldly. Is that other thing what he really meant?"

"No doubt."

"But he *told* me," she said, and looked at him with a forlorn hope.

"It was the best thing that he could do for himself; no doubt he guessed that eventually you would come to know."

She stood thinking back into the past.

"After he had told, he kissed me," she said; "he had never done that before." Her lips trembled and the tears ran down her face.

"You know enough now, my dear. That will not happen again."

"I still love him," she said, as though confessing to shame.

The Archbishop had sufficient wisdom to accept the statement without protest. "It would be hard for you to do otherwise," he said. "The heart cannot change all at once."

"I believed that with him I could do good."

"Can you believe that now?"

"I don't know."

"That sort of life enters the blood," said her father, "taints it, makes evil that which would otherwise be holy."

"You mean——?"

"I speak of marriage; the drawing together of two into one."

"It still is marriage."

"Its mystery has been profaned. Marriage then, coming after, may be only a reminiscence of sin."

She stood looking at him, her face very pale.

"I shall still have to ask him if it is true."

The Archbishop resigned himself to what he could not avoid. "If you must," he said. And then, thinking forward to what might possibly happen, he added: "It was my duty to tell you everything."

"Yes," she replied, "but you did not mean to tell me at first."

"I hoped that I might spare you," he explained. "These are not things that one speaks of willingly; if they can be avoided it is better that they should not be known."

She gave a gesture of impatience, pressing her hands against her eyes.

"Do not say anything more to me," she said, and her voice sounded hopeless and dead. "Not now."

And then, very slowly, she turned and went out of the room.

The Archbishop told himself that he had done his duty. Personal aggrandizement, great opportunities of power and social position he had put away, he had done a true and holy thing. And so he sat down and wrote to the Prime Minister.

CHAPTER XX

THE THORN AND THE FLESH

I

The next day Prince Max received a letter written by the hand which had become for him the dearest in the world. It was very simple and straightforward and methodical: it began with the word "Beloved" and asked whether certain things were true. It seemed, then, that for the first time his confession was understood. Not a single one of the questions put to him contained anything that was untrue, but they did not go much into detail, and no commentary was made upon the facts indicated.

Max sat down and wrote a very beautiful letter in reply, and got no answer.

For three days he put up with this rebuff to his honesty of character and his literary ability; then not finding his lady where he expected her to be, he went and called upon her father.

The Archbishop was out; but Max, not to be denied, sat down and waited for his return. He waited for over two hours. It was getting towards dusk when his Grace entered, a reverend, high-shouldered figure, showing a stoop and beginning now to look old.

The Archbishop's very formal greeting told Max that here was the enemy. This did not at all

dismay him; at that time, indeed, he was full of confidence. The temporary separation between himself and his beloved, brought about in a conventional way which he thoroughly despised, was for the moment a hindrance; but it had not yet taken to itself the colors of doom. He knew that Jenifer's heart was entirely his, and that they, with their common honesty, had only to meet again to be made one. What he wanted to know, therefore, was not so much the opinion of Jenifer's father about himself and the engagement, as to find out her present whereabouts. From the first moment of their meeting he knew that he did not stand in the Archbishop's good graces; but that hardly concerned him; and so it was almost without circumlocution that he asked for Jenifer's address.

The Archbishop, by a simultaneous depression of the head and raising of the eyebrows, managed to convey his just sense of the honor which was being done him and the liberty that was being taken.

"I wrote the other day," explained Max, "asking her to arrange a time when I might come and see you. In strict etiquette I believe that your Grace ought first to call upon me; but we have so few precedents to go by. She has, I trust, done me the honor to tell you that we are engaged?"

"I have been informed of the circumstance," replied the Archbishop with stately formality.

The Prince took the matter boldly in hand. "From your manner I have to presume that we have not the happiness of your consent?"

"My consent was not asked."

"Had it been?"

"I could not have given it."

"That I think," said the Prince, "would have been the perfectly correct attitude until such time as the King gave his. It is for that we have been waiting; had it not been so I should have come to you earlier."

"Early or late, my answer to your Highness would always be the same."

"May I ask upon what grounds?"

"I would ask, sir, in return, upon what grounds is it suitable that you should marry my daughter?"

"It so happens," replied Max, "that I am in love with her."

"What precisely, sir, to your mind does the phrase 'being in love' convey?"

The Prince saw that the tussle was coming; he gathered his thoughts together, then said, "An intense personal desire to endow a certain woman with motherhood."

The Archbishop flushed: sharp enmity showed itself in his eyes; he made a gesture of repulsion.

"Ah!" cried Max, "does that shock the Church?"

The challenge went unanswered; instead came question.

"Have you not had this desire before—in other directions?"

"Never!" exclaimed Max. "No, never!"

The Archbishop eyed him keenly. "You have had experience."

"I have lived my life openly," said the Prince.

"I was aware of that," returned his Grace. "Need I trouble your Highness with any further grounds for my refusal? Not with my consent shall my daughter marry a libertine."

"Great Judge of Heaven!" cried Max, springing to his feet. "Hark to this old man!"

"Don't shout," said the Archbishop; "He hears you."

Max's scorn dropped back like a rocket to earth.

"Yes," he retorted, "no doubt! The question is, are you capable of hearing Him?"

"I am always ready to be instructed," replied his Grace sarcastically.

"I must remind you," said the Prince, "that as a Doctor of Divinity I have some claim. Yes," he went on in answer to the Archbishop's look of astonishment, "though you have forgotten the circumstance, you yourself dubbed me Theologian by hitting me over the head with a Greek Testament."

The Archbishop accepted the reminiscence.

"In that case," said he, "I bow to your Highness's authority."

"Yes: you were a shepherd of that fold, yet you let me in? I was the clever one of my family; and the title was given me when, with three lives standing between, there was little likelihood of my becoming Head of the Church. Was I to wear it, then, as an ornament, or as an amulet to guide me into right doctrine? Whatever faith I still hold, I fear me that miracle has not been wrought."

"In these days," said the Archbishop, "faith itself is the great miracle."

"That people should have any faith in the Church is indeed a miracle," said Max. "Yet I suppose it is but another instance of how easily the world accepts what it finds. I myself remain outwardly a Churchman; merely because it seems to me hardly to matter, and because any overt act on my part would hurt those whom I love. And what spiritual experience have I acquired as the result of my outward conformity? I have found the pulpit the most polished of all social institutions: and never once have I heard from it any word troublesome to a conscience which has still, I can assure you, its waking moments. The eloquence that flows from it never trespasses beyond the bounds of polite conversation; and as regards 'unpleasant subjects' it deals faithfully only with the lives of those who do not form the bulk of its congregations. If it dealt faithfully with them, those polite congregations would get up and walk out."

"I do not think, sir, that your experience puts you in a position to know how the Church deals with the consciences of the faithful."

"You mean," said Max, "that in the ears of royalty uncomfortable subjects are avoided? That merely indicates the system. As the snail withdraws first his horns into his head, then his body into his shell, so your Church adapts itself to its surroundings. Let me give you a case in point—it touches on our present discussion. I have heard often enough the cheaper forms of prostitution decorously alluded to; but when did I ever hear dealt with, either for approval or reprobation, the established practice among the unmarried youth of our aristocracy of keeping mistresses?"

"I think, sir, that you must have been often inattentive. The virtue of purity is, I am sure, constantly inculcated by our clergy."

"In such a form," replied the Prince, "that we need not apply it to ourselves. The betrayal of innocency, yes, I have heard of that, for that only touches a small minority. But these mistresses whom most of us keep are no more innocent than ourselves, nor are we more innocent than they. And yet, while to them all social entrances are barred, we men are allowed to go in free."

"Society cannot act on mere rumor and suspicion," said the Archbishop.

"In the woman's case it does," replied the Prince. "And I wonder whether it has ever occurred to any one to connect that fact with the cheapening of our modern definition of chivalry. Are you ever chivalrous; am I?"

"Charity is a greater thing than chivalry."

"I am not so sure of that," said the Prince. "You had forgotten just now that I was a Doctor of Divinity; have you also forgotten that we share the honors of one of the most ancient knighthoods in the world?"

"Will your Highness be so good as to explain?"

"Your Grace will perhaps remember—since you officiated upon the occasion as prelate of the Order—my investiture rather more than two years ago as a Knight of the Holy Thorn?"

The Archbishop bowed assent.

"Your discourse upon that occasion was both learned and eloquent; but it did not really touch the subject that had brought us together."

"How would you define the subject?" inquired his Grace.

"The subject on which I hoped to be instructed," said the Prince, "was the real meaning of Chivalry as expressed in the Order of the Thorn, and the reason why I was deemed worthy to be made a knight of it. There had already been some comment owing to the fact that the honor was not conferred immediately on the attainment of my majority. Perhaps my shortened career at college had something to do with it—perhaps the fact that I had brothers who were older and worthier than myself. I am not in the least blaming my father for the delay; rather am I now inclined to be grateful. But that year the death of my two brothers created more than a vacancy: and any further postponement would, I suppose, have made the omission too pointed. I stepped into those dead shoes."

"What a talker the man is!" said the Archbishop to himself. But etiquette held him bound, and there he was obliged to sit, looking interested and attentive, while Max went on.

II

"For some reason or another—perhaps because it was the one thing for which, in spite of legitimate expectations, I had been kept waiting—I conceived for the honor, when it was bestowed on me, a sentimental regard which I did not experience toward my other titles. They had all dropped upon me without any merit on my part; for this one honor I felt in some curious way that I was not worthy. It may have been that feeling of unworthiness which made me, before the date of my investiture, study the history of the Order and the legend of its origin. I had hoped that you would touch upon that legend, and give it some modern application. I wonder now whether your Grace is aware of the legend; or whether I, indeed, am not the only Knight of the Order who has troubled to think anything about it."

"I fancy," said the Archbishop, "that the legend you refer to has a flavor of medieval Romanism

that would hardly commend itself to modern ears."

The Prince smiled bitterly. "Your Grace persuades me," he said, "to tell the story myself. At the point where it does not commend itself I shall be glad to hear your criticism.

"The Founder—or ought I not rather to say the first Knight?—of the Order was (if the story be true) a certain ancestor of our royal house who had spent the greater part of his life in wars of unjust aggression. To atone for them—or for other things which weighed more heavily on his conscience—he went late in life on a crusade to the Holy Land; and after being there handsomely trounced by the infidel, was returning in dejection to the sea-coast with the mutinous remnant of his following, when the founding of the Order of the Thorn occurred to him.

"It occurred to him thus: this at all events was his own account of it. He had become separated from his company of knights, darkness was coming on—when, as he spurred his tired steed with little mercy for its exhausted condition, he passed by the roadside a beggar who cried out to him for charity. But the charity asked for was not alms, but only the withdrawal from the mendicant's foot of a thorn which troubled him.

"My ancestor, softened by some accent of gentleness or patience in the suppliant's voice, dismounted to do the service required of him, and in the growing darkness drew out the thorn. But when he had got it free from the flesh it seemed no more a thorn but an iron nail; and the wound out of which he had drawn it shone with celestial radiance. Then was founded the Order. The Mendicant bade him bind the Thorn upon his heel in the place of his spur, so that whenever thereafter he should be tempted to goad or oppress whether man or beast the Thorn should remind him of pity and mercy. I wait for your Grace's criticism of that legend?"

The Archbishop made no reply: with a courteous gesture of the hand he invited the Prince to continue.

"I hoped," said the young man, "to be instructed in the connection between that Founding and the continuance of the Order. You spoke of chivalry and loyalty; but the chivalry which you invited us to emulate was merely the physical daring of our ancestors as proved in war (wherein I am no longer allowed to take part); and the loyalty was to a form of monarchy which modern conditions now threaten with change. And I, looking at all my brother Knights around me, and at myself, wondered by what right we wore that iron thorn upon our heels.

"Among us—I need not mention names—were men whose lives were far more notoriously evil than mine—men whose wealth had been gained for them by the grinding of sweated humanity; men who received enormous rents from houses not fit for human habitation—men who opposed every act of remedial legislation which disturbed their own vested interests, and who did these things with an untroubled conscience because the conditions they fought for were all the outcome of custom or of law.

"And I remembered that some day I should be required to become their Grand Master—the titular head of that dead Order of Chivalry; and I wondered what would happen if I acted honestly upon my conscience and refused."

"Yet you say, sir, that for this Order, of which you now speak so slightly, you had sentiments of reverence?"

"For the Order—yes; but none for the men—including myself—who make up its membership."

"Surely," said the Archbishop, "your Highness must admit that they are all men of mark; many of them have spent their lives in the public service—leaders of the people in peace and war. You cannot regard these things as nothing."

"For these things they already have their titles," said the Prince, "their state-pensions, or the wealth personally acquired on which their power and influence are based. Has the Order of the Thorn ever once in its history been given to a man because he was conspicuously good, or gentle, or forbearing, or unselfishly thoughtful for others? Has it ever once been given to a successful philanthropist who was not also of high lineage and title? I have looked through the lists; I can find none. Your Grace is the only one among us whose profession is to serve God rather than to be served by men."

The Archbishop glanced uneasily at the Prince; but there was no sarcasm in his look or tone. Max was never more of an artist than in his adaption of manner to theme. Sadly, almost dejectedly he went on.

"And now let us come to myself. It seems that I am not accounted worthy to receive your daughter's hand in marriage. In a certain sense I admit it. That he is unworthy seems true to every man who ever loved a woman well; and perhaps the woman feels the same of herself. But I do not admit that the reasons for your judgment are just. You deny me my claim because, during my early manhood, I have had illicit connection with one woman. Tell me—do you propose that your daughter shall ever marry at all?"

The Archbishop looked at the Prince with a half-pitying surmise and drew himself up as though he had some statement to make. Then putting the inclination aside he said: "That is for her to choose."

"From her own rank in life?" persisted Max,— "not limited, I mean, to the clerical profession?"

"I impose no limits on my daughter's freedom," said the Archbishop.

"And do you mean to tell me," inquired the Prince, "that of every suitor for your daughter's hand—lawyer, soldier, politician, man of letters—you will make it your business to inquire—and will expect to be told the truth—whether they have not at some period of their career had illicit connection with women?"

"I could recommend no suitor," said the Archbishop, "who had been at so little pains as your Highness to avoid the setting of a bad example to others."

"Is it, then, merely secrecy that you advocate?"

"A respect for moral observances is in itself a ground of recommendation," answered his Grace; "though at times a man may fall short of what he knows to be right."

"You mean," said the Prince, "that I have flagrantly committed myself in the upkeep of an establishment, where others have only paid an extravagant price for a night's lodging?"

"Your Highness puts the matter in a way that makes it impossible for me to discuss."

"I beg your pardon; I really was trying to be delicately indirect. But that you should beg off discussion because my way of putting things seems to you indelicate is yet another count in my quarrel with your established ministry. You seem to me to be amateurs where you ought to be professionals. How can you possibly deal with poor weak humanity in kid gloves? Like the surgeon before he can hope to bring healing in his wings, you too must be anatomical in your researches. It is the anatomical your civil churchmen fight shy of. Well, I will endeavor to get at the matter from another and a more accessible side. Your Grace is, I take it, a man of the world?"

The Archbishop was inclined to demur; humbly but firmly he deprecated the imputation.

"But surely!" protested the Prince, "had you not been, you would not now be in the place which you occupy; every one knows that an Archbishop's appointment is political. I ask you then, as a man of the world, how—short of a miracle—could you expect a man in my position and circumstances to have kept a technically unblemished record? Surrounded with luxuries from my birth, disciplined by no real hardship, having to make no struggle for my existence; brought up to eat meat and drink wine; athletic, but without any reason or opportunity for leading a strenuously athletic life; with brains, but with no compulsion to use them; passed, for the perfecting of my education, from one privileged grade to another; from the University to the Army, and from thence to sport and the race-course; from where on God's earth, in this modern curriculum for kings, was the idea to have occurred to me that I should do this thing, in attempting to do which your early hermits went hullabalooing to the desert?"

"I am now nearly twenty-six. My father, for reasons of State, married at twenty-one: I, for similar reasons, have been kept unmarried, no sufficiently eligible partner could be found for me. And I solved the time of waiting by contracting a non-legal conjugal relationship with a woman for whom I had a very real affection, who was considerably my senior in years, and who knew quite well that the arrangement could only be temporary. My Lord Archbishop, I ask you—could you in my circumstances have shown a better, a more blameless record? I was even punctilious enough to tell your daughter—an excessive scruple, I think,—she did not understand."

"She understands now," said the Archbishop.

"And who is it," inquired the Prince sharply, "who has thus played bo-peep with her intelligence—first shutting and now opening her eyes?"

"When evil is encountered," said his Grace, "instruction has to be extended."

"And still you have stopped halfway, just at the point where it serves you best. What does her pure soul know of these problems which to her are only a few hours old?"

"She is a daughter of the Church; and she knows what the Church's answer has always been."

"She knows, then," said Max, "what no school of historians has yet been able to decide! See over in England to-day how the Church, clinging to its establishment, has to dodge and shuffle over the changes in the moral law arising out of national habit. Is the Church of Jingalo so greatly superior, think you, that it can boast?"

At that moment a clock upon the chimney-piece intoned the hour; and the Archbishop, reduced to extremity in order to get rid of his distinguished but unwelcome visitor, permitted himself to throw an involuntary glance in the direction of the sound.

The Prince, perceiving the indication, rose at once to his feet.

"Pardon me," he said, "for having kept you so long."

"Pardon *me*," returned his Grace; "unfortunately I have to dine."

"Of course. I ought not to have forgotten."

"I mean that I have guests."

"They shall not be kept waiting by me," said the Prince. He moved to the door. Then he stopped.

"Your Grace," he said, "I know that we cannot be friends, still——"

He paused; and there was silence.

"I greatly wish to see your daughter. Surely you cannot deny me that right."

"I cannot," said the Archbishop. "She does."

This pulled Max up with a jerk: not that he yet believed it, however.

"Where is she now?" he inquired.

"She has joined the Sisterhood of Poverty. To-day she entered her profession."

The Prince choked.

"That is horrible!" he said. "You mean she has taken vows?"

The Archbishop of Ebury bowed his head. "For the remainder of *my* life at all events," he said in a stricken tone. "She will not return here. My house is left desolate to me—because of you."

"You still have guests," said the Prince.

"That is an unworthy gibe," retorted his Grace. "My work has still to go on."

"I beg your pardon," said Max.

"I have written to her," he added after a pause; "and she has not answered. Will your Grace be good enough——"

"I do not think she will. She prays for you. If you came, I was to tell you that."

Again there was silence for a time.

"When I was a child," said the Prince, "I had an old nurse, who whenever I did anything wrong—as whipping was not allowed—used to go down on her knees and pray for me; and she always did it against a blank wall. I suppose it helped her. That has always remained my vision of prayer. And now I shall always think of your daughter with her dear face turned to a blank wall, praying for you and me—her murderers."

He went out.

"Upon my word!" thought the Archbishop, "that is a dangerous man to be heir to a throne."

CHAPTER XXI

NIGHT-LIGHT

I

And meanwhile the Prince of Schnapps-Wasser had arrived; and Max, instead of pursuing his own love-affair, ought to have been busy entertaining him.

The first meeting between Charlotte and her suitor had been tactfully arranged; they had met riding to a review of troops in the great Field of Mars which occupied a central space in the largest of the royal parks. The Princess had a healthy taste for riding in thoroughly cold weather; she also particularly disliked to be in a carriage when those round her were on horseback; and so, by following her own taste, when the Prince met her she was looking her very best. Down a white-frosted avenue of lindens she and her escort came trotting to the saluting-point; and there, once more in his sky-blue with its sable and silver trimmings, the Prince was presented, and opening upon her mild blue eyes that looked curiously light in his bronzed and ruddy countenance, with dutiful promptness he fell in love with her.

By a little quiet maneuvering and attendance to other matters the King left them side by side for a while. Troops stood massed in the distance waiting the signal to advance.

"Do you like soldiers?" inquired the Prince.

"It rather depends upon the uniform," replied Charlotte.

"Oh! Do you like mine?"

She looked at it, and smiled; for there were no sky-blue tunics in Jingalo; and such cerulean tones on a man were to her eyes a little incongruous.

"It would be rather trying to some complexions," she observed. "But you look very well in it."

"Ah! I have been abroad," he explained. "That has given me the colors of a Red Indian."

"You look just as if you had dropped from the sky," she said, smiling still at him.

"Oh, no, not this sky!" and he cast up a grudging glance at the opaque grayness overhead. "Here you seem to have a sun that looks only the other way."

She threw back a light remark, while her eye strayed over the field. Presently he returned to the subject.

"So you only like soldiers because of their uniforms?"

"And when they ride well. I like drums too," she added.

"Ah! good! I can play on the drum. It is my one instrument."

"Does it require much practice?"

"Oh, yes; it is very difficult—to play well. But it has been very useful to me. I took a drum with me to South America. That is music that the natives can understand, it can make them afraid; and when one is all by oneself in the forest, then it helps that one shall not feel lonely. One night when I had no fire left, I was saved my life from wild beasts just by beating at them with my drum. It is funny that you should like drums."

"I like something with them as well," said Charlotte.

"Ah," grunted the Prince, "that depends. There is some music in the world that ought never to be allowed."

"Well, there is some of ours," said the Princess, as the massed bands of three regiments sent forth their blast. "How does that strike you?"

The Prince listened with the ear of a connoisseur. "For you here, that is good," he said judicially; "but you are not a musical nation. And there is a man there that is playing his drum as it ought not to be played."

And then his formal duties called him away. This was their first exchange of compliments. Old Uncle Nostrum, who had kept within ear-shot, reported to the King that things had gone sufficiently well. There was no secrecy about the intended affair in the royal circle now; everybody knew of it.

And that evening, at a State ball given in the Prince's honor, the destined pair met again.

Nothing very much happened at the ball. The Prince danced once with Charlotte and once with the Queen, and with nobody else; while Charlotte danced nearly the whole evening; and Max, moving about with a pensive and preoccupied air, danced with nobody. But the only reason why this ball has to be mentioned is because of something that happened immediately after, quite unconnected either with the about-to-be-linked or the about-to-be-separated lovers—something which takes us back to those underground workings of the body politic which his Majesty was only now beginning fully to apprehend.

State balls end punctually, and as it were upon the stroke; as soon as the royal countenance is withdrawn they come to an end. And so within half-an-hour of the retirement of the royal party all the great suite of chambers was empty, and in less than an hour light and movement had ceased in all that part of the palace wherein the royal family resided.

But the King, hindered during the day by constant attendance upon his guest, had some papers to look through before his next meeting with the Prime Minister. He went into his study, switched on the light, and for an hour sat at work. Outside traffic died away; the sense of silence grew deep; the whole palace became permeated by it. Wearing for bed, having got through his last batch of papers, the King looked at the clock; it was half-past one.

Just as he was getting up from his seat the mere ghost of a sound caught his ear. The door, silent on its hinges, had softly opened; and within its frame stood a figure in dark civil uniform who gave the military salute.

II

"Mr. Inspector!" cried the King in surprise, recognizing the face.

"I beg your Majesty's pardon."

"Ah! You came to see that everything was safe? This time you were a little too early. Still, as you are here, I should rather like to know how far those keys do allow you to penetrate?"

"Everywhere, your Majesty."

"You mean, even to the private apartments?"

Apparently he did.

"Do you often have occasion to use them?"

"Not after to-night, your Majesty—never again."

"Oh, do not suppose that I am objecting, if it is really necessary."

"I give these keys up to-morrow, sir," said the man. "I ought to have given them up to-day; but I

wanted to see your Majesty."

The King drew himself up; this seemed an intrusion.

"You could have asked for an interview," he said.

"I could have asked to the day of my death, sir; you would never have heard of it."

"You could have written."

"Does your Majesty think that all letters personally addressed are even reported to your Majesty?"

"I suppose not all of them," said the King after considering the matter.

"Not one in a hundred, sir."

"Still, any that are important I hear of."

"Mine, sir, would not have been reckoned important," said the man bitterly.

The King looked hard at him, not with any real suspicion, for his straightforward bearing inspired liking as well as confidence. But here was a man whose measure must be carefully taken, for he was certainly doing a very extraordinary thing.

"And have you something really important to tell me?"

Their eyes met on a pause that spoke better than words.

"Yes," said the man. Quietly he shut the door.

"Won't you come nearer?" said the King, for the depth of a large chamber divided them. But the disciplined figure kept its place. Slowly but without hesitation he gave what he had to say.

"I am dismissed the force," he began; "but that's not important—at least only to me—though I suppose that's partly why I'm here, for a man must fight when his living is taken from him. I am dismissed because your Majesty got out of the palace the other night without my hearing of it."

The King breathed his astonishment, but said nothing.

"I admit I ought to have known, but the man we had on duty at that door didn't know your Majesty—at least not so as to be sure. I asked him yesterday who it was went out, and he said—well, sir, he thought it was one of the palace stewards. They use that door a good deal at night, so I'm told."

"That he did not recognize me was, of course, my own doing," said the King.

"I know that, sir," replied the man, "but in the detective force we can't afford to make those sort of allowances. The consequence is—I'm out of it."

"I'm sorry, Inspector. What do you want me to do?"

"Well, sir, I'm here because I know something that I can't tell to another soul on earth. If I could have gone to them with it, I needn't have troubled your Majesty. But, so happens, I haven't got the proof."

"Are you going to ask me to believe you without proof?"

"Your Majesty can get the proof—or see it anyway. It's there at Dean's Court."

"Dean's Court? What is that?"

"Where the police museum is, sir. The proof of what I'm going to tell your Majesty lies there."

This was getting interesting. "Pray go on," said the King.

"That bomb," said the man, "the one that was thrown at your Majesty the other day—all the pieces of it are in the museum now."

He paused, then added—

"They have gone back to the place they came from."

It was evident then, from the man's tone, that to his own mind he had stated the essential part of his case.

But the King, his brain working on unfamiliar ground, missed the connection.

"I do not quite understand," he said.

"No, sir? Well, then, it's like this. After the bomb was thrown, we were put on to the ground, and the public were kept off. All the pieces picked up were brought to me. It must have been a very mild sort of charge, sir, nothing much besides gunpowder I should say; no slugs nor anything. Most of the shell I was able to put together again. It was blackened all over, partly by fire, partly new painted I think, but, under the black, I found lettering and numbers, all quite faint. I've got them here." (He drew out a pocket-book as he spoke.) "D.C.M. 5537."

He closed the book with a snap as though clinching an argument.

"The bomb that had that number on it," said he, "came from Dean's Court Museum; it's been there fifteen years. I've been in to look; that number is missing now. You'd have thought, sir, they might have been more careful than that!" He spoke with professional contempt for a job that had been bungled.

The solemnity of the man's manner, and the queer mystery of it all sent a cold sensation through the King's blood; he felt now that he was up against something dangerous and sinister.

"What do you mean me to understand from all this?" he asked?

"Well, sir," said the man, "it doesn't need me to tell your Majesty that when anarchists or any of that sort want to do a bit of bomb-throwing they don't go to our police museum for their materials. But that's not all. They found out, down at head office—after it was over, only then—that the local authorities had given permit for a cinematograph record to be taken from a stand just opposite, overlooking the new buildings, so as to get the procession as it came along under the arch. And so, as it happened, those films had got the whole thing recorded. We only heard of it when they were announced to be shown at the theater that night. I was sent down to get hold of them, and I brought them back with me.

"I've been through every one; most people wouldn't see anything. The point where the bomb went off was about fifty yards away; and those films give a view that just takes in a bit of the palisade. At number 139 you see an arm come up, and a face just behind it, very small, under the scaffolding; you'd hardly know it was there. But if that were put under a good microscope I shouldn't be surprised but what it could be recognized."

By this time the King's understanding had become clear; he saw where the argument was leading.

"Before I could do that," the man went on, "they were locked away. I didn't say anything about it—didn't point it out to them, I mean—for I'd begun to have a feeling that things weren't all right; and I daresay they haven't noticed what *I* noticed. If they have, number 139 and the ten plates following will be gone. Whether they have or not—that's my proof."

The King was now following the man's narrative with tense interest; every moment its import grew more clear; yes, clearer than day, sharp and bright as a rocket shot up against the blackness of a midnight sky.

The inspector paused for a moment and wiped his hand over dry lips; in the telling of that tale his face had grown white.

"Whom do you mean by 'they'?" inquired the King.

The man hesitated. "Well, your Majesty, I'd rather not say."

"I ought to know."

"Oh, yes, sir, I can't deny that! But, there, I've got no proof—so it's not the same thing. But I do say this, your Majesty, that to be able to lay hands on those things in the first place, and now to keep them locked away, needs somebody higher up in the department than I'd like to name. If I may leave it at that?"

"That will do," said the King.

"Your Majesty sees I couldn't safely go to anybody else with that proof; either it would be somebody who couldn't get at it before it was destroyed, or it would be those who had the whole thing in their own hands."

"I quite see that," said the King.

"That's all I had to say, then, sir."

"I am very much in your debt; I shall not forget what I owe you. There is one question I want to ask—you say that the charge must have been a very feeble one?"

"Yes, sir, much less than an ordinary shell."

"What do you deduce from that fact?"

"Well, your Majesty, I should say that killing had never been intended."

"That it was only done to frighten some one?"

"That is about it, your Majesty."

"Thank you; that is what I wanted to know. And if you will leave me your name, I think I can promise that you shall be at no disadvantage after I have gone into the matter."

"I am much obliged, your Majesty." The inspector came forward, drew out a card, and respectfully presenting it, retired again.

"Then, for the present, that is all," said the King. "It is now nearly two o'clock. You can, I believe, let yourself out?"

And in the light of a gentle, half-quizzical smile from the royal countenance, the inspector withdrew.

"What an amazing thing!" said the King to himself. "And oh! if it is true!"

III

He knew that it was true; for in a flash he had seen the meaning of it. And instead of angering him, it filled him with an almost intoxicating sense of power. For it meant that the Prime Minister, or the Government, could not do without him, he had been necessary to their plans.

He could not distinctly see why, whether it were a fear of Max succeeding to the throne at such a juncture or of popular resentment at the sovereign being driven to so desperate a remedy for his griefs, or fear merely of the damage that might be done to the monarchical system while bureaucracy was still depending upon it as a cloak for constitutional encroachments—whether one or all of these fears impelled his minister, the King did not know; but he saw clearly enough that to force him into withdrawal of his abdication the Prime Minister had adopted a desperate and almost heroic remedy.

He bore the man no grudge; the more he envisaged the risks, the more he admired and respected him. Feebly though the bomb had been charged, carefully though directed by slow underhand bowling only at the legs of horses, at a moment when the royal carriage had actually passed, still a bomb is an incalculable weapon—pieces of it fly in the most unexpected directions; and it was evident that for the execution of this ministerial veto on the Crown's action it had been necessary to risk the lives not merely of a picked body of troops, but of several high court officials and staff-officers riding in close attendance upon the royal coach. And a child in politics could see that if all this risk had been run to make abdication impossible, then abdication had been the right card to play.

And now that game was over, and another had begun, and if, in a certain sense, the leading cards had reverted to the ministerial hand, the King had the advantage of knowing what they were; and by leading off in another suit he might prevent the Ministry from playing them till too late for effect.

It was necessary, however, first to get his proofs. They lay at Dean's Court under official lock and key; and the hand which held that key was, for all he knew, the same which had thrown the bomb in order to frighten him. How, then, was he to get at it?

A brilliant idea occurred to him; so simple and easy that without worrying himself further he went to bed and slept upon it. And next morning, at their first meeting, he said to the Prince of Schnapps-Wasser, "Would you not like to come and see our police museum? Just now it contains some rather interesting exhibits—especially for us personally—that bomb, you know." And he proceeded to give details. "The actual pieces are all there, and a whole set of photographs, showing how the explosion took place."

Her Majesty, hearing of the project, backed it warmly.

"You will find it quite an intellectual treat," said she, "our police are such intelligent creatures. I went all over the museum myself once; and it felt exactly like being in a kaleidoscope—everything so wonderfully arranged."

"Ah, yes," said the Prince, "that should be very interesting."

And so, though it was not in the day's program, quite at an early hour the King and his guest drove down together to the Prefecture.

The Prefect himself had not arrived, but they saw one of the high permanent officials; and stating the purpose of their visit were formally handed over to the Superintendent of detectives. The department was his.

"Mr. Superintendent," said the King, "we come upon you by surprise; are you sufficiently prepared for us?"

The Superintendent declared that his department was ready at all hours.

"I wanted to show the Prince some of your relics," his Majesty went on, "particularly those connected with the recent outrage."

Of course the Superintendent was delighted; he led the way into the museum; and before long the Prince of Schnapps-Wasser became very much interested in all the things that were shown him.

Case after case was opened; and the King, seeing how smoothly matters were shaping, made no hurry toward the attainment of his goal.

Presently, pointing toward a case that stood in a window recess, the official remarked with a smile, "There lies your Majesty's death-warrant—what is left of it."

The case was opened; the King took up the fragments.

"Very interesting," he said. "There are also some photographs showing the actual event, are there not?"

"They are here, your Majesty." The Superintendent produced a small box with numbered slides.

"Very interesting," murmured the King again as he continued to handle the shards.

Presently he detected in one of these a faint trace of figures and lettering; he laid it to one side, took up the films, and began to examine them. Film after film he held up to the light; the scale was very small. Unable to decipher them in detail he sought only for the identifying numbers under which they stood catalogued.

After a while he came to the one he was in search of; that and the other two or three which immediately followed it he selected for closer scrutiny. Two of them he handed to the Prince. "This is just before," he said by way of explanation. "It was from behind those palisades that the bomb was thrown after our coach had passed."

"Here your Highness can see the actual explosion taking place," said their guide.

"Ah, very good! Very interesting!" murmured the Prince, with cordial appreciation. "That seems to have gone off quite well."

The King meanwhile had re-collected the four innocuous-looking films and set them apart from the rest. "And have you been quite unable," he inquired, "to trace the bomb to its origin, or to discover anything as to who threw it?"

"No trace at all, sir. The whole thing is a perfect mystery."

"Remarkable!" said the King.

And then with the leisurely air of a collector of curios he took up again the four films and the shard bearing the faint trace of figures, and before the astonished eyes of the Superintendent put them into his breast-pocket.

"I will keep these as a souvenir," he observed. "They will always be of great interest to me."

"I ask pardon, your Majesty," replied the official a little stiffly, "but it is against all regulations for anything to go out of this museum when it has once been catalogued."

"Ah, yes," retorted the King, smiling pleasantly, "but then it is against all regulations for bombs to be thrown at the royal coach when I am in it; so you must allow, for once, this small breach that I make in your chain of evidence. There is plenty of material for conviction still left, should you ever discover the criminal."

"I am afraid, sir," said the Superintendent, speaking gravely, "that this will get me into trouble with the Prefect. May I express a hope that your Majesty will reconsider the matter?"

"Oh, no, not at all!" said the King. "Tell the Prefect that the responsibility rests with me. The Prince here is witness that I robbed you and that you were helpless. Lay all the blame upon me without any scruple! And if it is a very grave breach of the regulations—well—you can inform the Prime Minister; and then, no doubt I shall hear of it."

The Superintendent stood mute; he had made his protest, and he could not pretend that he was satisfied.

"By the way," went on the King, "I have a very particular request to make which I think concerns your department. In connection with a certain incident that took place the other night—and which shall be nameless—one of your special inspectors has been dismissed, I hear?"

"That is so, your Majesty."

"Well, I do not wish to interfere in anything that makes for efficiency; but I have to request—will you please to make a particular note of it—that he shall be retired on a full pension."

For a moment the official hesitated. "May I ask why, sir?"

"Because practically I have promised it. It is either that or I re-engage him for my own personal service. He is a man whom I have trusted in matters of an exceedingly confidential character. Pray see to it."

The head of the department could hold out no longer. "It shall be as your Majesty wishes," said he.

"Very well," said the King. "Please report when you have seen the matter through. And now, Prince, I think that we have exhausted everything—including, I fear, your patience, Mr. Superintendent. What a very criminal part of society you have to deal with! I hope that the influences of the place are not catching."

"As to that, sir, I can hardly say," replied the other with a wry smile. "Your Majesty has just committed a robbery which I shall have to report; the first that has ever taken place in this department."

"Oh, surely not quite the first!" protested the King.

Then he checked himself. "Well, if that is so, you can but take out an order for my arrest. And you will find," he added slyly, "that I am already well known to the police."

And so saying, he and the Prince took their departure.

IV

But if the King was satisfied with his morning's exploit—a raid so successfully conducted—he had harassment to face before the day was over. His message to Council, on the matter of the Women Chartists and their grievances, was received by the Prime Minister not only with disfavor but with a clear though respectful intimation that it would not be allowed to effect the ministerial program.

"I must remind you, Mr. Prime Minister," said his Majesty, "that the Constitution gives me this right."

"That, sir, I do not question. But it gives to us also a discretion as to when time can be found for attending to it."

"Well," said the King, "you may fix your own date within reason."

"I can fix no date, your Majesty."

That was flat, and the monarch could not help showing his annoyance.

"If you think that that answer satisfies me," he said, "you are mistaken."

"I fear," replied the Prime Minister, "that it is often my duty to give your Majesty dissatisfaction."

"Well, well," said the King, "we shall see!"

He had drawn out of his pocket a small shard and was toying with it as he spoke.

"By the way," he said, considerably changing the subject, "I was at the Prefecture this morning; I took the Prince to see the museum."

"So I was informed, sir."

The Prime Minister showed no discomposure; his demeanor was wholly urbane and conciliatory.

"I brought away with me a small memento," went on the King.

"I was told of that too, sir," replied the Premier, smiling. "It was a little irregular; but if your Majesty wishes for it I do not think there can be any real objection."

"Really," thought the King to himself, "is he going to pretend that he knows nothing about it?" Yet the good face which his minister put upon the matter did not fail to win the King's admiration; he respected the man's courage and ability to brazen the thing out. The Superintendent, he judged, was not actually in the secret; but of the Premier he was now quite sure. That air of calm was just a little bit overdone. "I suppose he thinks that I can't do anything," mused the King. "Well, well, we shall see."

And then he inquired whether the Prime Minister had interviewed Prince Max.

"I have not, sir; but I have seen the Archbishop."

"You have been talking to the Archbishop about it?" cried the King sharply.

"At great length, sir," replied the Prime Minister.

"Then I must say that you have taken a most unwarranted liberty! You have gone entirely beyond and behind my authority. No, it is no use for you to protest, Mr. Premier; I did consent that you should speak to the Prince; but beyond that—until it had been thoroughly discussed with him—what I communicated to you was entirely confidential and private."

"An affair of such importance, sir, cannot possibly be private."

"It can have its private preliminaries—otherwise where would be diplomacy?"

"The Prince might any day have taken overt action—he might even have announced the engagement."

"He might, but he did not! And without even seeing him you have been behind his back and discussed it with the Archbishop! And pray, with what result?"

"At present, sir, I am not in a position to say, but I have good hopes. We are still in correspondence. I assure your Majesty that my conscience is clear in the matter."

"Your conscience, Mr. Prime Minister, has an easy way of clearing itself; you lay the burden of it on me! Yes, this is the second bomb that has been dropped upon me from Government back premises, and I am tired of it; I am not going to stand it any longer! In this matter of the Prince's engagement you and I were in entire agreement; but now you have so acted that you have endangered the relations—the very friendly and affectionate relations—between the Prince and myself. I hardly know how I shall be able to look him in the face. I give him my consent; and then I suddenly turn round and I work against him; I go behind his back, yes, I steal a march upon him—that is how it will appear. And if he so accuses me, what am I to say?"

"I appreciate your Majesty's feelings; but I say, sir, that any sacrifice was necessary to prevent so dangerous a proposal from going further."

"No!" cried the King, "no! not of straightforward dealing and of honor! That is what comes of being mixed up in politics. People forget what honor means, their sense of it becomes blunted. Unfortunately mine does not! Mr. Premier, you have profoundly distressed me; you have made my position extremely difficult. And I do not think that you had any excuse for it."

The Prime Minister had never seen the King so disturbed and agitated. He moved quickly up and down the room beating the air with his hands; and when his minister endeavored to put in a word he threw him off impatiently, almost refusing to hear him.

"No," he said, "no, you had better leave me! With the Prince I must make my peace as best I can. With you I no longer intend peace; it has become impossible! I have my material; and now my mind is made up, and I mean to use it! Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, you can go!"

And thereupon they parted.

V

Max was far gentler to his father than the King could have hoped. They did not meet till the next day; and for the first time in his life the King found him utterly cast down and dejected.

"Oh, do not blame yourself," he said in answer to his parent's explanations and apologies; "I do not suppose that what you have done makes any real difference. I have spent my life despising convention, occasionally defying it, and now it has overthrown me. Yes, sir, that is the true solvent of the situation; my morals have been weighed in the balance and found wanting."

"Dear me," said his father, "is that so? Well, well!" and he sighed.

"Of course, sir, I cannot expect you to be sorry about it."

"I am sorry, my dear boy—very sorry. Don't think because I have still to be King that I have not the feelings of a father. Ah, if you only knew how hard I have tried to get out of it all, you would believe what I say."

"Out of what?"

"Being King at all. Yes, Max, I have yet another confession to make; I meant to conceal it from you, but now I would rather that you knew. Perhaps you will think it wasn't quite fair; I intended to leave the responsibility of all this to you; and—well, it so happens that when you asked me I had determined to abdicate."

Max opened his eyes.

"I actually did abdicate. And then the bomb came, and that made it impossible. And so—here I still am; and that is how you got my consent!"

"You abdicated?"

"Yes, my boy, I really did. And if that bomb had not happened I should have been off the throne and you would have been on it. So now, Max, I am going to tell you everything." And he did, from beginning to end.

And when it came to giving Max the actual proof, he got up and unlocked a drawer, and handed out of it the shard and the four films for him to look at.

"Take a magnifying-glass," said the King. "The face and the raised arm are behind the palisade to the right."

"I can't see them," said Max.

"Very small," said the King; "a man with a dark beard."

Max continued to look without result. "I can't find it," he said.

"Well, look at the figures and lettering on the shard; you can see those."

"No," said Max, "I can't."

The King came impatiently across and took them off him. Then, as he examined them, he saw that the shard and the four films had been changed.

He had his souvenir; but the incriminating evidence was gone.

CHAPTER XXII

A MAN OF BUSINESS

While these events of political moment were going on, Prince Hans Fritz Otto of Schnapps-Wasser had been busy planting himself in the good graces of the Princess Charlotte. They rode, they skated, they lunched, they played billiards together; and so easy did their relations to each other become that the Queen ceased to have any anxiety as to the future, and left the entire conduct of the affair to Providence.

Charlotte all her life had been quick and impulsive in her decisions; her hatreds and her affections had always been precipitately bestowed, and while her conduct was seldom reasonable, her instincts were generally right. So now—when a most crucial question was coming to her for decision—for she no longer needed to be informed of the Prince's mind in the matter—she did not allow its serious character to weigh upon her spirits or make her less ready and spontaneous in the bestowal of her liking. On the contrary, if anything, it hastened her verdict of approval. "I do believe that I am going to fall in love with him!" she said to herself after an acquaintance of only twenty-four hours; and having so determined, she set forth with all speed to study "philosophically," as she phrased it, this huge healthy natural specimen which fortune had thrown in her way. "For if I don't take a philosophical view of him now," she said to herself, "I shall never be able to do it afterwards."

The effort to do so rather amused her; she was not in love with him but she liked him more than a little. She had not yet, however, put him to the test by revealing the awful fact that she had been in prison as a common criminal; and before doing so (a little nervous as to the result) she took such opportunity of survey as was left to her, studied him up and down, noticed his ways, demeanor, habits, and wondered to herself whether in three weeks' time she would be so infatuated with this great creature as not to know where divinity ended and mere earthly clay began.

She had plenty of material to go upon: he was as naïve in the revelations of his own character as in his half-bewildered admiration for the swift mercurial motions of her livelier temperament.

For a while, at the beginning of their acquaintance, some question as to the degree of her sincerity seemed to trouble him.

"How much of what you say do you really mean?" he inquired.

"Oh, it varies!" she answered. "I talk so as to find out what I think. Don't you? Some things one can't judge of till one hears them spoken."

"That seems funny to me."

"Why? You are fond of music: don't you find that sound is very important? Can you *think* music without ever hearing it?"

"Sometimes," he said.

"But only the airs."

"Oh, no; sometimes I can think like an orchestra, when I know all what is in it."

"You must be very musical."

"Yes; that is my misfortune sometimes. The world has so much ugly sound already; and then some people go out of their ways to make more."

"Ah, yes," she smiled, "I remember you were a musical critic once."

He let that go; and turning the conversation abruptly, as was his wont, to more personal ends, said—

"Tell me, do you like my name?"

"Schnapps-Wasser?" Shaping the word elaborately, she made a wry face over it.

"No—not that; my own name."

"But you have three."

"Yes; Hans, Fritz, Otto. Which of them you like best?"

"Fritz suits you best."

"Then will you always call me it?"

"Prince Fritz, Prince Fritz?—sounds like a robin," she said, trying it in musical tones.

"No, just Fritz; no more, only that."

"Wait till I have known you a few more days; then we will see."

"But I shall already be nearly gone by then," he protested. "I am only here such a short time."

"Perhaps some day you will come again."

"Ah! Again!" He sounded unutterable things, as though upon that word hung his whole fate.

Anything might happen to him before they met again.

"I have a secret," he said; "I want to tell it you."

"Are you sure you can trust me?"

"When I have told you it, you can tell anybody."

"Then it can't be much of a secret."

"Oh! You think?" He opened his big childish eyes at her and nodded his head solemnly. "This secret has been with me thousands and thousands of miles. Every time I shot off my gun, every day I went 'tramp, tramp' through the forest walking on snakes, every time I fought for my life I had this secret of mine to live with."

"You had better not tell it then; it may lose its interest."

"I want it to interest you."

"It does," said Charlotte, "very much."

"Huh! You do not know what it is."

"That is why; it is much more interesting not to know."

"Ah, you are playing at me! But what I go to tell you is no joke."

"I was not laughing," she said.

"No; only 'chatter, chatter'!"

"You know where I have been?" he continued.

"I know the continent."

"Yes;—you are right; that is all anybody knows about it. Well, inside of it there is a country as big as this Jingalo of yours; and it belongs really to nobody. I have been all over it."

"The people are very savage, are they not?"

"Savage?—oh, no. They are very fierce and proud, and strong; they are also the most wonderful artists. You call that to be a savage?"

"Artists?"

"Yes; look at that."

As he spoke he drew up his sleeve almost to the elbow, exposing a sunburnt arm, smooth, fine of texture, and enormously muscular. Over its brawny mold, with scaly convolutions elaborately tattooed, writhed a dragon in bright indigo.

"Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed the Princess. Marveling at the clear intricacy of its detail, she stooped to examine it more closely.

Prince Fritz turned his arm this way and that, displaying it. He snapped his fingers: flick went each separate muscle, the dragon became alive.

"What do you think?" he inquired, smiling with childish vanity and the delight of feeling upon his skin the warmth of her breath.

"It is very beautiful," she murmured again, her admiration divided between the scaly dragon's wings and the splendidly molded limb.

"I have them far more beautiful upon my legs," said the Prince.

"Dragons?"

"Yes; but oh! quite different; more—how do you say?—'bloodthirsty' you call it? Here and here"—he went on, indicating the locality—"I have two. One of them is climbing up and the other is climbing down; and they are both biting on my knee-cap with their teeth—like mad."

"They must be quite wonderful."

"They are all that! When I look at them I am lost with admiration of myself." Then he gazed speculatively into her eyes and speaking in dull, soft tones of Teutonic sentiment, said confidentially, "If you will marry me, you shall see them some day."

Charlotte's laughter rang loud. "Do you think I should marry you for that?"

A wistful, rather nonplussed expression came into the Prince's face.

"I do not know," said he, "why women marry at all; they are so wonderful, so beautiful, so good all by themselves; we men are not beautiful at all—not our bodies nor our hearts. And I—oh, well!"—he drew down his sleeve as he spoke,— "I have nothing more beautiful to offer you than those—my dragons. If you do not want them, why should you want me?"

"But women don't marry dragons!" objected Charlotte, scarcely less puzzled than amused.

"Oh! Do they not? I think you are wrong. Many of them marry only because the man they marry makes them afraid. I have seen it done in the country where I come from;—Germany I mean—and everywhere here it is the same. I am not a dragon myself; but if you are that sort of woman, these might help you to pretend. Do you not think you could be afraid of me enough to marry me?"

This was strange wooing.

"I am not afraid of you at all," said Charlotte; "but I like you—very much."

"Ah, then you want me to be quite another person? Very well, that make it so much easier. Then now I will tell you what I am really like; and you will try not to laugh, will you not?"

Charlotte composed her countenance to as near gravity as was possible, and the Prince went on.

"I am just one little child that has lost its way through having grown so big and strong. And I want some nice, kind woman, that is more sensible than I, to be a mother to me—to take me in her arms and let me cry to her when I am afraid. Herr Gott! I am so frightened sometimes—how I have cried! Of the dark night, of loneliness, of the stillness when there is no noise near, but only *that*, something far, far away, that comes! Everything frightens me when I am alone. Fighting? No, I am not afraid of that; it is this wait, wait, wait—for what? And I want to have one woman just at my heart, and her voice at my ear, and children—yes, plenty of them; and when I have plenty children, then I shall not be afraid of loneliness any more."

"But if you so dislike it, why did you go away into the wilds?"

"Ah! I had to run away from the music. That was awful! And then—have you lived in a German town?—that is awful too. Do not think that I am asking you to live in a German town? No: I could not be so cruel. So now I tell you my secret."

"You mean the dragons?"

"The dragons? No, no! They go with me,—they are part of me, they are 'in the know': but they themselves are not the secret. That is much, much bigger thing still!"

He paused, and she saw his blue eyes looking far away, as though he had forgotten her presence.

"Well?" she said encouragingly, "you are going to tell me, are you not?"

"Oh, yes! That is what I am come for." His tone was quite business-like now.

"That big country I told you of—it belongs to nobody. You know that those North Americans say that nobody from Europe is to have it, though they do not use it themselves. Well, I am going to have it."

"You?"

"Schnapps-Wasser,—me, with my water-bottles. I have turned them into a company; and they are going to give for it—well, never mind how much. But with what my bottles bring me I can make that country so that no power in the world can prevent it from being a great country to itself."

"But you say it has no coast?"

"No—just like Jingalo; that is what makes it strong. If I were foolish, if I were only going there to make money, I should try to get some treaty, some concession, some sort of trade-monopoly—rubber, or gum, or niggers' blood, it is all the same thing—I should try to get that from the Brazils or the Bolivias or whoever thinks that it is theirs to sell. I am not such a fool: I do not want to trade, if I have got the people. They are strong, they can run, they live clean lives—nobody has spoiled them; they do not want to be rich; they are still a wonderful people; they know a leader when they have found him. And when they gave me these dragons that I have on me, then I became their King. That is my secret. Now!"

"But if I were to tell people *that*—"

"Pooh! They would not believe you. 'Mad,' that is what they would say. 'Don't marry that man, he is mad!' And besides I am not King as we talk of kings here in Europe; they would not pay taxes to me or anybody, but I can show them what to do. That country on the map may 'belong' to anybody—the United States may write 'Monroe'—one of their big 'bow-wows' that was—they may write 'Monroe' all round the coasts of South America and at every port that they like to stick in their noses; but they cannot get there to say that the people living on that land shall not become great and strong in their own way, without any one else to say about it. To those men outside I shall only look like a trader what is too stupid to trade with them; but all my trade will be among my own people. That country can live on itself; there, that is my secret! It wants nothing, nothing from outside at all; and the people want nothing either. They have great high plateaux where they can live cool; and they have all the brains and the blood that they want to make themselves a great nation. I have drilled them; ah, but not German fashion, no! They are much too splendid for that. Every man is an army to himself. They do not fear, for in their religion it is forbidden them. But if you can think of Bersaglieri—which are the best troops in Europe—able to climb like monkeys, to swim like fish, to go along the ground like snakes, and to get all by different ways to the same place in the dark with their eyes shut, though they have never been there before—for that is how it seems—well, that is what my army is going to be like. I have ten thousand of them drilled already; in a year I shall have them armed; and I tell you that at six hundred miles from the nearest coast nobody will be able to beat them."

"No, perhaps not with armies," said Charlotte; "but what about civilization itself—all the evil part of it, I mean? How are you going to keep that out?"

"Civilization will find us a bad bargain," said the Prince, "we shall not trade: that is to be our law. I have told them how dreadful civilization has become, and they are afraid of it; they will not touch it with a pair of tongs. Traders may come to us; they shall get nothing, and we shall get nothing from them. Only the King, with those that he has for his Council, shall choose what is to bring in from outside; and that will not be for trade at all.

"Well, now you know! And it is to be Queen of that country, but never to wear any crown, that I ask if you are going to marry me?"

"It would be rather a big adventure, would it not?" said Charlotte.

"Of course! I thought that is what you like."

"Yes, so it is. But what about papa? I don't know what he would say if he knew."

"Do you always tell him what you do, beforehand, to see if he shall approve?"

"I've not done lately," said Charlotte. And then she saw that a suitable moment for her own confession had arrived. She had very small hope of shocking him now; but she did her best.

"Do you know that I have been in prison?" she said.

"No. Who was it that put you there—your papa?"

"I put myself."

"Did you get the keys?"

"I made them arrest me."

"How?"

"I took a policeman's helmet from him, and ran away with it. At least that is what he said afterwards: I don't know whether it was true."

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the Prince in ravished tone. He did not turn a hair; it was merely as though he were listening to some fairy tale.

"But very likely it was!" persisted Charlotte, anxious for the worst to be believed; and then she gave him a full account of the whole thing.

"And what for did you do it?" he inquired when she had finished.

"Because they had told me that you were coming, and I had promised not to run away."

"I do not understand?"

"Well, I didn't know what you were like; and I didn't want you to think I was a bit anxious to meet you.—That was all!"

"That was all, was it?" Enlightenment dawned on him; he beamed at her benevolently.

"And I wanted to see," she continued, "whether you would be shocked: at least, I wanted to give you the chance of being."

"Well, you have given it me, and I am not; I am delighted. The more women can do that sort of thing the better—pull men's heads off, I mean."

"Goodness me!" exclaimed Charlotte, "but I'm not going on doing it."

"Why not? A good thing done twice is better."

The simplicity of his approval left her without words.

"In that country where you and I are going to," went on the Prince, imperturbably, "the women can fight just as well as the men. They are trained to wrestle; and before they allow to marry they must have wrestled off on to his back a man as old as themselves."

"But the men?" cried Charlotte, astonished. "How can they stand being beaten by women?"

"Pooh, that is nonsense!" said Fritz; "men do not mind being beaten by women unless it is that they despise them. In that country the woman that has thrown most men is the one that they are most anxious to marry."

"I have never thrown any one yet," said Charlotte reflectively.

"You!" Peaceful of look he eyed her wonderingly. "You have thrown something much stronger than a man," he said—"you, a princess, that has gone to prison!—and for that silly notion of yours that you could shock me. Ha!"

"I did it for other reasons, too."

"Quite like; people may have a lot of reasons they can make up afterwards for doing wise, brave, foolish things like that!"

"But I did think," insisted Charlotte, "that those Women Chartists were right."

"I do not care whether they are right or wrong;—that is not my concern. They may be just as foolish as you, or just as wise—what difference to me? But when I go to think of you sitting there in that common prison all those ten days with everybody looking for you—looking, looking, and not daring to say one word—so afraid at what you had done—oh, that is marvelous! That is to be a King! That is power!"

Charlotte had become very attentive to her lover's praise. "You think they were really afraid, then?" she inquired, "afraid that it should be known."

"You ask them!" replied Fritz, "and see if they do not all cry 'Hush!'"

And then in his usual abrupt way he returned to matters more personal to himself.

"Well, what are you going to say to me? For the last hour I have been asking you to marry me, and you have said nothing; only just 'wriggle, wriggle,' talking off on to something else."

"Wriggling is one way of wrestling," said Charlotte. Her eye played mischief as she spoke.

"Just wagging the tongue!" retorted Fritz with genial scorn. "Throw a man with that?—you cannot throw me!"

"But I must throw somebody, or else I shall not be qualified. The women of that wonderful country of yours would look down on me."

"Throw me!" The Prince opened his arms, smiling. "I will let you!" he said.

"And despise me afterwards! No, Mr. Schnapp-dragon, I shall choose my own man, and throw him in my own way."

"And if you succeed?"

"Then—yes, then I will marry you."

"And if you fail?"

"Then I won't."

"H'm!" observed the Prince in easy-going tones, "you must have been very sure of him before you would say that!"

Charlotte opened her mouth to rebuke that brazen remark; and then shut it again.

"When do you do it?" went on Fritz, equable as ever. "Before I go?"

Charlotte pretended to temporize. "Well, perhaps to-morrow," said she.

And sure enough, to-morrow it was.

II

Nobody in Jingalo knows to this day what finally induced the Prime Minister to concede so unexpectedly that preliminary point of vantage—a mere foothold among the interstices of the ministerial program—which the Women Chartists had so long and vainly striven for. What use they made of the opportunity thus accorded has now become a matter of history: we need not go into it here.

No royal message to ministers in Council assembled worked that miracle; for, as we shall see in another chapter, the King's mind was destined at this point to be suddenly distracted in quite other ways; and when he was again able to turn his attention anywhere but to himself he found that and other matters which had disturbed his conscience tending with comparative smoothness toward a solution in which he personally had had little share.

But though Jingalo knows nothing of these inner workings of history, we peering behind the scenes may note how, when bureaucracy is bent on keeping up appearances, fear of scandal can become more potent to constitutional ends than love of justice.

Never in his long career had the Prime Minister known so flagrant an instance of blackmail unpunishable by law as that which the Princess Charlotte sprung on him when, in brief interview, she dictated the terms on which alone the Ann Juggins episode was to be allowed to sink into oblivion. And perhaps one can hardly wonder, under the circumstances, that even then he did not feel secure, and was anxious to see so incalculable a "sport" or variant of the royal breed removed to a safe distance. For even though he might rely on her word as to the past, where was his guarantee that she might not do the same thing again?

"That Prime Minister is very anxious to get rid of you," said Prince Fritz when at a later date he and the Princess began once more to compare notes as to future plans, when in fact the joyful news of their engagement was about to be publicly announced in a general uproar of thanksgiving.

"Oh, yes," went on Fritz, enjoying the retrospect, "one could see that quite well. He was putting on my boots for me all the time, and was willing to pay a good deal more for the accommodation

than he had expected me to ask."

"Pay?"

"Yes, dearest; but it all goes into your pocket, not mine. It is the price he pays for your character; that is all."

"But what has my character to do with him?"

"Your character, beloved," said the Prince, turning upon her an adoring gaze, "leaves him with no moment in which he can feel safe. He thinks that you have 'a great vitality,' but here not enough scope. And he seems that he cannot govern this country so long as you stay in it. I think him very wise. Shall I tell you what I did?"

"Well?"

"I made a bargain."

"About me?"

"Of course about you, beloved—for you; who else except would I bargain for? Besides was it about anything but your business that he and I were having to seek each other? Well, because you so frighten him now he pays rather more to get rid of you; and you, oh my dear heart's beloved, you will get more. That is all that your Fritz had to do yesterday—and he has done it. So now!"

And then, well pleased with himself, the practical Fritz let his romantic side appear again, and for two minutes or so he lived up to the sky-like blueness of his eyes and the childlike gentleness of his face, and because his heart was very full of love he talked his own native German, and not Jingalese any more.

And these two sides of him are here given so that the reader, if kindly anxious about Charlotte's future, may trouble about her no more; for when your idealist is also a very practical man of business he can, up to the capacity of his brain-power, go anywhere and do anything, and even in a land that is outside Baedeker will assuredly find his feet. Not for nothing had Prince Hans Fritz Otto of Schnapps-Wasser turned his bottled industry of home-waters into a company.

In tentative motherings of her gigantic babe, Charlotte had forgotten all about money and business affairs when once more the practical man in him came out of childish disguise to make an inquiry.

"Beloved," said he, "tell me—was he that man?"

"Which man?" inquired Charlotte innocently.

"The one that you wrestled with?"

Charlotte nodded; a smile flickered over her face.

"And you got him down?"

"Yes."

"Quite down?"

"As flat as he could go."

"And that is why you marry me?"

The two lovers exchanged sweet looks of candor and honesty.

"Yes," said Charlotte, smiling, "that is why."

"O Beloved," murmured the infatuated Fritz, "how beautifully you do tell lies."

CHAPTER XXIII

"CALL ME JACK!"

It was noticed when the King came down to the first Council of the new session that his face was flushed and his manner strangely discomposed. He barely returned the respectful greetings of his ministers, and by postponement of the customary invitation to be seated, kept them out of their chairs for quite an appreciable time. Standing awkwardly about the board they looked like a group of carrion crows awaiting the symptoms of death before descending to their meal. To none did he accord any word of personal recognition.

Even when proceedings had commenced it was evident that his attention constantly wandered, only returning by fits and starts at the call of some chance phrase on which now and again he would seize, remarking in a tone of irritation, "And what does this mean, please?" And thereafter he would require to be instructed at some length, as though he had forgotten all current or

preceding events.

In consequence of this the formal reports of the various departments became a lengthy business; and the really important matters, to discuss which the Council had been specially called, were proportionally delayed.

Presently the word "strikes" caught his ear.

"Ah, yes, what about those strikes?" he inquired.

"They are still going on, your Majesty."

"Yes, *I* know that! Why are they going on—that's what I want to know? The strike you are talking about was practically over more than a month ago; why has it begun again?"

"They have secured fresh funds, sir, and other trades have joined in."

"Is it the other trades that are finding the funds?"

"Not entirely, sir; large contributions are now coming in from abroad."

"From abroad?" interjected the King irritably, "where are they getting funds from abroad?"

"From England, sir."

"From the Government, do you mean?"

"Of course not from the Government, sir."

"Well, explain yourself, then! Don't call it England if it isn't England."

"I might almost say that it is England, sir, since a judicial decision is the immediate cause of it. Labor in that country has just won a very important action for damages arising out of a Crown prosecution. It has now been decided that the Crown is responsible for the torts of its civil and military agents. The unions in consequence are flush with funds, and a portion of the Court's award, amounting to £50,000, has been handed over to the strike fund in this country."

"And this subsidy from a foreign and a so-called friendly Power is having the effect of prolonging our industrial conflicts, and is doing damage to our trade?"

"Undoubtedly, sir, it has that effect."

"Well, and has nothing been said about it—to the English Government, I mean?"

"It is not a direct act of the Government, sir."

"I don't need to be told that," said the King. "Neither was it a direct act of the Government when a party of English undergraduates climbed to the top of our embassy and hauled down the national flag because Jingalese had been made a compulsory substitute for Greek at their universities. But for that the English Government apologized, publicly and privately, and all round. Do they apologize for this? Do they offer to compensate us for the loss it is to our trade and the corresponding gain to theirs? Have they been asked to apologize?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"And pray, why not?"

By this time, around the ministerial board, much open-eyed interrogation was going on. Where, they seemed to be asking, was this glut of foolish interrogations going to end? But still the minister under examination endeavored to answer as though the questions were reasonable.

"There would be no chance, sir, of obtaining any redress."

"Yet this is doing us infinitely more harm?"

"It is merely a development, sir, of that new thing called 'syndicalism.' It is cropping up everywhere now."

"It may be new as it likes," protested the King. "All I say is that as it stands it is a *casus belli*. You say it is cropping up; all the more reason why it should be put down! What else is government for? Take cattle disease; you put that down, you do not allow that to be imported. Why should you allow syndicalism to be imported either?"

The Council sought resignation of spirit in sighs and looked to its Chief in mute appeal.

"How would your Majesty propose to prevent the importation of ideas?" inquired the Prime Minister dryly, in a tone that tried to be patient.

"Don't tell me," said the King, "that a syndicalist subsidy to Labor of £50,000 is only an idea. But you are quite right, Mr. Prime Minister; in the past countries have gone to war largely over the importation of ideas, as you call them, either religious or social; that is why they failed. England went to war with France at the end of the eighteenth century merely because France was importing revolutionary ideas into England. Was she able to prevent it? No; she only got the disease in a much more virulent form herself, and has been running tandem to it ever since. It is no use going to war for sentimental reasons; you must do it for business reasons, and you must

do it in a business-like way."

"Merely as a matter of business, sir," said the Prime Minister, his hopefulness now on a descending scale, "war with England would cost us considerably more than the loss of trade occasioned by this subsidy which you complain of."

"Not a bit of it!" retorted the King, "not if you went the right way to work. The Chancellor was saying just now that we should have to devise some fresh taxes. Well, put a tax on Englishmen; quite enough of them come here to make it worth while. Every summer the place is alive with them!"

"I am afraid, sir," said the Prime Minister, sighing wearily, "that the most favored nation clause stands in the way of your Majesty's brilliant suggestion."

"Not if we do it openly as an act of war," explained the King; "then it becomes a war tax. That's what I mean when I say conduct your wars on business lines. Don't tax yourself, tax your enemy! England is the one country we can fight on our own terms. She can't get at us. We are an inland power; there isn't a coast within three hundred miles of us; and Dreadnoughts can't walk on land, you know. They really can't!" he added, as though there might be some doubt among those who had not yet given the matter their consideration.

"I assure you, gentlemen, that war on England, if scientifically conducted, would be a profitable thing. I've been reading a book by a man named Norman Angell, who says that war doesn't pay. Well, the reason for that is we don't conduct our wars on the proper lines. Now if we made war on England——"

"Your Majesty," entreated the Prime Minister, "may we proceed to business?"

"If we made war on England," persisted the King, "we should not have to send out a single regiment, or impose any extra taxation on ourselves; in fact we should save. We should simply raise our railway and hotel tariffs fifteen or twenty per cent. to all Englishmen, except children in arms; children up to thirteen half price. There's the whole thing in a nutshell; no difficulty, no difficulty whatever."

At this point, to the Premier's annoyance, Professor Teller took up the question with a humorous appreciation of its possibilities.

"But, sir," he inquired, "how should we know that they were Englishmen? They might disguise themselves as Americans."

"They couldn't!" said the King. "An Englishman trying to talk American makes as poor an exhibition of himself as an American trying to talk English; and besides, you don't know the British character! Penalize them in the way I am suggesting and they would flaunt their nationality in our faces; they would wear Union-jack waistcoats and carry in their pockets gramophones which played 'God save the King' when you touched them. They would make a point of showing us that they didn't care twopence for our fifteen per cent.; in fact, their Tariff Reformers would applaud us—they would put it in large headlines in all their newspapers, and call it an object lesson and would demand a general election on the strength of it."

"But supposing, sir," inquired the Professor, "that they did not come at all? We have to remember that we live largely by our tourists; and if we eliminate the English tourist——"

"Better and better," said the King. "Think how popular we should be with the rest of Europe! No English? The Germans would simply flock to us; our hotels would be crammed; we should be turning away money at the door."

The Prime Minister tapped wearily upon the table; all this was such utter waste of time; and he began to think that the King was so intending it, and was bent upon making a royal Council a constitutional impossibility.

But in some curious magnetic way other members of the Cabinet were now beginning to be infected. The idea tickled their national vanity; and though it was all put in a very amateurish way, many of them saw well enough that for war to be retained as a solution of international problems something on these lines would have to be done for it. Syndicalism was merely a showing of the way.

"But, your Majesty," inquired the President of the Board of Ways and Means, "might not England retaliate by declaring a Tariff war on us?"

"She might," said the King; "but not with the Liberals still in power; they couldn't reduce themselves to absurdity in that way. Still, supposing our declaration of war threw the Liberals out, what could the others do? Our trade in English goods comes to us mainly through France or Germany; and our own return trade is chiefly limited to our native crockery, toys, wood-carving, and needlework, supposed survivals of our peasant industries, which, as a matter of fact, are nearly all of them manufactured for us in Birmingham, the home of Tariff Reform. In that matter, by the taxing of articles which are only nominally made in Jingalo, English trade would suffer more than ours; and there might, in consequence, come about a real revival of our native crafts (an advantage which I had not previously thought of)—lacking our usual supply of the bogus article we should at last become honest in our professions and truthful in our trademarks. Let the Minister for Home Industries make a note of it."

"The prospect your Majesty holds out is certainly alluring," replied the minister thus appealed to; "but if war is to teach us moral lessons, surely we ought to have moral reasons for engaging in it as well as business ones."

"Well, if you want them, you've got them!" said the King. "If moral reasons were to count we ought to have been at war with England any day for the last fifty years. England has become—if she has not always been—a center of infection to the whole of Europe. Every disastrous experiment on which we have embarked has come from her. By her gross mismanagement of established institutions—the Church, the Peerage, the Army, Land, Labor, Capital—the whole system of voluntary service and voluntary education—she has driven the rest of Europe into revolutionary changes for which there was no necessity whatever. In avoiding the woeful example she has set us, of always standing still on the wrong leg, we have run ourselves off both our own. And now she is nourishing syndicalism like a bed of weeds, and sowing the seeds of it into her neighbors' territories. If you are looking for moral excuse there is no end to it; I preferred, however, to put it to you as a business proposition."

"I must assure your Majesty," said the Prime Minister, "that your Majesty's present advisers have no intention whatever of making themselves responsible for a war on England, however advantageous the circumstances may seem."

He might as well have spoken to the wind; with an increasing volubility of utterance the King went on—

"If it were decided," said he, "that an actual invasion of England were advisable, I have three separate plans now forming in my head, all equally feasible and promising, and all capable of being put into operation at one and the same time. Each one, in fact, would serve to divert attention from the others."

It may be noted that at this point Professor Teller suddenly ceased to be amused; his look of half-quizzical detachment becoming changed to one of gravity, almost of distress; his Majesty's "pace" had apparently become too much for him.

"We know, for instance," pursued the King, "that if we succeeded in effecting a landing the German waiters would rise as one man and join us as volunteers. Germany would, of course, officially disown them, while for the purposes of the war we should give them letters of Jingalese naturalization on their enlistment; these, which they would carry in their knapsacks, would prevent them from being shot in the event of their being taken prisoners. Our own army of twenty thousand picked Jingalese sharpshooters would go to England disguised as tourists. Each in his bag would carry a complete military outfit; our new uniforms are so like those of the English territorials that they would arouse no suspicion at the Customs House, and even when worn only experts would know the difference. At a given signal——"

There the Prime Minister, having extracted a look of despairing encouragement from the Council, got upon his feet.

"I have to ask your Majesty," he said very resolutely, "that we may now be allowed to proceed to the business for which we have been called together."

"At a given signal——" went on the King.

"I must protest, your Majesty."

It was quite useless.

"At a given signal—I will give you your signal, Mr. Prime Minister, when you may throw your bomb; yes, for I have seen you preparing it!—at a given signal when the King and his Parliament were assembled together in one place, some of our forces would mingle with the crowd; others emerging from places of concealment would form into ranks and advance from various quarters upon Westminster. Then, before any one was aware, we would cable our declaration of war, rush the House, seize the heads of the Government, carry them off to the topmost story of the clock tower, garrison it from basement to roof, and there, with the King and his whole Cabinet in our hands, stand siege till the rest of the nation sued for peace."

Once more the Prime Minister endeavored to interpose; he was borne down.

"They could not blow us up," went on the King, "without blowing our prisoners up also; they could not starve us out, for the King and his Cabinet would perforce have to share our privations. We should have in our possession not only the whole personnel of the Government, but that supreme symbol and safeguard of the popular will which crowns their constitutional edifice. And, gentlemen, you may think me as mad as you like—you may arrest me, you may take me to the police-station, you may rob me of all the evidence of conspiracy I have against you, and you may call me Jack—jack-of-all-trades, master of none—Jack, plain Jack——"

The Prime Minister and Council sprang to their feet. Consternation was upon the faces of all.

"But nothing! nothing!" he went on, "no power on earth—except it were a whole army of steeplejacks——"

At that word the flow of his eloquence ceased; his mouth remained open but no sound came from it. Suddenly his staring eyes puckered and closed, wincing as from a blow; and his face flushed to a fiery red, then paled.

He gave a short cry, threw out an arm feebly; wavered, toppled, crumpled like a thing without bone, and fell back into his chair.

"My God!" muttered the Prime Minister. "Oh, great Heaven!"

Some one, more nimble of wit than the rest, dashed out of the room to seek aid. All the others, impressed with a true sense of incompetence, stood looking at their fallen King. Not one of them knew how to handle him, whether it were best to lay him down or leave him alone. First aid—even to their sovereign lord—had formed no part in the education of these his counselors.

The Prime Minister did the one thing which he knew to be correct—and which could not possibly do harm; he felt the King's heart. But nobody for a moment supposed him to be dead; unconscious though he lay, his heavy breathings could be seen and heard.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE VOICE OF THANKSGIVING

I

For three whole weeks thereafter—if the papers were to be believed—the entire nation hung upon the bulletins which were issued hourly from the royal palace. The King's illness gave the finishing touch to his popularity; devotion to affairs of State had brought on brain-fever, and the more desperate the symptoms of the illness could be made to appear, the more sublime became the moral character of its august victim, and the more deeply-rooted the affection of his people.

Professional vanity had also to be flattered; and during those fierce fluctuations of hope and despair, Jingalo's topmost place in the world of medical science became vindicated to the meanest intelligence. If by a scientific miracle the King's life was to be saved, Jingalese doctoring, and no other doctoring in the world would do it.

Nobly the press performed its task of giving to every factor in the situation its due prominence; even the Church got its share; and when favorable bulletins became the order of the day, their origin was generously ascribed, even by the ministerial press, almost as much to the prayers of the people publicly offered as to the skill of the six best medical authorities. But when all was said and done it was to the King's marvelous constitution, his patient courage, and his quiet submission to the hands of his nurses (foremost of whom was her Majesty the Queen), that the praise was chiefly due; for it was necessary, in order to complete the situation, that the loyalty so nobly tendered should be nobly earned.

And nobly tendered it certainly was. Never could the nation have had so good an opinion of itself as during those dark weeks when, taught by its press the meanings of the various symptoms, it sat by the King's bed feeling his pulse, holding his breath, and scarcely daring to raise any voice above a whisper. Various sections of the public were informed in their daily journals how they and other sections were behaving themselves; how business men went to office almost apologetically, and only because they could not help themselves; how nursemaids hushed the voices of their charges as they wheeled them past the precincts of the palace for their morning's airing in the royal park; and how Jingalo only consented to its accustomed portion of beer in order that it might drink to the King's health and his quick recovery.

Every week in the streets at the back of the palace fresh straw was laid down, not so much for the benefit of the sufferer (whose room was too far away for any sound of traffic to disturb him), but as a stimulus to popular imagination. The men who laid it down performed their task as though the eye of the whole nation were upon them; and even upon the Stock Exchange one learned that the rise and fall of prices were but the harmonious accompaniment of a stupendous national anxiety.

All these things Jingalo was told by its newspapers, and some of them were true; and in the reading and the doing of them how Jingalo enjoyed itself! It had never had such a time of feeling good, unselfish, and thoughtful on a large and homogeneous scale, without having to do anything particularly unpleasant in return. The theaters suffered, but not nearly so much as the charities; for though Jingalo was still able decorously to amuse itself—and did so at her Majesty's special request, for the sake of trade—it could not have its heart successfully wrung by human compassion in more than one direction at a time—at least, not to the same extent. And so, charitable appeals had to wait till a livelier sense of gratitude prompted by the King's recovery should revive them.

In the conduct of human affairs association plays a very curious part. When a man is shouting for joy he can scatter largesse with a free hand, but he cannot loosen his purse-strings while he is holding his breath; and even when it is only being held for him by a sort of hypnotic suggestion, his nature is still undergoing a certain impedimental strain.

And as a visible embodiment to all this strain of calculation and suspense, small crowds could be seen standing constantly at the gates of the palace, waiting for bulletins and watching with a

curious fascination the flag that so obstinately continued to float mast high. They watched it as a crowd watches for a similar sign outside the walls of a jail: not that they wanted it to fall—but still, if it had to, they dearly wished that they might be there to see. Thus, even in their griefs, did the sporting instincts of the Jingalese people rise to the surface and bring them a consolation which nothing else could afford.

My readers will give me credit, I trust, for not having sought to impose on them that fear of impending doom, that apprehension of what the next hour might bring forth, on the strength of which the Jingalese press so sedulously ran its extra editions from day to day. I have never for a moment pretended that the King was going to die, seeing, on the contrary, that he was destined to make a complete recovery. But he was not to be quite the same man again—not at least that man whom we have seen in these pages bumping his way conscientiously through a period of constitutional crisis. For when the six Jingalese medicos came to put their heads together over him, they found in the back of his head a small dislodgment of bone, rather less than the size of a florin, and protruding almost an eighth of an inch from the surface of the skull. Great was their speculation as to how such a thing could have come about without their knowing it—for here, of course, was the root of the whole mischief. This fracture, brought about perhaps by some flying fragment of bomb, unnoticed in the excitement of the moment and afterwards ignored, had evidently been the cause of the brain-fever; and when a cause of this sort is discovered nothing is easier for medical science than to put it right again.

And so, seeing that the bone was out of place, they put it back just where it ought to be, that is to say, where it had been. And as soon as that was done, and the right pressure once more restored to the King's brain, then his temperature went down, his delirium abated, and his mind, as it gradually came back to him, recovered the dull, safe, and retiring qualities which had belonged to it a year ago; and with its old constitutional balance restored to it, it became once more contented with its limitations and surroundings, and made a very quiet, happy, and peaceful convalescence. And though on his recovery the King still remembered the events of the past months they appeared to him rather in the light of a bad dream than as a slice of real life.

The Prime Minister came to see him on the very first day when he was allowed to sit up and receive visitors, and they met without any sign of constraint or enmity.

"Well, Mr. Prime Minister, how are things going?" inquired the King.

"Very well, indeed, sir," replied the minister, "now that your Majesty has taken the necessary step to relieve us of all anxiety. And, though I have not come on this occasion to intrude politics, it may interest you, sir, to hear that on the question of the Spiritual Chamber, the Archbishop and I have come to an arrangement, and the necessary legislation is to be carried through by the consent of both parties."

"Very gratifying, I am sure," said the King. "How did it come about?"

The Prime Minister hesitated. "Well, sir," he said, "there were several contributing causes: I need not go into them all. The one thing, however, which made some modification of our plans clearly necessary was the death of the Archimandrite of Cappadocia. After that our proposed consecration of Free Churchmen to the new bishoprics ceased to be possible. No doubt your Majesty will feel relieved."

"Yes, I am," murmured the King mildly.

And so was the Prime Minister; for that event, happening so fortuitously at the right moment, had saved his face; his political retreat was covered, partly at any rate, by the death—in a queer odor of sanctity all his own—of that exiled patriarch of the Eastern Church.

His exit, though opportune, had not been dramatic; attention being at the moment otherwise directed. His two wives nursed him devotedly to the end, and wrapped him for burial in the magnificent cape which in his brief day of political importance the Prime Minister had given him. Very quietly and unostentatiously he was laid to rest under the rites of an alien Church—for his own would have none of him; nor was there any one left to say of him now, in the land of his exile and temporary adoption, "Ah, Lord," or "Ah, his glory!" Only in his duplicated domestic circle was he in anywise missed; politics had shifted the ground from under him, and he had become negligible.

II

The King's recovery was the event of the new year, not only giving it an auspicious send-off, but lending thereafter a peculiar flavor to the whole social calendar. For months, addresses of congratulation kept coming in from all the societies and public bodies in the kingdom, and at every philanthropic function in which any member of royalty took part during the next twelve-month it gave pith to all the speeches and focussed the applause. Its influences extended to every department of public life; it affected politics, trade, public holiday, art, science; it invaded literature, increased the circulation of the newspapers, and lent inspiration even to poetry.

And those being the facts, how useless for satirists and cynics to pretend any longer that monarchy as an institution was not firmly and inextricably imbedded in the very life and habits of the Jingalese people?

Even at the universities the theme chosen for the prize poem that year was the King's recovery

from sickness; and though the prizes were few an unusually large number of the rejected poems, owing to the popularity of their subject, were published in the local newspapers. Perhaps only a few of them were good, but one at least achieved success, and was recited at all charity bazaars, concerts, and theatrical entertainments given in the ensuing year. One couplet alone shall be here quoted, portraying as it does in graphic phrase the national suspense during those weeks of prolonged crisis when telegram after telegram continued to pour monotonous negation on the hopes of an expectant people—

"Swift o'er the wires the electric message came,
He is no better: he is much the same!"

Even amateur reciters could make an effect out of lines like that. Many of them did, and on one occasion the Princess Charlotte was a conspicuous member of the touched and attentive audience. It was a difficult moment for her, but with the help of a handkerchief she concealed her emotion, and the papers referred to it appreciatively as a touching incident.

The joy-bells that rang for a King's recovery, rang also for the public announcement of a royal betrothal. Prince Fritz had returned to the enchantment of his Charlotte's society at the earliest possible moment, and was in consequence one of the royal family group which went in state to the Cathedral to return thanks for the sovereign's restoration to health.

Across that bright scene we have to note the passing of one shadow which, though not of impenetrable gloom, should not fail to enlist the equable sympathy of kindly hearts. Max still moved upon the public stage with a pensive and a chastened air. In the last month he had matured visibly, yet he did not mourn as one without hope, for he remembered that in the Church of Jingalo virginity could only vow itself for a limited number of years, and he knew that time could bring wisdom to inexperience, and make conspicuous the virtue of a heart that would not take "no." Also he had certain fireworks up his sleeve whose brightness, when they were let off, would penetrate even to the most cloistral abode—he had, that is to say, his Royal Commission to work on, and the preparation of a minority report which could not fail, when it was divulged, to startle the world. He was even beginning to have hopes that three or four others would sign it; for to be in a minority with royalty has its charm.

But though he still believed in the future he was for the moment in very solitary plight. His Countess, to whom alone he could go for comfort in his grief, had cried over him and kissed him with all the motherly kindness imaginable; and then, disturbed by the very depth of her pity and afraid of what might come of it—her heart being but tender clay—had suddenly packed up her traps and flown, leaving, if you would like to know, most of her jewels behind her. And Max, sending after her with his own hands those souvenirs of the past, had added a few tender words of regret and thanks which to her dying day that good woman cherished and said her prayers over.

III

The Thanksgiving was a very splendid affair; but the people who liked it least were the piebald ponies. Never in their lives did they so narrowly escape a hugging at the hands of the great unwashed; and this unwelcome demonstration as directed against them was quite without reason or excuse. They had not had brain-fever, or bones put back into place, or made miraculous recoveries from anything; and they practically said as much when resenting the liberties that were taken with them. All they knew was that they were doing rather more than their usual tale of work; and in consequence they were a little cross. Nothing serious happened, however, and while waiting at the Cathedral doors they were given sugar which quieted them down wonderfully.

Inside the Cathedral all that was great and good and noble in Jingalo had assembled to celebrate the occasion; and in its midst, still looking rather frail and delicate after his illness, sat the King with the Royal Family. To right and left of him sat judges, bishops, lords, ladies, members of the House of Laity, staff officers, diplomatists, mayors, and corporations, heads of public departments, all very gorgeously arrayed in their official uniforms; and there amongst the rest sat a compact bunch of prominent Free Churchmen in black gowns—their chances of episcopal preferment flown.

With triumphant suavity the Archbishop of Ebury conducted the service, assisted by deans, chapters, bishops, and a dozen cathedral choirs. Something in G was being intoned; the Archbishop was in splendid voice.

He asked that the King might be saved; and, man and boy, the twelve choirs were with him.

He asked a blessing on the Church; and his prayer was seconded.

He implored wisdom for Cabinet ministers; that, it was agreed, would add to the national satisfaction.

"In our time, O Lord, give peace!"

Peace: the echoes of that blessed word thrilled down the vaulted aisles of the Cathedral.

Put into another form that might mean, "After our time, the deluge." But the better word had been chosen: "Peace."

To the King's ear it came with all the softness of a caress; he welcomed it, for it meant much to him. And thinking of all that was now happily past he rubbed his hands.

The watchful reporters in the press-gallery above took notes of that; to them, whose duty that day was to interpret all things on a high and spiritual plane, it betokened the stress of a fine emotion, and in their grandiloquent reports of that solemn ceremony they set it down so and published it.

Yet as a matter of fact, the King had only rubbed his hands. And, truly interpreted, his thoughts ran thus—"Peace? Well, yes, I think that now I have earned it! Here am I, still King of Jingalo, alive and in my right mind. During the last few months I have abdicated—put myself off the throne, and been blown on to it again by a bomb engineered by my own Prime Minister; I have been arrested, I have been locked up in a police cell, I have committed robbery, and in my own palace been robbed again. My daughter has been in prison for ten days as a common criminal; my son seriously assaulted by the police, and for about four months surreptitiously engaged to the daughter of an Archbishop; while a revolutionary and seditious book written by him as a direct attack on the Constitution and on society has been providentially burned to the ground—that also, probably, at the instigation of my ministers. And though all this has been going on in their midst, making history, bringing changes to pass or preventing them, the people of Jingalo know nothing whatever about it. What a wonderful country is the country of Jingalo!"

And at that happy conclusion of the whole matter the King had rubbed his hands.

THE END

[1] Jinglese equivalent for "Black Maria."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK KING JOHN OF JINGALO: THE STORY OF A
MONARCH IN DIFFICULTIES ***

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